

A

**TREATISE**

OF

**CONVERSION,**

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PREACHED AND NOW PUBLISHED FOR THE USE OF THOSE THAT  
ARE STRANGERS TO A TRUE CONVERSION, ESPECIALLY  
THE GROSSLY IGNORANT AND UNGODLY.

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If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold  
all things are become new.

2 COR. v. 17.

THE

CONSTITUTION

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
AS REVISED AND AMENDED FOR THE YEAR 1901  
THE SECOND EDITION OF THE CONSTITUTION  
WITH A HISTORY OF THE CONSTITUTION

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TO THE INHABITANTS  
OF THE  
BOROUGH AND FOREIGN  
OF  
KIDDERMINSTER.

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Dearly beloved Friends in the Lord,

As it was the unfeigned love of your souls, that hath hitherto moved me much to print what I have done, that you might have the help of those truths, which God hath acquainted me with, when I am dead and gone, so is it the same affection that hath persuaded me here to send you this familiar discourse. It is the same that you heard preached : and the reasons that moved me to preach it, do move me now to publish it ; that if any of you have forgot it, it may be brought to your remembrance ; or if it worked not upon you in the hearing, yet in the deliberate perusal it may work. I bless the Lord that there are so many among you that know by experience the nature of conversion, which is the cause of my abundant affection towards you, above any other people that I know, (especially in that you also walk in so much humility, unity, and peace, when pride and divisions have caused so many ruins abroad). But I see that there is no place or people on earth that will answer our desires, or free us from those troubles that constantly attend our earthly state. I have exceeding cause to rejoice in very many of you ; but in many also I have cause of sorrow. Long have I travailed (as Paul speaks, Gal. iv. 19.) as in

birth, till Christ be formed in you. For this have I studied and prayed, and preached; for this have I dealt with you in private exhortation; for this have I sent you all such books as I conceived suitable to your needs: and yet to the grief of my soul I must speak it, the lives of many of you declare that this great work is yet undone. I believe God, and therefore I know that you must every soul of you be converted, or condemned to everlasting punishment. And knowing this, I have told it you over and over again: I have shewed you the proof and reasons of it, and the certain misery of an unconverted state: I have earnestly besought you, and begged of you to return; and if I had tears at command, I should have mixed all these exhortations with my tears; and if I had but time and strength, (as I have not,) I should have made bold to have come more to you, and sit with you in your houses, and entreated you on the behalf of your souls, even twenty times, for once that I have entreated you. The God that sent me to you knows that my soul is grieved for your blindness, and stubbornness, and wickedness, and misery, more than for all the losses or crosses in the world, and that my heart's desire and prayer for you to God, is, that you may yet be converted and saved. But alas! I see not the answer of my desires, some few of you (and I thank God they be but few) will not so much as come to me, nor be willing that I should come to you to be catechised or instructed. Some of you still quarrel with the holy way in which you must walk if ever you will be saved. Some of you give up yourselves to the world, and thrust God out of your hearts and houses, and have not so much as a chapter read, or an earnest prayer put up to God nor once a savoury word of heaven, from morning to night. I would there were none of you that secretly hate the diligent strictness that God hath commanded us, and think this daily care for our salvation to be more ado than needs; as if you had found out something else, that better deserved your care and diligence, and would better pay you for it. Too many among you are carping and cavilling against those humble, godly Christians whom you should carefully imitate; you are hearkening after and aggravating all their infirmities, and charging them as hypocrites, because they will not be as careless as yourselves: but you consider not



that in so doing, you censure yourselves, and speak the greatest terror to your souls, that you can imagine; for if they that go so far be hypocrites, what will become of you that come not near them? If they that set their minds on the life to come, and think nothing too much that they can do to be saved, be yet but hypocrites; if they that dare not swear, or curse, or drink, or whore, or deceive, or wilfully live in any sin, are yet but hypocrites; what then shall become of such as you, that so much neglect a holy life, and live so much to the world and flesh, and never did a quarter so much as they for the saving of your souls? If the righteous themselves are scarcely saved, (that is, with much striving and suffering, and with much ado,) and if hypocrites cannot be saved at all; where then shall the ungodly and the sinners appear<sup>a</sup>? Your Judge hath told you that “except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven<sup>b</sup>.” If these men then be no better than pharisees, you must exceed them, or there is no possibility of your salvation. Go beyond them first, and then you may the better condemn them. Till then, you doubly condemn yourselves that come so short of them. If malice did not blind you, you would have seen that this stone which you cast at others, would fly back in your faces.

But above all, it is the odious, swinish sin of tippling and drunkenness, and such like sensuality, that declareth too many of you to be yet strangers to conversion. I have told you the danger of it: I have shewed you the word of God against it, resolving that drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God<sup>c</sup>, and commanding us not to keep company with you, or to eat with you<sup>d</sup>. I have told you, and told you an hundred times, with what a face these sins will look upon you in the end. And yet all will not do, for aught yet I see, as I found you I must leave you; and after all my pains and prayers, instead of rejoicing in the hopes of your salvation, I must part with you in sorrow, and appear against you before the Lord, as a witness of your wilfulness, and negligence, and impenitency. Ah Lord! is there no remedy, but I must leave so many of my poor neighbours

<sup>a</sup> 1 Pet. iv. 17, 18. Matt. xxiii. 33.

<sup>b</sup> Matt. v. 20.

<sup>c</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.

<sup>d</sup> 1 Cor. v. 11—13.

in the power of satan, and in a slavery to their flesh, and a contempt of heaven, and a wilful neglect of a holy life? Is there no persuading them to cast away their known and wilful sin; and to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness? Must I see them condemned by Christ that would have saved them? Must my preaching and persuasions be brought in against them, that were intended by me for their conversion and salvation? O, what is the matter, that we cannot prevail with reasonable men in so plain a case? Can they imagine that sin is better than holiness; or that it is better to obey their flesh than God? Do they think that this life will last always? Or that the pleasures of sin will never have an end? Or that they shall never be called to a reckoning for all this? Can they imagine that heaven is not worthy to be sought, and eternal things to be preferred before those that are transitory? Or that a careless, loose, and fleshly life will be better at last than a life of diligence, obedience, and holiness? O that we did but know what to say to these men that would go to their hearts, and bring them to their wits, or what to do for them that might turn them from their sin, and fetch them home to God, and save them. Is there no hope to prevail with them before they find themselves in hell? Poor miserable souls! O that I knew but what to do for you, that might do you good, and save you before it be too late. But alas! what should we do more? If my life lay on it, I cannot persuade a drunkard from his filthy drunkenness, nor a covetous man from his worldly mind and life, how much less to a thorough conversion, and a heavenly conversation? The example of their godly neighbours at the next doors will not allure them, but they will go on towards hell with the voice of prayers and exhortations in their ears! The reproofs of their neighbours do but anger them, and they cry out, that all is said in malice: as if it were a malicious thing to go about to save them from sin and hell. Ministers cannot prevail with them in public nor in private. Many of them will speak me fair; but they will not be persuaded to turn and live a holy life. And if neither neighbours, nor friends, nor ministers can be heard; if conscience itself cannot be heard; if the God that made them, if Christ that bought them cannot be heard; if the plain-

est Scripture cannot be regarded ; if mercies and afflictions, if heaven and hell cannot prevail to draw a sinner to be willing to be saved, and for so reasonable a matter, as to let go his filthy vice and vanity, and to be ruled by his Maker rather than by his flesh ; then what remedy, and who shall pity them that sees them in damnation ?

Neighbours, my request to you is now but this much ; and as your friend, as your teacher, I beseech you deny me not so small a matter : even that you will be but at so much labour, as to read over this book to yourselves, and with your families ; and that you will consider of it as you go, between God and your own hearts, whether it be not a matter that concerneth you to the quick : and that you will daily beg of God upon your knees to give you this necessary mercy of conversion. Away with your known sins, and with the unnecessary company and occasions that would draw you to them. You were baptized into the name of the Holy Ghost as your Sanctifier : and will you hate sanctification, or refuse it, or neglect it ? You say, you believe the communion of saints, and will you abhor their communion, and choose the company of ignorant, ungodly men ? Well ! if after all this you be still the same, and any of you shall appear before the Lord in an unconverted state, this book, besides the rest of my labours, shall witness to your faces, that you were told of the danger, and told of the necessity of a thorough conversion. And you that now are always telling us, that all are sinners, and quiet yourselves with this, that all men have their faults, shall then be convinced to your everlasting confusion, that there is so great a difference between sinners and sinners, the converted sinners and the unconverted, that the former shall enter into the joy of their Lord, when you with the rest must be cast into perdition, Matt. xxv. 13. That you were forewarned of this, is here witnessed against you, under the hand of,

Your faithful monitor,

RICHARD BAXTER.

Kidderminster,  
June 1, 1657.

## THE READER.

### AN ACCOUNT OF THIS SLENDER WORK.

You have here presented to you a common subject, handled in a mean and vulgar style, not only without those subtleties and citations, which might suit it to the palates of learned men, but also without that conciseness, sententiousness and quickness, which might make it acceptable to the ingenious and acute. If you wonder why I should trouble the world with such an ordinary, dull discourse, as I owe you an account of it, so I shall faithfully give it you. Besides my defect of leisure and acuteness to satisfy the expectations of these sharper wits, I did here purposely avoid that little which I could have done. I was to preach not only to a popular auditory, but to the most ignorant, sottish part of that auditory; for it is they that are principally concerned in the matter. And knowing that the whole nation abounds with such, I was easily persuaded to permit the press to offer it to their view, and that, as it was preached without alteration. For the subject, I know it is the most needful that can be offered them. The reason why they must be condemned is, because they are not converted; and were they but truly converted they would escape. To convert a sinner from the error of his way, is to save a soul from death, and to cover a multitude of sins<sup>e</sup>: to convert them, is to pull them out of the fire<sup>f</sup>: it is to recover them out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will<sup>g</sup>. Conversion is the most blessed work, and the day of conversion the most blessed day that this world is acquainted with. It takes a slave from satan, and a hand from his ser-

<sup>e</sup> James v. 19, 20.

<sup>f</sup> Jude 23.

<sup>g</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 25, 26.

vice ; it addeth a subject, a son, a member to the Lord Jesus : it rescueth a soul from everlasting torments, and maketh him an heir of everlasting joys. And for such a work, we can never do too much. And alas, the most are little sensible of the nature, or necessity of this change. Many that say, they believe in God as their Creator, and in Christ as their Redeemer, do declare that they are deluded by their deceitful hearts, in that they believe not in the Holy Ghost as their Sanctifier : for they know not what sanctification is, nor ever much looked after it in themselves. The commonness and the greatness of men's necessity, commanded me to do any thing that I could for their relief, and to bring forth some water to cast upon this fire, though I had not at hand a silver vessel to carry it in, nor thought it the most fit. The plainest words are the most profitable oratory in the weightiest matters. Fineness is for ornament, and delicacy for delight ; but they answer not necessity, though sometimes they may modestly attend that which answers it. Yea, when they are conjunct, it is hard for the necessitous hearer or reader to observe the matter of ornament and delicacy, and not to be carried from the matter of necessity ; and to hear or read a neat, concise, sententious discourse, and not to be hurt by it ; for it usually hindereth the due operation of the matter, and keeps it from the heart, and stops it in the fancy, and makes it seem as light as the style. We use not to stand upon compliment or precedency, when we run to quench a common fire, nor to call men out to it by an eloquent speech. If we see a man fall into fire or water, we stand not upon mannerliness in plucking him out, but lay hands on him as we can without delay. I shall never forget the relish of my soul, when God first warmed my heart with these matters, and when I was newly entered into a seriousness in religion : when I read such a book as Bishop Andrew's Sermons, or heard such kind of preaching, I felt no life in it : methought they did but play with holy things. Yea, when I read such as Bishop Hall, or Henshaw's Meditations, or other such Essays, Resolves and witty things, I tasted little sweetness in them ; though now I can find much. But it was the plain and pressing downright preacher, that only seemed to me to be in good sadness, and to make somewhat of it, and to

speaking with life, and light, and weight: and it was such kind of writings, that were wonderfully pleasant and savoury to my soul. And I am apt to think that it is thus now with my hearers; and that I should measure them by what I was, and not by what I am. And yet I must confess, that though I can better digest exactness and brevity, than I could so long ago, yet I as much value seriousness and plainness; and I feel in myself in reading or hearing, a despising of that wittiness as proud foolery, which savoureth of levity, and tendeth to evaporate weighty truths, and turn them all into very fancies, and keep them from the heart. As a stage-player, or morris-dancer differs from a soldier or a king, so do these preachers from the true and faithful ministers of Christ: and as they deal liker to players than preachers in the pulpit, so usually their hearers do rather come to play with a sermon, than to attend a message from the God of heaven about the life or death of their souls.

Indeed, the more I have to do with the ignorant sort of people, the more I find that we cannot possibly speak too plainly to them. If we do not speak in their own vulgar dialect, they understand us not. Nay, if we do so, yet if we compose those very words into a handsomeness of sentence, or if we speak any thing briefly, they feel not what we say: nay, I find, if we do not purposely draw out the matter into such a length of words, and use some repetition of it, that they may hear it inculcated on them again, we do but overrun their understandings, and they presently lose us: that very style and way, that is apt to be a little offensive to the exact, and that is tedious and loathsome to the curious ear, whose religion is most in air and fancy, must be it that must do good upon the ignorant, and is usually most savoury and acceptable to them. Upon such considerations, I purposely chose so coarse a style in the handling of this subject: for I preached and wrote it, not for the judicious, but for the special use of the most senseless, ignorant sort. And indeed, I am very sensible that herein I have not reached the thing that I desired; and yet have not spoke half so plainly as I should: especially, that there wanteth that life and piercing quickness, which may concur with plainness, and a subject of such necessity doth require. The true causes of this were, the dulness and badness of my

own heart, and a continual decay of the quickness of my spirits, through the increase of pituitous scotomatical distempers, together with that exceeding scarcity of leisure, which weakness and oppressing business have caused. But if God will give help and leisure, I shall seek a little to amend it, in something more which on the same subject I have begun.

One other reason that moved me to consent to this publication, is the scarcity of books that are wrote purposely on this subject: though, on the by and by parts, I know that nothing is more common in English, yet on this subject purposely and alone I remember scarce any besides Mr. Whateley's "New Birth," (and some Sermons of Repentance): and indeed I have long persuaded all that I had opportunity to persuade, to buy that book of Mr. Whateley's, and to give them abroad among the ignorant, ungodly people. And if I had seen any such fruit of my persuasions as I desired, I think I should never have published this. But when I could not prevail with the one sort to buy them, nor with the other sort to give them, I resolved to print somewhat on so necessary a point, were it never so meanly done, if it were but that I might have some books to give myself to some that need, and also that the newness and other advantages might entice this book into the hands of some, that are never like to read those, which heretofore I have commended to them.

One thing more I observe is like to be offensive in this writing, and that is, that the same things do here and there fall in, which formerly have been spoken. I confess my memory oft lets slip the passages that I have before written, and in that forgetfulness I write them again: but I make no great matter of it. The writing of the same things is safe to the reader, and why then should it be grievous to me<sup>h</sup>? not because it is displeasing to the curious, till I set more by their applause, and take the approbation of men for my reward. I like to hear a man dwell much on the same essentials of Christianity. For we have but one God, and one Christ, and one faith to preach; and I will not preach another Gospel to please men with variety, as if our Saviour and our Gospel were grown stale. This speaking the same

<sup>h</sup> Phil. iii. 1.

things is a sign that a man hath considered what he speaks and that he hath made it his own, and utters not that which accidentally falls in. And it is a sign that he is still of the same belief, and doth not change, and that he loves the truth, which he so much dwells upon; and that he looketh more at the feeding of men's souls, and strengthening their graces, than at the feeding of their itching fancies, and multiplying their opinions. For it is the essentials and common truths (as I have often said) that we daily live upon as our bread and drink. And we have incomparably more work before us, to know these better, and use them better, than to know more. The sea will afford us more water after we have taken out a thousand tuns, than a hundred of those wells and pits from whence we never yet fetched any. I speak not against the need of clothing the same truths with a grateful variety in representing it to the world, nor against a necessary compliance with the diseases of some itching novelists in order to the cure; but only give you an account of this publication, by him that had rather be charged with the greatest rudeness of style, than with the guilt of neglecting what he might have done for the saving of one soul.

RICHARD BAXTER.



## TREATISE OF CONVERSION.

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MATTHEW-xviii. 3.

*Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

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BELOVED HEARERS,

**T**HOUGH the Gospel doth not presuppose grace in men, but bringeth it to them, yet doth it suppose them to be men, and therefore endued with natural principles. And though there is not enough in nature to convert men, yet doth grace find some advantage in nature for its reception, and somewhat which it may improve for a further good: otherwise we might as well plead with beasts as men. Supernatural light supposeth natural; the doctrine of faith supposeth reason; and he that would draw you to be everlastingly happy, doth suppose you so much to love yourselves as to be willing to be happy, and loath to be absolutely miserable. I come not therefore to persuade any of you to these things, which are supposed: we are not sent to entreat men to be men, or reasonable creatures, or to love themselves, or to be willing to be happy; I will not be beholden to any of you for this, for you cannot do otherwise: but we are sent to tell you where your happiness lieth, and where not, and to advise you to exercise your reason aright, and to know the way to happiness, and take that course by which it may obtained.

I must confess to you that ever since I knew what it was to be a minister of the Gospel, what labour it must cost, and how cold a reward is to be expected from our hearers, and what a troublous errand we come upon, in the judgment of the most, I never could think any thing below the pleasing of God, and the saving of the souls of our people and ourselves, to be a motive sufficient to draw a man to this employment. Nor do I think it meet to come once into the pulpit, with any lower ultimate ends than these. He that is a minister for lower ends than these, in heart and deed is no minister of Christ; but as he seeks himself, so will he serve himself, and must reward himself as he can; and no wonder if he be unfaithful in all his course. And he that preacheth one sermon for lower ultimate ends than these, will seek himself, and not Christ, and so be unfaithful in that sermon: and if such study smooth words and fine sentences, which tend more to please, than to save men's souls, it is no wonder. Considering these things, when I had purposed this day's work in this place, I remembered in whose name I must speak, and on whose errand I must go, and therefore that from him I must receive my message: and I remembered also to whom I was to speak, even to men that must be everlastingly happy or miserable, and that are now in the way, and have that to do in a little time, which this their everlasting state doth depend upon: I remembered also, that Christ hath assured me that of the many that are called, few are chosen; and that most men perish, for all the mercy that is in God, and for all that Christ hath done and suffered, and for all the grace that is offered them in the Gospel; and I considered the reason, even because they will not receive this grace, nor entertain Christ and the mercy of God, as it is offered to them. I therefore resolved to preach to you, as one that hath but one sermon to preach to you, and knows not whether he shall ever speak to you more, and therefore to choose no lower subject than that which your life or death depends upon, and to handle it as far as I am able accordingly, with that plainness as a matter of such concernment should be handled with. If my business hither were to be thought a learned man, or to procure your applause, or to please your ears, I should then have prepared some pleasing matter, and tried to have adorned it

with some flourishes of wit, and presented it to you in a mixture of languages, which you do not understand, and with such pretty jingles and gaudy allusions as carnal fancies are used to be tickled with; but knowing that this is not the way to please God, but to please the devil, nor to save myself, or those that hear me, but to hinder the salvation of me and you, I soon resolved not only to avoid the study of such unprofitable, carnal ostentation, but even to study to avoid it: for I should be loath to please satan any way by the doing his work, but doubly loath to please him in preaching the Gospel, and to be serving him in the choicest service of my Lord.

Will the Lord but bless the word that I shall speak to the conversion of any souls here present, I have the ends I come for; and shall believe that I have cause to bless his name that sent me hither to day; and in hope of this success, which I have begged of the Lord, I shall cheerfully address myself to the work.

The occasion of these words of Christ, was the carnal thoughts of his disciples concerning the state of his kingdom, as if it had been of earthly pomp and glory, like the great monarchs of the world; and also their carnal, aspiring desires and contrivances to get the highest place in his kingdom. They found these conceits among the Jews, and nature easily entertained and cherished them, which is so dark and so disaffected to higher things. Christ thought it not yet seasonable to give them the full discovery of his kingdom, it being reserved for the Holy Ghost, who was miraculously to possess them, and teach them all things in Christ's bodily absence, that the world might see that his doctrine was not of his devising, but from above: but yet he presently falls upon that sin which these inquiries did discover in them; and before he fully telleth them the nature of his kingdom, he plainly telleth them what they must be if they will have a part in that kingdom. It may seem a great doubt, whether the disciples were at this time unconverted, that Christ telleth them of the necessity of a conversion, or whether it be but a particular conversion from some particular sins that he here speaks of; as there is a general conversion or repentance necessary to the unreg-

nerate, and a particular conversion or repentance necessary to the godly upon their particular falls. To this I answer, 1. Judas was undoubtedly unconverted, and so did continue. 2. The apostles were then ignorant of many truths which afterwards became of absolute necessity to salvation; as Christ's death, resurrection, ascension, the nature of his kingdom, &c. Yet I dare not say, that they were not in a state of salvation when they were thus ignorant of them, because they were not then fundamentals, or of absolute necessity, as afterwards they were: but yet Christ might well tell them that these truths must be believed hereafter, and they could not have that eminent measure of faith which was proper to his more illuminated church after his ascension, without believing of them. Yea, if they had not believed them when they were made fundamentals of absolute necessity to be believed, they had ceased to be true disciples of Christ. And whether there be not some noble effects of this Gospel-doctrine upon the heart, which are also proper to the church after Christ's ascension, as well as these articles of belief were proper to them, and so that this text may speak of both, I leave to further consideration. 3. Many think that it is but a particular conversion and repentance that is here spoken of; that is, from this sin of ambition which the disciples did now manifest: but then they observe not that it will hence be concluded, that a true disciple may by a particular sin be in such a state, that if he should die in it, he should not be saved. But others that are learned and godly think that no hard conclusion, as long as God will not suffer them to die in it. 4. I purposely forbear to trouble you with the names of expositors, but I make no doubt but they are in the right, that suppose that Christ doth here reprehend their ambition, by describing the contrary temper of his true followers, shewing them the absolute necessity of conversion, without any determination whether they were or were not converted at present: he telleth them that except they be converted, humble persons, they cannot be saved, but doth not determine that now they are otherwise. And indeed it seemeth not likely that the disciples of Christ had not then that conversion and humility of mind that was of absolute necessity to salvation: these words may well be used to converted men, to

shew them the necessity of that conversion which they have. As if a Christian begin to grow covetous, you may say, except you be a man converted from earthly mindedness to heavenly mindedness, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven; which doth not deny him to be already converted. Though as to our present purpose the matter is not great which of these be taken for the sense, because they all afford us that doctrine that we shall gather: for if there be no salvation without a particular conversion from a particular sin, much less without a conversion from a state of sin. But the plain sense of the text I doubt not is this; as if he should say, 'You strive for pre-eminency and worldly greatness in my kingdom; why I tell you my kingdom is a kingdom of babes; it containeth none but the humble that are small in their own eyes, and look not after great matters in this world; and though nature be proud, yet except you be (now or hereafter) converted men, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.' By the kingdom of heaven is here meant, both the estate of true grace, and so of glory. Not as if conversion were a preparation to their entering into this kingdom as begun on earth, but it is their very entrance itself, and so the beginning of it. The doctrine we shall hence handle, shall be given you in no other but the words of the text, lest I seem to force them.

Doctrine. It is a most certain truth, protested by Jesus Christ, that except men be converted and become as little children, they cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The order which we shall observe in handling this, is,—

I. To shew you what this kingdom of heaven is.

II. What it is to be converted, and particularly what to become as little children.

III. Confirm the doctrine from other Scriptures.

IV. I shall give you the reasons why no man can enter into the kingdom of heaven that is not converted.

V. We shall make use of all, and therein shew you the hindrances of conversion, the marks of it, the motives to it, and the Directions for attaining it; as the Lord shall enable me.

I. The kingdom of heaven is taken in Scripture both for the state of grace and glory. As all men are by nature in

the kingdom of satan here, by a willing obeying of him, and hereafter to be tormented by him ; so all the converted are by grace in the kingdom of Christ, by a willing submission and obedience here, and hereafter to be glorified by him for ever. This is all one kingdom, because there is the same king and the same subjects ; yet they are diversified in this, that one is the way or means to the other, and that the laws and duties which belong to us in the way, are not all the same as those that shall continue at the end. It is called the kingdom of heaven, both because the king is from above, and not a mere man as earthly kings are, and reigneth in heaven invisibly, and not as earthly monarchs whom you may see ; and because it is heaven which all grace and means, and duties do tend to, and it is heaven where is the end and full felicity, and the most glorious part of the kingdom. The Guide and Sanctifier of the church also is from heaven, even the Holy Ghost : the law is from heaven by the inspiration of the Spirit : the hearts of the subjects are heavenly, and their lives must be heavenly : it is here in the seed, it will be hereafter in the full tree. The difference between the egg and the bird, the acorn and the oak, is not near so great as the difference between the kingdom of grace and of glory. And yet a man that had never seen or known the production of such creatures would little believe, if you should shew him an acorn, that that would come to be an oak. And it is no marvel if a carnal heart will not believe that the weak, despised graces of the saints, do tend to such an inconceivable glory. When a poor Christian that is dead to this world lieth praying and panting after God, and looking and longing after glory, little doth the unbelieving world think, what a blessed harbour it is that by these gales he is moving and hasting to ; they now see him praying, and shall then see him possessing and praising ; they now see his labour and suffering, but they will not believe his blessedness, and perfection, till they see it to their own sorrow who have lost it.

Before I proceed to open the nature of conversion, I shall say somewhat more of the word : and I shall shew you the difference between Conversion, Repentance, Regeneration, Sanctification, Vocation.

1. The truth is, all these five words are used in Scripture to express the same work upon the soul : only they have

some respective and other smaller differences, which I shall now manifest to you. And the first word Vocation is taken often for God's act of calling when it hath no success, and this is called uneffectual calling. So it is used Prov. i. 24. "Because I called, and ye refused, I have stretched forth my hands and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof." So Isa. lxxv. 12. Jer. vii. 13. "I called, but ye answered not:" and many other places. 1. Sometimes it is taken for the act of God when it is successful; as 1 Thess. ii. 12. and many more places. 2. This success itself is termed our calling in a passive sense: and it is twofold. (1.) Common; when men are brought but to outward profession and common gifts; and so the word is used often. (2.) Special; when men are savingly converted to Christ: the former is Common effectual Calling; the latter is Special effectual Calling. And this last is the same with conversion: only these two differences are observable. 1. As to the name, it is metaphorically taken from the outward call of the Gospel, and so applied to the effect on the soul. 2. It hath usually in Scripture a principal respect to the first effect on the soul, even the act of faith itself above all other graces, and following obedience; yet not excluding the latter, but sometimes plainly comprehending them. So that some divines conceive that Vocation is a work different from Sanctification, because they conceive that it is only the Spirit's causing the first act of faith in the soul, and by that act a habit is effected, and therewith the seed of all graces, which they call the work of sanctification. And indeed the word Vocation hath special respect to the Gospel-call, to the act of believing in Christ, and the proper effect of that call, even our actual belief. But sometimes it comprehendeth the whole Christian relation and state, as Heb. iii. 1. and 2 Pet. i. 10, &c.

2. Repentance is the same thing as special effectual calling; so we take not calling in the most narrow sense of all, for the bare act of faith; only this difference there is: 1. The word Repentance doth specially denote our motion from the 'terminus à quo,' even that sinful state from which we turn, and which we repent of; yet including essentially also the state to which we turn. Whereas the word Voca-

tion doth principally express the state to which we are called. 2. Also the word Repentance doth principally respect our turning to God from whom we fell : but the word Vocation doth as much or more respect our coming to Christ the Mediator as the way to the Father. There is a twofold repentance ; (1.) One is our turning from a state of sin and misery, such as the unconverted are in, and this is it that we mean now, as the same with conversion from the same state. (2.) There is also a particular repentance, which is a turning from a particular sin, and this must be daily renewed while we live. Repentance signifieth and containeth two things. The first is a hearty sorrow that ever we sinned ; the second is a change of the mind from that sin to God. Indeed the former is but part of the latter : the changed mind is changed in this part, and manifesteth its change in a special manner, by remorse for former sins : though all remorse is not from such a change.

3. The word Regeneration also signifieth the same thing with Conversion, but with this small difference ; 1. The term is metaphorical, taken from our natural generation ; because there is so great a change, that a man is as it were another man. 2. The word is in Scripture-sense, I think more comprehensive than Conversion, Repentance or Vocation ; for it signifieth not only the newness of our qualities, but also of our relations, even our whole new state. This is not ordinarily acknowledged, but if we view the places where the word is used, it will prove so : for as Paul describing the thing though he useth not the word, 2 Cor. v. 11. saith, " He that is in Christ is a new creature, old things are passed away, behold all things are become new : " where relations must needs be a part of that all as the context will shew. So Tit. iii. 5. it is called " the laver or washing of regeneration ; " and is distinguished from renewing of the Holy Ghost ; at least as the general, comprehending that as a part. 1. Most expositors think that the word hath reference to baptism, and expresseth its effects or consequents : and no doubt baptism is for remission of sins, and therefore the laver of regeneration is for remission of sins. 2. The very text maintaineth plainly that grace by which we are saved ; by free grace, and that is our free justification as well as free sanctification : and our divines



commonly cite that text against the Papists upon that account, as pleading for free justification: "Not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." Is not saving from the guilt of sin a part of our salvation? What reason to restrain saving here to sanctification only? Doubtless if there were reason to restrain the word Regeneration to either, it would be to justification only; because the giving of the Holy Ghost is next mentioned by itself, but justification is not mentioned at all, if regeneration comprehends it not. And it is certain, that the apostle intendeth not only to tell us, that we are freely sanctified without works, but also that we are freely justified by grace without works. So John iii. 3. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;" where he at least hath some respect to baptism, as most suppose, and baptism is for the remission of sins: to be born of water therefore must needs include remission of sin. And this regeneration maketh a man a new creature, and as Paul saith, "in the new creature all things are become new," and not the qualities only. But in the main, Regeneration is the same with Conversion.

4. The word Sanctification also signifieth the same thing for the main, as Conversion doth, only with these small differences following: 1. The word is more comprehensive, for it signifieth our whole state of dedication or devotedness to God, which comprehendeth in it these four things: 1. The change of a man's qualities, whereby he is made fit for the service of God, having his heart bent towards him, and set upon him. 2. The actual dedication or devoting of a man's self to God by faith and a holy covenant; especially in baptism, by solemn vow or engagement. 3. The relation of a person so dedicated or devoted to God, as he is one set apart to him for holy uses, and it is from this relation especially that the word Sanctification is used. 4. The holiness of life that followeth hereupon, in the actual living to God, to whom we are devoted. Sanctification comprehendeth all this, and so comprehends in it Vocation, and somewhat more.

But then perhaps it may be found, that the word is

sometimes, if not often used in Scripture for holiness of the life alone, as presupposing all the rest. Indeed there are more words than one, which we translate Sanctification, which yet are not all of one sense. As *δικαιοσις*, *δικαίωμα*, and *δικαιοσύνη* differ: so doth *ἀγιασμός*, *ἀγιότης*, and *ἀγιασύνη* differ: but I shall purposely forbear to trouble you with such matters. So that having opened before to you the word Conversion, and now these four, Vocation, Repentance, Regeneration and Sanctification, you may see how far they are the same, or differ. The like may be said of the word Changing, Renewing or making new, and the like, which all signify the same work of God upon the soul.

Those therefore that inquire whether Vocation, Regeneration, Repentance, Sanctification, &c. are the same thing, or divers; and which of them goeth first, &c., must first be resolved of the sense of the term, before they proceed to the matter; for most of these words are used in several senses, and that ambiguity must first be removed.

II. I am next to shew you what it is to be converted and become as little children; which cannot be so well done till I have first given some brief description of the state of a man unconverted: to which end you must know, that God made man perfect, and gave him a perfect law to keep, which commanded perfect obedience upon pain of everlasting death: by the temptation of satan, man broke this law, and cast himself out of the favour of God, and made himself the slave of satan, and the child of death; this he did by a wilful adhering to the creature, and departing from God, so that the nature of man was thus become corrupt; and such as the first man Adam was, such must his posterity needs be, for who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean<sup>a</sup>. And how can Adam convey to his posterity that image of God, which he had lost himself, or that right to the favour of God, and further happiness? So that we are all born with corrupted natures, inclined to earth and earthly things, and strange and averse to heaven and heavenly things; prone to evil and backward to good! estranged from God, and making our carnal selves our God; pride, self-love, covetousness, voluptuousness, unbelief, ignorance, error, hypocrisy, ungodliness, strife, contention,

<sup>a</sup> Job xiv. 4.

cruelty and all wickedness have their roots at once in us, and if temptation serve, we shall bring forth the fruit.

This being the state of every man by nature, by practice and custom in sinning men become worse, and the longer they delay before they are converted, the worse usually do they grow, and the further do they go from God, and from their happiness. By all which methinks you may easily see, both what conversion is, and why there is such a necessity of it.

The word Conversion is sometimes taken actively, for that act or work that doth convert us; and sometimes passively, for that change that is thereby wrought: as man is the subject or patient, so is he also an agent in the actual turning of his own soul; so that God and man are both agents in this work. The word here in my text is active, and maketh it the act of man, "except ye convert yourselves:" but we translate it, "be converted:" because the word is used reciprocally, as some speak in Scripture: in a word, God, as the most laudable, principal cause, doth cause man's will to turn itself. So that conversion actively taken, as it is the work of the Holy Ghost, is a work of the Spirit of Christ, by the doctrine of Christ, by which he effectually changeth men's minds, and heart, and life from the creature to God in Christ: conversion, as it is our work, is the work of man, wherein by the effectual grace of the Holy Ghost, he turneth his mind, and heart, and life from the creature to God in Christ. And conversion as taken passively, is the sincere change of a man's mind, heart and life from the creature to God in Christ, which is wrought by the Holy Ghost, through the doctrine of Christ, and by himself thus moved by the Holy Ghost. Here you may see, 1. Who is the cause of this conversion, and what is the means. 2. What is the change wrought. 3. On whom. 4. From what, and to what. 1. The most laudable, principal cause is the Holy Ghost, who is the Sanctifier of the elect. 2. The instrumental cause is the doctrine of Christ, either read, or heard, or some way known, and brought by the Spirit to men's understandings and consideration. 3. Man himself is the subject of the Spirit's operation, and the proper agent of these holy actions of believing, repenting, &c. which the Holy Ghost doth cause him to perform. It is

not the Holy Ghost that believeth, but he causeth man to believe. 4. That which we are turned from, is as to the object, the creature, which sinful man doth adhere to above God ; and as to the act, it is sin, that is, he ceaseth this vicious adhering to the creature. 5. That which man turneth to, is God in and by Christ the Mediator. God hath again the heart of a sinner, when he is converted, and God will be his happiness ; his reformation, recovery, reward and felicity consisteth in this.

The parts of this conversion are these three. I. It is a change of the mind. II. Of the heart. III. Of the life.

1. Conversion changeth the mind.

1. From ignorance.

2. From inconsiderateness.

3. From unbelief.

4. From error.

1. Every unconverted man is ignorant of the saving truths of the Gospel, either by a total ignorance of the thing, or by an insufficient, superficial, ineffectual apprehension of it : the most of the world do not know, what man is by nature and actual sin ; how hateful sin and sinners are to God ; how it deserveth his everlasting wrath, and maketh it our portion ; how Christ hath satisfied and redeemed us from this misery ; and on what terms, and in what order he offereth to man that pardon and life which he hath purchased ; how he will judge them that believe, repent and obey him at last to everlasting glory, and the rest to everlasting misery. Many poor souls are utterly ignorant of these very principles of the Christian religion, in the midst of Gospel-light, and under all our most diligent instructions ; and of those that have some knowledge of them, many know them but superficially and ineffectually.

Now the first thing that the Spirit of God doth either in or to the work of conversion, is to open men's eyes to understand these mysteries : so that, the man that was wont to hear them as a strange thing, as if we spoke Greek or Hebrew to him, is now like a man that is brought out of a dungeon into the open light ; or that hath his eye-sight recovered, and doth not only know these things, but knows them with a somewhat clear and affecting knowledge ; and

is much taken with the light, and rejoiceth in it, and marvelleth at his former ignorance. I shall prove all this to you by Scripture. In 1 Cor. ii. 14. the apostle tells us, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." In 2 Cor. iv. 3. the apostle saith, "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." And then the cure you may see, Acts xxvi. 18. "I send thee to open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God." Many poor people think that utter ignorance may stand with grace, and that they may be saved without knowledge because they are not book-learned; but you hear God telleth you otherwise. Many have much brain-knowledge that have no grace, but no man can have grace without solid knowledge: for who can hate sin till he knoweth it, and the evil of it? And who can love God till he know him to be lovely? And who can do the duty that he understandeth not, or go the way to heaven that he is ignorant of? So that this is the first part of the change of the mind from ignorance to knowledge.

2. The second part of the change of the mind, is, from careless inconsiderateness to sober consideration; and this is a great help to all that followeth. The main reason why we cannot bring men out of love with this vain world, nor to yield to the call of God, and make out after Christ, and their everlasting salvation, is, because we cannot bring them to consideration: men are heady and rash, and drown their own reason with wilfulness, or passion, or worldly businesses, and will not give reason leave to work. Their vicious wills command their understandings to other objects, and will not let them dwell long enough on those that should do them good. All wicked men are inconsiderate men, and therefore inconsiderate, because wicked; and therefore wicked, because inconsiderate. If they hear of the greatest truths in the congregation, they go home and talk of other matters, and all runs out, and they are never the better: we cannot get them to go alone one hour, and

seriously consider of what they heard: ignorance doth much to men's perdition, but inconsiderateness much more. Oh! if that little which our common people know, were but frequently and earnestly considered of, it would not suffer them to be such as they are! Well, but when the Spirit of God comes effectually to convert the soul, he maketh them consider: he awakeneth the sleepy soul, and sheweth them that the matter so nearly concerns them, that if they love themselves, it is time to consider of it: he setteth these truths still before their eyes, which formerly they cast behind their backs; he holdeth their thoughts upon them so, that they must needs consider them. They had heard perhaps an hundred times before of sin, and Christ, and the necessity of conversion, of judgment, and heaven, and hell, but they never thoroughly considered it till now. Oh, this is a great part of the renewing work of the Spirit, to fix a man's thoughts upon the truths of God till they work, and to bring a man's reason to do its office. I will shew you this but in two or three texts of Scripture. In Acts xvii. 11. it is said, that the Jews of Berea had more ingenuity than the rest, "for they searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so, therefore many of them believed:" when they came home they did not turn their thoughts presently to other matters, and think no more of what they had heard, but they took their Bibles, and considered and examined the sermons which they had heard, that they might be resolved whether it were so indeed or not; that if it were so, they might obey it accordingly; and therefore they believed. In Psalm cxix. 59, 60. David saith, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies; I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments:" when he thought of his ways, he turned without delay. And God complaineth of the disobedient Israelites in Isaiah i. 2, 3. that he had nourished and brought up children, and they rebelled against him; and what was the cause? why, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." So that you may see the second part of the conversion of the mind is from inconsiderateness to consideration.

3. The third part of the change of the mind, is, from unbelief to true believing. A customary belief upon the

bare credit of their forefathers, and the common vote of the country they dwell in, most among us may have of the Gospel; but this faith is like the ground of it and will not serve to establish and renew the soul. Men are not soundly persuaded of the infallible truth of all the Word of God till converting grace doth bring them to believe it: they think it may be true, and it may be false for ought they know, they cannot tell: and therefore it is that when we come to those particulars that displease them, they will not believe them. When they do confess in general that the Scripture is true, yet when we tell them particularly of those passages that speak of the necessity of conversion, the difficulty of salvation, the fewness of the saved, and the multitude that shall perish, with many the like truths, they will plainly shew that they do not believe them. A word of such matters of heaven and hell, if it were well believed, would doubtless prevail against sensual allurements, and make them see that they have something else than this deceitful world to look after. Certainly all unconverted sinners are at best but such half believers as in Scripture are called rightly unbelievers. But when the Spirit by the Word doth illuminate their understanding, they see then that all this is most certainly true: that the talk of sin, and misery, and Christ, and grace, and glory, and of everlasting torments to the impenitent are no dreams or doubtful suppositions. God telleth them then to the very heart, that these are matters not to be questioned, but presently and seriously to be regarded: for God will prove true when all men prove liars: heaven and earth shall pass away, but a jot or tittle of his Word shall not pass away till all be fulfilled<sup>b</sup>. Whatever unbelievers think of it now, nothing is more certain than that all men on earth shall shortly find themselves in heaven or hell. Now the soul perceiveth that this is true, as the God of heaven is true, and that it is madness to question the truth of his Word, who is truth itself, and to think that Word will shake or fail which beareth up heaven and earth and is the best security that is possible to be had; and that he should deceive them who never deceived any; and doth so much to save them from being deceived by satan, and their own deceitful hearts. Before conversion

<sup>b</sup> Matt. v. 18.

you might have heard by his cold prayers, and carnal conference, and seen by his careless, sinful life, that he did not heartily believe the Word of God ; but now you may hear, and see by him that he doth believe it. If you tell a man that a bear or a cut-throat thief is following after him, if you see him not stir any faster, nor mend his pace, you will say, sure he doth not believe it ; but if you see him run as for his life, it is a sign that he believes it. When once a man is truly converted, you may see by his affection, and diligence, and self-denial, that he owneth and believeth the Word of God indeed : if you over-heard him in his prayers, his tears, or at least his hearty groans will tell you that he believeth : if he talk with you of his former life, his sobs and sighs, and his deep self-accusings will tell you that he believeth it : his careful endeavours for the saving his soul, his earnest inquiries what he shall do to be saved, will tell you that he believeth. The change of his company, his talk, his life, his casting away those sins with hatred which were his delight, and taking up that holy life with delight which before he had no heart to ; all this will shew that he is now a true believer. Because “ Noah believed, he was moved with fear, and prepared the ark <sup>c</sup>.” He that had seen him at work might perceive that he believed : he would never else have so laboured to escape the danger.

4. The fourth part wherein the change of the understanding doth consist, is, in the healing of men’s errors, and turning them from those false conceits which they had about God and his ways, and the matters of salvation. While they were unconverted, satan had taught them, and the world had taught them, and the flesh had taught them many things against God and their own safety : they were persuaded that either there was no heaven and hell, or that God would save them though they did not much look after it themselves. They thought sin was better than holiness, and it was a more desirable life to please the flesh, and to be honourable, and eat and drink, and be merry, than to live in the thoughts of another world, and deny the flesh that pleasure it desireth, and to spend so much time in reading, hearing, praying and meditating. They thought this was a tedious, unnecessary life, and that all this was more ado.

<sup>c</sup> Heb. xi. 7.



than needs; and that the wisest way was to follow their business in the world, and take their pleasure while they might have it, and only come to church, and forbear some heinous sins, and then believe that God will be merciful to them, and they shall do well enough without all this stir, and that they may take what they can get of the pleasure of the world, and when they have done, if there be any heaven, they may have it with a short repentance when they can keep the world no longer. Abundance more such errors as these are in the minds of unconverted sinners, through the seducements of the deceiver: indeed they live a life of error. Some heretics err in one particular, and some in another, but wicked men err in the very drift of their lives. But when God converteth, he changeth all these opinions. The man is then of another mind. He that thought sin so pleasant, would now fain spit it out; he that desired so to glut himself with the world and sinful delights, would now be rid of them: like a foolish person that will needs take poison, because it is sweet, and will not believe him that tells him it is deadly; but when he feeleth it begin to gripe him in the bowels, and to burn him at the heart, then he crieth out, 'Oh now I believe you that it is poison! Oh give me a vomit that I may cast it up quickly, or else I die.' Then, if you see him retching and straining himself to get it up again, and groaning, and crying out, 'Oh my heart, it burns me, it tears me; Oh that I could get it up!' you may see then that the man's opinion is changed. Sinners, believe it, if ever God will save you, it will be thus with you. You thought there was no great harm in taking now and then a cup with good fellows; in neglecting God and your souls, while you provide for your bodies; in dropping a curse or a small oath in the heat of your passion: you could ask, what harm is it to spend the Lord's day in idleness, or vain-talking, or recreations, when you had a God, and a soul, and an everlasting state to look after, which should have been the business of that day. Perhaps you let down now and then some sharper poison of covetousness, malice, fornication, &c. Oh, but if ever God convert you, all this must up again; you will groan and strain at it by the vomit of repentance, and cry out, 'Oh that I had never known it! Oh that I had never seen the faces of such un-

godly companions! Oh that I could get up the very roots of this sin, I would never return to it again.' You that now think it so grievous a life to be godly, and that there needs not so much ado for your salvation; if ever God convert you, he will make you see that it is both necessary and delightful: you will then say, 'What, shall I sit still when my everlasting salvation is at stake? I have but a little time to make sure of escaping eternal misery: I must very shortly be in heaven or hell; and now is the time that must turn the scales, for then I must be judged according to my works; and is this a time to loiter in? Or is this a matter to be forgotten or made light of?' Oh sinners, if God open your eyes, you will marvel, I tell you, you will a thousand times marvel, that ever you should be so sottish, and in a manner besides yourselves, as to follow your business in the vain world, and eat and drink, and sleep so quietly, while you knew not what should become of you for ever. You will cry out of yourselves, 'Oh where was my wit, that I should make so light of that which was my only business? And that I should sleep out that short time of my life which was given me of purpose to work out my salvation in? And that I should forget that judgment that was told again and again was at the door?' Sinners, if God do once truly convert your souls, you will see, that if wife, children, friend, estate, life require your labour and care, your salvation requireth an hundred times more. You will then say, 'What, can I make too much haste to heaven? Or be at too much care or pains to make sure of it? Can any labour be too much to obtain such a glory, or to escape the flames of everlasting misery? If I lose the world and my life, I may be a saver and a gainer in the life eternal; but if I lose that life, how shall I be a saver? Or which way shall I hope for a reparation of my loss? And what good will it then do me that I had pleasure, or credit, or riches in the world? Is it worth the labour of all my life to rake in this earth, and to live in more plenty of worldly vanity than other men a little while, till I drop into my grave? And is it not worth ten thousand times more care and pains to make sure that I live among the angels, and see the face of God in endless glory?' Oh Lord, where is that man's brains that thinks he can pay too dear for heaven, and yet that all the stir of his life is not too dear a price for earth! To get him

a pleasant passage to his grave, when he might have as much pleasure upon other terms? Where is that man's reason that will be at all this trouble for nothing, and yet will cry out to God, or to his minister, 'What need all this ado to be saved?' Ask a gasping man on his death-bed, whether this labour had not been better laid out for heaven? And whether heaven or earth will pay a man better for his care and pains? What! doth the Lord himself cry out to sinners, "Lay not up for yourselves a treasure on earth, where rust and moth doth corrupt, but lay up for yourselves a treasure in heaven, &c." "Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, &c." "Labour not for the food which perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life<sup>d</sup>." And shall men that call themselves Christians say, that this is more ado than needs?

Thus, sinners, will your minds be changed, if ever you be converted: you will then be quite of another mind concerning the world, and God, and the wicked, and the godly, than now you are. I tell you, God will unteach you again all these false opinions about these matters, which the devil, the world, and the flesh have been so long teaching you. It is his work to unteach you first, and then to teach you better things: this will be so. You that now say you will never believe but a man may be saved without so much ado; you will never believe that none shall be saved but those that are thus changed; you will never believe that God maketh so great a matter of sin as preachers talk of: if God will convert and save you, he will make you believe it. Even the most confident of these conceits will be changed. Be not too peremptory, man, God can yet shew thee so much mercy as to change thy mind: he hath changed as self-conceited men's minds as thine, and hath shaken as confident opinions as these: Paul thought himself as wise as you, before his conversion, and telleth us, "I verily thought myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus." But when God had struck him down, and amazed him with his glory, and then illuminated him with his saving light, he cried out, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" Acts ix. 6. And this with trembling and astonishment. And Tit. iii. 3. He telleth you what

<sup>d</sup> Matt. vi. 19, 20, 33. John vi. 27.

he thought then of his former courses: "We ourselves were sometime foolish, disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures;" but how was he healed? ver. 4, 5. "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." You say you will never be of another mind; aye, but God can make you of another mind: his light cannot be overcome by your darkness, if he mean you so much mercy as to shine in upon your souls. This is the fourth part of the change of men's understandings from error to saving truth in the matters of salvation.

11. The second part of the work of conversion is upon the Heart or Will, to which this change of the mind or understanding is preparative: and in this change of the heart, there are these several parts observable. 1. The will is brought to like what it disliked, and to dislike what it liked before. 2. It is brought to choose what it refused; and to consent to that which it would not consent to. 3. It is brought to resolve, where it was, either resolved on the contrary, or unresolved. 4. The several Affections are changed, of love and hatred, desire and aversion, delight and sorrow, hope and despair, courage and fear, and anger, and content, and discontent. In all these respects the converted is changed, which we must therefore speak of in their order.

1. The first change that God maketh on the heart or will in the work of conversion (after the preparatory works which we now pass over) is, in the complacency or displacency of it: he causeth that to savour or relish as sweet to the will, which before was bitter: the soul receiveth a new inclination; it liketh that which before it disliked, not only by a mere approbation, but by a willing closure of the heart therewith. So that, these two things, a New Inclination, and a New Complacency, do go to make up this first part of the work. Before conversion the very bent of man's mind is toward the things below, and his heart is against the things of God: he relisheth the things below as sweet; and it pleaseth him to possess them, or to think of possessing them, but he hath no pleasure in God, nor in thinking or hearing of the life to come: all things please or displease

a man, according as they agree or disagree to his inclination; and as they seem to him either suitable or unsuitable. Things do not please or displease according to their own goodness or badness, but according to the qualification of him that apprehendeth or entertaineth them. To the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet, but the full soul loatheth the honey-comb<sup>d</sup>. What life can be more pleasant to a glutton or drunkard, than to pour in and stuff their paunch? And to any sharp stomach, how good is their meat? But when a man is sick, there is scarce a greater torment than to eat or drink, when the stomach goeth against it. Oh how they loathe it, and cannot get it down! They had rather cast the daintiest fare into the channel, than take it into their stomachs; so it is with the sick, unrenewed soul: he hath no pleasure in God, nor any holy things: it goeth against his heart to think of them, or seriously to speak or hear much of them. He marvelleth how other men can find so much delight in reading, and hearing, and praying, and the like; for his part he is weary to bear it; though for fashion, or fear of God's wrath he comes to church, or saith over a few words of hypocritical, heartless prayer, yet he usually makes no long matter of it; but he longeth till it be done, and he is glad when it is over; therefore the Scripture calleth such, enemies to God, and haters of him; for their hearts are not with him, though with their tongues they may draw near him<sup>e</sup>. I know it is a very common thing with almost all men to profess that God hath more of their hearts than their pleasures, profits, or any thing else; but it hath blinded them so, that they know not themselves: otherwise it would be a very easy matter for them to perceive that their very hearts are turned away from God. Many poor sinners are even willing to cheat their souls with a lie, when they might know that their hearts have no delight in God; but that the very thoughts of him and of his word, and service, and everlasting life, are rather grievous to them; and as the psalmist saith, "God is not in all their thoughts." "The Lord knoweth their thoughts, that they are vain<sup>f</sup>." Well, this is then the first change that God by his renewing grace doth make upon the heart; he turneth it

<sup>d</sup> Prov. xxvii. 7.<sup>e</sup> Isa. xxix. 13. Matt. xv. 8.<sup>f</sup> Psal. x. 4. xciv. 11.

to himself, he giveth it a new inclination and bias : he first openeth men's eyes to see God's excellency and the excellency of those glorious things which he hath promised ; and thereby draweth their hearts unto them. It is a great and difficult matter to set the heart of man upon heaven, but God can do it, and doth it in this great change. I know the best are still earthly in part, and too much in the dark, and too backward to the things of God, and God hath not near that room in their hearts as he deserves, and as they could wish he had : yet a wonderful change is made on them : they that had no savour of God and glory before, do now savour nothing else so much ; they can truly say as David, though perhaps not so feelingly as he, " Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee <sup>g</sup>." He that scarce thought of God before, now his mind runs upon him ; now his thoughts are, whether God be reconciled to him, or not : and how God approveth of him, and his ways : were he sure of his favour he would think himself happy : could he but know him, and enjoy him more, he had the very desire of his heart. It is his greatest trouble that he is no nearer him, and no more fit to please and honour him ; and God hath no more room in his heart. Unfeignedly he grudgeth at the remnants of sin, that they should so weary and grieve the Spirit of God, and hinder his more sensible enjoyment of his love ; it grieveth him that any of that room in his heart should be taken up by fleshly and worldly vanities, which he knoweth doth of right belong to Christ. It is his care to give him yet better entertainment, and to get out those remnants of sin and vanity, that God at last may have it all to himself. It is his daily business to sweep out this dung, and dress up his disordered heart for Christ ; and glad he is when he can but find any signs of his presence, and feeleth any stirring of his grace ; and when he can but move towards him more swiftly by a stronger love ; this is the true condition and temper of a converted soul ; all other men do but talk of God, but it is only these that give him their heart. Sirs, I would fain make this as plain as I can to you, and I would fain have you try as we go along, whether this change has been made in your own hearts or not. You know that

<sup>g</sup> Psal. lxxiii. 25.

there is something or other that every man is most pleased in, and his mind is most towards ; and this complacency and bent of the mind, is the very spring of almost all his conversation ; but if he have no pleasure in it, nor mind to it, he will neglect it, whatsoever you can say or do. Here is the true root of the difference between the hearts of the carnal, and of the spiritual : before a man is converted, his mind is not towards God, but upon other things ; but afterwards nothing is so near and dear to him. Mark the discovery of both these states, Rom. viii. 5—9. “ For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh ; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death ; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God : for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” Here you see in the very words of the Holy Ghost a plain description of these two different conditions of men ; till a man be converted, his mind is more on his fleshly pleasure or commodity, or credit in the world, than in God or the happiness of the world to come. Whatsoever he may say or pretend to the love of God, yet God knoweth that his mind is another way : but when converting grace comes, it taketh off the old bias, and setteth on a new one ; and now the man that was carnally minded is become spiritually minded. Sinners, if you would but enter into your own hearts, and ask them what it is that seemeth best to you in all the world ; what it is that most pleaseth you ; what you would have if you might have your choice ; by this you might know the bent of your mind ; and so know whether you are indeed converted, or not. You think, it may be, that you may have worldly and fleshly minds, and yet have grace too : and that you may set your hearts most upon your fleshly and worldly pleasures, and yet be the children of God ; but deceive not yourselves, it cannot be : believe it, it cannot be. Oh that those men did think of this, that drown their hearts in the cares of this life ; or wilfully run on in gluttony, drunkenness, or other fleshly delights. If ever you escape the torments you have

deserved, if ever you will see the face of God in peace, those hearts must be turned quite another way; those delights must grow bitter to you: you must be ashamed of your present pleasure<sup>h</sup>. And your souls must abhor them in comparison of Christ, and even abhor yourselves for all your abominations<sup>i</sup>. And cast them all away as dross and dung; and account all as loss for the winning of Christ, which now you think your greatest gain<sup>k</sup>. Oh sinners, how low will all these things be then in your hearts? When you look upon all the glory of this world, it will be no more lovely than a dead carcase in your eyes: for you will be crucified to the world, and the world to you. If a man would then offer you all the kingdoms and glory of the earth, it would be but as a chip to you, it would stink in your thoughts if it tended to deprive you of everlasting glory. Many infirmities may stand with grace, but a carnal or worldly mind in a prevailing sense cannot. “Love not the world nor the things of the world, for if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him<sup>m</sup>.” I know there are few men so foolish and ungodly, but will say with their tongues, that God is better than the creature, and heaven than earth, and would give it as their judgment under their hand, and confirm it with an oath, that they do not dissemble: yea, but the question is of the inclination and complacency of their hearts; which do these men love better, and which do they mind as the most suitable good? Never tell me that their estimation of God is sincere, unless it affect the heart with an answerable complacency and inclination to him: they may apprehend it as truth that God is the chief good, but they do not truly, that is thoroughly, apprehend it.

But when converting grace comes, it doth this work. I know when the best Christians have reached to the greatest knowledge of God, and sense of his love, which in this life they may expect, they will still be looking higher after more. And the apprehension of that which they yet come short of, will much darken the apprehension of their present attainment: infiniteness will quite overmatch both our apprehensions and our affections: but though we are ready to

<sup>h</sup> Rom. vi. 21.

<sup>i</sup> Ezek. xxxvi. 21.

<sup>k</sup> Phil. iii. 8, 9.

<sup>m</sup> 1 John ii. 15.



call our present glimpse and taste of God, a very nothing, when we compare our knowledge of him with our ignorance, and our enjoyments with our wants ; yet when we compare these small things with all the pleasures or profits of this world, we see that we have chosen the better part. Alas, the poor converted soul hath quickly a taste of the vanity of this world in the very first heart-breaking and humbling that he was brought into ; when his sin is set in order before him, and the voice of the law doth make his heart to tremble, and an angry God doth look him into terrors, what then can all the world do for his relief ? How sensibly then doth he say, Oh, silly comforters ! what should I do if I had no better hopes ! Oh, what contemptuous thoughts and speeches then hath he of all these things that he once so much valued ! He thinketh he can scarce find words that are base enough for them. If he could find worse than Paul's losses, and dross, and dung, and dogs-meat, he would do it. O that men would now in the day of their prosperity bethink themselves of this, which all shall know at last. It is a most doleful sight to any man of wisdom and compassion to see men that have wounded and loaden consciences, to run up and down, after pleasure and profit, as if these would heal them, which have made their wounds ; men that are even undone for want of healing, and are within a step of hell, and will certainly and very speedily be there, if Christ, by saving, renewing grace, do not recover them, do quite forget the nature of their distress, and the thing they want, and mind the toys of worldly things, as if they would save them. What, still is sin sweet to you, when it hath made such work against your souls ? Still is this world so lovely in your eyes, when it hath enticed you already to the very brink of hell ? Oh poor bewitched souls, that will dote upon that which you confess deceiveth you ! That will dig your own graves with such excessive pains, and purchase a room in everlasting torments at so dear a rate ? Well, if ever God will have mercy on your souls, he will show you another kind of pleasure and felicity ; he will acquaint you with that which shall be worth your labour ; he will bring those sick distempered souls to another relish than now they have. He will make you spit out this dirt and dung, and thirst for the

living water that shall spring up in you to everlasting life<sup>n</sup>. And instead of your over-eager seeking the food that perisheth, he will make you hunger after the bread of life<sup>o</sup>. What the unsanctified man doth most love, we may see by experience; we see what he seeks after partly by his life; and will you see out of Scripture yet more fully which way the heart of the sanctified is inclined? "The love of God is shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Ghost<sup>p</sup>." They "are confident that nothing can separate them from this love, neither height nor breadth<sup>q</sup>, &c." They can sometimes appeal to Christ himself with Peter, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee<sup>r</sup>." "Oh how I love thy Law!" said David, "it is my meditation day and night, yea, I love them exceedingly<sup>s</sup>," saith he; "above gold<sup>t</sup>," above their appointed or necessary food<sup>u</sup>," saith Job. "Thy word was the joy and rejoicing of my heart<sup>x</sup>," saith Jeremiah. So vehement was Paul against those men that could not love the Lord of love, that he pronounceth them accursed with the greatest curse<sup>y</sup>. "Thy law," saith David, "is within my heart. How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord. My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord, my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; blessed is the man whose strength is in thee, in whose hearts are the ways of them. My soul breaketh for the longing it hath to thy judgments at all times. Thou art my God, early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee; to see thy power and thy glory as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live, I will lift up my heart in thy name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips, when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night season<sup>z</sup>."

2. The second part of the change of the heart is in its intents. Conversion setteth a man upon right ends. All the work of a man's life lieth in intending certain ends, and

<sup>n</sup> John iv. 14.

<sup>q</sup> Rom. viii. 39.

<sup>t</sup> Ver. 127.

<sup>y</sup> 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

<sup>o</sup> John vi. 17.

<sup>r</sup> John xxi. 15.

<sup>u</sup> Chap. xxiii. 12.

<sup>z</sup> Psal. xl. 8. lxxxiv. 1, 2. cxix. 20. lxiii. 1—3.

<sup>p</sup> Rom. v. 5.

<sup>s</sup> Psal. cxix. 167.

<sup>x</sup> Chap. xv. 16.

using certain means to obtain them. And all the work of Christianity lieth in intending right ends, and in using right means to obtain them. The chief part of man's corruption in his depraved natural state, doth consist in this, that he intendeth wrong ends : that is a man's end, which he accounteth his felicity, his treasure, his chiefest good, and which he useth all things else to obtain. Whatsoever you think the best thing in the world for you, and had rather have it than any thing else ; and whatsoever you principally seek after in your life, and think yourself most happy if you could obtain it, and think yourself most miserable if you miss of it, and therefore had rather lose all than that, and make it your main business to be sure that you may enjoy it, that, and nothing else but that, is your end. In general, every man's happiness is his end, and this nature itself, as nature, doth so far adhere to, and intend, that no man can do otherwise, and there is no note of man's not intending this. But generals are nothing, but as they are found in particular things : when it comes to the particular object of fruition, and what it is wherein men's happiness doth consist, there it is that the depraved nature doth most damnably err. For every carnal man doth apprehend it the best condition for him to enjoy his carnal pleasure, and profit, and vain-glory in this world ; or if he look for a life to come, he would have it consist of such kind of pleasures as he here enjoyed in this life ; and, therefore, his very heart is most set upon these sensual worldly things : he hath a nature so suitable to them, that he savoureth these as the sweetest delights, and things fittest for him ; and, therefore, his very business, and daily care and work in the world, is to get, or increase, or keep, or enjoy and draw out the sweetness of these sensual things. So that an earthly man hath an earthly mind, and earthly ends, as Christ said to Nicodemus<sup>2</sup>. That which is born of the earth is earthly ; and a fleshly man hath a fleshly mind, and fleshly ends, as I before shewed, from Rom. viii. 7. they cannot see in the love of God, or the enjoyment of him, so certain, so suitable a good for them, as may be their felicity, and better to them than these earthly things. Either they doubt whether the happiness which they see not be

<sup>2</sup> John iii. 6.

true, or a mere delusion; or else they think that it is too far off, and a place too strange to them to be their felicity. They think that God and man are at too great a distance to be so mutually loved, and that he is so strange to us, as to be an unsuitable object for our highest love. Nay, because of his holiness, justice, and the other blessed perfections of his nature, and because he will judge the ungodly world unto perdition; therefore their hearts are even against him, and they that call him their God, have a secret enmity to him. So that, before conversion, it is the sinful miserable state of all men, that God is not their end; he hath not their hearts. It is not he that they most seek after in their lives, nor in whom their souls apprehend the chiefest delight and felicity to consist. But it is in the fleshly pleasures, or profits, or honour of this world. It is some creature, and not God, that hath men's hearts, their care, and earnest diligence. Hence it is, that they are said to "have their portion in this life," *Psa. xviii. 14.* and are there called "the men of the world." They are such as "lay up a treasure on earth<sup>a</sup>." They think none can shew them any greater good, and apprehend not the joy of the light of God's countenance<sup>b</sup>. They seek only "what they shall eat or drink, or wherewith they shall be clothed," for this is the custom of the "nations of the world<sup>c</sup>." "They make light of Christ," and the kingdom that he promiseth, in comparison of their farms, their oxen, their worldly wealth and pleasure<sup>d</sup>. "They lay up treasures for themselves here, but are not rich towards God<sup>e</sup>." If they have abundance, they cheer their souls, as having "enough for many years," and so resolve to "eat, drink, and be merry<sup>f</sup>." If they are called by a trial to part with all for Christ, and the hope of everlasting glory, "they go away sorrowful because of their riches," or the dearness of that which they are called to forsake. In a word, they are such as a compassionate man should mention with tears, "they are enemies to the cross of Christ," though not always to his name. "Their end is destruction, their God is their belly, their glory is in their shame, they mind earthly things<sup>g</sup>." They "make provision for the flesh

<sup>a</sup> Matt. vi. 18, 19.<sup>b</sup> Psal. iv. 6, 7.<sup>c</sup> Luke xii. 29—31.<sup>d</sup> Luke xii. 21. Matt. xxii. 5.<sup>e</sup> Luke xii. 21.<sup>f</sup> Luke xii. 19.<sup>g</sup> Phil. iii. 19.

to fulfil the lusts thereof<sup>h</sup>." They have their "good things in this life," when the godly have their "evil things," and therefore when others "are comforted, they shall be tormented<sup>i</sup>." All these Scriptures declare to you what are the ends of unconverted men, and where are their hearts. "For where their treasure is, there will their hearts be<sup>k</sup>."

But when the Spirit comes with converting grace, the very ends and intents of a man are changed: as he findeth the greatest excellency in God, and the things of the life to come; so hath he there laid up his treasure<sup>l</sup>, and fixed his hopes: he hath reckoned what the world is worth, and how much it can afford him, and how long it will last him, and what it will do for him in the greatest need; and upon certain knowledge of its vanity and insufficiency he hath resolved that this cannot make him happy. If ever you be converted, you will know all this to be true by experience that I say: that it is the work of converting grace to make a man consider whether all that he can hope for in this world will make him indeed a happy man, and upon consideration he findeth it will not serve his turn. God bringeth it now close to his thoughts and affections, so that the mere splendour, and sugared taste, and glozing appearances of worldly things cannot deceive him as formerly they did; but he understandeth now the utmost they can do for him; he considereth how that they do but flatter him into the grave and hell, and leave him when he is in the depth of his distress: before he was as the prodigal, that thought it hard keeping to live in his father's house, but abroad and among his companions and pleasures he would go; but when he comes to himself, he finds that he must home again, or perish with hunger: the poor soul then layeth all these things to heart; alas, thinks he, I may be merry a few days more if I hold on in this company and course, but will this life last for ever? I may be somebody in the world for a while, if I can be rich or honourable; but how long can I keep it when I have got it? I may please my mind among my friends and worldly businesses, my corn and cattle, my pleasures and prosperity; but what shall I do shortly when these things are gone? I may think now that I can live

<sup>h</sup> Rom. xiii. 12, 14.

<sup>i</sup> Luke xvi. 25.

<sup>k</sup> Matt. vi. 21.

<sup>l</sup> Matt. vi. 20.

without the favour of God, but can I do so when I have nothing else to live on? Alas! is that fit to be instead of God and heaven to me, that will not keep me out of the grave, nor keep my strongest or most beautiful parts from rotting in the dust; no, nor keep my soul from everlasting torments? Oh, what shall I do if I have not a better portion than this? Woe to me that ever I was born, if I be not better provided for before I die! Thus doth God take off the soul in conversion from its former ends, and makes it say, Lord, these will not serve my turn; O put me not off with such things as these. When the soul is thus loosened from its former delight, and seeth that it must be something else that must be his happiness; then doth the Spirit by the word of God reveal to him the certainty and the fulness of that glory that is to be had by Christ in the everlasting love and fruition of God; and then he sees that though it be not here to be had, yet it is to be had hereafter; and that man was made to higher things than he hath hitherto minded. Now he begins to bethink himself in good sadness, that heaven may be had, and that for him as well as others; the impossibility is taken away by Christ, and the door is set open; the glory is inconceivable, and if he can but once get it he is made for ever. These thoughts now work in the heart of the man that never had such lively working thoughts of it before. So that now he feeleth his heart burn within him, when he hath once found where his happiness is to be had; presently, the Spirit having touched his heart with an effectual inclination thereto, he is bent upon it, and sets his heart and face to seek it. And now this is his business; comparatively he hath nothing else to do. Now it must be God or none; heaven, or nothing that will serve his turn. Now if God should offer him, 'I will give thee mirth and riches for a thousand years without interruption, I will give thee the good word of all about thee, I will make thee the greatest man on earth, and thou shalt have the world at will; but not my love and grace in Christ, nor the hope of everlasting glory:' this would be the saddest news that ever came to his soul. It is not now the same thing that would please him as before. Tell not him now of profit and pleasure; it is everlasting pleasure that he must have. He hath another journey to go, another home

to regard, another kind of trade to drive on in the world than before he had. Now he "looketh for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God;" and therefore doth take himself but as a stranger on earth, and one that sojourneth in a foreign country<sup>l</sup>. Now the best of worldly things will no longer satisfy them; but they "desire a better country, that is, an heavenly. Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city<sup>m</sup>." Now they are soundly persuaded that "there is a God, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him;" and that this reward is beyond the grave, and therefore they have respect to the recompence of reward, and are content to submit to the sufferings of this life, that so they may obtain a better resurrection<sup>n</sup>. He now is to this world as a dead man in comparison; "crucified to the world, and the world to him<sup>o</sup>." "And his life is hid with Christ in God; and when Christ, who is his life, shall appear, then shall he appear also with him in glory<sup>p</sup>."

Beloved hearers, you may easily conceive that it is a very great change, that causeth a man to have other ends than ever he had before, and that quite turneth the very bent of his heart and life, and maketh him have quite a contrary business in the world, than before he had; that setteth a man's face another way, so that he that before went one way, doth now go the clean contrary. Alas! it is not the restraint of a wicked work or two, or the outward civilizing of your lives, that is true conversion. It is such a change as I am now describing to you, that turneth you quite another way. If you are true Christians that hear me, you know it, or may know it, to be thus with yourselves. For certainly you have had experience of this in your souls. It were no impossible thing for you now, if you were but willing, to know certainly whether you be converted, yea or no. One would think that a man's end might be discerned above all things. Cannot you know what you like and love best? And what you would fain have? And what you cannot be content without? And what you drive at in the course of your lives? And what you place your hopes and happiness in, which you will have, though you part with all to get it?

<sup>l</sup> Heb. xi. 9, 10, 13.<sup>m</sup> Heb. xi. 16.<sup>n</sup> Heb. xi. 6, 26, 35.<sup>o</sup> Gal. vi. 14.<sup>p</sup> Col. iii. 3, 4.

And what it is that beareth down all things else in your hearts and lives? Why something or other doth this, whatsoever it be, and this is your end. And one would think, that this which so much takes one up, and so much sways, and is the business of his life, might be well discerned. Sirs, deal truly between God and your souls. What hath your hearts? What game do you follow? What do you mind above all? I ask not whether you set not a foot now and then out of the way: but which way are you travelling? For earth or for heaven? O that you would but be faithful to your souls in this trial! I have often told you, and will tell you yet again, and desire you to remember it as long as you live, that this is the true difference between every true converted soul, and all hypocrites and carnal men in the world; 'That to the true Christian indeed, God and everlasting glory is his main end, and religion is his business, and all worldly things come in but upon the bye, and therefore he can have them, or be without them; whereas with all hypocrites and carnal men, the pleasing of their flesh in this world, is their main end, and therefore worldliness, voluptuousness, or ambition is their business, and the matters of God and religion come in but upon the bye, and therefore they can taste of them, or they can be without them.' I would you would keep this one mark by you while you live: by which you may judge yourselves without deceit; and so the true Christian need not deny his sincerity, nor the hypocrite imagine that he is what he is not, but might certainly know that he is yet in the flesh. And thus I have shewn you what is the second part of Conversion of the Will or Heart, even the change of a man's ends and intentions.

3. The third part of the work of Conversion on the Will, is this, The same Spirit in the word, which changeth a man's ends, doth also change him as to the choice of means, and causes him to choose what before he refused, and to consent to that which before he did reject. Heaven is not obtained in every way, but in God's own way, and if a man should never so much intend God as his end, and yet not seek him in the means of his appointment, (though I think there is none that doth so, or that ever these indeed are separated, yet I say, if such a thing were,) it would not save him. It is



not enough to know where we must be happy, but we must also know how to come thither. There is but one right way to salvation in the main, and he that will be saved, must be sure to hit it.

(1.) There are two sorts of means or ways to salvation ; not contrary, but one subordinate to the other ; but one is the chief and principal way, and that is Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost ; the other is the subservient way, and that is the means that Christ hath appointed under himself. When man was lost, there was no remedy for him in heaven or earth, but the ever-living Son of God to come down from heaven, and take our nature, and perfectly obey the law, and suffer for our disobedience ; this he did in compassion to mankind. He was born of a virgin, without man, and without sin, by the power of the Holy Ghost. He lived on earth without sin also, and proved his Godhead and doctrine by his works ; he raised the dead, healed the lame, the blind, the sick, and at last offered himself on the cross a sacrifice for our sins, in suffering that which we must else have suffered ; and being buried, he rose again on the third day, and after forty days in the sight of his disciples, ascended into heaven, where he is now in our nature interceding for us, and preparing us a place. And before he departed from earth, he ordained this law, and sent his disciples to preach it to all the world ; that all they that would renounce their own works, and trust their souls upon his redemption and ransom, and forsake the world, the flesh, and the devil, and take him for their only Lord and Saviour, and so return to God himself, shall receive the pardon of all their sin, and be made the heirs of everlasting glory. And he hath promised also to send his sanctifying Spirit to dwell and work in those that believe. Thus you see what is the principal means of salvation : it is the Lord Jesus Christ, who having suffered for us, is offered to us in the Gospel, to be our Head and Husband, our Saviour and our Lord.

Two things are here of absolute necessity to our salvation : the one is, to believe unfeignedly that Christ is the Messiah and Redeemer of the world : and the second is, to accept him as he is offered to us in the Gospel. Now the heart of an unconverted sinner is against both these. 1. It doth not soundly believe the truth of Christ's incarnation, resurrec-

tion, and ascension, but only by a common, customary, superficial belief: but of this I spoke before. 2. He doth not welcome Christ to his soul, as he is offered to him; partly because men are unhumbled and feel not the need of Christ; for "the whole need not a physician, but they that are sick:" and partly, because that Christ would reclaim them from the way that they take pleasure in, and would bring them into a way that is against their hearts; and many other causes there are. So that, even where Christ seemeth to be much honoured, and men will bow, and do the greatest reverence to his name, and profess themselves his faithful servants, and that they trust their salvation on him alone: yet for all this they do not savingly or sincerely believe in him. They have learned to speak well of Christ, and they are willing to be forgiven by him; but they never laid hold on him, as a drowning man would do on that which might save him; nor did they ever feel at their hearts, what a glorious work of mercy he hath wrought in their redemption; and how much he hath done for them, and how much he hath engaged their souls unto himself. They never had any of the saints' admiration at the height, and breadth, and length, and depth<sup>q</sup>, nor have they been taken up with this astonishing project of love, as men thus redeemed at such a rate must be; nor would they ever consent that Christ should rule over them, and mortify their lusts, and bring them back from the flesh to God: and therefore they are unbelievers, even while they profess the faith of Christ. But when converting grace comes, as it raiseth the soul's estimation of Christ, as I have said before, so doth it open the heart to his entertainment. O what glad news is it to desolate, self-condemned souls to hear, that the Son of God hath bought them with his blood! It is life to them to hear the glad tidings of their redemption. It is the very work of the Spirit in conversion, to bring the soul into this admiration of redemption; and to shew it the riches of grace in Christ, and the mystery of this blessed work, when his eyes are opened to see how God designed here the magnifying of his love; and how glorious God is in his mercy in the work of redemption, even as glorious as in his power in the work of creation. And when his wounded soul hath well understood

<sup>q</sup> Eph. iii. 18.

how Christ hath made him a plaster of his blood, this makes him have other thoughts of Christ and redemption than before he had. O how much sweeter to him are the hearing, and reading, and thinking of this Christ, than before they were! He that before did shut the door, and let Christ knock and knock again, and could so often churlishly resist him; O how the case is now altered with him! Now Christ is to him as cordial waters to a man in a swoon; as a hand to a drowning man; as drink to a man in a burning fever; as a pardon to a man condemned to die: the name of Christ doth even revive him, when withal he can but have some hope that he is his. O could you now assure him that Christ is willing to pass over all his unkind resistance, and to be friends with him, and wash his soul in his blood, how glad a man would he be! When sin stares him in the face, O then for a Christ to make his peace! When conscience is up in arms against him, now how doth Christ befriend him, to step in and bear the stroke! He saith not as Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord that I should serve him?" Nor as they in Job xxi. 14. "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways:" nor as the common rebels of the world, "We will not have this man to reign over us:" but as Laban to Abraham's servants, "Come in thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without? For the house and room is prepared for thee." Too long have I made my soul a sink, a sty, a dungeon, when it might and should have been thy dwelling, and the temple of thy Holy Spirit. Come in, Lord, and let sin possess thy room no longer. Hath here been room for the world, and room for fleshly lusts and pleasures, and is there no room for thee? Let thy graces dwell where sin hath dwelt; here is room for them all; or if there be not room, O cast out sin, and make thee room. Thou that madest all things ready for me, before thou calledst me by the voice of the Gospel, make all within me ready for thyself, and cast out him that is stronger than I, and hath held my heart so long in a peaceable captivity. Only thy presence now will do me good: I die if thou revive me not: I am devoured by the jaws of the devouring lion, if thou do not rescue me. I am tormented by my own conscience, and nothing but thine applied blood can mollify it.

<sup>r</sup> Luke xix. 27.<sup>s</sup> Gen. xxiv. 31.

I am accused and condemned by the law, which I have broken, and what shall I say or do, if thou come not in, and plead thy blood, and answer for me? I have many thousand sins that will be brought in against me; and how shall I come off, but by the virtue of thy sacrifice? Hell is ready to devour me everlastingly, if thou do not save me. Save me, save me, Lord, or I perish! I am lost, undone, a damned man if thou do not save me. The devils that have deceived me, do but stay to torment me if thou do not save me. A just and angry God will be to me everlastingly a consuming fire, if his indignation be not quenched by thy blood and intercession. There is no other name under heaven by which I can be saved<sup>t</sup>. No, no, it must be Christ alone, it must be Christ or none, Christ, or I am lost. Now doth the poor soul look upon Christ as on the fire or air, that he cannot live without; he sees an absolute necessity for him in the main, and an absolute necessity for every particular. Every sin that he remembereth, telleth him that he hath need of Christ. Every corruption that he feeleth stirring within him, telleth him of the absolute need of Christ. Every temptation that assaulteth him, telleth him of the need of Christ. He never falleth into any known sin again, (which alas! is too often,) but it maketh him see the need of Christ. He findeth he could not live a day or an hour safely without him: he cannot wash away one spot, nor master one corruption without him. When he goes to God in prayer for his soul, he then findeth the need of Christ; he dare not draw near if Christ take him not by the hand; he knows there is no admittance in any other name. He durst not look God in the face, nor name him, nor worship him, nor hope for any mercy from him, but through Christ. In a word, without Christ he dares neither live nor die. You see then where another part of conversion lieth in this true belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. You may know and say all this of Christ before conversion; but you never rightly apprehend it and feel it, till then.

And as the merit, so the Spirit of Christ is here comprehended; for I join both together for brevity. It is by his Spirit that Christ takes down the strong contradiction of the flesh, and bringeth all in subjection to himself; as light

<sup>t</sup> Acts iv. 12.

prevaileth against darkness, and strength against weakness, and life against death, so doth the Spirit prevail for Christ in the souls of the elect. Before conversion, there is nothing but grieving and striving against, and quenching the Spirit, and using it like an enemy. But now how glad is the soul of his presence! how loath to grieve him! how fearful of quenching it! And if by some unkindness the Spirit seem to be withdrawn, what moan doth he make! and how sadly doth he cry out as David did; "Restore to me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me by thy free Spirit:" and if he feel the Spirit as it were, departing from him, he calls aloud with David, "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy holy Spirit from me<sup>x</sup>." As a living man is loath to die, and knoweth that when his Spirit is gone from his body, he will be a carcase, and therefore will use all possible means to keep the soul and body from parting, even so the true believer knows that if the Spirit of God were gone from his soul, the soul were dead or worse than dead, and therefore it is his daily care to keep the Spirit and his soul from parting. He apprehendeth it now to be a blessed privilege indeed, to have the Spirit of Jesus still within him, to be his temple, and by him to be preserved from temptation, excited to duties, and animated in them, and sanctified to the service of him that did redeem him.

And now sirs, I must needs say to those of you that are unconverted, that all these matters are strange to you; you hear me, but you have felt no such things as these within yourselves. Oh what a difference is there between this living faith in Christ, and the name of faith, and the image of Christianity, which you boast of and presume upon! What a difference is there between these warm heart-reviving closures with Christ, and your cold belief and dull profession! It is one thing for Christ to dwell in the heart by faith, and another thing for him to have the custom of the country, and the law of the land on his side, to make way for him. It is one thing for a man that is well, to honour a physician, and another thing for a sick man to seek out to him, and beg his help, and take him for his physician, and willingly take down any thing that he giveth him.

<sup>u</sup> Psal. li. 12.<sup>x</sup> Ver. 11.

I pray you mark what I say, because it is the most common delusion of unconverted men among us, that they verily think that they truly believe in Christ already : and there is a common belief that will never save them, and that they take up with, and look not after the saving faith : I cannot better open the difference to ordinary capacities, than by the aforesaid comparison. You know a man in health may truly believe that such a man is an able physician, and he may speak well of him, and honour him : now suppose a man were deadly sick of a consumption, and did not know it ; if this man honoureth the physician as much as any other healthful man, will this cure him, or save his life ? No, but the patient that prayeth him to come to him, and will trust his life in his hands, and will take the bitterest medicine that he gives him, and will forbear any hurtful meat or drink, be it never so pleasant to him, this is he that is like to be healed by him. Christ is known among us to be the able physician of souls ; we all confess and praise his skill, and know that he can save us. We all hear of the freeness of his cure, that he takes nothing, but doth it as soon for the poorest beggar, as the greatest prince ; but knowing all this, and speaking well of him, will cure no man ; no, but you must go to him believingly, and beg his help, and take him for your physician, and trust your souls upon his blood and Spirit, and apply his means, and take the bitterest cup that he shall reach you, and forsake the morsels of fleshly pleasure that have been sweet to you heretofore. Do not say, this is to be justified by works ; for this is no other kind of works than what standeth in a necessary subserviency to Christ, even the work of grace itself. This is but the work that Christ calls thee to, John vi. 29. “ This is the work of God, that ye believe in him whom the Father hath sent : ” this is but “ coming to Christ that ye may have life ” : and “ taking his yoke and burden on you, that you may find rest to your souls ” . When the poor people followed him on earth from place to place, and hearkened to his words, and took up his cross that they might be his disciples, and be justified and saved by him ; he did not tell them, this is sinful working for justification. To conclude, if ever you be converted,

<sup>y</sup> John v. 40.

<sup>z</sup> Matt. xi. 29.

thus must you follow Christ, and thus must you yield to the Spirit which you now resist.

Thus I have shewed you how the converted soul doth accept of Christ and the Spirit, on the terms and to the ends that are mentioned in the Gospel. Christ Jesus is accepted as the Redeemer of their souls, that hath satisfied justice by being a ransom for their sins, and hath merited everlasting glory for them; and as the Lord that by the title of his redemption, must rule them; as their head that must provide for them and supply all their wants; and as the fountain and treasure of all that grace that must save them; the Holy Ghost is entertained as he that must sanctify and guide them in the way to life everlasting, having already sealed the truth of the doctrine.

2. We are next to consider how the work of conversion doth turn the heart or will of man to these means that stand in a subordination to Christ: and indeed a natural man is disaffected not only to Christ, but to all his ordinances: he that mindeth not the end nor the means, cannot heartily mind the subordinate means.

(1.) One means that God hath appointed to salvation, is, confession of sin, with a broken heart for the sin confessed. A man unconverted doth neither see any such evil in sin as to drive him to this confession, nor to break his heart in godly sorrow; nor will his heart be brought to consent to the faithful performance of that. A heart unhumbled and unchanged doth think it but a piece of childish folly to weep and mourn for sin, and lament it before the world: they are too stout to stoop to a disgraceful acknowledgment: they scorn to be so base as to make an open confession of their sins, or to lament their misery. They feel no such burden upon their consciences as should drive them into such repentance to seek to God and man for ease; and if they confess to God in secret, it is without a broken heart; they will not endure so much pain as to feel their own condition, and have their sores so faithfully searched as is necessary to a cure: this afflicting of the soul, their souls abhor.

But when converting grace hath changed their hearts, O how the case is altered with them! Then godly sorrow is even as it were, natural to them; and they that could not en-

ture it, do now even cherish and indulge it. It is a voluntary sorrow; they mourn and would mourn like him that cried out, "Labour not to comfort me<sup>a</sup>;" that is, till God will comfort me. As a sore that is not ripe will not break nor run, and that which is not suppurable is oft incurable, but when it is brought to suppuration and ripeness, then it will even break of itself, and run without any more ado: so is it with the impenitent soul and the penitent; till repentance comes, the soul is not ripe; ministers are every day applying to it all the mollifying, dissolving remedies they can devise, to bring it to suppuration, but all will not do; their hearts will not break, not a tear of unfeigned repentance will come forth; they hide their sin, and scorn to make a penitent confession. But Oh! when grace hath done the work, and softened the heart, and ripened the sore, then it will come out of its own accord. I would not have you take this upon my bare word, but see whether the Scripture say not so before me, Acts ii. 37. They were once a stubborn generation of sinners that the apostles had there to deal withal, that durst have their hands in the blood of Christ himself; but when they were once converted, "they were pricked at the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" This did imply a confession of their sin: q. d. We confess ourselves guilty, and we find our souls in a miserable case under the wrath and curse of God: O give us your advice what we shall do. These were three thousand people at once that were brought to this conviction and confession. See how freely all comes out, when the heart is once pricked by the Word and Spirit! The like you know was the case of Saul at his conversion, Acts ix. 5, 6. as stout a hearted sinner before as another; but when God overpowered him by converting grace, then he calls out with trembling and astonishment, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And when he relateth his own life and manner of conversion, Acts xxii. 4, 5. how freely doth he confess his former persecution! And again, in Acts xxvi. 10, 11. confessing that he was a persecutor, "yea, and punished Christians in the synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; yea, was mad, yea, exceedingly mad against

<sup>a</sup> Isa. xxii. 4.



them." The like doth he confess, Tit. iii. 3. Acts xvi. the apostles met with a sturdy jailor that put them in the inner prison, and their feet fast in the stocks; but when an earthquake opened the doors and set them free, and a heart-quake brought him in, and laid him at their feet, and grace took the opportunity to do its work, then he crieth out with trembling, ver. 30. "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" David tells you his own experience, Psal. xxxii. 5, 6. "I acknowledged my sins unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid: I said, I will confess my transgression unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin: for this shall every one that is godly, pray unto thee in a time when thou mayst be found." And after his grievous fall, the fifty-first Psalm will shew you his confession. So Acts xix. 18. "Many confessed and shewed their deeds, and brought their books and burned them before all men." These were such as were reputed wise and learned before; but when grace had changed them, they openly confess that all was folly. Many more such examples we have, and precepts where God requireth it; Ezra x. 1. Neh. ix. 2, 3. Lev. v. 5. xvi. 21. xxvi. 40. Numb. v. 7. And indeed, pardon itself is offered on these terms, 1 John i. 9. "If we confess, he is faithful and just to forgive." Prov. xxviii. 13. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth them and forsaketh them, shall have mercy." James v. 16. "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another." And indeed in the first times, no man was baptized that did not confess his sins openly before, and renounce them; even John himself caused the Jews to confess their sins before he would baptize them; Matt. iii. 6. Mark i. 5. So in Jer. iii. 12, 13. "Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord; and I will not keep mine anger for ever; only confess thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord, &c. Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord, for I am married to you, &c." You see here that conversion hath ever confession accompanying it. He that turneth, must and will confess, as the repenting church, Jer. xiv. 20. "We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers; for we have sinned against thee: do not abhor us

for thy name's sake." And Hos. v. 15. it was the Lord's threatening against them, "I will go and return unto my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face; in their afflictions they will seek me early." So that it is most evident that conversion openeth the heart and mouth to confess, even to God or man, or both, according as the case requireth: not but that a Judas will do it at last in horror, and cry out, "I have sinned in betraying the innocent blood:" but this is forced by horror, and not by a gracious change. Many a thief will confess their sin at the gallows, that are not converted; but when conversion comes, the very mind being changed, is set against the sin, and therefore they long to cast it up. Hiding tendeth to keeping, confession tendeth to parting with sin: therefore he that is penitent doth not hide it, so far as he hath any call to confess it. O sirs, that the Lord would bring this to the hearts of some of you that most need it: one may hear by your speeches that conversion is far from your hearts. How many among us are there that have little cause to justify themselves, and yet we cannot bring them to any confession, but what is general and common with all, That we are sinners! But for any hateful and disgraceful sin, they excuse it, and hide it; and have nothing but good almost to say of themselves. You shall not hear one sad complaint almost that they will make against themselves. If you have a forward wife, you will complain of that; if disobedient children, if careless or stubborn servants, you will complain of them. If you have unkind friends or neighbours, you will complain of them; but of yourselves, where you have greatest reason to complain, we can scarce hear a word. If any do you wrong, you are still harping upon it, and making the worst of it; but for all the wrong that you have done to God and your own souls, you can lightly pass it over, and make little of it: and who heareth you half so oft complain of yourselves as others? What say you, is it not thus with many among us? You know not how sad a mark this is. I tell you, if ever converting grace come to your hearts, it will make you pour out complaints against yourselves; it will make you cry with David, "I have done foolishly<sup>b</sup>:" and with Paul, "I was foolish, disobe-

<sup>b</sup> 2 Sam. xxiv. 10.

dient, I was mad, yea, exceedingly mad<sup>c</sup>: "and, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me<sup>d</sup>?" Mark the unconverted man in his talk, and you shall hear him, if not as the Pharisee, saying, "I am not like other men;" yet at least saying nothing against himself, but nibbling at the good names of others, and making the devil more servants than indeed he hath, and God fewer, by their venturous censures; they have the hypocrite's eye that was not made to see itself, that is good for little, but to spy moles in others' eyes; but the beam in their own they cannot see. The infirmities of those that fear God they can talk of; but a graceless heart and a worldly, fleshly life of their own doth little trouble them. But when converting grace comes, you may hear by their very talk, that the case is changed; they have nobody then to talk against, so much as themselves; their censures against themselves do seem the most uncharitable; their talk is most of the sins of their own hearts and lives: and blame them not, for these are nearest them, and most concern them: the mote in their own eye doth most grieve them, and till they have wiped out that, they have less mind to look into the eyes of others. In a word, whosoever is justified of God, and freed from condemnation, is a judger and condemner of himself; 1 Cor. xi. 31. But they that lie under the condemnation of God, are commonly self-justifiers; Luke xvi. 15.

(2.) Another means that converting grace doth turn the heart to, is, earnest prayer to God. A man unconverted is a stranger to true prayer; either he doth nothing in his duty, or that which is next to nothing: commonly they will not be brought so much as to the outside and form of the duty; but if they be, that is all; till some affliction or conviction come and awaken them to a little more for a time: but they never fall to this work to the purpose, till saving grace do truly change them: a carnal heart feeleth no such need of God or mercy, as to drive him to beg for it from day to day. He feels himself well enough, and therefore saith with them in Job xxi. 15. "What is the Almighty that we should serve him? and what profit should we have if we pray unto him?" as Mal. iii. 14. they scarce think it worth their labour. It may be for fear of perishing with the ungodly, and

<sup>c</sup> Acts xxvi. 11. Tit. iii. 3.

<sup>d</sup> Rom. vii. 24.

from some general conviction of conscience, they may use some formal, cold expressions, or perhaps take up the outside of this duty : but it is not prayer, without the desires of the soul which carry out a man to seek for mercy and relief to God : unconverted men are either dumb to this holy duty, or their hearts are dumb while their tongues are speaking : either they have nothing to say to God ; or nothing but some words that they get by rote, and utter without the feeling of their souls ; or else they have little else but words. Their consciences witness, and God himself is a witness, that they do not in secret beg earnestly for his mercy : they do not heartily call to him for pardoning grace and sanctifying grace : with their families they do not earnestly beg of God the same mercy, as a people that desire that he should dwell among them. For where there is no true feeling of sin and misery, and desire after grace, there can be no hearty prayers to God : what need you any further mark of a graceless soul, than that they are prayerless.

But converting grace doth open the heart, and let in the Holy Ghost, which is a Spirit of supplication<sup>e</sup> ; and this Spirit doth help their infirmities, and whereas, of themselves, “ they know not what to pray for as they ought, he maketh request for them with groans that are unutterable<sup>f</sup>. ” As the new-born infant, or any living creature, will quickly shew whether it be alive, by making towards the parent or dam for its nourishment ; so will the new-born Christian. It is not unlikely that the apostle referreth to this : “ We have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father. ” As the child doth first learn to cry dad or mam ; so doth the Christian first learn to make out to God as a Father, and by prayer to seek to him for relief ; and for certain, as the Spirit of Christ is a Spirit of prayer, so if any man “ have not this Spirit, he is none of his<sup>g</sup>. ” The evidence that God giveth Ananias of Saul’s conversion, was this, “ Behold he prayeth<sup>h</sup>. ” It was the proof of Cornelius’s grace, that “ he prayed to God always<sup>i</sup>. ” And the angel takes the time of his prayer, to appear to him ; and Peter that must be sent unto him, is found at prayer<sup>k</sup>. The new

<sup>e</sup> Zech. xii. 10.

<sup>f</sup> Rom. viii. 26, 27.

<sup>g</sup> Rom. viii. 15. 9.

<sup>h</sup> Acts ix. 11.

<sup>i</sup> Acts x. 2.

<sup>k</sup> Acts x. 9.

converted disciples “ continued in prayer<sup>1</sup>.” It is no small part of a Christian’s life to “ continue instant in prayer, and watch in the same<sup>m</sup>.” It were easy to prove this by multitudes of Scripture texts: he that hath not this breath of prayer, is either a dead man, or in a dangerous swoon. As the poor child when any thing hurteth it, or affrighteth it, runs to the mother or father for help; so doth the poor Christian to Christ. He may go to ministers, and go to other Christians (as Cornelius to Peter, because Christ sendeth him, and so under Christ); but it is Christ that he goeth directly to, and that he is most with. He hath a very praying spirit within him, contrary to that dumb spirit that possesseth the ungodly: so that he must needs go to God when any thing aileth him, and he will not be held back. His soul would be disconsolate, and as David in the wilderness, Psal. xlii. if he were kept from God: he would be overwhelmed with his troubles if he might not go ease his mind with God: some ease he may get from ministers and friends, but Oh! if he had not more from God, his case were very sad: he is in prayer as Jeremiah in preaching; “ The word was a consuming fire shut up in his bones, he was weary of forbearing and could not stay<sup>n</sup>.” So are his sins and his necessities like a consuming fire shut up in his heart; he is weary with forbearing, he cannot hold them, to God he must go, as David, while he held his tongue, his sorrow was stirred, his heart was hot within him, the fire burned till he spake to God: “ While I kept silence my bones waxed old<sup>o</sup>.” You may better keep the converted Christians from food, or raiment, or home, or friends, than keep them from God: they had rather be without a shop to work in, a house to dwell in, a bed to lie in, than a place to pray in. But the best is, that God hath sanctified every place to him, and commanded him every where to lift up pure hands<sup>p</sup>. His Lord and Saviour hath left him his example, who was sometimes in a wilderness, and sometimes in a garden, and sometimes in other solitary places, purposely for prayer, and so accustomed to one, that Judas knew of it<sup>q</sup>. He that was perfect would shew us his de-

<sup>1</sup> Acts ii. 42.<sup>m</sup> Rom. xii. 2. Col. iv. 2. Ephes. vi. 18. <sup>n</sup> Jer. xx. 8, 9.<sup>o</sup> Psal. xxxix. 2, 3. xxxii. 3.<sup>p</sup> 1 Tim. ii. 8.<sup>q</sup> Mark xiv. 23. xxvi. 36. vi. 46. xiv. 32. Luke xxii. 41. 44.

pendance on the infinite Godhead, by giving us an example of constancy in this duty: so that we find him even all night in prayer to God<sup>r</sup>. And all his disciples do learn this lesson of him, and imitate him in their measure, in this holy work. If we ask for other examples, we may find Cornelius and Daniel at it in their families<sup>s</sup>, Peter at it in the house top<sup>t</sup>; Paul and Silas at midnight are at it in the inner prison in the stocks<sup>u</sup>. From every place can the prayers of the godly have access to heaven. For God is every where present, and therefore though the places of public assemblies be in a special sort the house of prayer<sup>x</sup>; yet doth he not confine his prayer to that house. The very soul of a Christian is habituated to prayer, and therefore he doth it as it were continually<sup>y</sup>: and in every thing he maketh known his wants by it to God<sup>z</sup>. So that he is seldom so deep asleep in any lapse through security but that more or less he breathes his breath of grace in holy prayer. If he want wisdom, he asketh it of God; for he knoweth that he giveth liberally, and upbraideth not<sup>a</sup>. If he want the Spirit itself in a further measure, he goes to God that hath promised to give it to them that ask it<sup>b</sup>. If he want forgiveness of sin, deliverance from any evil or temptation, it is the matter of his daily prayer, yea, so is his very daily bread, his health and life, and all the comforts of it: for he knoweth that all things are sanctified by the word and prayer<sup>c</sup>. If he be afflicted, he prayeth; and if in sickness, he desireth the elders of the church to pray with him<sup>d</sup>: for he knoweth that the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous availeth much<sup>e</sup>. If the servants of Christ be in troubles, it is prayers without ceasing that is the means of their relief. Even besides secret prayers and church prayers upon any such occasion of their own and others; if a few Christians can get together to prayer, it is more pleasant to them, than to the drunkard or voluptuous, when they can get together for sports or wickedness. When Peter was in prison, many were got together in a house to prayer, when he came and knocked at the door, when the angel had set him free<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>r</sup> Luke vi. 12.<sup>s</sup> Acts x. Dan. vi.<sup>t</sup> Acts x. 9.<sup>u</sup> Acts xvi. 25.<sup>x</sup> Matt. xxi. 13.<sup>y</sup> 1 Thess. v. 17.<sup>z</sup> Phil. iv. 6.<sup>a</sup> James i. 5.<sup>b</sup> Luke xi. 13.<sup>c</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 5.<sup>d</sup> James v. 13, 14, 16.<sup>e</sup> James v. 15, 17.<sup>f</sup> Acts xii. 12.

In a word, the true convert beginneth his new life in prayer ; he continueth it in prayer habitual or actual ; sometimes by the secret motions of the heart, and sometimes by the expression also of his mouth ; and he endeth it, as to this world, most commonly in prayers : as the Lord Jesus himself, as his blessed martyr Stephen did, committing their spirits to God at the closing of their eyes ; and the saints do commonly follow them in that course : so by the help of these blessed gales we are carried through the waves and troubles of this world, and by this we land at the last in glory. Never think therefore to find a prayerless convert, any more than to find a breathless living man. O ! the poor Christian feeleth that he cannot live without prayer, because he cannot live without God. He cannot be without it one day ; he cannot be at home without it, or abroad without it ; he cannot travel or return home without it ; he cannot labour without it in the shop or in the field ; but when he wants a place to bow his knee in, he hath yet an opportunity to bow his soul ; and if company or business do shut his mouth, yet it must be business indeed that quite taketh off his heart ; for his eyes are on God, as the eye of the servant on the hand of his master, saith David <sup>g</sup>. Why may I not say, as the eye of our dogs, when they wait on us at our tables, is towards us for every bit they have ; so the eye and dependance of the Christian for soul and for body, is upon God : and many a secret ejaculation doth he send up, and many a groan doth pass his heart, that those that even stand by him are unacquainted with. As a beggar is known by his needy begging tone, so is he known by his begging of God ; “The poor useth entreaties <sup>h</sup>,” or speaketh supplication ; you may know them by it ; they make a trade of it ; they live by begging ; they will have no nay : such an one is the Christian, that even liveth by begging as his very trade : as one that must always pray, and not be weary or wax faint <sup>i</sup>. So that this is the second means that converting grace doth turn men’s hearts to.

(3.) The third means, subordinate to Christ and the Spirit, which converting grace doth turn the heart to, is, the Word of God, whether heard, or read, or preached, or any way fitly made known. The Word is the very seed that

<sup>g</sup> Psal. cxxiii. 2.

<sup>h</sup> Prov. xviii. 23.

<sup>i</sup> Luke xviii. 1.

doth beget him to this life, the immortal seed of God, which always must remain in him<sup>k</sup>. Of this incorruptible seed is he new born<sup>l</sup>. And therefore it cannot be but he must love it, and desire it. The Scripture to a carnal man is as a common book : many things in it seem to be unlikely, and many things even next to foolishness, because he hath not the Spirit to discern them. To all the ungodly it is as a sealed book ; though some of them know the grammatical and logical sense, none of them taste the spiritual sweetness, nor partake of the life that it begets in the soul. Therefore we find the learned Papists so many of them making a jest of Scripture, even while they confess it to be the Word of God. Some of them daring to accuse the matter, and some the style, and many the words and manner of expression, as if it were obscure, or unfit, or insufficient to its proper use : a carnal man can easily spare it ; a chapter in the Bible to him is but as a common story. Many an one of them can delight to read a romance, or a book of fables and fictions, like " The Knight of the Sun," " The Seven Champions," or " Palmarine," or " Guy of Warwick," or such like wicked devices of men's brains that are made to rob God of men's hearts, and to rob themselves of their time and wit ; than to read over the sacred story, and the holy precepts of Christ, and the spiritual doctrine of faith and salvation. We may see the difference between men's dispositions towards God's Word in the Papists and poor Protestants, in the time and place of persecution. The Protestants would make much of one leaf of the Bible ; they would get together to hear a chapter read, as to a feast, when they knew their lives were endangered by it. The Papists used all their power to suppress it, to hinder the promulgation of it, and keep the people from the knowledge of it, and burned them at a stake for the using of it. Their inquisition in Spain and Italy inquire after it, as if it were some book of treason or witchcraft ; when the poor Christians whose hearts are touched with it, do hide it and keep it, as the chiefest jewel in the world. Luther would not take a world for one leaf of the Bible ; his adversaries would have been glad if they could have banished it out of the world. In the primitive church the heathen persecutors did

<sup>k</sup> Luke viii. 11.    <sup>l</sup> 1 John iii. 9.    <sup>1</sup> 1 Pet. i. 23.



first seek after the Christian Bibles and other good books, that they might burn them. And if the ministers would deliver them all the books, sometimes they would spare their lives; but the poor Christians would be torn in pieces and suffer any kind of death before they would deliver them one of those books to be burnt. And if any through fear had yielded to deliver them, they were ever after looked upon by the other Christians, as if they were apostates and deniers of Christ, and were commonly called by the name of Traditors, and the very posterity of such was in disgrace after them. In so much that the schism of the Donatists sprung from an excessive zeal on this occasion; because a bishop was but ordained by one that had been a son of a Traditor of the Bible, they separated from him, and from all the church that held communion with him, for his sake. So that you may see what thoughts the servants of Christ have ever had of the Holy Scriptures, and how contrary to these are the men of the world.

And we cannot blame them, for they know that it was by this word that God did first quicken them; by this he convinced them of sin and misery; by this he revealed to them Christ and glory. In this is contained the covenant of grace, the charter for salvation, and that title to all the mercies of this life and that which is to come. Here are the laws of heaven by which they must live, and by which they must all be judged. Here are those promises which first revived their distressed souls; the first cordials that did refresh their fainting spirits: the first news of pardon and glad tidings of salvation that ever they had was from hence. They know it is a book inspired from heaven by the Spirit of God, containing the discovery of the will of God; and the highest mysteries, which flesh and blood cannot reveal; and that they are matters also of everlasting consequence, to which all the matters in this world are as nothing, and not worthy the naming or once remembering. And do you blame a poor Christian for being in love with this blessed book? Especially when he knoweth these things not by bare hear-say only, but by many a sweet experience in his soul; many a sweet draught hath he here drank in his extremity; and many a feast hath his soul here had, if he be a Christian of long standing and experience. But, however,

this was the means of his conversion, and the very instrument of the Spirit for raising him from the dead ; and as the Christian is so in love with the book of God, so is he with the doctrine of it, wherever he finds it. Any other book that is written to explain and apply this, is savory to him ; especially the public preaching of this word, which is most eminently the standing ordinance of God for man's conversion and edification. The same sermons that would have made him sleep, or made his head ache before his conversion, do now awaken him, and make his heart ache for his former folly ; and yet he loveth them, though they trouble and grieve him, for he loveth that kind of trouble and grief which they beget. Oh how sweet is that word to his soul, which heretofore he was wont to loathe or quarrel at ! He could live with David in the temple, even day and night : other men can scarce be drawn to it, but for customs or by-respects, but it would be a death to him to be kept away. If there were a famine in the land of the word of God, he would wander from sea to sea before he would be without it<sup>m</sup>. It is as natural, according to this new nature, for a true convert to seek after the word of God, as for the infant to make to the breast<sup>n</sup>. As new-born babes, they desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may live and grow thereby ; they receive with meekness the engrafted word : τὸν λόγον ἐμφυτον the word which is innaturalized to them, and connatural with them : for it is it that is able to save their souls ; James i. 21. Able to do its own part thereto. Never did you know that Christian that could live without this word ; any more than a man can live without meat. I told you the language of Job, David, and Jeremiah before. O how certainly do the careless neglecters and despisers of this word discover, that yet they are unconverted souls, that taste no more sweetness in it than in a chip ; that will rather make it a matter of derision, when they see people read and hear so diligently, and talk so much of the word of God : and do in their hearts almost as one of the Papist rebels in Ireland did with his feet, even stamp the Bible in the dirt, and curse it, and said, " This is it that hath bred all this, and set us together by the ears." Little better thoughts have many secret infidels of it in their hearts. But

<sup>m</sup> Amos viii. 12.<sup>n</sup> 1 Pet. i. 2.

here the Christian hath grounded his hopes ; here hath he built and bottomed his soul ; and here will he live and die. This then is another part of the work of conversion, it turneth men's hearts to the word of God, and maketh them value it as their necessary food.

(4.) The fourth means of salvation which conversion turneth the heart of a man to, is the Communion of the Saints. Before conversion, the nature, and sometimes the very name of a saint is loathsome to them, though God hath told us, that without holiness none shall see him<sup>o</sup>. And that all his people are called and sanctified ; and that none but they shall be glorified, yet how commonly do we hear men make a mock at the very name of saints. These are the saints, say they, these are the holy brethren. When the blood of Christ is shed to sanctify men, when the Spirit of grace is sent from heaven to sanctify men, and hath made it his office, when all that God doth by his word and ordinances is to sanctify men. When all true Christians are sanctified men, or saints, and the church itself is a company of saints ; and when sanctification is nothing else but our devotedness to God that made and redeemed us. Yet, dare these impious wretches open their mouths against sanctity, coming near to the scorning of God himself, and to reproaching the word and the will of God ! Yea, and to some kind of blaspheming the Holy Ghost. It is natural to a wicked man to hate a saint<sup>p</sup>. An enmity is put between them. And the first two men that were born into the world did manifest that enmity, for Cain killed his brother Abel, because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous<sup>q</sup>. And Christ himself telleth his disciples, that because they are not of the world, but he hath chosen them out of the world, therefore the world hateth them ; but if they were of the world, the world would love his own<sup>r</sup>. Yea, on this very account, it first hated Christ himself<sup>s</sup>. And therefore no wonder if the communion of the saints be abhorred, or not delighted in by the ungodly, even while they make it an article of their creed. But when once the soul is truly converted, there is a likeness to God and his saints put upon them, and a natural love to them implanted

<sup>o</sup> Heb. xii. 14.

<sup>p</sup> Gen. iii. 15.

<sup>q</sup> 1 John iii. 12. Heb. xi. 4.

<sup>r</sup> John xv. 19.

<sup>s</sup> John xv. 8.

in their hearts, and thereupon a strong inclination to have communion with them in the worship of God, and the way to heaven; as many drops of water will gather into one, or many streams will run into one river, or many small flames, if you bring them near, will make all into one, and every thing is inclined as it were to incorporate with its like, so is it with the truly sanctified soul. The same means will not serve their turns, if they have it not in communion<sup>t</sup>. The multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and of one soul, and they distributed to one another, as every one had need, and charity made that common which law had made proper<sup>u</sup>. They continued stedfast in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and breaking of bread and prayer; and they that believed were together, and had all things common, (that is, by charity, as I said before) and they continued daily with one accord in the temple, breaking bread from house to house. Certainly, there is in all the children of God, such a love to their brethren, that they love their company, especially in the holy worship of him that redeemed them. False hearted Christians, that have but the name, may have the hearts of heathens, and do as they did, who were unacquainted with Christian love, but so will not the true. Hence it is, that the Christians in all ages have so valued the sacrament, which hath been still called the Communion of the church, or of saints; because there they all join together to feed upon one Christ, and taste of the supper of the Lord, as the fellow heirs of his glory. And as many corns made one loaf of bread, so are they, as the apostle speaks, one bread and one body. For the bread which they break, it is the communion of the body of Christ, and the cup which they drink, is the communion of his blood<sup>x</sup>. And hence it is, that it hath ever been so heavy a punishment in the eyes of all Christians to be excommunicate, and shut out of the fellowship of the church, (though there are also other reasons greater than this). So that the poor Christians, if they had fallen into any sin that deserved excommunication, they would have stood with tears at the church doors, month after month, entreating the prayers of the church that they might be pardoned, and be fit to be taken in again; and this even when Chris-

<sup>t</sup> Acts iv. 32.<sup>u</sup> Acts ii. 43.<sup>x</sup> 1 Cor. x. 16.

tianity was so persecuted, that it was a matter of danger to a man's life to be a Christian, so precious then was the communion of saints. Every Lord's day did they administer the Lord's supper, that they might be frequent in that part of communion. And, therefore, they highly esteemed the Lord's days, because they were the days of the churches' holy communion. Do not marvel then, if any true converted soul have a closing, uniting, combining, disposition; and if they love to be together in the holy worship and service of God; and if they are glad when they can get together in the public meeting place, or any other convenient place, to join together, and help each other in the work that is common to all. I know there may be some upright souls live among such as hinder them from that communion which they would have; but their hearts are towards it, and they will have it if they can. I know also, that the heathens and the Papists, and all enemies of the church, have still defamed the communion of Christians, and such as join to seek the Lord. And if any evil fall out among them, they would lay it all on their meeting and communion. But yet this malice of the devil could never break the assembly and communion of the saints. I know also, that many heretics are much addicted to secret combination, and to tie together in their way; but that is natural for men to love their like in evil; so drunkards can flock together to an alehouse; but it is not so natural to delight in good; other men's communion in evil, doth not disgrace, but commend our communion in the fear of God. Satan hath his legions that can agree in one man; but they are not such as the legions that attended upon Christ. What, must Christ have no school or army, because satan hath one? Must we dissipate, because the wicked always associate? There are means sufficient left us to discern the communion of the church of Christ from all ungodly and heretical combinations whatsoever. Though there be some stings in the church of Christ among the bees, yet there is more honey. The meetings of heretics are like the nests of wasps, they are all sting and no honey. Saith Tertullian, "*Vespæ habent favos, et Marcionitæ ecclesias:*"—"Wasps have combs too, and heretics make churches." The combs of the bees and of the wasps may be very like to look upon,

but the honey is not like, nor the sting altogether. It is not to feed on the doctrine of Christ, and live to him, that heretics do combine; but it is to divide the church, and to shew their error and pride, and to sting and despise others. So that their meetings are nothing like the meeting of the church in many regards. I beseech you now beloved hearers, try how your hearts are affected to the matter in hand. If you are true converts, your very hearts are among the saints: it doth you good especially to join with them in public, and especially in the two duties of praising God, and receiving the sacraments, which are the most proper to the church. And also it will do you good to have communion with them in private, in prayer, in conference, in any holy work. You are where you would be, when you are thus employed. You do not do like the hypocritical world, to say, "I believe the communion of saints," and at the same time either hate and scorn, or at least neglect and set light by the communion of saints. It is not to every wicked man that the promise is made, "Where two or three are met together in Christ's name, there is he in the midst of them." And it is not for nothing, that the saints delight in this communion. For as here is most of God's blessing, and most help from one another, so when they are nearest to one another, they are all nearest to Christ. And their closure and communion is a foretaste of their communion in glory: for their happiness lieth in their being one with Christ and among themselves<sup>y</sup>: and Christ died of purpose to "gather into one the children of God, that are scattered throughout the world<sup>z</sup>:" and it is God's design in the work of redemption to "gather together in one all things in Christ<sup>a</sup>." And as he therefore "gives his prophets, apostles, and ministers to the church, for the perfection of the saints, and edifying the body, till it be all come in the unity of the faith to a perfect man, that we may grow up in him, who is the Head in all things from whom the body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, to the edifying of itself in love<sup>b</sup>." So also at the day of judgment shall the "angels gather the elect together from the

<sup>y</sup> John xvii. 21.

<sup>z</sup> John xi. 52.

<sup>a</sup> Ephes. i. 10.

<sup>b</sup> Eph. iv. 11—16.

four winds<sup>c</sup>,” and they shall be one in Christ for ever<sup>d</sup>. Great reason therefore have the saints to make out after more of that, which their perfection doth so much consist in. Other men may have some delight in the company and assembly of Christians for bye-respects; but to love the communion of the saints, as such, and delight in them as the body of Christ employed in his praises, this is the proper disposition of a saint. And this is another thing that conversion doth turn their hearts unto.

4. Having spoken of the third part of the Conversion of the Heart, which consisteth in the right choice of the means to salvation; I proceed to the fourth, which consisteth in the thorough resolving of the yet wavering and unsettled soul. I make not this a part in itself different from all that are beforementioned, but the very life and perfection of them, especially of the two last. Some kind of willingness and unsound consent there may be in the half-converted, and many times it is long after the beginning of this change before it reach to a sound resolution; but it is never a saving work of special grace indeed, and proper to the saints till then. Men may have many convictions, and be brought to engage themselves in covenant to God, and yet for want of this true resolution, their hearts may not be right with God, nor they be stedfast in his covenant<sup>e</sup>. We are suitors for Christ to a backward and obstinate generation of men; we are long persuading them before they will yield, and when they seem to yield, they are long in the beginning, deliberating and wavering before they will resolve. Sometimes God turneth the heart more suddenly at a sermon; but ordinarily, for aught I can find, men stick long under conviction and half purposes, before they are thus converted. When they see that all is not well with them, and that they are not in a safe condition to appear before God at judgment, in that they have not taken the right course that Christian wisdom required them to take, they feel then within them many persuadings of the Spirit of God, and their conscience reasoning the case with them, and saying, ‘This life will not serve thy turn long, if death find thee in this condition; thou art an undone man: away then with thy negligence and idle company and courses, and set thyself to seek after

<sup>c</sup> Matt. xxiv. 31.

<sup>d</sup> John xvii. 21.

<sup>e</sup> Psal. lxxviii. 37.

Christ before it be too late;’ and under these persuasions the mind is sometimes purposed to do it. But these purposes are either for the time to come, that hereafter they will be new men; or else they are but half purposes, that reach not to a resolution: and therefore if at present they make some kind of change, it is but by the halves; and they usually turn back again: this is the case of the best men ordinarily before conversion.

But when conversion comes, it turns over the mind unfeignedly to God; it brings the soul beyond its former waverings; it shews men that there is no other remedy, the thing is of necessity, and that all is but vanity that can be said against it; and no good reason can be given to take any wise man off from the work of repentance and a heavenly life, and therefore he is resolved that this shall be his way. He hath considered and found for certain that there is no true felicity but in the favour of God; and that his love and promised glory are everlasting, and all things else are vain and transitory; and therefore he is resolved that God should be his portion, and nothing but God; heaven shall be the end of his desire and labour, and nothing but heaven. He hath also considered that there is no pardon of sin, but by the blood of Christ, and no hope of salvation, but by cleaving to him, and yielding to his renewing Spirit; and therefore he is now resolved that Christ shall have his heart, and his Spirit shall do its work, and that the word of God hereafter shall be his rule. He is now determined to know nothing but Christ crucified<sup>f</sup>. Before he was like a man that was weighing somewhat in the scales, and the other end was the heavier, or the scales stood as it were even: but now the Holy Ghost hath brought in those arguments, and set them home on the conscience, with that life that hath turned the scales. Before he was like a man that had lost his way, and standeth still, considering whether he shall turn back or not, or whether he shall go this way or that; but now he is resolved, and he stands no longer considering, but turns without any more ado. And this resolution is not rash or ungrounded, but having considered what can be said for God and for the world, for sin and for repentance; and considering what he may meet with in the

<sup>f</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 2.



way to heaven, he resolveth whatever it cost him, repent he will, return he will, for saved he must be. Though he meet with hard dealing from the world, there is no remedy, he will go through it; though he may suffer much in the flesh, yet that shall not take him off; though he knows he must leave his former pleasure and wicked company, and live that life that the flesh doth abhor, yet all this shall not take him off. O what a pleading and reasoning there is commonly between the flesh and the Spirit, before the heart will be thus resolved. As it was with Carraciolus, the marquis of Vicum, when his conscience bid him leave his land, and friends, and all for Christ, to forsake Popery, and betake himself to these countries, where he might enjoy the Gospel; his house and lands then came in his eyes; 'What must I leave all these for mere conscience, and live I know not how?' His wife hangs upon him, his children with tears do cry after him, 'O father, leave us not!' And many a sob and sigh it costs his heart before he could resolve to get away: and as it was with many of the martyrs when they were to die for Christ and for his truth; wife, and children, and friends follow them to the fire, crying out, 'O turn, turn, and do not undo yourselves and us;' so that they had almost as much ado to overcome that temptation, as to bear the flames: so is it with a sinner in the work of conversion; when he looks to Christ and everlasting glory, and considereth withal that these cannot be obtained without the loss of earthly, sinful pleasure; and when he thinketh of his old merry company and course, his ease and fleshly pleasure that he must leave; when he thinks of the strangeness of the way that he must now turn to, and how unacquainted he is with it, and how many bitter scorns, and worse, he is like to meet with, and how much care and pains it must cost him to be saved; this keepeth him sometimes at a stand, and breedeth in him many troublous thoughts, so that he scarce knows which way to turn him, or what to do. If he repent and turn to God, he must deny his flesh, and forsake all this world, and for aught he knows, have scarce any more of that kind of pleasure that he lived upon before; and if he do not this, he must forsake God, and all hope of everlasting glory, and give up himself to eternal misery. This seemeth a very sad straight to one at the first; because he yet hath had no ex-

perience of the joy of the Holy Ghost, and the higher comforts of a Christian life, nor of the help which God will afford him in his way : and therefore we cannot marvel if many a poor soul do here stick in the birth ; and if it be long before they resolve for God ; and if others turn back and perish for ever ; and grace, and only grace will resolve them ; when Christ opens their eyes effectually and to the purpose, he lets them see, that between heaven and earth, God and the world, grace and sin, there is no comparison. They see then, it is not a matter to doubt of, or to stick at : God must be pleased, but there is no necessity that the world or the flesh be pleased. God's favour must be had, but we may live without the favour of the world ; death and judgment must be provided for, but it is needless to provide for the desires of the flesh : an hundred considerations come in upon his soul, which make him say, Away with all these worldly vanities, and welcome Christ and a holy life. Now he " casteth off that weight that hangeth on him, and that sin that did so easily beset him, that he may run with patience the race that is before him, looking to Jesus the Author and Finisher of his faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despised the shame, and is sat down at the right hand of God<sup>s</sup>." In a word, he is now thoroughly convinced that one thing is necessary, and therefore he hath chosen the better part, which shall not be taken from him<sup>h</sup>. O sirs, you are never truly converted till this resolution of the soul ; whatever good purposes you may have for the time to come, if you be not presently resolved presently to return ; I say, presently without delay, you are not yet truly converted to Christ, though you may verily think that the life of faith and holiness is the best life, and may have some mind to it, and purpose one of these days to return ; nay, though you may have some present purposes that are cold and faint, and come not up to the height of resolution ; and though you make some trial hereafter, and change some of your company and your courses, all this is well, but it will not serve the turn without this resolution. Many a man that is lost for ever, hath had many a good wish and purpose, and made some essay to mend his life, and made some half reformation, and yet, be-

<sup>s</sup> Heb. xii. 1, 2.

<sup>h</sup> Luke x. 42.

ing not resolved for Christ, they have perished. The very principal part of the work of saving grace in the soul doth lie in this resolution. O that the wavering, and the loitering, and the delaying soul would lay this well to heart. O that they understood this, who are convinced that they must return and be new men, and yet cannot be brought to present resolution, but linger in their sins, as being loath to come away; as Lot did in Sodom, till God being merciful to him, caused the angel to carry him out. Well this is the next work of converting grace. If ever you be converted, you will be resolved for Christ.

5. The fifth part of the work of Conversion in the heart, consisteth in the change that is made upon the Affections. Though these are not so evident and certain always to try a man's state by; and therefore I would have Christians try especially by the former, yet it is certain that conversion changeth these also; and because they are many, and I have been long in the description of this work already, I will the more briefly run them over.

(1.) The first of the affections that appeareth in this change, are, love and hatred. Before conversion, the heart loveth not spiritual things and ways: there is an opposition to them, and enmity against them<sup>1</sup>. It loveth not inward holiness, nor a holy life; it loveth not the people that are holy; nay, it loveth not God himself as he is just and holy; yea, it hath an inward loathing of him, and of his image and way; though yet it be so deceitful as perhaps not to know thus much by itself. But on the contrary, it loveth fleshly pleasure, and earthly profit, and vain-glory, and ease, and honour of the world; for it only savoureth these kind of things<sup>k</sup>. But conversion turneth a man's love and hatred, and maketh him love the holy God, and those holy people and ways that he could not heartily love before, and it maketh him loathe those sins, that before he loved; that this is so, in all that are converted, is evident from many texts of Scripture. "He that loveth father or mother<sup>l</sup>, &c." "His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night<sup>m</sup>." "In his eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 5. 7.

<sup>k</sup> Rom. viii. 7.

<sup>l</sup> Matt. x. 37.

<sup>m</sup> Psal. i. 2, 3.

fear the Lord <sup>n</sup>.” “ By this we may know that we are passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren; he that loveth not his brother abideth in death <sup>o</sup>.” They hated the light before, because it was against their deeds, but now they love it, and come to it <sup>p</sup>. The very evil actions that they do, they now hate <sup>q</sup>. Yea, they hate even the garments spotted of the flesh. All that beareth the mark of a fleshly sensual course <sup>r</sup>. Sirs, if you be truly converted, this change will be upon your affections.

(2.) The second pair of affections that shew themselves in this change, are, desire and aversion. These are so near akin to love and hatred, that I need to say the less of them. The unconverted man's desires are after the fleshly pleasures which he loveth; of these they think they can never have enough, but cry as the horse-leech, give, give. When do you hear the covetous man say he hath enough? or the ambitious man say, I would be no higher? or the sensual man say, my appetite and lust are now satisfied, I would have no more? Their very life is a thirsting after provision for the flesh <sup>s</sup>; and the fulfilling its desires <sup>t</sup>. And sometimes God giveth them much of that they do desire for a time, but it is in judgment, and a curse to them through their sin <sup>u</sup>. But as for God and Christ, and the Spirit, and holiness, to these they have no appetite, but naturally loathe them, and at the best have but cold and heartless wishes after them. Hence it is, that they refuse so many motions for their own good. Move them to spiritual things, and there is somewhat within them that is against the motion, so that they will not hear us, or be persuaded by us. O how backward is an unconverted soul to spiritual good! They will go no further than they are drawn, and they will not be drawn to give up themselves to it. Hence it is, that our ministerial labours are so much lost. We persuade sick men to their meat, that have no appetite to it. Nay, whose stomachs rise against it and loathe it. It goeth against their carnal natures, against their former customs, against their ease, and profit, and pleasure, and therefore it will not down with them, they cannot away with it <sup>x</sup>. We

<sup>n</sup> Psal. xv. 4.

<sup>q</sup> Rom. vii. 15.

<sup>r</sup> Eph. ii. 3.

<sup>o</sup> 1 John iii. 14.

<sup>p</sup> Judè 23.

<sup>u</sup> Psal lxxviii. 29.

<sup>p</sup> John iii. 19, 20.

<sup>s</sup> Rom. xiii. 12.

<sup>x</sup> Job. xxi. 14.

heave a stone that will stir no further than main force doth move it. O had they but desire after Christ and grace, as they have after worldly, fleshly vanity, how happy might they be.

But when converting grace comes, it changeth their desire. God calls to them then effectually by his word and Spirit. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come and drink of the water of life freely <sup>x</sup>." As if he should say, 'What mean you to desire that which will do so little good, and to lay out your labour for that which will not profit you, and follow my direction, and I will give you that which is worthy your desire.' When God hath once effectually touched the heart with converting grace, it leaves a secret thirsting after him in the soul. As when he called Peter and the other apostles, and said unto them, follow me, they presently left all and followed him. Then they cry out with David, "My soul thirsteth after thee as the thirsty land <sup>y</sup>." "The desire of their soul is to his name, and to the remembrance of him <sup>z</sup>." Now they see that excellency in God's word, and ways, and graces, that all things that may be desired, are not to be compared with it <sup>a</sup>. "They are more to be desired than gold, yea than fine gold <sup>b</sup>." Before they desired many things, and nothing would satisfy them; now give them but one thing and they will be satisfied to the full <sup>c</sup>. Before their desires were only after vanity; but now, so far as they are renewed, they are only after good <sup>d</sup>. And that God that gave them these desires, will fulfil them <sup>e</sup>. He that caused them to hunger and thirst after righteousness, will satisfy them <sup>f</sup>. And he that turned their minds from this world, and gave them to desire after a better country <sup>g</sup>, will give them that promised land which they desire.

(3.) The next affections, whose change is discovered in the work of conversion, are their delight and sorrow. This is the next pair. An unconverted man doth naturally find no pleasure in God or spiritual things: for a fool hath no delight in understanding <sup>h</sup>. It is fleshly lust and pleasure that they desire <sup>i</sup>. And the "pleasure of sin for a season," for

<sup>x</sup> Isa. lv. 1—3.

<sup>y</sup> Psal cxliii. 6. xlii. 2. lxiii. 1.

<sup>z</sup> Isa. xxvi. 8.

<sup>a</sup> Prov viii. 11.

<sup>b</sup> Psal. xix. 10.

<sup>c</sup> Psal. xxvii. 4. lxxiii. 25.

<sup>d</sup> Prov. xi. 23.

<sup>e</sup> Psal. cxlv. 19.

<sup>f</sup> Matt. v. 6.

<sup>g</sup> Heb. xi. 16.

<sup>h</sup> Prov. xviii. 2.

<sup>i</sup> Tit. iii. 3.

which they part with the highest delight<sup>k</sup>. "They live in pleasures on earth, and fat themselves as for a day of slaughter<sup>l</sup>." They account it pleasure to riot in the daylight of the gospel, in that day that is given for other kinds of works<sup>m</sup>. They not only do evil, but have "pleasure in them that do it<sup>n</sup>." These "fools hate knowledge, and scorers delight in scorning<sup>o</sup>." And if they have any delight in better things through a common work of grace, it is but a superficial fading delight<sup>p</sup>. "A rejoicing in the light for a season<sup>q</sup>." But no sound well-grounded delight. But when converting grace comes, it giveth a man those new delights which he knew not of before. Then the things that he before saw not, nor well believed, the things which he distasted and loathed, are in his delight. God himself is his delight<sup>r</sup>. The doing of his will is their delight<sup>s</sup>. His law, his word, his statutes, are their delight<sup>t</sup>. On the Lord's day they delight in him<sup>u</sup>. In the multitude of troubling, perplexing thoughts, his comforts delight their souls<sup>x</sup>. Their delight is in the saints on earth, and those that excel in virtue<sup>y</sup>. It is their meat and drink to draw nigh to God. It doth them good at the heart, when they can but be enlarged towards him, and have more light and life than before they had. These are the new delights of a converted soul. He doth not part with all delight at his conversion; he doth but change a brutish and sensual delight, for such as are fit for a man and a Christian. The wicked think they shall never have a merry day again, if they should be thus changed; but he meets with more truly comfortable days than ever he did before: Nay, he never knew what true comfort was till now. I know every poor Christian hath not that measure of these delights as some have. Some are clouded with darkness, and infirmities, and live much more sadly than others do, but yet the delight which they have in these things, is more than in the things which they before delighted in. It glads them when they can but see a beam of

<sup>k</sup> Heb. xi. 25.<sup>l</sup> James v. 5.<sup>m</sup> 2 Pet. ii. 13.<sup>n</sup> Rom. i. 32.<sup>o</sup> Prov. i. 22.<sup>p</sup> Isa. lviii. 2.<sup>q</sup> John v. 35.<sup>r</sup> Psal. xxxvii. 4.<sup>s</sup> Psal. xl. 8.<sup>t</sup> Psal. i. 2. cxix. 24. lxxix. 16, 35, 47, 70.<sup>u</sup> Isa. lviii. 14.<sup>x</sup> Psal. xciv. 19.<sup>y</sup> Psal. xvi. 3.

heavenly light from the face of God. They have so much as sheweth the change that is made upon their souls.

The like we may say also of the sorrow of the unconverted. It is not the same that it was before. Before it went nearer their hearts to lose any pleasure or commodity in the world, or to be wronged, or suffer any disgrace from men, or to suffer any want in their estates, or any pain in their bodies, than it did to lie under the wrath of God, and live as without him, and his favour in the world. They were truly such as satan fully reported Job to be; had you but touched them in their estates or bodies, they would have quickly shewed you what was next their hearts. But all the misery of their soul was no great trouble to them. A man would marvel, that knoweth what a miserable state that of sinful nature is, that so many thousands in the world can be void of God's image, strangers to the Spirit, and know no more of Christ but the very name, and yet be no more troubled at it. That they can bear such a weight of unpardoned sins as they do every day, and feel it no more. That they can live under the curse of God's righteous law, and remain in daily danger of damnation, so that if they should die before conversion, they are lost for ever, and yet be no more troubled at it. But alas, they are blind, and see not the case that they are in; they are dead and stupid, and therefore feel it not. It is the nature of their miserable condition to make them so; they are more troubled for a worldly trifle, than for all these things of everlasting consequence. But it is far otherwise with the converted soul; one doubt of the love of God is more grievous to them, than to doubt of their worldly happiness; the remnant of their mortified sins is heavier on their soul, than the mountains of unmortified sin was to them before; they send out more groans and cries to God, because of their daily failings and infirmities, than they did before for all their iniquity; the utter gracelessness of their hearts was then not so grievous to them as the weakness of their graces now. He never before knew what it was to have the least spiritual communion with God, and yet he bare it lightly; now the miss of it one day and in one duty, is more grievous to him. What need we prove this to you, when every gracious soul doth feel it, and the world about

them may see it, that their sorrows are of another nature than they were before? Were they wont to lie in tears for sin, and mourn for God's absence as now they do? Before they were sorrowful, that they might not come to heaven without such a course as would impoverish them in the world<sup>y</sup>; but now they are sorrowful that they can shake off the world and sin no better, and get ground of their corruptions no faster than they do. *Object.* Perhaps you will say, if conversion bring so much sorrow, is it not better to be without it? *Answ.* No, for it is a willing sorrow, a necessary healing sorrow, that worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of; and not the sorrow of the world that caused death<sup>z</sup>. See there the blessed effects of it at large<sup>a</sup>. It is a sorrow mixed with greater joy; for we are as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing<sup>b</sup>. It is a very short sorrow that will quickly be forgotten; for God hath promised himself to wipe away all tears from our eyes<sup>c</sup>. It is a sorrow of God's own giving, and therefore it cannot choose but be good, for God giveth not evil: it is a sorrow preparing for everlasting joy; and he that hath called us to it, hath foretold us, that we "shall be sorrowful, but our sorrow shall be turned into joy, which none shall take from us. We shall weep and lament, and the world shall rejoice<sup>d</sup>;" but mark the end, who it is that will be sorrowful, or joyful then. "Mark the upright man, and behold the just, for the end of that man is peace<sup>e</sup>." What wise man will refuse so short a sorrow for so long a joy? Who that is well in his wits, will choose rather to die of his sore, than to endure the smart of the lancet to open it? Nay, there is an ingenuity in a converted soul, which makes it in a kind of holy revenge even be willing to taste somewhat of the smart of his own folly. He sees that it was himself that caused it, and brought all this upon himself, and the desert of a thousand times more, and therefore he even chooseth in some measure to afflict his soul, and doth not thrust away sorrow from him, as before he was wont to do.

(4.) The next pair of affections that shew their change, are, hope and despair. Before conversion, the soul of sin-

<sup>y</sup> Matt. xix. 22. Luke xviii. 23.

<sup>z</sup> 2 Cor. vii. 10.

<sup>a</sup> 2 Cor. vii. 9, 10.

<sup>b</sup> 2 Cor. vi. 10.

<sup>c</sup> Rev. vii. 17. xxi. 4.

<sup>d</sup> John xvi. 20.

<sup>e</sup> Psal. xxxvii. 37.



ners is either borne up on false, ungrounded hopes, which is the common case, or else they drop into desperation. The hopes of an unconverted man, are foolish and contrary to the word of God, and do but shew the delusion of his soul, and tend to his destruction: they are like the hopes of a man that thinketh he is travelling to London, when he is in the way to York, and yet goes on, and hopes he shall come to London for all that, as well as they that go the right way: so do these men commonly hope to come to heaven, while they go in the way to hell. And though God have told them, and passed his word on it, that he that goes in these ways shall not see peace<sup>f</sup>: and hath assured the world, that there is no peace to the wicked<sup>g</sup>: yet still they will hope to find peace in evil ways: these deceiving hopes are the common cause of the damnation of the world; as the Scripture frequently acquainteth us. But when converting grace comes, O! what work it maketh on the soul in this particular! How it battereth down all the false hopes of sinners; and maketh them see that they are all this while deceived! O! it maketh the poor soul even undone in its own apprehension, and shews then that all his hopes were vain that before he trusted in. Then he cries out, 'I had hoped to come to heaven without conversion, but now I see it will not be: I had hoped I was well enough before; and that God would have mercy on me in that condition without any more ado, but now I see I did but deceive myself. I had hoped that I had a saving part in Christ, though I loved the world and followed my sins; but now I see it is not so. I had hoped I might have been saved if I had died in that condition; but now I see that I had certainly been damned.' Now the soul is brought to a kind of despair; not an absolute despair that God will have no mercy on him; no, he never escaped that till now; but a conditional despair, that ever he should come to heaven without conversion; he despaireth of ever being saved in the old condition that he was in: and then comes in another kind of hope than ever he knew before: then the Spirit of grace doth bring him to hope upon grounds that will not deceive him: now he hath a hope that quickeneth him, and that comforteth him: before he had a dull and dead hope to es-

<sup>f</sup> Isa. lix. 8.<sup>g</sup> Isa. lviii. 21. xlviii. 22.

cape damnation; but now he hath a living hope of seeing the face of God for ever. He hath now that hope toward God by which we are saved, even the hope of the resurrection of the dead, and the hope of things not seen<sup>h</sup>. Now he hath a hope which is built on the Scripture; and bred by experience, and which will not make him ashamed<sup>i</sup>: before, as he was without God, so was he without hope<sup>k</sup>; but now he hath that hope which is an anchor of the soul<sup>l</sup>; a hope that he can give a reason of<sup>m</sup>; a hope that purifieth him<sup>n</sup>; even the hope of eternal life, which none have but those that are heirs by faith, and are brought to it by this regeneration<sup>o</sup>. And for this blessed hope at the glorious appearing of the great God our Saviour, doth his faith and patience expect and wait<sup>p</sup>. So that now he hath some reason for his hopes, for he hath the promise of the faithful God to support them. The least hope that a poor troubled soul hath after conversion in the midst of all his fears and doubts, is of more value than all the most confident boastings of the unconverted: for there can be no hope of being saved out of the way that God hath appointed to salvation: and the bolder men are, and the more they hope and boast in a wrong way, the blinder they shew themselves, and the more is their misery; but the godly are safe in an objective hope, even when they want much of the subjective. There is hope, yea, and assurance in itself, when they know it not; and they are safe in that which they do not perceive.

(5.) The next pair of affections that manifest their conversion, are, courage and fear; an unconverted man is bold in sin, but feareth not much the wrath of God, and the sorest evil that he threateneth in his word. But when he should encounter with any of the enemies of his salvation, there he hath no courage. It is a marvel to see the strange distemper of a graceless soul. These poor wretches are so valiant in their wickedness, that they dare sin when the converted dare not; they dare break the Lord's-day, and dare drink, and revel, and take their pleasure, and neglect their souls, and slight God and all his mercy: they dare run upon his sorest wrath and upon hell itself. Tell

<sup>h</sup> Acts xxiv. 15. xxiii. 6. Rom. viii. 24.

<sup>k</sup> Ephes. ii. 12.

<sup>n</sup> 1 John iii. 3.

<sup>i</sup> Heb. vi. 19.

<sup>o</sup> Tit. iii. 5—7.

<sup>l</sup> Rom. xv. 4. v. 4, 5.

<sup>m</sup> 1 Pet. iii. 15.

<sup>p</sup> Tit. ii. 13.

them of these things, and you cannot much daunt them. It is their mad valour that they dare damn their own souls : like a distracted man, that dares leap into water and drown himself ; or a blind man that dares run into a coal-pit, because he knows not what he doth : such a kind of valour have unconverted men, when as in the way of their duty, they are the most notorious cowards in the world : they dare not venture upon a little suffering to prevent eternal sufferings ; or upon the frowns of men, or the danger of being undone in their worldly estates, though it be for a hope of everlasting glory. Nay, they dare not venture upon a very scorn ; but when they have some mind to turn and set upon duty, a wicked man can mock them out of all. Are not these valiant men indeed, that dare not look the feeblest enemy of their souls in the face, and yet dare venture on the flames of hell ? This is the common case of the unconverted.

But when grace hath made this change, then they are clean contrary affected ; then they are the most fearful men in the world, of God and his displeasure, and the most courageous against all the opposition of the world. Alas ! they find then that it is madness, not valour, to be fearless of the wrath of God : there is no standing before his indignation, and no dealing with Almightyness, if it be set against us. Therefore doth the poor soul throw down all weapons of opposition, and lay himself at the feet of God, as Saul, Acts ix. 3. and say, " Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do ? " Therefore we find converts use to come in trembling to Christ, Acts xvi. 29. and ix. 6. And Scripture tells us, " The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom <sup>1</sup>." Now he dare not for his life do that which before he did : he durst have let fall an oath or a curse in his passion before ; but now he dares not : he durst have secretly deceived others, and have committed secret filthiness ; because no body saw him, he was out of fear ; but now he dares not ; for he feareth him that is greater than all. He durst have neglected duty, and have been indifferent for all company, and taken his fleshly pleasures, but now he dare not : for his life he dare not. O ! thinketh he, what if I should die in the act of that sin ? What if God should deny me repentance and

<sup>1</sup> Psal. cxi. 10. Prov. i. 6. ix. 10.

forgiveness? Where were I then? He durst before lie in a state of death, and now he dares not live quietly, till he have laboured after assurance of his salvation; that he may know it shall go well with him when he must be here no more. Now if he be tempted to know sin, this is his answer, 'I dare not do it, because I fear God<sup>r</sup>.' Other rulers oppressed the people, and so did not he; because he feared God. It is the description of the ungodly, that "there is no fear of God before his eyes<sup>s</sup>." And the description of a wicked place, "There is no fear of God in this place<sup>t</sup>." And the description of the godly, that "they fear God<sup>u</sup>." By this "fear of the Lord it is that men depart from evil<sup>x</sup>." This "tendeth to life<sup>y</sup>." In this "is strong consolation<sup>z</sup>." So that it is the work of conversion to bring the presumptuous, hardened sinner to this fear of the Lord: none do so much fear God as they.

But then for the threats of men, for worldly troubles or crosses, or losses, or any such thing that may stand in the way to heaven, how little do they fear them all? Here where the wicked are most cowardly, the converted soul is most courageous. Alas! he knows the difference between the creature and the Creator. And therefore, when he hath once got God on his side, he seeth he is safe, and the danger is most over. Then, O what light thoughts hath he of man, or of all that he can do! "In God have I put my trust," saith David, "I will not fear what flesh can do unto me<sup>a</sup>" q.d. What is flesh to be compared with God? Can flesh resist him, and cross his pleasure, and overcome him? as Psal. cxviii. 6. "The Lord is on my side, I will not fear what man can do unto me;" and Psal. xlvi. 1—3. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; therefore will we not fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, though the waters thereof roar." So xxvi. 3. He knoweth what encouragement God hath given him, Ia. xli. 10. "Fear not, for I am with thee;" and vii. 4, 35. xiv. xli. 13, 14. xliv. 2, 8, li. 7. "Fear ye not the reproach of man, neither be afraid of their revilings; for the moth shall eat them up like a gar-

<sup>r</sup> Nehem. v. 15.<sup>s</sup> Psal. xxxvi. 1.<sup>t</sup> Gen. xx. 11.<sup>u</sup> Psal. lxvi. 16. Eccles. viii. 12. xii. 13.<sup>x</sup> Prov. xvi. 6.<sup>y</sup> Prov. xix. 23.<sup>z</sup> Prov. xiv. 26.<sup>a</sup> Psal. lvi. 9.

ment, and the worm shall eat them like wool. But my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation." These words of God are the instruments of that change that is made on the converted soul, and therefore will make an impression like themselves. When God doth change men, he maketh them soldiers under the banner of Christ, and setteth them in fight against principalities and powers, even against a world of wicked enemies; and therefore he will certainly give them courage. This courage is an essential part of our change, and without some measure of it we cannot be Christians. He that will come to heaven must forsake all, and tread down all, and despise all in comparison of Christ, that he may not be a forsaker and a despiser of Christ. Therefore we find the apostle, in the name of himself and his fellow-soldiers, courageously triumphing over death, and the grave, and every enemy, 1 Cor. xv. 55. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" And Rom. viii. 18, 31. to the end: "The sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us; what shall we say then to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? It is God that justifieth, who shall condemn? What shall separate us from the love of God?" Read these triumphant words at leisure. Certain, a true believer hath more valour than to be turned out of the way to heaven, by any assault that a creature can make upon him.

(6.) The next passion that sheweth the change, is anger. This is a single passion, and hath no contrary. Before conversion, men are angry with those that trouble them in their sins. If you would but teach the ignorant, or persuade the obstinate, or cross them in the way of their beloved sins, O how angry will they be! as if you were their enemy, and did them some deadly hurt. You cannot speak to them so tenderly in a reproof, but they will think you do it to disgrace them, or in ill will to them, or at least that you make them worse than they are, and they think you make more ado than needs; as Amaziah did by the prophet<sup>b</sup>. They would stop his mouth if they could, who would stop their course of sinning. You shall not see one of many of them that have so much ingenuity as to take a

<sup>b</sup> 2 Chron. xxv. 16.

close reproof in good part! no, not from a minister, whose calling doth specially bind him to it. Hence is the common indignation that we meet with from poor blind wretches, when we do but our duty. Nay, when we do not half, nor the tenth part of our duty, in persuading them to a greater care of their salvation, they are offended with us, as if we did too much. O what a difference is there between their judgment, and the judgment of God, and our own conscience! And what a strait a poor minister, or private Christian, must needs be in between both! I confess to you all here, to my shame, that I remember no one sin in the world, that my conscience doth so much accuse and judge me for, as for doing so little for the saving of men's souls, and dealing no more fervently and earnestly with them for their conversion, or reformation. And yet everybody is not pleased with that little which I do. I confess to you, that when I am alone, and think of the case of poor, ignorant, worldly, earthly, unconverted sinners, that live not to God, nor set their hearts on the life to come, my conscience telleth me, that I should go to as many of them as I can, and tell them plainly and roundly what will become of them, if they do not turn; and to beseech them with all the earnestness that I can, to come in to Christ, and change their course, and make no delay. And though I have many excuses come in from other business, and from disability and want of time, yet none of them all do satisfy my own conscience, when I consider what heaven and hell are, which will one of them be the end of every man's life; my conscience telleth me, that I should follow them with all possible earnestness night and day, and take no nay of them till they return to God. But if a man should do thus, how would it be taken? Some of them would think of him as Christ's natural kindred did of him<sup>c</sup>, when they were about to lay hands on him, and thought that he was besides himself; some would think him a precise fellow, that thought nobody should be saved but a few that make more stir than needs; and most would be angry with a man, as if he did them wrong, when he doth but seek to save them with fear, pulling them or keeping them out of the fire of sin<sup>d</sup>. Christ himself is an offence to the ungodly

<sup>c</sup> Mark iii. 21.<sup>d</sup> Jude 23.

world<sup>e</sup>. And therefore no wonder if we offend them. They will even bear a secret grudge in their minds at those men that trouble them in their sins; and “anger resteth in the bosom of these fools<sup>f</sup>.” If you should suddenly come in upon a thief or an adulterer with a light, who thought to have hidden his sin in the dark, he would be offended at it; and so are most wicked men with us.

But when converting grace hath changed the heart, the case is quite contrary. Then he will thank you for that which before he was angry at; he loveth no man so well as him that hath sought to save his soul. O, those reproofs and exhortations that God did bless to his conversion will stick by him for ever. He will bless God that ever he saw your face, and remember those words that helped to save him, as long as he liveth; he will take it for a greater benefit than if you had given him all your wealth. A special extraordinary love to those that were made the means of their conversion will stick for ever in their minds; the very words that you speak to them will be so remembered, that they would not for a world but they had heard these words. O, what a change is here suddenly wrought! He that was wont to say, ‘Look to yourselves, you shall not answer for me,’ and be angry with them that troubled him in the way to hell, now loveth their very names, and the remembrance of their kindness is pleasant to him. Even like a poor distracted man, that layeth about him, and abuseth the physician, and calls them all to naught that would cure him, as if they came to kill him; but when he is come to himself again, then he will give them hearty thanks. Somewhat like it is in a beast; if he have a thorn in his foot he will strive against you, and not let you pull it out; and if you cast him down to force him to it, he lieth as if you were about to kill him: but when it is out, and he perceiveth the ease, he will perceive you did not mean him any harm. So it is with a sinner before his conversion: he is angry with those that would do him good; but when once God hath turned his heart, he is quite of another mind. Then he saith, “Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head<sup>g</sup>.” And he taketh open “rebuke better

<sup>e</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 8. Rom. ix. 33.

<sup>f</sup> Eccl. vii. 9.

<sup>g</sup> Psal. cxli. 5.

than secret love; and the wounds of a friend to be better than the kisses of an enemy<sup>g</sup>." I know, by sad experience, that too much heart-rising against reproof doth remain in many that I hope are converted, but that is from their unconverted part; and if it were predominant, it would prove them unconverted men. For so far as they are gracious, thus it will be.

Yea, not only so; but when a man is converted, his anger is turned against himself. He was never so angry with others for reproving him, as he is now for sinning against God, and doing so much wrong to his own soul. Certainly there is in every converted soul a great indignation against themselves for their sin. They fall out with themselves, and think ill of themselves, and speak ill of themselves; yea, and could find in their hearts to be in part revenged upon themselves. You may see as much said by Paul, 2 Cor. vii. 11. where, among other effects of godly sorrow, he nameth indignation and revenge. A true repenting sinner could even find in his heart to execute some punishment upon himself. O, how he calls himself almost all that is naught! O, thinks he, what a fool, what a wretch, what a beast was I, to love the filth of sin better than the favour of God and the hopes of everlasting glory! What a madman was I, to be angry with those that would have kept me from damnation! Where was my wit and reason, when I so long forgot the work that I was born for, and made so light of the Lord that bought me, and thought so little of the place that I must live in for ever? Sirs, I do not speak this of mine own head. I have heard many, and many a one, through God's great mercy, after conversion, calling themselves worse than all this comes to; and expressing greater anger against themselves, than the wicked now express against those that would convert them. And you read, that even the saints in Scripture did the like; and that not by a secret confession, but left it on record to all generations. David calls himself an "ignorant fool," and as "a beast<sup>h</sup>." He cries out, when his heart smote him by true repentance, "I have sinned greatly; I have done foolishly<sup>i</sup>." Paul himself saith, that he was "even mad, and exceedingly mad,

<sup>g</sup> Prov. xxvii. 5, 6.

<sup>h</sup> Psal. lxxiii. 22.

<sup>i</sup> 2 Sam. xxiv. 10.



against" the Christians before his conversion<sup>k</sup>. And of himself and the rest, he confesseth, "We ourselves were sometime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another<sup>l</sup>." So that you see converted men are very angry with themselves for their sinful lives; you hear how they call themselves. If they used such language against another man, you would think it were railing; to call them fools and madmen, and all to naught. But, alas! they know by sad experience what they say, and yet by glad experience that it is now better with them. Therefore it is that they can easier bear the hard words of another, when they are forced to say as bad by themselves. Therefore is every converted sinner a man that loatheth himself for his iniquity<sup>m</sup>. Yea, they could find in their hearts, as I said, to be partly revenged on themselves. For though they must not destroy their own bodies, because they are not their own but Christ's, nor must any way hurt them, so far as to make them the less serviceable unto God; yet, in any other case, they can find in their heart to punish this flesh, and to make it smart, that hath led them to so much evil. Therefore they are the easier brought to fasting, and denying the flesh its desires, though they put it to trouble and pain; for as this doth tend to master it, and subdue it for the time to come, so a vindictive penance for the time past voluntarily undertaken, is but a lawful fruit of repentance, so that it do no whit disable us from the service of God. Hence it is, that a thorough convert doth more easily forbear a carnal pleasure, than a hypocrite or half-convert will do. For when they are pleading the lawfulness of their pleasure, and saying, 'what harm is it,' and 'why may I not do this or that,' he is willing to avoid it, though it should be but indifferent, as long as there is any great danger of sin in it. For what careth he if the flesh do smart for it, if they be the worst? Seeing it is the flesh that he is fallen out with, and hath done so much wrong to God and him. So that you see what a change conversion makes on a man's anger as well as other passions.

(7.) The last change we shall mention on the affections, that is made by converting grace, is in regard of a man's

<sup>k</sup> Acts xxvi. 11.

<sup>l</sup> Tit. iii. 3.

<sup>m</sup> Ezek. xxxvi. 31. xx. 43.

content and discontent. Before conversion, a man is discontent if he had not the desires of his flesh. He hath no rest in his mind, if he be poor or afflicted, and see not some hope of coming out of it. But for the love of God, and the life of grace, and the joys of the godly, he can be well enough content without these. If he had but what he would have in the world, take you the rest, for he thinks he can live well enough without them. When Cain's sacrifice was not accepted as his brother's, he was discontented at his brother, and consequently at God himself. He "was very wroth, and his countenance fell". Because his brother was preferred before him, and was judged righteous when he was judged unrighteous. But he could be content without true righteousness itself, though he could not be content without the estimation of it. So can all ungodly men be content well enough to be ungodly, but not to be called ungodly; the name troubleth them, when the thing is so far from troubling them, that they will not be persuaded by any means to leave it. In a word, it is the things of this world that wicked men do seek content in, though they find it not. But as for spiritual and heavenly things, they can be better content in the case that they are now in; without them, than with them.

But conversion turneth the heart also in this regard. For when a man is once truly changed, he can be contented with any state, if he have but the favour of God, and the life of his grace, and communion with him; and without this he can be content with nothing. Nothing but Christ will serve his turn. If God will give him more upon the by, he will take it and be thankful; but without Christ he takes all things to be as nothing. What if he had lands and lordships, honour and dignity, what will this do for him without God in Christ? And blame him not, for he hath felt such a disease, that these things could not heal, when Christ, and Christ alone, could do it. And therefore Christ he must have whatsoever else he go without. A little of the world will serve with Christ, but nothing in the world will serve without him. As a wicked man is troubled and restless, because he hath not that which he would have, when every thing is not according to his mind. If friends, if es-

tates, if his house, or his body, or any thing be out of order, he is in discontent, because it is here that he seeks content, and therefore is troubled when he misseth of it. So is it with a believer in respect of Christ. If God hide his face, if the Spirit seem to withdraw, if Christ seem strange to him, if doubts of salvation come in upon his soul, he is as a bone out of joint, pained and troubled, and nothing will quiet him till he be set in joint again. Like a child that will be quieted with nothing but that which he cries for. If you offer him any thing else, he throweth it away, for that is not it which he crieth for. So is it with this poor Christian; if you tell him of riches, or honour, or pleasure, and not of Christ, and grace, and glory, you do but trouble him, for these are not the things that he looks after. There is but one thing in the world that can give him content; let him have that and he hath enough. O, did he but know that God is reconciled to him, and that he is united to Christ, and the Spirit is in him, and that he is in the safe way to the kingdom of glory, then if he have but food and raiment he can therewith be content<sup>o</sup>. Yea, or if he were without them, if God so dispose of it. For he hath learned by the teaching of converting grace, to abound and to want, and in what state soever he is, therewith to be content<sup>p</sup>. And therefore, his conversation is without covetousness, and he is content with such things as he hath, because God hath promised him that he will never leave him nor forsake him<sup>q</sup>. So this is another fruit of conversion about men's content, or discontent.

Having said thus much of the change of the affections, I might proceed to shew you, what particular reigning sins it is, that this work doth cast out of the heart, and what particular graces it there setteth up, and so go over all the chief sins and graces. But because this would hold me longer than I intend to stand upon this subject, and because these are comprehended in the change already mentioned; I shall pass these over; only that part which my text doth particularly express, I take it to be my duty particularly to handle.

“Except ye become as little children.” You see here, that Christ placeth much of the work of conversion in the

<sup>o</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 8.

<sup>p</sup> Phil. iv. 11.

<sup>q</sup> Heb. xiii. 5

making us to become "as little children." I shall here, therefore, stay awhile to tell you, 1. What is not meant by this; and 2. What is meant by it. 1. Christ doth not by this intend, that little children are altogether innocent, and that there is nothing in them that is hateful to God: for certainly they have all original sin; for who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? or how can the parents beget holy children that are unholy themselves? and righteous children, that are themselves unrighteous? I mean, without sin, when they are not themselves without sin. I remember what an outcry there was<sup>a</sup> once against me in this town, for saying, that children by nature, considered as sinful and unsanctified, were as hateful in the eyes of God, as any toads or serpents are in ours: so that the people railed at me as I went along the streets; but doubtless the comparison is far too short; for every child by nature hath original sin, and sin is more hateful to God a thousand times, than any toad or serpent is to us. And therefore it is not by nature that children are righteous, or come to heaven. But it is by grace, through the blood of Christ that washeth them; and the covenant that forgiveth them; and baptism that sealeth this unto them; and they are capable also of the Spirit, to sanctify them. If there were not a willing nature in infants disposing them to evil, before they do it; as there is a stinging venomous nature in a serpent before he stings, or in a wasp even in the comb. How should it come to pass, that children should be so forward to evil as soon as they can commit it? Why are they not as forward to good? If children be not by nature, through original sin, even hateful to God, what need have we of the blood of Christ, to wash them and cleanse them from it? And of the water of baptism to seal this cleansing? Doubtless, there is not an infant in the world but would be for ever damned, if Christ's blood did not procure their pardon and reconciliation with God. It is not therefore in absolute innocence, that Christ here means that we must become as little children, before we can enter into the kingdom.

2. Nor yet is it in point of safety from the wrath of God, as if every child, or any by nature, were free from all dan-

<sup>a</sup> Fifteen years ago.

ger of everlasting perdition. By grace many are, but by nature none at all. From the hour of their birth many may be sanctified ; but it is the covenant of grace, and the grace of the covenant, that sanctifieth them<sup>r</sup>, and not the parent or nature.

The things, therefore, that Christ intendeth in the words of my text, are these two : First, That as children are but men entered into the world, and beginning their lives, and all things are new to them, so he that will be saved, must by conversion, as it were, begin the world anew. I pray you mark it, sirs, for Christ hath not given you this doctrine and example for nothing. Therefore it is that we find so often in Scripture mention made, of laying by, or destroying, or putting off the old man. In Rom. vi. 6. " Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." He that hath truly learned Christ, " hath put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and are renewed in the spirit of their mind ; and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness<sup>s</sup>." " Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth ; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence and covetousness, which is idolatry : for which things' sake, the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience : in the which ye also walked sometimes, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these ; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing ye have put off the old man with his deeds ; and have put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him<sup>t</sup>." Upon consideration of which great change, they are said also to be " dead, and risen again, and their life now hidden with Christ in God<sup>u</sup>." You see then that here is an old man to be put off, and destroyed, and a new man to be put on. That is, there must be such a change of the qualities of the soul, and the practice of the life, that a man must not, in his affection and conversation, be the same man that he was before. For though he be the same in

<sup>r</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 14.

<sup>s</sup> Eph. iv. 22.

<sup>t</sup> Col. iii. 5—10.

<sup>u</sup> Col. iii. 1—3.

substance and person, and the natural faculties of his soul, yet not the same in disposition and practice. In regard of his old corrupt disposition and conversation, he is called the old man, and in regard of his new disposition and conversation, he is called the new man. As a man that hath been an ill husband, and run out of all, and having nothing left, is cast into prison, and when he lieth there, he bethinks him of his folly, and at last a friend comes and payeth his debts, and setteth him up again, and giveth him a stock to trade with; we say of this man, 'he begins the world anew.' So when a poor sinner is in prison, under the wrath of God for his sin, and Christ comes in his gospel and telleth him, 'I have paid thy debt, and now I will set thee free, and give thee the help of my Spirit, and means; only see thou be faithful to me, and make better use of my mercy for the time to come.' Now this converted sinner is to begin the world, as it were, anew. As a man that hath fallen into a fever, that hath consumed all his flesh to the very bones, when he is cured his natural parts do make him new blood and flesh again. So when Christ hath cured the diseased soul, the old flesh is as it were consumed, and we are made anew. As a man that hath missed his way at the first setting out, and gone the contrary way all day, and at last comes to know that he was all this while out of his way, he is then to begin his journey anew. So is it with the converted man. When the illumination of the Spirit by the word, doth acquaint him, that he hath all this while been out of the way to heaven, he turneth again and saith, 'I am now to begin my life again.' The building that he hath been setting up all this while, is blown down by the breath of God's displeasure, or consumed by the fire of his curse. And therefore he must begin again, and build all anew from the very ground. Not an earthly building like the old, but a spiritual house for himself, that may be fit for his holy Spirit to dwell in\*. And may attain at last to the building not made with hands, eternal in the heavens<sup>v</sup>.

I beseech you, beloved hearers, mark this as we go, and see whether this be so with your own souls. I must tell every carnal, worldly sinner of you all, in the name of God, that your old condition is a miserable condition, and will

\* Rom. viii. 11. 2 Tim. i. 54.

v 2 Cor. v. 1, 2.

not serve the turn of heaven. If ever you will be saved, you must become as little children, and even begin the world anew. A new heart you must have, a new life you must lead, a new course you must take, and a new end you must aim at, and intend. But of this I must speak more anon, under the further proof and application.

Secondly, Another thing that Christ here principally intendeth in the text, is, that we must become as little children, in regard of humility, and all our designs and contrivances of the world. Though this be not the whole that he intends, yet this is the very reason for which he mentioneth the whole work of conversion, as necessary to salvation; and therefore he particularly giveth instance in this part: though children have the seed of all these in their natures, yet are they not acquainted with the acts of all, even when they begin to be acquainted with some. Children will very young shew their frowardness and disobedience, and sensuality, and some pride, but not by aspiring after great things in the world; and seeking after dominions, and dignities, and honours. They are in no care for enlarging possessions, for heaping up riches, for buying lands and lordships; they envy not the princes and lords of the world, but are as well contented with their lower matters, as kings and emperors are with their crowns; if they have meat, and drink, and clothes, and play, they are pleased: you never hear them murmur that they are not preferred to this office or that, in church or commonwealth: they do not contrive how to undermine others; nor to get above them in worldly dignities; nor to blast the name of others, that they may magnify their own. They disdain not those of the lowest rank; but the children of a lord, will play familiarly, if they be not dissuaded by others, with the children of beggars: in a word, though they have pride, and shew it in lower things, yet do they not look after the great matters of the world, as ambitious and covetous persons do. And this is the thing that Christ intendeth to his disciples, and to all Christians, that if ever they will enter into the kingdom of heaven, they must lay by their pride and vain-glory, and covetousness, and become as little children to all these honours and riches of the world. So that it is plain, that Christ maketh humility an essential part of the

work of conversion, and altogether inseparable from the heirs of his kingdom. As pride is thought to be the first sin of the devil, and was certainly the first, or one of the first that tainted the nature of man, when he would needs be as God, knowing good and evil; so is it not the last or least of the works of Christ on the soul in its recovery, to take down this pride, and humble us, and make us little in our own eyes. Satan drew us to aspire after a kind of god-head, and to be more than men; and Christ brings us to be as little children, and almost less than men. Satan drew us to be like him in pride, and Christ draweth us by doctrine and example, to be like to him in meekness and lowliness: satan would lift us up, that he might cast us down, and our fall might be the greater, by how much we attempted to mount the higher; and Christ casteth us down, that he may lift us up, and that our glory may be the greater, by how much we are made the baser by humility. Satan did but unsettle us by taking us off our rock and foundation, when he pretended to exalt us; and Christ doth settle us again by laying us low; and by teaching us meekness, he causeth us to find that rest to our souls, which in pride and vain-glory could not be found<sup>z</sup>. Satan by sin did make us low and vile in God's eye, and high and excellent in his own; and Christ by converting grace doth make us low and vile in our own eyes, and high and excellent in God's. By corrupted nature, men are still inclined to rise higher, and lift up themselves; but by grace he is disposed to think meanly of himself, and to set light by the honours and greatness of this world. And why is this, think you? Is it because grace debaseth men's spirits? No, but because it raiseth and ennobleth them. The converted soul doth slight the glory and greatness of the world, not on the same reasons as children do; i. e. because they know it not, or because it is above them; but because he is now acquainted with far greater things, and because that all on earth is below them. It is not because he would fain have greater matters, and cannot get them, but because he hath got a sight of such things in the world to come, in comparison of which, these things are as nothing, and therefore to be set light by, and even trodden under foot. He slighteth not crowns and

<sup>z</sup> Matt. xi. 28, 29.



kingdoms as things above him, but as things below him. The very humility of the saints hath a high design: when they lie in the dust, in self-abhorrency and self-condemnation, they are aspiring thence as high as heaven: their humble confession, and tears, and groans, have a tendency to that glory, which is above the sun. As a child that casteth his ball to the ground, that it may rebound the higher; or as a man that means to make the highest building, will dig deepest to lay the foundation; in the depth of their debasement they are seeking to be as the angels of God. It is heaven that they mean in every duty, in every prayer, in every lamentation they make for their infirmities, yea, in all they do in the world, it is nothing lower than heaven that they intend.

Perhaps you will by this time turn your judgment of them, as much as the barbarians did of Paul, Acts xxviii. 3. And as before you thought them too base, now you will say, that grace doth make them proud: but it is no such matter. Pride is the undue estimation of a man's self, and a desire of undue estimation from others; and it provoketh a man to seek after an unnecessary seeming greatness in the world, which tendeth to lay him as low as hell. But these high desires, and attempts, and expectations of the saints are accompanied with a deep sense of their own undeservings: they confess beforehand that they are worthy of nothing, when they live in hope of all things; they acknowledge that hell is their desert, when they aspire after heaven. And when they come thither, they will confess it was not from their merit, but will for everlasting glorify that grace that did bestow it. They lean in all their endeavours upon Christ, and never think to rise so high by any strength that is properly their own. They will readily confess, that they have nothing but what they received, and that it was God, and not themselves, that made them to differ; and therefore they dare not glory as if they received it not. When they have most, they most honour the giver: and when they do best, they magnify him that quickened, and strengthened them; and say, "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to thy Name give the glory." The more they have, the better they know whence they had it. And as

their light increaseth, so doth it lead them further from themselves, and shew them their natural darkness, and the glory of that sun from whence all flows. It is not impossible for a low spirit to have high designs; and for a man to lie in deep self-accusations, with strongest hope of an angelical glory. A man may look toward heaven that lieth flat on the earth, so that his back be towards it, and not his face. It is no pride to desire that which God made for us; nor to seek after any greatness, that he hath promised and offered, and commanded us to seek for. The sin of pride lieth not in the elevation, and aspiring after things so great; but in the undueness and error of it, and in the falseness of the estimation; unless when it comes to desire to be even as God. It is not pride, but spiritual wisdom, to desire to be like to God in holiness, and to bear his image, for that is our perfection. It is not pride, to be unsatisfied with all the greatness and glory of this world; and restlessly to seek after a heavenly kingdom, and to hope to be like the Son in glory, and to be equal with the angels of God<sup>b</sup>: for God hath made us for this, and set it before us, as the prize we run for, and given us an infallible promise of it in his word: God would not have us base, when he forbids us to be proud. His service dignifieth us, if any thing be a dignity. He would not have us to be such earth-worms, so poor, so miserable, so blind, so naked, as to take up with the trifles and dirt of the world; but would have us live like men that have souls, which are immortal. Pride is the tympany of the soul, which consumeth the substance, and is a mortal disease: he loveth not our barrenness, nor is he against our substantial growth and nourishment, because he would cure us of this tympany that would kill us. It is wind and water, and not flesh and substance that is the matter of this disease. So that, when God takes you down, it is that he may lift you up; and he makes you lesser, that he may make you greater. And if you should yet imagine that humiliation is an unlikely way to exaltation, the Spirit of God and the life of grace have taught the true convert the contrary by experience: he knows it is God's ordinary way to bring life out of death, and light out of darkness, and all things out of nothing, and to be glorified by weak things.

<sup>b</sup> Luke xx. 36.

He knoweth that Christ went by the cross unto the crown, and was nearest his glory, when he was lowest in his humiliation; and so must he. For he that will be conformed to him in his glory, must be conformed to him in his sufferings<sup>c</sup>. We must suffer with him, that we may reign with him<sup>d</sup>. The prison, and the stocks, and scourging, and scorns, were the preparation for the throne, that Paul and many another must undergo. The lark that soareth highest, and singeth as it were in the face of the sun, was bred under a clod, as low as any other bird.

Beloved hearers, I beseech you hear not these things as matters that concern you not, but as the true description of the heirs of heaven. Thus must it be with you if you will be saved. While you are unconverted; O what stoutness and stubbornness is in the heart! How fain would men be somebody in the world! How ill do you take it to be lightly esteemed! You would think it a gallant thing, if you could but be greatest, and have all things done as you would have them, and all men beholden to you, and depend upon you, and you to be beholden to none, and to have men's knees bow to you, and your word to be the law, and all men give you the preeminency; to have your name to be great and famous, and to be honoured by all. O what an excellent life were this in the eyes of a carnal man! But converting grace will bring you down, if God in mercy please to give it you. 2. It will make you call yourselves less than the least of all his mercies<sup>e</sup>. "A worm and no man<sup>f</sup>:" a wretched man<sup>g</sup>. It will make you think yourselves unworthy to live; unworthy to come among the saints; unworthy to mention the name of God; or taste of his favour; and this not feignedly, but from your very hearts. It will make you marvel, that God should do so much for such a wretch as you; and that he had not damned you long ago. It will make confession of sin, even natural to you, and make you lay your mouth in the dust<sup>h</sup>. You will say worse of yourselves to God and man, than most others will say of you, and you will the more easily bear all slightings and reproaches, and unworthy usage from the world, because you know how ill you deserve of

<sup>c</sup> Phil. iii. 10.<sup>d</sup> Rom. viii. 17.<sup>e</sup> Gen. xxxii. 10.<sup>f</sup> Psal. xxii. 6.<sup>g</sup> Rom. vii. 24.<sup>h</sup> Lam. iii. 29.

God, as having used him and his grace so ill. Instead of snuffing at those that observe you not, and honour you not, you will think yourselves unworthy to be observed, and think the dishonour less than your due. Instead of snuffing that any should go before you, or be preferred above you, you will be ready to stoop to the feet of the meanest, for their good. You will esteem others, as far as reason will bear it, better than yourselves; and in honour prefer others before yourselves<sup>b</sup>. Instead of lording it over your brethren, you will think it your greatness to be the servants of all<sup>i</sup>.

It may be you will say, this is a strange person whom I now describe, and if there be no true converts but such as these, God help us all! for they are but few. I answer, this is the description that I find in the word; and be they few or many, it is these, and only these, that are the disciples that Christ will own. "For thus saith the Lord, the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones<sup>k</sup>." "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word<sup>l</sup>." "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for their's is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth<sup>m</sup>." Read the text that Christ preached on Luke iv. 18. Rom. xii. 16. "Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate." And Job xxii. 29. "He shall save the humble person." "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted, and he that exalteth himself shall be brought low<sup>n</sup>." "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble<sup>o</sup>." I shall but trouble you to recite one half of the Scriptures that speak in this strain, and assure us that there is no true grace and Christianity without true humility. I confess there are several degrees of it in the sanctified, according to the several degrees of their sanctification, but it is predominant in them all.

<sup>b</sup> Rom. xii. 10.

<sup>i</sup> Isa. lxvi. 2.

<sup>o</sup> James iv. 6.

<sup>k</sup> Matt. xx. 27. xxiii. 11.

<sup>m</sup> Matt. v. 3—5.

<sup>l</sup> Isa. lvii. 15.

<sup>n</sup> Luke xiv. 11.

O that the ambitious great ones of the world, would lay this to heart. O that even all the leaders of Christ's flock, the preachers of humility, would lay this to heart! Then we should not have had the church so torn in pieces, by contending after precedency and preeminency, who should be lords, bishops, and above the rest; especially after such a check from Christ, as this text and divers others do contain. When his disciples strove who should be the greatest, this is Christ's decision of the controversy. Not by telling them that Rome shall be the ruler of all other churches, and the other four patriarchs shall be next to it; and the bishop of the metropolis or greatest cities, shall rule those of the lesser cities, and these shall rule those that dwell in a village. No, Christ takes another course to decide the controversy, by setting before them a child, by telling them that the "kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and they that exercise authority are called benefactors: but ye shall not be so; but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he that is chief, as he that doth serve<sup>p</sup>." One would think that the very thoughts of Christ's washing his disciples' feet, and saying to them, that thus they should do by one another, should shame proud ambition from among the preachers of such a Gospel. O that our stubborn people also would remember this! that are too good to obey the word of the Lord; and too stout to be admonished, or come for instruction to their ministers; yea, or patiently to bear a reproof. All these persons, and many more may call themselves Christians as long as they will, but Christ that knows his sheep will not own them. Believe it, sirs, it is as impossible to be a true Christian without true humility, as for a house to be without a foundation.

I have shewed you now what it is to become as little children, so far as is beyond controversy. But there is somewhat more that might be worth our inquiry, whether they were not baptized and purified children, as such, that Christ here intendeth; in whom even the root of pride is mortified? But this I will not presume to meddle with, because on this subject I would deliver you nothing, but what among the godly is commonly agreed on. But this I may well say in general; that this text in part, and others

<sup>p</sup> Luke xxii. 25, 26.

more fully do tell us, that Christ did not look upon infants as at so great a distance from him, as the Anabaptists now do.

III. Having done with the work of Conversion on the Judgment, and on the Heart, the next thing to be done, is to shew you the change that it makes on Men's Lives: for this must be looked after as well as the former. The same God that ruleth the heart, doth rule the life; and he that requireth the cleansing of the heart, doth require also the cleansing of the hands. The soul commandeth the body, and the heart will dispose of the life; if therefore the heart be changed, the life must needs be changed too. The root is for the fruit; and the life within, is much to enable us to action without. When God giveth us the root and life of grace and holiness, it is that we may bring forth the fruit, and do the works of grace and holiness. He makes not the new creature for nothing, or to be idle, much less to go on in serving the devil: but he makes him for a new work, even to serve the living God<sup>q</sup>. "For we are his workmanship, created to good works, which God hath ordained that we should walk therein<sup>r</sup>." The excellency of his peculiar people, is "to be zealous of good works<sup>s</sup>." A good heart and a good life are inseparable, as to the main; but the life may further outgo the heart, than the heart can outgo the life: for there may be a reformed life that is in many respects good, while the heart is bad; but the life is never worse than the heart: for there can be no evil of sin in this life, but what the heart is the proper cause of. "For out of the heart come murders, adulteries, theft, false-witnessing, blasphemy, and such like sins, which defile the man<sup>t</sup>." It is therefore a vain boast of those men, that take on them to be converted, when they live as they did before: neither God nor any wise man will believe them, though they may thus deceive themselves. Seeing then, there must be a new life, with a new heart, or no salvation, let us a little particularly inquire, wherein that newness of life doth consist.

1. The first and principal change of the life, consisteth in the covenant which the converted soul doth make with Christ. As this is principally in the heart, and so containeth faith and holy resolution, we have spoken of it

<sup>q</sup> 1 Thess. i. 9.    <sup>r</sup> Ephes. ii. 10.    <sup>s</sup> Tit. ii. 14.    <sup>t</sup> Matt. xv. 18—20.

before; but now I mention it as expressed with the tongue; for as with the heart we believe to righteousness; so with the mouth is confession made to salvation<sup>a</sup>. A resolved heart will have a resolved tongue; it will carry a man to express his resolution, as there is convenient opportunity, both to God and man; this covenant might be verbally entered before in the face of the congregation, in our baptism by our parents, who are authorized by God in Scripture, and nature to enter their children into it for their good; but if the heart did never truly own that covenant, when you come to the use of reason, you cannot expect to be saved by it. Your own covenant with Christ, when you come to age, is then as necessary to your salvation, as your covenant by your parent in baptism was before, to put you into that right which infants have by virtue of the promise; this covenant is the very bond, and foundation of all the following obedience of your lives, when God hath opened the eyes of a sinner to see his great necessity of Christ, and the glory and felicity that he hath procured, and withal to see the universality and freeness of the promise: and that God doth call to him to consent to his terms, and accept the mercy freely offered. Converting grace doth move the heart to acceptance, and the tongue and life to make expression of it. There might be half-covenant, and false, hypocritical promises before, which for want of sincerity were soon broken, and come to nought; but conversion entereth us into a true, and firm, and durable covenant; when the poor sinner doth once understand that it is not long of God, if he be shut out, and that Christ hath put in no bar of exception against him more than any other in the promise of pardon and salvation; and when he understandeth that God doth but stay for his consent, and all the stop is at his own will, and when he understandeth thoroughly what reason he hath to be willing, and how little there is to be said against it; then he doth set up his resolution, and give up himself in covenant unto God. It may be before he misunderstood the covenant, and thought that Christ was unwilling to shew mercy to such an one that had done him so much wrong, and he doubted whether God would bid him welcome, if he should come home; but when he is better informed, he ma-

<sup>a</sup> Rom. x. 10.

nifesteth his consent. God saith to him in the Gospel, 'Sinner, wilt thou be mine?' And he answereth, 'Yea, Lord, with all my heart; and glad that thou wilt accept of such a wretch as I.' God saith to him in his Gospel and by his ministers, 'Sinner, thou hast undone thyself, and art under my wrath and curse, I have redeemed thee by the blood of my dear Son; he hath bought thee and will save thee, if thou wilt be his; what sayest thou? Wilt thou heartily give up thyself to him to be saved? Shall he be thy Saviour and thy Lord?' And the sinner answereth, 'Yea Lord, with all my heart; nothing more welcome to me than Christ. It is Christ that my wounded soul doth want. It is he, and only he that can save me: I will be his, and take him to be mine, and gladly make with him an everlasting covenant.' Before, though Christ were offered a thousand times, the stupid sinner laid it not to heart, and would not come to him that he might have life<sup>\*</sup>: but when he is drawn by the Father, and secretly illuminated and converted by his grace, then is he heartily glad of the match; he takes this as the day of marriage between Christ and him. Christ giveth up himself to the sinner, and the sinner giveth up himself to Christ. I know that the mere covenant of the lips alone, will prove no man to be heartily converted; but this in connexion with that of the heart will prove it. Have you been brought to this, beloved hearers? To do that by yourselves at age, which you did by your parents in baptism? Have you gladly taken Christ, as he is offered to you? And have you delivered up yourselves to him? I tell you, converting grace will bring you into covenant: this covenant is the very sum of all your change: all is contained in this one word, 'The making up the match between Christ and you.' Yea, and it will make you upon fit opportunity, even manifest this to others; and even glory in your Saviour, and be willing openly to confess him before the world, and let them know that you are in covenant with him.

(1.) And I must tell you in a word, that if this covenant be sincere, it will have these qualifications following. 1. It will be done in some competent measure of understanding and judgment: you will know what Christ is, and what he

<sup>\*</sup> John v. 40.



hath done, and what need you have of him, and how he is offered, and upon what terms he is to be received and made yours. For there can be no true covenant, when you are utterly ignorant of the very substance of the covenant. 2. If it be a true covenant, it must be entire, you must take that is offered you, and not only a part: you must yield to the terms of the covenant, and give up yourselves wholly to Christ again. It is not to take Christ to some uses, and not to others, as to justify and save you from hell, and not to sanctify or save you from sin. 3. You must do it resolvedly and habitually, from a rooted habit and resolution of the very heart; and not from a sudden fear, or flash of conviction under a moving sermon, and as many will do in sickness and extremity, and then forget all, or grow cold again, and return to their vomit, when the fit is over: like those, Psal. lxxviii. 34—37. “When he slew them, then they sought him, and they returned and inquired early after God, and they remembered that God was their Rock, and the High God their Redeemer: nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and lied unto him with their tongues, for their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant.” And ver. 10. “They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his law.” 4. If you covenant sincerely, it must be for a present return, and not only for the time that is to come: It must be from that day forward, without any more delay. It is not a true covenant, which excepteth but a day. 5. And if you truly covenant with Christ, you will do it unreservedly: yea, and resolve against all reservation. You will not secretly make exceptions, and say in your hearts, ‘I will be the servant of Christ, if he would use me as I would have him, and deal easily with my flesh, and not destroy my worldly interest; I will follow him as far as the way is fair, and no further:’ No, but you will unreservedly give up yourselves to his dispose, and say, ‘I am sure I cannot have Christ, and life upon terms too hard. I am sure that however he deal with me, I can have no better master, nor can I take a better course; and if he do as hardly by me as ever he did by any of his servants, I know I shall be no loser by him, nor ever have cause to repent of the bargain. And therefore I am resolved I will give up myself to him. He is wise, and just,

and merciful, let him do with me as he will.' This is the principal effect of true conversion, to bring the soul thus to close with God in Christ.

(2.) And in the same covenant, as the converted soul doth close with Christ, so doth it renounce all other competitors. Before he served another master, but now he understandeth it must be so no more. There is no serving God and mammon, the Spirit and the flesh. Christ and satan are as unreconcilable as light and darkness. It is the purpose of Christ to bring men from the captivity of satan, and of sin<sup>r</sup>. He letteth the sinner know, that there is no hopes of joining these together: either the devil or Christ must be forsaken; either sin or mercy must be renounced. The word, and Spirit, and minister say to him, 'Thou seest, sinner, how the case standeth, God is resolved, he will not change. Never think of any other way; either let sin go, or let heaven go; take which thou wilt, and leave which thou wilt; but never think of keeping both.' Hereupon the sinner lets go his sins, and renounceth the world, the flesh, the devil; and engageth himself that Christ alone shall be his Saviour and his Lord, and God alone his chiefest good. He will take the promised glory for his portion; and this is the other part of the covenant. At this one blow the root of every sin is destroyed. But principally, that which is the centre and sum of all the rest, and that is, self-love, and self-seeking. Every unconverted sinner liveth to himself, and is addicted principally to his carnal interest, and the main work that Christ hath to do upon the soul, is, to take down this carnal self. This is the great enemy that he bendeth his force against. And the subduing of this is his chiefest victory. This is the great idol of every unregenerate man, that must be taken down, or there is no salvation. The very nature of conversion, is, a turning from carnal-self to God by Christ. This therefore is to be inquired after by all that would find this change upon themselves. And I beseech you brethren be very careful in this particular. For as this part of the work is of absolute necessity, so the interest of carnal-self is very strong and deep-rooted, and exceeding much befriended by our nature. So that here is the main difficulty of all your work. O, it is no easy mat-

ter for a man unfeignedly to deny himself: it is a subtle enemy that will keep much secret life and strength, when it seemeth to be overcome. And though you may think in an affliction, or time of humiliation, that self is brought very low; yet, when prosperity comes again, or when its interest lieth at the stake, and you are called either to costly duties or sufferings, you will then see better what strength your carnal-self yet retaineth. Many a man hath gone far, and done much, and shamefully fallen away at the last, because they were never brought thoroughly to self-denial. It is the remaining interest of carnal-self that leadeth some to fleshly lusts, and some to proud ambitious ways, and some to drown themselves in the cares of this world, and so prove wretched hypocrites at the last. I do therefore as earnestly advise every soul of you to all possible care in this point, as I would do to any thing in the world. Whatever you do, be jealous of this sin. Fight neither against small nor great, but against this enemy, carnal-life; and do not too easily believe that it is overcome. Conquer this and conquer all. This is the life and soul of all sins. The very use and end of all sin is flesh-pleasing. As he that hath right ends, hath done more than half his work for his salvation, so he that keepeth up his fleshly ends is still a servant of the flesh, whatever he may do that seemeth to be for God. He that hath got the victory of this self, hath broke the heart of every sin. And in this fall of carnal-self, there are three great master sins go down. 1. Pride. 2. Covetousness. 3. Voluptuousness. He that before was set upon the exalting of himself, is now set upon the glorifying of God. And he that lived to the world, and was a drudge for earth, is now employed for higher things, and he that must have his sports and pleasures, and fleshly ease, hath now learned to use his body as a servant, and no longer to suffer it to be the ruler of his soul. But of these I have spoken elsewhere, so that I will say no more of them now. Only this, that the destroying of these three sins, pride, covetousness, and voluptuousness, and in them carnal-self, is one half of the work of true conversion. As the other half is the setting up of God, and the turning of the soul by Christ to him, and an unreserved dedication and resignation of ourselves to him.

2. When the sinner is thus engaged in covenant to God, the next thing that he doth, is, actually to forsake that sin which he hath renounced, and make good the covenant that even now he made. For it is not a false dissembling promise, that converted sinners make to God. There is no hold to take of another man's word. Before conversion, all promises come from so low a principle that they quickly vanish, and the heart of such a man is as changeable as the moon: but when they are converted, you shall see that they are men of their word, and did mean as they said, and were in good sadness with God, and that they are indeed fallen out with sin. They do not now think to put off the righteous God with words, and keep that sin which in their covenant they did renounce: no, they know that that would but bring greater wrath upon them, and cause God to deal with them as perjured covenant breakers, besides all the rest of their sins; and therefore the same grace that caused them to promise, causeth them to perform. O what a sudden change doth appear in the lives of such as these, when God hath thoroughly done his work! I know the work on the heart is the greatest work, but that is not seen so much by men, and therefore not so much admired. But the life is seen by others, and therefore it is a wonder in the eyes of the world many times, to see the change of a converted sinner: when they see, that he that lived in fleshly pleasures, doth now despise them, and hath no such mind of his former sports and delights! They marvel what aileth the man that he is so changed, when they hear him that was wont to curse and swear, and deride those that feared God, to lament now his wickednesses, to reprove others that do as he was wont to do, and warn them to take heed of going that way. People will marvel what hath befallen the man that hath made this alteration. They do not see what he hath seen, nor know the workings of the Spirit of God upon his soul. They know not how God hath been hammering his hard heart, and melting it, and forming it to this. They were not witnesses of the strivings and conflict in his spirit, which was between Christ and the flesh; and therefore when they see not the cause within, the change without will seem the stranger to them. And indeed it is a kind of miracle to see the effects of the power of Christ, and how suddenly oft-

entimes the change is made, that would never have been made by any other means. Take a man that hath only some light convictions, and a half-repentance, and how long is he in making a half-reformation. If he were wont to swear or curse, or frequent alehouses and vain company, he cannot suddenly leave it, but sometimes he restrains it a little, as if he were reformed, and sometimes he falls to it again, because he is not truly changed. But when he is converted indeed, you shall see him ordinarily leave all these sins even on a sudden. He that was wont to swear or curse, you shall never hear him do it again. He will flee from the places that before he delighted in. He is moved by a more effectual principle, and therefore will not stand trifling in the business. Grace makes a man know, that sin, and satan, and the flesh are his deadly enemies, that seek the everlasting damnation of his soul, and therefore it is the less marvel, if he use them as enemies. If friends have weapons in their hands, they will but play with them, but deadly enemies will seek the blood of one another. There is difference between fencing and fighting for life. Though a man that knoweth nothing of their meaning, might think a fencer is fighting in good sadness, seeing he seemeth to make as great a stir as if it were so indeed. Yet the issue will shew you, that it is otherwise, because you see that there is no blood shed, nor men killed. So is it with an hypocrite in his seeming reformation; when he makes the greatest stir against his sin in confessing and prayer, and other means, yet he will not resolvedly cast it away, but he secretly useth it as his friend, while he openly abuseth it as his enemy; and he puts it into his bosom, while he calls it all to naught. He will not be brought unfeignedly to renounce it, and give it a bill of divorce, and cast it out as a man doth his vomit, with resolution never to take it in more. O how sweetly doth he roll it in his thoughts in secret, when he frowneth upon it with the severest countenance! How easily is he drawn to it again and again, when he takes on him to repent of it and abhor it! But it is clean contrary with a man that is converted. Though the remnants of sin will remain in him while he liveth, yet as to the reign of it, he presently casteth it off, and biddeth defiance to it. He fighteth against it in good earnest, as knowing that either

he or it must die. He casteth it up as a loathsome vomit which he will not take into his stomach again; you shall quickly see by the course of his life, that his heart is changed. Before true conversion comes, what a stir have we with wretched sinners to leave a base lust? To forsake their drunkenness, or covetousness, or uncleanness, to leave their swearing and cursed speaking, and yet we cannot prevail with them; sometimes they will, and then again they will not; sometimes a flash of conviction flieth in their faces, and they are a little affrighted, and then they will presently repent and mend; but when the fit is over, you shall see that it is not a change of his disposition or nature; it was but a little falling out with their sin, which leaveth them faster friends when they are reconciled. But conversion maketh an unreconcilable enmity. Away goes former sinful customs and courses; away goes covetous practices, and wicked speeches, and proud fashions, and courses. As Sarah thrust out Hagar and Ishmael out of her house, and would receive them no more. If you have deadly enemies in your house, you will thrust out them and all that they have. If a man should sit in a dark room among snakes and toads, and think verily that there were no such matter, but he were in his bed-chamber, you might persuade him long enough to come away, and tell him of the danger; but he will not stir, but laugh at you, because he doth not believe you. But if you come into the room with a light, and he see them crawling all about him, and making at him, then you need not another word to bid him be gone; he is quickly up, and leaveth them with abhorrency. We tell unconverted sinners of the hatefulness of sin, and the danger that they are in, and pray them to leave it, but they believe us not, and do but laugh at it; but when the Spirit of God bringeth in the light, and they see all this with their own eyes, that it is even worse than ever we made it, then away goes their sins without any more ado. Like a child that hath a fine yellow crab which he taketh for an apple, he will not part with it, nor let you take it from him; but when he hath set his teeth in it once, and tasted it, he will throw it away without any more ado. If such a foolish child be playing with a nettle, while he taketh it for a common herb, he is bold with it, but when he feels the sting, he

throweth it away; or if he be playing about a nest of wasps or bees, while he takes them to be but harmless flies, you cannot call him away, but when once they have stung him, he cries and runs away of himself, without another word. Even so is it with a poor sinner about his sins before conversion. We pray him to come away, and tell him that sin hath a sting, and a deadly sting, and assure him from the word of God that it will be bitterness in the latter end, and he makes no great matter of our words, but can hear us, as if we came into the pulpit to tell him a tale, and not to save his soul from hell. And therefore he can go on in his old way for all this, and take his cups, or follow the world and his fleshly lusts, and give the preacher leave to talk. But when converting grace comes, it makes them taste the bitterness and sourness of sin, and then they quickly spit it out. It makes them feel the sting and smart, and then they cry to God for help, and wish they had never known it, and run away from it with detestation. Grace bringeth in that light from God, which shews them that which they did not see before. How that all this while they have had a multitude of crawling serpents in their bosom, and they have been playing even at the brink of hell. And when they see this with their own eyes, it is time for them to take another course.

If you doubt all this that I say, whether conversion doth make a man thus cast away his sin, while the hypocrite stands dallying with it, and cannot leave it, look into the example of all true converts. Or if that do not satisfy you, look into the infallible word of God. How eagerly was Saul going on in his persecution, till the light from heaven did stop his course, and the voice and grace of Christ did change his mind! Acts ix. But do you read ever Paul did persecute any more? or doth he delay and take time to consider of the matter before he would leave his former sin? No; but he presently forbears, and betakes himself to another course. And Tit. iii. 2—5. when he confessed the former sinful course of himself and others, he telleth you now how the matter is mended. And no marvel; for the man that liveth in his former sinful way, can never be saved, whatever change of the heart he may pretend. “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?”



Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revellers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God.\* Now you see that conversion makes an effectual change of the life. Ye were such; but now it is not so, ye are washed, ye are sanctified by the Spirit of God. And, Isa. xxx. 22. when God mentioneth the conversion of these people, he saith concerning their former sins: ‘Thou shalt cast them away as a menstruous cloth, thou shalt say to it, get thee hence.’ With what detestation will a converted sinner say to his former sin, ‘Get thee hence! It is by thee that I have suffered, and had like to have been undone for ever. It is by thee that I have so much wronged God, and therefore, away with thee, get thee hence.’ So in Isa. xxxi. 6, 7. “Turn ye unto him, from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted; for in that day every man shall cast away his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which your own hands have made you for a sin.” And the description of conversion runs thus, Ezek. xviii. 31. “Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed against me, and make you a new heart, and a new spirit: for why will you die, O ye house of Israel?” And Ezek. xx. 7. God commandeth them: “Cast ye away every man the abomination of his eyes;” and ver. 8. “They rebelled, and did not cast away every man the abomination of his eyes.” “Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light: let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.” “Wash ye, make ye clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well.” “Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God for he will abundantly pardon.” “Amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of

\* 1 Cor. vi. 9—11.    y Rom. xiii. 12, 13.    z Isa. i. 16, 17.    a Isa. lv. 6, 7.



the Lord your God, and he will repent him of the evil<sup>b</sup>." An hundred more such passages might be cited, wherein it is most evident, that there is no true conversion of the heart, if the sin of the life be not also cast away.

If any will here desire to be curious, and to know just how much conquest the least degree of grace doth make, and how much actual sins may stand with sincerity of grace? Or if any will imagine, that because there is actual sin in the converted, that, therefore, there is no discernible difference between their reformation and other men's, I answer them as followeth. 1. A strong degree of grace is easily known by him that hath it, by the thorough reformation both of heart and life. 2. The weakest degree of grace is not ordinarily known, and therefore you cannot expect that I should make it known. For he that hath so little grace as to sin as much as will stand with true grace, shall scarce ever know that he hath any true grace at all in that condition. He is not fit for such a condition, nor would it do him good till he were fitter for it. 3. There is no change of the life that will discover sincerity certainly to others, nor to themselves considered alone, without the change of the heart, but there is a wickedness of the life that will prove a wickedness of the heart even unto others; much more to men themselves, who may know both immediately. 4. By this one mark you may know whether the sins of your lives, be they great or small, are certain proofs of an unconverted, graceless heart or not. In every true converted man, the main bent of his heart and life is against sin, and his chief desire and endeavour is to destroy it; but in others it is not so. Whatsoever kind of sinning therefore will not stand with such a bent of heart and life, with such a desire and endeavour, will prove that man to be graceless or unconverted that doth commit it. Now how far a man's sin is with, or against the main predominant bent of his own heart and life, he may discern himself by diligent observation.

3. I have hitherto spoke only of sins of commission, which are cast away when the soul is changed. The next part of the reformation of the life is in point of duty. A converted soul hath presently another work to do. As he hath set his heart upon another end, and looketh after ano-

<sup>b</sup> Jer. xxvi. 13.

ther portion and inheritance ; so hath he other means to use, which are suitable to the nature of the end which is to be obtained. A heavenly felicity is not gotten by earthly means. " Learning to do well," therefore is ever joined with " ceasing to do evil<sup>c</sup>." " Seeking the Lord while he may be found, and calling on him while he is near," is joined with " forsaking wicked ways<sup>d</sup>." He that is " turned from the power of satan, is turned to God<sup>e</sup>." Before conversion the wretched sinner had no pleasure in God, and therefore no pleasure in his service ; and therefore was seldom, and cold, and careless in it ; and gave God nothing but the leavings of the world and the flesh, and what he could spare ; and put him off with some formal, superficial, cheap kind of service that would cost him but little. But when converting grace hath made a change, as God is his delight, so is his work and worship. He sees a world of work before him, which they made no conscience of before. As I told you of Paul, Acts ix. 11. he falls a praying as soon as he is converted ; and from praying, he proceeds to the preaching of that Gospel which he persecuted before. It made the people wonder to see him that had been persecuting all that called upon the name of Jesus, but a little before, to preach for them a little after, Acts ix. 20, 21. The text saith, " all that heard him were amazed, and said, Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name at Jerusalem, and came hither to that intent, to bring them bound to the chief priests ?" So is it to this day : when a poor sinner that was wont to mock at a holy life, and never was used to call upon God, or at least but heartlessly, and with the lips ; that made no conscience of praying in his family, or instructing them, or holy spending the Lord's day, shall now be as diligent in these as any : when the Bible is in his hands, or other good books, that had rather before have had a pack of cards, or dice, or worldly business : when a man was wont to set light by these things, is now set upon them, and cannot live without them : this makes the world about him amazed, and say, Is not this the man that scorned sermons, who now followeth after sermons ? Is not this he that was against these things as much as any, that now is set so much upon them ? I know a man that is

<sup>c</sup> Isa. i. 17.<sup>d</sup> Isa. lv. 6.<sup>e</sup> Acts xxvi. 18.

now unconverted, may be much in the use of means, but here is the difference: to a converted man, the obedience of God is his chiefest work and business, to which all other things are made to stoop: but to the unconverted, the work of the flesh, and world is the chief, and the service of God must stoop to that. Sirs, if any of you dream that you are converted, and yet will not be brought to the works of obedience, both in holiness to God, and righteousness to men, you do but wilfully deceive yourselves. Do you think a man can love God above all, as every true Christian doth, and not seek him above all? Or that a man can have a heavenly heart, and not a heavenly life? It cannot be. If you had rather sit at home, when you should be attending upon God in the public assembly, or enjoying private helps for your souls; or are cumbered about many things, when you should be looking after the one thing necessary; it is a sign that you have not chosen the better part: whenever the heart is changed to God, the main bent of the life will presently consist in the seeking of God.

4. A new heart will have a new tongue. The fruit of it will appear in the scope of a man's discourse; "for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh<sup>f</sup>." I know a man may force his words, and therefore I still say to you, that these proofs from the outward actions, are stronger for the negative, than the affirmative. An evil tongue will prove an evil heart, but to prove a man sincere, there must be both heart and tongue. But certain it is, that though words may be counterfeit, yet true conversion doth always change the speech, and make the tongue also serviceable to those higher ends, which the heart is newly set upon. He that before had no mind to speak of any thing but earthly and fleshly matters, is now inquiring after other matters. The first words that we read of the converted Jews, Acts ii. 37. and the converted Jailer, Acts ix. and Paul, when he was converted, Acts ix. were, what God would have them do that they might be saved. Before, the very discourse of sin, and grace, and Christ, and the life to come, were a trouble to them, but now it is otherwise. They know they have their tongues for no greater use, nor can they better employ them, than in seeking direction for

<sup>f</sup> Matt. xii. 34.

their everlasting happiness. Now, if you mark them in the company that they come into, if they have any fit opportunity, they are lamenting their former sinful life, or warning others to avoid the way that they were led into, or telling men of the evil of sin, and the need of Christ and grace, or asking help of those that can help them; how to search their hearts; how to overcome the remnant of their sins; and how to carry on the work of God, that they may be ready for death and judgment, and get safe to heaven. You that are carnal, do wonder that men speak so much of these things, and you are weary to hear them, but you know not the change that is made upon their hearts. Can you blame a man to talk of his everlasting condition, and of that which is of greater moment than all the matters of the world? Can you blame a man to talk most of that which he mindeth most, and which his very heart is set upon? If his tongue be of heaven, while his heart is on earth, then he is an hypocrite: but would you not have a man's tongue to follow his heart, when his heart is right? Yet some men are so perverse, and so against the things of God, that they are ready to say, Why cannot they keep their religion to themselves? Cannot they be religious in secret, without talking of it so much to others? As if the heart only were made for God, and the tongue for the world, the flesh or the devil. As if a man should talk of nothing but the childish toys and trifles of the world, for fear of seeming an hypocrite, or for fear of troubling these queazy souls. Shall the Holy Ghost make such a change on the heart of a sinner, and shall not the tongue partake of it, or express it? Can Christ and his Spirit dwell in the heart, and the tongue conceal so blessed an inhabitant! Can a man have a taste of heaven upon his heart, and the kingdom of God begun within him, and yet not express his life or joy? Or is it meet for him that hath found the way to heaven, to hold his tongue, and let others quietly post to hell? Should a man that hath narrowly escaped damnation, himself be silent, when he seeth others go in the same way that he had liked to have perished in? Who will not call to another to take heed, that hath escaped a quicksand himself? Or set up a bush, that those that follow may see the danger? Is it not a strange conceit of these men, that would have the

converted so cruel to all that are yet unconverted ; so unthankful to God that hath mercifully delivered them ; so senseless of matters of the greatest weight, and so serviceable to satan the great deceiver, as to say nothing of such unspeakable things as these ? What ! have the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, and say nothing of it ! Have the pardon of sin in the blood of Christ, and say nothing of it ! What ! see many hundred souls in danger of damnation, and say nothing, but let them perish ! It cannot be ; it must not be ; it is a most unreasonable thing to desire it. Our tongue is our glory, it is the principal instrument of manifesting our mind, by which man differeth from all other inferior creatures : and should we not use it for God and the greatest things ? What sottish people are these to think their worldly matters fit for their discourse, and the matters of everlasting life, unfit ! To think it no harm to jest and talk foolishly, and tell idle tales, and such a man they take for a pleasant companion, and never find fault with him. But for the things that may honour God, or tend to men's salvation, or to destroy sin and cross the devil, here we must be silent, and keep our religion to ourselves. Did ever these wretches believe Jesus Christ ; " that by their words they shall be justified, and by their words they shall be condemned ? " Did they ever believe, or regard the words of the Holy Ghost, Eph. v. 3, 4. ? " But fornication, uncleanness or lasciviousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints ; nor filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jestings, which are not convenient, but rather giving of thanks." And Eph. iv. 29, 30. " Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth ; but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers, and grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." " Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another<sup>b</sup>." " Exhort one another daily while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin<sup>i</sup>." " If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God, that God in all things may be glorified<sup>k</sup>." Abundance of such passages are in Scripture, which may tell you what to think of the folly of such

<sup>a</sup> Matt. xii. 37.<sup>b</sup> Col. iii. 16.<sup>i</sup> Heb. iii. 13.<sup>k</sup> 1 Pet. iv. 11.

carnal men; and may assure you that a converted, heavenly heart, will always have a new and heavenly tongue.

5. A changed heart will have change of company, if it may be had. There is somewhat in nature that disposeth all men to delight in that company which is most suitable to their disposition. While their hearts are carnal, they love the company of such: a man that is of their mind and way, and will break a jest, and be merry with them, or talk with them about their worldly matters, is the best companion for them; for the company of mortified and heavenly men, they have no pleasure in it. They do but mar their mirth with putting in words about the evil of sin, and death, and judgment, and everlasting things: they do but trouble them, and cast them into dumps, and therefore they have no mind to their company. But when converting grace hath changed them, their minds in this are changed also. O how sapless and unsavoury then is it to them to sit or walk in the company of such that have never a word of God, or that may help them in the matters that their hearts are set upon! Their merry talk, and fine discourse, is to him but as the crackling of thorns in the fire. It doth but trouble him, and move him to compassionate such empty souls that have no God, no Christ, no heaven to talk of, but mere unprofitable trifles; but the company of those is sweet to him, that will discourse about the matters of his salvation; that will tell him how he may get more grace, and open to him more the mysteries of the Gospel, and speak of the riches of God's love in Christ, or tell him of the dangers that are yet before him, or the duties that he must perform. These matters are now savoury to him, for these he knows do indeed concern him, and are worth the talking of. When a man is in a strange country a thousand miles off, it doth him good to meet with his own countrymen, and talk with them about his friends, and family, and his estate, and inheritance, and home, which he must return to; one hour of this discourse is sweeter to him, than an hundred with the strangers of the country, about matters that are little to him: so is it here; a Christian that knoweth he is a stranger in this world, and that his God, his salvation, his home, his inheritance are all in the world to come; had rather far discourse with a heavenly minded man about

his Father, and everlasting works and blessedness, than with worldly men about this world. Who loveth not the company of his dearest friends and brethren more than of strangers or enemies? We know, those that fear God are like to be our companions for ever, and therefore we would have them our companions here. You may see by Scripture that it is thus with true Christians. "In his eyes a vile person is contemned, but he honoureth them that fear God<sup>l</sup>." "They take sweet counsel together, and walk to the house of God in company<sup>m</sup>." "They that feared the Lord, spake often one to another<sup>n</sup>, &c." "I am a companion," saith David, "of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts<sup>o</sup>." And it is one of the Hebrews' commendations, that they "became companions of them that suffered for Christ<sup>p</sup>." And on the contrary side, it was feigned to be one of Job's iniquities, to go in company with the workers of iniquity<sup>q</sup>. For men are supposed to be such as their company is; and we are commanded with such, no, not to eat<sup>r</sup>. And "to have no company with them, that they may be ashamed<sup>s</sup>." And Solomon saith, "A companion of fools shall be destroyed<sup>t</sup>."

6. Another part of the change of the life is this, true conversion makes a man compassionate to those that are unconverted, and very desirous of their conversion, and therefore sets men upon such endeavours as they can use to bring it to pass; yea, it makes men zealous of good works<sup>u</sup>, and very careful and studious to do what good they can. It is the disposition of wicked men to draw others with them into wickedness, and to make others as bad as themselves: "They not only do that which is evil, but have pleasure in them that do it<sup>x</sup>." They would have others as loose as they, and as careless of their own souls as they, and to make as light a matter of sin as they do. The drunkard would have companions, and the gamester would have companions; every one that hates and derides a godly life, would have all others do so too. Men are loath to go to hell alone; but like men that are running violently down a hill, they draw

<sup>l</sup> Psalm xv. 4.<sup>o</sup> Psalm cxix. 63.<sup>r</sup> 1 Cor. v. 11.<sup>u</sup> Tit. ii. 19.<sup>m</sup> Psalm lv. 14.<sup>p</sup> Heb. x. 33.<sup>q</sup> 2 Thess. iii. 14.<sup>x</sup> Rom. i. 32.<sup>n</sup> Mal. iii. 16.<sup>q</sup> Job xxxiv. 8.<sup>t</sup> Prov. xiii. 20.

one another with them. It somewhat comforts them to see most of the world as bad as themselves, because they think then God will not condemn so many: as if the number of sinners did extenuate the wrong. And those unconverted men that are not so bad as to wish others as bad as themselves, yet have little zeal for men's recovery: for how can they love other men better than themselves?

But when conversion hath given a man a sight and sense of the evil of sin, it makes him pity all that are misled, and earnestly desire their conversion and recovery. O how fain would the gracious soul have others to see the folly of sin, as he hath seen it! How fain would he have them see the need of Christ, that glory above, that felicity that lieth in the favour of God, as he hath seen them! It doth him good to have companions in good: he hath no mind to be happy alone. The number of partakers he knows will not at all diminish his joys. If he could tell how, he would have all the world to be as happy as himself, the more the better. And therefore he prayeth heartily for the conversion of other men: he pleadeth with them, and persuadeth them; and fain he would have their eyes to be opened, and their hearts to be softened and turned to God. He remembereth that their case was once his own, and how foolish and froward he was, even as they now are! He remembereth how miserable he then was, though he knew it not, and would not for all the world be in the same case again; and therefore he cannot choose but pity those that he hath left behind him, and long for their deliverance.

Truly, sinners, it is from hence that men fearing God, do trouble you so much in your sins, and make such a stir with you about matters of your souls; and tell you of your danger, and persuade you to turn, and take another course: it is because they are loath to see you perish, if they could help it. You would have them let you alone, but they are loath to let you alone, in such a case and way as that. If some that are running to drown themselves, or do any mischief to themselves, should bid you let them alone, and meddle with yourselves, and take no care for them, you would not let them alone for all that, but would hinder them if you could from making away with themselves. So, if you are angry with men that would keep you out of hell, and bid



them let you alone, and take no care for you, because you shall answer for yourselves, this will not satisfy them to stand still, and see you run into damnation, if they knew how to help it. Alas! it is not because they love to be meddling with other folks' matters, or take pleasure in reproving and controlling other men. If it were not for your sakes and the glory of God, it is easier for us to let you alone. We have work enough of our own to do, and dangers enough of our own to prevent. It is small pleasure to any man that is well in his wits to meddle needlessly with other men's matters, and to contradict wilful sinners, when he knows how little thanks he is like to have for it. What do you think we long to have men hate us and fly in our faces? Is it a pleasure to us to vex men, and make them our enemies? No. Alas! it is so great a displeasure, that it becomes a strong temptation to us to be unfaithful or negligent in our duty. Many a minister is so loath to get the ill will of his people, that he lets them alone in their sins, or only telleth them of it in public, or at the most but in an easy, ineffectual way, and so falls in danger of perishing with them for company. Nothing makes more negligent, unconscionable ministers, (next to the unfaithfulness of their own hearts,) than people's hating their instructions and reproofs, and impatiently bearing the means that should recover them. Carnal ministers will not cast themselves upon the people's displeasure, but rather let them alone and venture them. They that dare venture their own souls to escape the ill will of men, will venture other men's too. And so it is also with private Christians. The reason why so few will be brought to deal plainly and faithfully for the saving of others, is because it is commonly so ill taken. Alas! sinners, what ease, what profit, what good is it, think you, to other men to trouble you in your sins, if it were not for your good, and for the command and glory of God? But what man that is not a tyger, or hath not a heart of stone within a little of damnation, and let them alone? Who can be so cruel as to hold his tongue, while he seeth men in the highway to hell? If we were yet in our unbelief, and did not believe that the word of God is true, or that unconverted men shall certainly perish, then we might well be silent; for who would go to make men sad with melancholy fancies or

fearful dreams that have no truth in them? But O! do not blame a man that hath been in the same condition himself, and is mercifully delivered by converting grace, if he look back to those he hath left behind, and tell them of their danger! Do not blame a man that hath his eyes opened by faith, and seeth hell-fire a little before you, if he should call to you, and call again, and call with tears and greatest earnestness, to entreat you to stop, and go no further. I dare say, if you did but see what he seeth, you would be of the same mind, and would be as loath to go on in an unconverted condition, as any one would be to suffer you. When the eyes of sinners are shut that they see not their own condition, nor what a storm is rising in heaven against them, they are content and quiet at the gates of hell! But when either grace or torments have opened their eyes, the case will be quite changed with them. Well, this is certain, that whenever God converteth the soul, he maketh men very desirous of other men's conversion, and very compassionate to them that are yet in darkness and in bondage by their sins. Not only Paul and the preachers of the Gospel say, "Necessity is laid upon me, and woe unto me if I preach not the Gospel;" but every Christian in his place doth find a necessity upon him to endeavour the good of others; and he findeth an earnest desire to it, and a delight in that which God hath made so necessary. And it is not in this matter of conversion only, but in all other things also, that a true Christian hath a special inclination to do good. As he that is evil, delighteth to do evil; so he that is good, delighteth to do good. Though he be not perfectly good, for so is none till he come to heaven; much less primitively, and of himself good, for so there is none good but God. Yet hath he a derived, an imperfect goodness, and in that measure as he is good, he must needs be prone to do good; for every thing will work according to its nature. It is a death to wicked men to do that which is a godly man's delight. A man or beast cannot fly in the air, but a bird can do it as easily as we can walk on the earth. A good man is never in his own element, but when he is doing some good. His mind runneth on it: he studieth how he may effect it; and he is not content to do good, unless he do much good. He knoweth

what Christ hath said ; “ Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit<sup>z</sup>.” He findeth by experience that which others will not believe, that doing good is either a receiving of good, or inseparably conjunct with it. The more a man giveth to the poor or to other good uses, with right intents, the more he receiveth. Whatever others receive by his endeavours, he is sure that he shall not lose his labour or cost, as to himself. “ He that giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord ;” and look what he layeth out, it shall be paid him again. A carnal man is ever selfish, and draws all to him, as if there were no one but himself that he cared for : but a gracious man is in his place and measure like God, a communicative good. As “ God is good and doth good<sup>a</sup>,” so is he. That which a man’s nature inclineth him to, he cannot forget. A good man forgets not in the main to do good, for he knoweth that with such sacrifice God is well pleased<sup>b</sup>. Mark this all you that profess more zeal for God than others : believe it, true conversion will appear in good works. The true servants of Christ do as much exceed the world in a contempt of earthly things, and in compassion to the miserable, and in readiness and bounty, according to their ability to those that want, as they do exceed them in praying, or other duties. Other men part with the world as their treasure, and almost as their blood, but the heavenly Christian parteth with it as his superfluity, or at least as that which he can spare. Faith teacheth men to do good ; and good works are part of the riches of a saint<sup>c</sup>. Doing good is so excellent and necessary a thing, that even an enemy must be made partaker of it<sup>d</sup>. And want of thankfulness or requital from men, is no excuse to them that neglect it<sup>e</sup>. Some works of piety may be forborn for doing good to others<sup>f</sup>.

So much for that part of the change.

<sup>z</sup> John xv. 8.

<sup>a</sup> Psal. cxix. 68.

<sup>b</sup> Heb. xiii. 16.

<sup>c</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 18.

<sup>d</sup> Matt. v. 44.

<sup>e</sup> Luke vi. 35.

<sup>f</sup> Mark iii. 4.

## CHAPTER II.

I HAVE spoken of the work of conversion, as it containeth the change of the judgment, and of the heart, and of the life, and so have finished the third particular promised : which was to shew you what conversion is, and wherein it doth consist. By what is said, you may easily see that it is a great change that is made on the soul and in the life, by this renewing grace of Christ. Methinks now all those men that know, or may know, that never such a work was wrought upon their hearts, should see that it is time to look about them, and to lay to heart the sad conclusion, which Christ hath here protested in my text. What ! have all the people of this congregation found all this change upon judgment, heart, and life, as I have here spoken of? O that it were so well. What a joy were that to us, to angels, to Christ himself ! And what everlasting joy would that be to themselves ! But, alas ! their conversations and careless lives do tell us, that with too many of them it is far otherwise. And what keepeth such guilty souls in peace ? Can so many men hear such a text as this ; that except they be converted they cannot be saved, and yet not look about them, nor be awakened from their security ? Yet it is too evident by sad experience, that they that read this and know, or might know, that they are not converted, are yet as careless as if they could endure damnation well enough. And what is the matter ? And how comes this to pass ? Doubtless, because they do not thoroughly believe the truth of what is said.

IV. I shall therefore come now to the next thing promised : briefly to shew you from the word of God the certain truth of what we have in hand, that you may see it is a matter past all doubt and question.

1. And first, What need you any more than the very words of the text ? Do you need further proof, where you have the words of Christ himself ? But you shall see yet more, John iii. 3. He telleth Nicodemus, " That except a man be regenerate and born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven : " that is, as a child is as it were a new creature that lately received life, which had none before, and newly entereth into the world ; so must every man that will

be saved, as it were receive a new spiritual life, and enter into the world of grace, even into the church of God, and begin his life as it were again; "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new." See here both the necessity, and the nature of this change. It is not one or two, but every man that is in Christ, that is thus converted. And he that is not in Christ, is not a Christian, and he that is not a Christian cannot be saved. Every true Christian then is a new creature; not in substance, but in quality and in life; "old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new!" What are these 'all things?' but those that I have before expressed to you? A true converted man, hath not the same ends and intentions that he had before: he hath a new hope and happiness, new love, new desires, new sorrow, new delight, new resolution, and a new conversation: all is become new. He entereth a new covenant with Christ, and so he hath a new master, a new head, and husband and Lord: and is now a member of a new society, and entereth into a new kingdom and family. He hath a new work to do, he hath a new company to converse with, he hath new thoughts in his heart, and speaks a new language. He leadeth his life by a new law: and thus all things are become new. Even relations are here included, as well as physical qualifications. For he hath a new Father, a new inheritance, and so of the rest. It must needs be a great change indeed, where all things are become new. If it were but one or two of these, it would make a great alteration; much more when it is in all. So in 1 Pet. ii. 2. The apostle likeneth them to "new born babes, who must therefore desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may live and grow by it." And in Gal. vi. 15. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. The world must be crucified to us, and we to the world, that we may live anew to God." ver. 14. And I told you before out of Ephes. iv. 22—24. That in conversion we "put off the old man, which according to the deceitful lusts, is corrupt; and are renewed in the spirit of our mind, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." And Tit. iii. 5. "According to his mercy he saved us by the washing

of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he sheddeth on us, through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." So Col. iii. 10. "We put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created us." Ezek. xviii. 31. He commandeth them to "make them a new heart, and a new spirit." And what he commandeth all, he declareth himself resolved to give to his elect. Ezek. xxxvi. 26. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put into you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh; and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them." So in Ezek. xi. 19. "I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh; that they may walk in my statutes, and keep my ordinances, and do them, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God." And as they are new creatures, so they have a new commandment, or law to live by; and a new promise, or covenant for their inheritance<sup>b</sup>. They have a "new name, that no man knoweth but he that hath it<sup>c</sup>:" or at least they shall have. They have "new employments, even serving God in newness of life, that as they were planted together in the likeness of Christ's death, they should be also in the likeness of his resurrection. Knowing this, that their old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth they should not serve sin. For he that is dead is justified or freed from sin<sup>d</sup>." And thus they "serve God in newness of spirit<sup>e</sup>." And so the whole church is "one new man in Christ<sup>f</sup>." And a "new lump that is purged from the old leaven," must all particular churches of Christians be<sup>g</sup>. But lest any doubt should be left, I will reduce the rest to some particular arguments.

1. It is the very office of Jesus Christ, which he came into the world to perform, to bring back ungodly sinners unto God. And shall we think that Christ came on a needless errand? Believe it, sirs, as his suffering was ne-

<sup>b</sup> John xiii. 34. Luke xxii. 20. 2 Cor. iii. 6. Heb. ix. 15.

<sup>c</sup> Rev. ii. 17.

<sup>d</sup> Rom. vi. 4—7.

<sup>e</sup> Rom. vii. 6.

<sup>f</sup> Ephes. ii. 15.

<sup>g</sup> 1 Cor. v. 7.

cessary for our ransom, so was his doctrine and Spirit as necessary for our conversion, and we can no more be saved without the one, than without the other. Think with yourselves whether it be a likely thing, that God should send his Son on earth by a miracle, surpassing all miracles, and this on purpose to call home straying sinful souls, if they might be saved without conversion? If it had been possible for men to be happy without holiness, and to escape misery without escaping sin, what need Christ have come to sanctify them? The Lord Jesus is the great Physician of souls, and he comes not to heal any petty diseases, that might as well have been healed without him; but he comes to cure a killing plague, that no one else could have cured but himself. It was never the mind of Christ to come down from heaven to suffer for our sins, that we might be saved in them without a change. Never did it enter into his holy thoughts, to bring men to glory in their sins; but to destroy their sins that would keep them out of glory. He never meant to bring you and your disease to heaven together; but to heal your disease, that else would be your ruin. What shall we think, that Christ came to impute a righteousness to the impenitent and unconverted? And to make God believe that they are just in him, who are not in him at all? And to make men seem to be what they are not? Why, this were to fain the blessed Son of God to be the patron of iniquity, and to die for the upholding of sin; and not for the destroying of it. What greater blasphemy against Christ can there be, than to imagine that he befriendeth sin, which he doth so hate? And that he taketh part with satan, and strengtheneth his kingdom, when it was his very business in the world to destroy it, and his works<sup>b</sup>? What must Christ come, and so miraculously condescend and do, and suffer what he did, and all to heal diseased souls, and kill that sin that else would kill them, and after all this, shall he be made the patron of it? Take this home with thee to thy heart, unconverted sinner, whoever thou art. If men could have been saved without conversion, Christ would never have done so much to convert them as he hath done. You comfort yourselves in Christ, while you live in wilful sinning; and you think that though you be not renewed, yet you shall be pardoned and

<sup>b</sup> 1 John iii. 8.

saved by his blood-shed. Why, I tell you from the word of God, you may fetch much terror from the thoughts of Christ; but hope of salvation without conversion he will afford you none. You may rather think with yourselves, that if the changing of a sinner had not been a work of great necessity, Christ would never have come down to do it. I know that we have free pardon of sin by his blood, or else we had no hope; but it is none but the converted that partake of that pardon, as you may see, Mark iv. 12. "Lest at any time they be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them." So Acts xxvi. 18. iii. 9. "Repent ye therefore, that your sins may be blotted out." If you had but that one chapter, Luke xv. to tell you in what manner Christ doth save men, you might easily see, it is not by bringing them to heaven in their ungodliness. He likeneth himself to one that having lost a sheep in the wilderness, goeth and seeketh after it, till he find it. And when he hath found it, (what, doth he leave it? no, but) layeth it on his shoulders, and bringeth it home rejoicing; ver. 4, 5. Or like one that sweepeth the house to find a piece of silver that was lost; ver. 8. Or like the father that gladly receiveth the returning prodigal. But without returning, there had been no receiving him, nor any rejoicing over him.

*Object.* But doth not Christ tell us of some that needed no repentance? ver. 7. *Ans.* True, why is that? Because they had truly repented before. They needed no conversion; or such conversion as the new converts have, which consists in a change, from a state of sin to God: but only a proceeding in obedience, and particular repentance for their particular slips. But if they had not been converted before, they would have needed such a conversion or repentance. For so the prophet saith, Isa. liii. 6. "All we like sheep have gone astray, and have turned every one to his own way." And so, 1 Pet. ii. 25. "For ye were as sheep going astray, but are returned to the shepherd and bishop of your souls." Or if there be any that were sanctified in their infancy, as no doubt there is, so that their actual going astray was prevented; yet as they went astray in Adam and their parents, so had they a straying disposition in their corrupted natures, which needeth a turn, as well as the sins, which appear in the life. And thus it



appeareth that Christ came of purpose to convert men, and not to pardon any soul without conversion. "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost<sup>l</sup>." "Who gave himself for us (not to pardon us, and to save without converting us, but) to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works<sup>k</sup>." So that hence you may see the absolute necessity of conversion to salvation.

2. It is the very drift of the Gospel, and main design of the whole word of God, to convert men from sin to God, and build them up when they are once converted. And do you think that God would have made it the scope of his word, if it had not been necessary? If a man could be saved without conversion, what need God to inspire prophets and apostles to deliver his word to the world, and to seal it with the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, and all to convert men, and build up the converted? Would God make all this stir with us, as he doth in the Bible, for a needless thing? Alas! if he did not know that your disease will kill you except it be cured, he would never have prepared so many remedies against it. This is the very use and glory of the law of God. "The law of God is pure, converting the soul<sup>l</sup>." What else doth Scripture call sinners to, but to repent and turn to God by Christ. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel<sup>m</sup>." "But if the wicked shall turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, saith the Lord God; and not that he should turn from his ways and live? Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby you have transgressed, and make you a new heart, and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God; wherefore turn yourselves and

<sup>l</sup> Luke xix. 10.

<sup>k</sup> Tit. ii. 14.

<sup>l</sup> Psal. xix. 7.

<sup>m</sup> Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

live ye<sup>n</sup>." So Ezek. xiv. 6. iii. 18—21. Isa. xxxi. 6. lix. 20, 21. Jer. iii. 7, 14. xviii. 8. xxvi. 3. Prov. i. 23. "Turn ye at my reproofs, and I will pour out my Spirit unto you;" Hos. v. 4. xii. 6. Joel ii. 12. "Turn ye to me with all your hearts, with fasting, and weeping, and mourning; rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn to the Lord your God; Jonah iii. 8. An hundred such places might be brought in which it is apparent, that the turning of sinners to God, is the main scope of the holy Scriptures.

3. It is as certain, that it is the very business that the ministers of the gospel are appointed to, to convert men to God by the faith of Jesus Christ. And is it likely that God would send us to trouble the world with a needless work? For my part, if I did not know that repentance and conversion are absolutely necessary to the glory of God's grace and saving of the sinner, I should be loath to trouble myself and others so much about such matters as I do. Who could find in his heart to study, and preach, and weary himself, and vex the world, and call men to such unwelcome duties, and preach to them such unpleasant truths, and set them upon works that are so hard to flesh and blood, and put them upon so many sufferings in the world, if all this were for a needless thing? John Baptist began to preach repentance; Christ followed him in preaching repentance, and tells them, "except they repent, they shall all perish<sup>o</sup>." The apostles follow him in preaching the same repentance, as that without which there is no salvation<sup>p</sup>. They tell us, "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent<sup>q</sup>." Paul's business was, "to shew all men that they must repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance<sup>r</sup>." And "to open men's eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and the power of satan to God, that they may receive remission of sins, and an inheritance among the sanctified by faith in Christ<sup>s</sup>." As Christ himself came to "call sinners to repentance<sup>t</sup>," so doth he send his ministers on the same errand; and after all his sufferings, he will give men pardon on no other terms. But "repentance and remission of sins must be preached in his name among all nations<sup>u</sup>." Mark

<sup>n</sup> Ezek. xviii. 23, 30—32.

<sup>q</sup> Acts xvii. 30.

<sup>t</sup> Matt. ix. 13.

<sup>o</sup> Luke xiii. 3, 5.

<sup>r</sup> Acts xxvi. 20.

<sup>u</sup> Luke xxiv. 46, 47.

<sup>p</sup> Acts ii. 38. viii. 22.

<sup>s</sup> Acts xxvi. 18.

the way of gospel-preaching and salvation: "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins<sup>x</sup>" Repentance in order before forgiveness. When men turn from sin, God turneth from his punishing wrath; but not before. God hath "granted to the gentiles repentance unto life<sup>y</sup>." The sum of Paul's doctrine was, "Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ<sup>z</sup>." For this do God's ministers "instruct in meekness them that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will<sup>a</sup>;" and 2 Pet. iii. 9. it is said, that "God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;" which plainly implieth, that if they come not to repentance, they must perish for all that. And therefore repentance is one of the fundamentals, and preaching repentance is laying the foundation, as appeareth, Heb. vi. 1. And he that is grown incurable, and remediless by apostasy, is said to be one that "cannot be renewed by repentance<sup>b</sup>." Which supposeth that there can be no other way of renewing. And a desperate man is one that "findeth no place for repentance<sup>c</sup>." And in the godly, all the fruits of holiness are made the "fruits of repentance<sup>d</sup>."

4. The very providence of God in mercy and affliction, are purposely to bring sinners to repentance. And therefore certainly, "Repentance is necessary to salvation<sup>e</sup>." "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up to thy self wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God<sup>f</sup>." If conversion were not necessary to salvation, God would not make so much ado by affliction and mercy to bring us to it.

<sup>x</sup> Acts v. 30, 31.

<sup>y</sup> Acts xi. 18.

<sup>z</sup> Acts xx. 21.

<sup>a</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 25, 26.

<sup>b</sup> Heb. vi. 6.

<sup>c</sup> Heb. xii. 17.

<sup>d</sup> 2 Cor. vii. 9—11.

<sup>e</sup> Rom. ii. 4.

<sup>f</sup> Rev. ix. 20. xvi. 9, 11.

5. God makes it the duty even of every man in his place, to do all that he can for the conversion of others: and this he would never do, if there were another way to salvation. "They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever <sup>f</sup>." James saith, "If any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know, that he that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways, shall save a soul from death, and cover a multitude of sins <sup>g</sup>." And David promiseth, if God would pardon and restore him, that he "will teach transgressors his way, that sinners may be converted to him <sup>h</sup>." So that, lay all this now together, and judge whether it be likely that God would have set all the world on work for the conversion of sinners, if there had been any other way to save them. Should Christ himself have come upon this errand? Should the word of God be written to this end? Should all the prophets, apostles, and ministers of the Gospel be sent on this message? Should all mercies, and all afflictions be directed to this use? Should it be made the duty of every Christian to endeavour it? If men could be saved without conversion, by any other way? Doubtless the case is plain, it should not be.

I beseech you therefore, let this be received by you as an unquestionable truth: make no halt or doubt in the business; shift it not off with foolish cavils; but ground it even in the bottom of your heart, that without true conversion, there is no hope of salvation.

You have as good proof of it as you can desire of any truth in the world. Yea, besides all that I have said, it is a thing that in general is confessed by heathens, and discerned even by the light of nature. They that will not believe in Christ, will confess the necessity of repentance and reformation, which yet cannot be wrought without faith in Christ. Though I know there is a great deal more necessary to this work, yet I should think I had done something to-day, if you would but all go home resolved without all doubt of the truth of my text: and would never more think that there is any other way to salvation, besides conversion. For certainly, if you were once well resolved, that you must every man of you be con-

<sup>f</sup> Dan. xii. 3.

<sup>g</sup> James v. 19, 20.

<sup>h</sup> Psal. li. 13.

verted, or condemned, you would look a little better about you than most do. At least this would destroy your deceiving hopes and presumption, and make you see what is yet to be done, and would much help to prepare you for a further work. And that none of you may say another day, that you never heard or knew the truth, I do here solemnly proclaim it to you all in the name of Christ, that there is no hope of salvation without true conversion. And I have fully proved it to you from the word of God. So that if ever a man or woman that is here before the Lord this day, shall yet dare to live in an unconverted state, you are left without a cloak for your sin. You shall not be able to tell the Lord at judgment, that you never heard or knew so much. If he ask any of you at that day, how it came to pass that you turned not to God, nor sought after converting grace, and how you could ever think to look God in the face without conversion? you shall not be able to say, 'We lived under a minister that never told us of it; we thought we might have done well enough without it, and some particular repentance might have served the turn.' The truth hath shone this day in your eyes: you have heard what Christ saith, and what his apostles say, and what is the drift of all the Scripture. If yet you will believe that a man may be saved without conversion, it is your wilful obstinacy and unbelief that maketh you think it: you must wink hard, and draw the curtains of carnal security about your ears, if in the midst of this day-light you will sleep as in the night of former darkness.

*Quest.* But are there not many in the world that need no conversion, even from their infancy? Doth not God regenerate men by baptism, or at least before, which baptism sealeth; or at least by Christian education in their infancy? And what need have these of after conversion?

*Ans.* To this I shall answer briefly, but plainly, in these propositions following: 1. No doubt but God doth pardon original sin to multitudes of infants by the blood of Christ, through the covenant of grace, which is made to the faithful, and their seed. And being thus pardoned, they may be truly said to be new creatures, or regenerate relatively. And this pardon bestowed by the covenant, is sealed by baptism, which solemnly conferreth it. 2. It is most

probable that God doth also make some change on the hearts of infants, secretly giving them some seed of inward grace before, or in their baptism. 3. It is certain, that sometimes before their death, he doth give this Spirit to elect infants, according to their capacity, and thereby fit them for glory. I mean those that die in infancy. 4. Holy education of parents may be a means through God's blessing, of actual converting those that were before but semi-nally changed, yea, and of those that were not. And if parents did their duty first in a believing dedication of their children to God by baptism, and then in a careful bringing them up in his fear; it is most certain, that this would be the most ordinary age and season of regeneration and sanctification to life. For God would not be wanting to his own ordinances used in faith by his own people. He did not appoint them in vain, neither hath he given them a precept without a promise. 5. If any one did receive the seed of true grace in their infancy, it will certainly appear in a holy life, even from their infancy upwards. And therefore there is the same work done in the hearts of such as were converted in infancy, and after were brought up in the fear of God, as I have before described to you in the truly converted. If any man did but live one year, or month, or week of his childhood after he had the use of reason, in a state utterly graceless, that man hath no reason to take the least comfort now to himself, upon any conceit that he was regenerate in his infancy. If he have from his childhood unfeignedly loved God above all, and been heavenly-minded, and hated sin, and delighted in all holiness, and feared God, and repented of all known sin, and laboured to subdue it, and had the rest of the marks of grace in his heart, then he may be sure that he was sanctified betime. But if any man have lived to the world or the flesh but one month, since his infant state, never minding the life to come, nor loving the holy ways of God, nor hating iniquity, he may be sure that he must have another conversion, than any he had in his infancy, or it will not serve his turn for heaven. An infant-conversion may serve for an infant state of salvation; but he that hath after that lived to sin, must have an actual conversion, as he was actually a sinner. And if he had grace in infancy, he must have the same working of it

toward God and heaven, which in the work of conversion I described before. So that I do not call you to judge of your state by the time or manner of your change, so much as by the matter or thing itself. Find all that work upon your judgments, heart, and life, which I have before laid down, and be sure it is there, and then, whensoever you came by it, you are happy. But if it be not now there, it is a silly delusion, to glory in the conceits of an infant-baptismal change. Yet I doubt not but there is many a true Christian, who hath received this grace so early, that they have the greater cause to be for ever thankful for it to God.

So much for the confirmation of the point. That certainly this work of conversion is necessary to all that will be saved. One time or other the image of God must be imprinted on the heart, and in those at age expressed in the life.

II. I am next, according to the method propounded, to give you the reasons of it. Why a man cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven except he be converted. The case is so clear, that we may easily see reason for it, if we be willing to see.

1. If there were no other reason apparent to us but the word of God, one would think it might satisfy such as we. Heaven is his own, and he may give it to whom he will, and he hath told us in his word, that he will give it to no other, and should not that suffice us? May not he do with his own as he list? It is his hand that must set on the crown; and may not he set it on what head he please? We are sure of these two things: 1. That God hath full power to dispose of it, and therefore can do no wrong to others by denying it. 2. And that he is infinitely wise, and good, and just, and therefore it must needs be the wisest and best way that he takes, though such dark sinners as we could not see the wisdom, or the goodness, or justice of it. Do you grudge at this doctrine, that none shall be saved but those who are converted? Why, then you grudge at God. And do you think indeed that he knoweth not what he doth? Are you wiser than he? or are you more righteous than he? What! must the God of heaven come down to you to learn wisdom, or justice, or mercy? Will you question him at the bar of judgment, and ask him why he doth

so? Will you charge him with injustice, or unmercifulness, and say, ' Lord, why art thou so unmerciful as to condemn all the unconverted? O poor fools! (for so I dare call you that dare so far presume) how easily will God answer you, and justify his wisdom, his justice, and his mercy. It is a fine world, when the Creator must be judged at the bar of a silly creature! What! if a fly or a flea could speak, should it expostulate the case with God, that he made him not a man? or should a toad, or a snake, reprove him of injustice for making him such, that never had sinned? or tell him that this is an act of unmercifulness? How much less should a wretched sinner, that hath done so much wrong to the Lord that made him, that hath refused his grace by which he would have saved him, presume to open his mouth against God, and tell him after all this, that if he condemn him, he is unmerciful. But more of this anon.

Sirs, I tell you my religion, and my resolution. I believe all that God saith to be true, though the matter were never so much beyond my reach. And of this I am so confident, that I will venture my soul upon it. I have looked up and down to see if there be any better and surer grounds for a wise man to venture his happiness upon, and I can find no better: nay, I am sure there is no better. If any man have found any better, let him take it, and make his boast of the gain when he hath it. For my part, I will take God's word, and I will trust my soul and hopes on this, and I will look for satisfaction of all my doubts and scruples, when I come to possess the promised felicity. And I am sure I can lose nothing, or no great matter by this resolution. For sure I am that all other happiness is a shadow and delusion: and all other foundations are sandy, and will deceive. If God tell me in his word, that "no man shall be saved except he be converted," I will take his word, and let them look well to their standing that do refuse it. I will set this word of God against all the reasons in the world that you can bring. Well, you say it is a hard saying, that so few should be saved: will you say you cannot believe that God will deal so hardly? Against all these vain cavils I set the word of God. God hath said it, and will he not do it?

2. Well, but if we must needs go farther, to reasoning the case with you, and God's word will not satisfy you, I



will proceed to shew you some nearer reasons from the nature of the thing. And the first of these reasons shall be from the nature of God's government, and the state of men in this present life. We are set here as in the way to a further end. God never intended that this should be our home, nor that we should have the victory without a combat, nor the crown without the victory. God never meant that we should have the wages of his glory, how free soever, without a faithful performing of our work; at least the work of unfeigned repentance and conversion. Would you have God reward men for serving the devil? Or to say at the last day, 'Come, sinner, thou hast lived to the devil all thy life, and set thy heart on the world, and abused or despised me and my grace, enter now into the promised glory.' Why, sinners, if self-love did not blind you, and make fools of you, you could tell that this were a sentence unfit for the most wise and righteous God. What! must he reward the devil's servants? Shall not the Judge of all the world do righteously<sup>i</sup>? And what is righteousness, but to give every man his due? And is not punishment naturally due to the disobedient? Especially when they have refused, or set light by a pardon. Sirs, the case is plain. A wise and righteous governor, let him be never so merciful, must make a difference between the righteous and the wicked. And therefore God will so do. "A righteous judge must pass sentence according to the law<sup>k</sup>." Tell me, would you think well of that governor, that should let men rob you, or beat you, or violently take possession of your house or land, and never punish him? And will you think that God will put up infinitely greater injury at your hands? Would you like such a law, that shall bid all men steal, and kill, and spare not, for the judge will not be so cruel as to hang or punish them? I think you would say, this were but a foolish and unmerciful judge, that pretended thus to be merciful. Do not then for shame impute this folly and unrighteousness to God. If he should not have made righteous laws, which threaten punishment to sin, for the restraining of it, how should the world be governed? And if he should make laws, and never execute them, how should he be wise and righteous? He is not so weak as to be put to govern the world by mere deceit. It

<sup>i</sup> Gen. xviii. 25.<sup>k</sup> Mal. iii. 18.

belongeth to a righteous governor, to see that it go well with the good, and ill with the bad; ‘ut bonis bene sit, et malis male.’ And I think if God should deal so well with the worst as with the best, your own reason would be ready to question it. Why, what can he do more to the best, than to save them in his glory, for what more are they capable of? And should he do this also to the worst? And sure, if he must shut them out of glory, they must need be in misery. For if there were no more, but to look towards the happiness which they so lost, and see Lazarus in Abraham’s bosom, and the righteous whom they derided, possessing that glory which they set light by, it must needs fill their minds with anguish and vexation; and their own consciences would torment them for ever. Well, you see then some reason why the unconverted should not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

3. But further consider this. The holy nature of God will not permit the unclean and unholy soul in his presence. “There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, or whatsoever worketh abomination<sup>1</sup>.” “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity<sup>m</sup>.” “For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight, thou hatest all the workers of iniquity. The righteous Lord loveth righteousness; but the wicked his soul hateth<sup>n</sup>.” “Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous<sup>o</sup>.” “For God shall judge the world in righteousness, and minister judgment to the people in uprightness. And he is known by the judgment which he executeth, when the wicked is snared in the work of his own hand. So that the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God<sup>p</sup>.” “What reason would you have more? There is a contradiction between the nature of God and the unconverted. “What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness; and what communion hath light with darkness<sup>q</sup>?” Therefore it is that God also putteth an “enmity between the seed of the woman, and of the serpent<sup>r</sup>.” And

<sup>1</sup> Rev. xxi. 27.

<sup>o</sup> Psal. i. 5.

<sup>r</sup> Gen. iii. 15.

<sup>m</sup> Hab. i. 13.

<sup>p</sup> Psal. ix. 8, 16, 17.

<sup>n</sup> Psal. v. 4. xi. 5.

<sup>q</sup> 2 Cor. vi. 14.

calleth his converted people to come out from the impenitent unbelieving world ; not by a schismatical, but by a godly separation. “ For what concord hath Christ with Belial ? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel ? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols ? For ye are the temple of the living God ; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them ; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord ; and touch not the unclean thing ; and he will receive you, and be a father to you.” If God himself could endure communion with the unholy, then he would allow his people to endure it. But because they are his, and must be like him, therefore must they withdraw from such. Sinners, I pray you judge as you would be judged of. Would you have communion yourselves with that which is against your nature ? Would you be tied to feed upon toads or snakes, or to put them in your bosom, or lay them in bed with you ? or if a toad could speak, would it be a reasonable argument to say, Why art thou so unmerciful as to refuse my company or thus to abhor me, and cast me away ? Why, the holy nature of God is infinitely more against unholy sinners, as such, than your nature is against the most venomous toad. And therefore he cannot admit the unconverted into his kingdom. Therefore it is, that he will redeem and sanctify them, and cleanse them from their sin, that they may be presented spotless and unblamable to him by Christ, before they shall come to glory<sup>t</sup>. Believe it, sinners, light and darkness, holiness and unholiness, God and sin, are utterly unreconcilable. If ever God and you must live together in glory, you must become holy as he is holy, that you may be such as he can dwell withal, and delight in. Either he must turn unholy like you, or you must turn holy like him. And which do you think is the more likely to be done ? Can you expect that the Sun of righteousness should turn dark to comply with your darkness ? or that the immutable God should lay by his excellency, to suit himself with your vileness ? Why, this were for God to cease to be God. For to be an unholy God, is to be an evil God, and this is to be no God. For to be God, is to be the chiefest good. See

<sup>s</sup> 2 Cor. vi. 14—16.<sup>t</sup> Ephes. v. 26, 27.

then what a fair issue the carnal reasonings, and confident hopes of wicked men have. They hope to be saved without conversion and holiness. And the issue is this, they hope that God will cease to be God, lest they should be damned and shut out of his kingdom. Do not say I make worse of your reasoning than it is. The case is plain, it is no better. And I appeal to thy own conscience, whether the brains of a man be capable of greater madness. O sirs, what a be-fooling thing is sin! Is it not more reasonable that thou shouldst cease to be ungodly, than that God should cease his blessed nature? There is some possibility yet that thou mayst cease to be a wilful impenitent sinner. But there is no possibility that God should cease to be God. Woe to thee, if thou cast thy soul upon such hopes. Should God cease his goodness and blessed perfection, all the world would be confounded, or turn to nothing. Turn, therefore, for be sure of it, he will not turn to thee. He hath commanded his servants, that they come not one jot nearer the wicked. "Let them return to thee, but return not thou to them." And will he then do that which he forbiddeth his servants? Many a sinner hath thought that God is like himself, even of his mind, and thought as lightly of sin as they, Psal. l. But they never found it so in the end. He did, by wonderful incomprehensible condescension, become man to save sinners, but he will never become a sinner to save sinners; nor unholy to save the unholy. He took our flesh, and he took our curse, and in that sense became sin for us, who knew no sin; but he will never take to him sin itself. He is yet reconcilable to sinners, but he will never be reconcilable to sin. Yet, if thou wilt turn to him, thou mayst be welcome; but never look he should turn like thee!

4. And do you not yet see reason enough, why no unconverted sinner should be saved? Why come along with me, and I will shew you yet more. God offered them salvation in this life, for the very taking. I may well say upon easy and reasonable terms, when it was no more but accept it, and have it; and they would not. It was propounded to their choice, and they refused it. They might have had Christ, and pardon, and holiness, and happiness if they would, and

they would not: and would you have God to save them, whether they will or no? He set life and death before them, and bids them choose life, that they might live<sup>x</sup>. He set before them blessing and cursing, and denounced to them, that they should certainly perish if their hearts turned away, and they would not hear. He called heaven and earth to record against them<sup>y</sup>: and he sent his Son, his apostles to them, to entreat them, and in his name to beseech them to turn to him, and to be reconciled<sup>z</sup>; he charged us to be “instant with them, in season, and out of season<sup>a</sup>,” and “to reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine;” as suitors that would take no nay. He bids us even “compel them to come in<sup>b</sup>,” and yet they would not come, we could not prevail. Some would make excuses from one thing, and some from another: some had their farms, and some their trades, and some their wives, and all their sins to regard; they could not have while to be converted and fear God: and some set light by us and our message<sup>c</sup>: and some did openly oppose it, and contradicting the truth and cavilling at it, as if they were wiser than to be converted and saved; as if they had more reason than to come in to God that called them, and accept of his salvation; and therefore even scorned the Holy word and way of God, that should have saved them. Sirs, to our heart’s grief we must witness it against the face of thousands of our poor hearers, that this was the true case, and thus things were carried between God and them: Christ called out to them when he was on earth, even with tears, and bids us do the like with tears now in his stead. “Oh, that thou hadst known at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace!” but they would not, till they were hid from their eyes, and it was too late<sup>d</sup>. “How often would I have gathered thee, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not<sup>e</sup>.” Sinners, I beseech you, let not sin and flesh befool you, to make you fly in the face of God, instead of returning to him at his call. Can you think that God is unjust or unmerciful, that would have given you heaven, and you would not accept of it? If he

<sup>x</sup> Deut. xxx. 19.

<sup>y</sup> Deut. xxx. 17—19.

<sup>z</sup> 2 Cor. v. 20.

<sup>a</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 2.

<sup>b</sup> Matt. xxii. 9. Luke xiv. 23.

<sup>c</sup> Matt. xxii. v.

<sup>d</sup> Luke xix. 41, 42.

<sup>e</sup> Matt. xxiii. 37.

deny you that everlastingly, which you would not accept of, can you blame him or yourselves? I know what some hearts will be ready to imagine: you will say, 'I was willing to be saved, and therefore this is nothing to me.' But were you willing to take salvation as it was offered? If not, you may as well say plainly, you will have none of it; for you shall have none of it upon any other terms. You would have had mercy by the halves and not in whole. You would have picked out that part of salvation, which pleased you, and left the rest. God would have saved you from the guilt and power of sin, from hell, and from unholiness; and you would have but one of these, without the other: or would have been saved from hell and all other punishments; but you would not be sanctified and brought near to God, and taken off from this world, and set your hearts on the world to come: and you knew, or might know, that God would not halve and part his salvation: you shall have all, or you shall have none. If you will keep sin, you shall keep the curse with it: if you will keep the serpent, you shall have the sting and venom with it. If you will not take Christ for your master, as well as your Saviour, and be ruled by him, when his yoke is so easy, and his burden so light, never look to find rest to your souls<sup>f</sup>. If you will not be converted, you may as well speak out, and say plainly you will not be saved: for it is all one. He that saith, he will not eat and drink, may as well say he will not live: and he that will not take the physic, may as well say, he will not be cured. Sirs, if Christ, and grace, and glory had never been offered to you, nor you had any means to have brought you to the knowledge of him, then you had had some excuse. As Christ saith, John xv. 22. "If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin." If we had not in Christ's name entreated you to return, and offered you salvation, you had some excuse. But now, what can you reasonably say? I dare challenge the reason of all the world, to answer this one reason, by which God will prove, that the unconverted should be condemned. It is reason, that he that would not have heaven upon such reasonable terms as Christ did tender it him, should for ever be shut out.

<sup>f</sup> Matt. xi. 27—29.

What will you say to this, when God shall question thee, and say, 'What sayst thou, sinner, did not I freely offer thee my grace and salvation?' Do you believe you shall have the face at the day of judgment, to tell Christ he is unmerciful if he damn you, when he shall tell you, that he would often have gathered you to him, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not? Will not that one word stop thy mouth for ever? What dost thou complain of, man? Is it for want of mercy? Why, what tenderer mercy wouldst thou have had? "I would have gathered thee as the hen, &c." Sinners, I witness to you this day, that God, and angels, and men shall judge of you, that if you be thrust into hell, it is because you would not be saved; and it is not because God was cruel to you, but because you were cruel and unmerciful to yourselves. I tell you this will prove true at the last.

5. If all these reasons do not satisfy you, I will shew you more, and such as methinks should satisfy any man on earth, that the unconverted cannot be saved. Even because it is an impossible thing. It is a flat contradiction. Why, conversion is part of salvation here, and the perfection of it is an higher part hereafter. Why, sirs, sin is the soul's sickness, and wound, and death; and grace and holiness is its health and life: and were not that man a fool, that expecteth you should make him well, and not remove his sickness? And cure his wounds, and never heal or close them? Or make a dead man alive, and yet let him be dead still? Why, it is as great a contradiction and impossibility for a man to be saved and not converted. What is it that we must be saved from, but sin and hell? And there is no saving from hell but by saving from sin. "He shall save his people from their sins <sup>h</sup>." Do you know what the salvation is that God hath promised us in glory? Why it is this: that we should be perfectly freed from all sin, and have the image of his holiness perfected on our souls: that we shall be perfectly in love with God, and perfectly beloved of him, and live in the sight of his majesty, and fill ourselves with the view of his pleased face, and breathe out his praise with the heavenly host for ever. Doth such a heaven as this is like you? or doth it not? If it do not, you must have none; for

<sup>h</sup> Matt. i. 21.

there is no other, except you will call an alehouse or an whorehouse, or other sensual pleasures your heaven. But if you will have this heaven which God doth offer you, you may easily see that it cannot be had without conversion. Can you be saved from sin, and yet keep it? Can you be perfected in holiness, and yet be unholy? Can you live in the everlasting love of God, and have no true love to him at all? Can you delight in him, and yet have no delight in him, but be weary of him, and delight in your worldly vanities more? Well, sinners! I think I need to say no more. The contradiction is so evident, that you may as well say, 'I will be saved, and I will not,' as to say, 'I will be saved, but not converted.'

But perhaps some vain caviller will say, 'It is true, we cannot be glorified without conversion and holiness, but God might have given us that in another world, though he change us not here.'

*Answ.* But do you not know, that this life is the appointed time of working, and running, and fighting for the crown? The life to come is the time of reward, and of your receiving the prize that here you run for. Would you have God help you in your race, when you are past it, and your time is gone? Or contrary to wisdom and governing justice, to confound the way and the end, this life and that to come? You may with far more wisdom expect, that when you have loitered till the sun be set, God should call it back again, at your desire, that you may have daylight to work by. He gave thee time, and gave thee warning to use it while thou hadst it; and told thee, "this was the accepted time, this was the day of salvation<sup>i</sup>." And to trifle out this time, and then to think that God should give thee both grace and glory in that life, where he hath resolved only to perfect grace in glory, and crown those that have overcome on earth. This is such folly in so great a business, as I desire no friend of mine may be guilty of.

*Object.* 'But it is our ignorance of God that maketh us unholy; and therefore when death hath opened our eyes, as we shall know him better, so we shall the more love him according to that knowledge; and so we shall be sanctified.'

<sup>i</sup> 2 Cor. vi. 2.



And God cannot but love those that love him; and therefore they will be saved.

*Ans.* It is not all knowledge of God, that will cause a love to him. If you know him as excellent, and yet as your enemy, and one that standeth resolved everlastingly to punish you, this will provoke no love to him, but hatred. The dignity and worth of an enemy may be some matter of admiration to us, and of reverence, but not of such love as may tend to fruition. It is inseparable from your natures to love yourselves; and therefore you will love that which you think is for your good, and hate that which you think is against you, and tends to your destruction. You will then find that your damnation was part of God's righteous government of the world: and that the whole work of government, was one inseparable frame, begun by legislation, and finished by judgment and execution: and that God will no more break the frame of government, than he will the frame of nature: nor so much. For that he may do when he please, though he will do it rarely, but this his own perfection is against. So that when you see God, as it were obliged everlastingly to destroy you, you cannot close in love with him, as your friend or chiefest good, as those do that enjoy him in the promised glory.

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### CHAPTER III.

V. HAVING thus cleared the way, by shewing you the meaning, and the truth of the point in hand, I shall next come to the application of it to ourselves.

*Use 1.* And first, by way of inference you see from hence, that there is a kingdom of heaven to be obtained. It were in vain to talk who shall come thither, and who shall not, if there were no such thing to be had. Doubt not Christian, thou hast the word of the God of heaven for it. Challenge the tempter, if he would draw thee to doubting, to prove that ever the God of this word deceived any. If he would tempt thee to question, whether it be his word or not; shew him upon it his image and superscription, with the seal of his manifold uncontrolled miracles. And ask him what better evidence

mortals can expect, unless they would have God, who cannot be seen, to walk among them, and speak to every particular man. Oh! that thou wouldst be true to God and thyself, and then thou shalt find God will be true to thee. As sure as there is an earth for thee to tread on, and as sure as there is a sun whose light thou seest; so sure is there an heavenly everlasting glory, for every converted, persevering soul. There can be no better ground of assurance than the word of God. I know, that man, whilst he is in this flesh, is strange to things beyond his sense, and hath a natural desire to have his senses themselves to be the inlets of his knowledge; and therefore he is apt to think that either he is uncertain of all that he seeth not, (unless he hath seen the like that may help him to understand it); or else that his knowledge of it, is as no knowledge; but this is a weakness unworthy of a man. What if you had never seen London, or any such city, and should hear the glory of it described by others; would you think it uncertain that there is such a place, because you have not seen it? Nay, further, you have not seen your souls, do you think it therefore uncertain whether you have a soul or no? A man that is born blind did never see the sun, and yet he will not doubt whether there be a sun, when all the world about him telleth him so: and shall not the word of God be taken as soon as the word of a man? You never saw God himself, and yet it is the grossest error in the world to think that there is no God, when we see every hour the works that he hath made; and which we know could none of them make themselves: you see that which assureth you of the things that are unseen. You see the word of God; you see his works, and daily providences; you see a divine testimony, the sufficient ground of your belief. Noah did not see the flood, when he laboured so many years in making the ark. But though the unbelieving world might deride him in the beginning, at the last the flood came and did convince them. "By faith Noah being warned of God, of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark, to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness, which is by faith<sup>a</sup>." O, if the devil could once make you stagger at the truth of the promise, and

<sup>a</sup> Heb. xi. 7.

make you doubt whether there be a heaven and a hell, because you see them not; he might then delude you with the vanities which you do see. But when you believe it upon God's word, as verily as if you saw it, then you will be likely to be Christians indeed. Therefore the apostle bringeth such proof of the doctrine of the resurrection, and when he hath done, he buildeth this exhortation upon it. "Wherefore my beloved brethren, be stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know your labour is not in vain in the Lord<sup>b</sup>."

*Use 11.* Having gone thus far with you, and shewed you that a kingdom of heaven there is; and that certainly none but the converted shall enter it: my next business is, to come nearer your hearts, and to inquire of, and beseech you to inquire of, yourselves, whether you are the converted heirs of this kingdom, or not? Sirs, you hear from the mouth of Christ himself, how the case standeth. He that spoke this will be your judge, and according to this word it is that he will judge you. Believe you not this? I hope you do believe it. Methinks now I should need to say no more to reasonable men, to warn them presently to enter into their own consciences, and try, and try again whether they are converted. But because that this is so necessary a work, I will tell you some of those reasons that should move you presently to set upon this trial: and shew you how desirable it is to be well resolved in this point. For I know that the devil will be such an enemy to it, and the heart so backward to it, that all we can say, is likely to be too little to bring the most, but to a faithful examination of their own souls.

1. The first reason that moveth me to entreat you to try yourselves, is, the weight of the business in hand. A wise man may put a small thing to a venture, but he will not venture all his estate, or liberty, or life, if he can help it. How much less should a wise man venture his soul! Great things and eternal things should be made as sure of as we can. For a man to be in endless happiness or misery, is a matter that should not have one cold, or dull and careless thought: much less should it be ordinarily, or wholly made light of. I profess to you brethren, I wonder how you can

<sup>b</sup> 1 Cor. xv. ult.

so little regard the assurance of your conversion and salvation, as most of the world doth ! As if hell were grown sufferable : or heaven grown of smaller value ; and the glory of it did begin to fade. For, a man that is no heathen, but believeth that a departing soul goes some whither, either to heaven or hell : methinks he should be willing to know whither it should go before it is gone. For, when it is once gone, it is past recalling. Methinks, as long as you are in much doubting of your salvation, this one thought should often be running in your mind : ‘ What if I should not be converted or saved ? What a case were I then everlastingly in ? ’ Your hearts, it is like, do cherish some hopes that you are converted, and all shall be well enough with you when you die : O, but what if it should prove otherwise ? Methinks this one thought should even amaze you, whilst you are in that estate. For all my hopes, what if I should perish ? O, what wise man would put his everlasting salvation or damnation to the venture, if he could possibly get it out of doubt ? Therefore Sirs, I beseech you for the Lord’s sake ; get alone again and again, and put this question to your own consciences, ‘ How can I tell that I am truly converted ? ’ And if you are ready to say, ‘ I hope it is so,’ when you have nothing for these hopes, but because you would have it so ; call to your consciences for the proof of what they say, and do not take your own bare words. It is proof that must carry it, and not mere saying that you are converted. Ask therefore conscience, ‘ How canst thou prove it ? What canst thou shew that will evidence a conversion, more than unsanctified persons may shew ? ’ And I pray you, see that you be not put off too easily, and take not every gloss for evidence ; but in a matter of such consequence, see that you deal faithfully, and go to the very quick : alas ! almost all the comfort of your lives lieth upon it : and your everlasting salvation lieth upon it ; which is much more.

2. Another reason, which makes me the more earnestly desire that you would try, whether you are truly converted, or not, is, because all men by nature are children of wrath, and need conversion, and the greatest part of the world do live and die in their natural state, and never come to be truly converted. Seeing therefore, that it is a thing that every

one must have that will be saved, and yet most men go without it, and therefore are damned, should it not waken you to examine, whether you are of the number of those that are converted, yea or nay? If it were a needless thing that might be spared without your undoing; or if it were a thing that every body hath, or that almost all, or most have; you might be the more secure; but it is not so. What need we more proof than God's express word? "The gate is strait, and the way narrow, and few there be that find it<sup>c</sup>." And common experience seconding this word of God. Do you see that most men are converted, and such as I before described to you? O that it were so! But we shall speak more of this towards the end. Will any man that hath not lost his senses, now stand cavilling, and quarrelling that so few should be saved, instead of making sure of his own salvation? The reason that there are so few, is, because they will not be saved upon God's terms. And if you will take their course, and quarrel with the gracious word and ways of God, instead of submitting to them, you will speed as they, and be carried down the stream for company. But those that care for their souls, will take warning by other men's miscarriages, and be awakened to make sure.

3. Another reason that should move you to examine, whether you be indeed converted or not, is, because the want of this is one of the greatest causes why so few come to be converted, and to be saved. Nothing doth more keep a man from turning back again, when he hath lost his way, than when he doth not know that he hath lost it: and how can he know, that wandereth in the night, and will not inquire and ask the way, or that is so wilful and self-conceited, that he will not believe any man that telleth him he hath lost his way? As long as he is of this mind, he will never turn again. So is it with most of the careless world: they are going into the way of worldliness or vainglory, and live to the flesh, which is clean contrary to the way to heaven, and yet they will not once seriously ask a minister, or ask any one that can inform them, whether that be the way or not? Or whether they shall ever come to heaven in that way? But they trudge on after their fleshly business, as if they had no tongue in their heads; or as if it were not

<sup>c</sup> Matt. vii. 14.

worth the asking, to know whether they were in the way to heaven or hell. Surely, if men will not so much as inquire, or consider with themselves, and examine their way by the word of God, to see whether they are right or wrong, they are never like to be saved. If you, that never had this great cure done upon your souls, did but know so much, you would not rest sure, till it were done. You could not lie down quietly, nor rise quietly: you could not eat or drink, or sleep quietly. Tell me, ever a man or woman of you: could you be quiet, if you were sure that you were yet unconverted, and in a state, that if death should find you in, you must be damned? If you knew this by yourselves, how could you choose but get presently to God on your knees in secret, and cry out, 'Help Lord, or I am everlastingly undone! O forgive me, and change my heart and life; or else I am a lost man and woman for ever!' How could you choose, if you knew yourselves unconverted, but follow God with your prayers day and night till he had changed your hearts. You could not sit at home, but you would go to the ministers, and to experienced Christians, and ask them for some help, and advice for your salvation. But, when men think all is well with them; who can expect that they should put themselves to so much trouble? Or seek much to God or man for cure, or make any great matter of the greatest misery? I do not fear any one thing more, to make me lose all this labour, and leave many of you after all this, unconverted, than this conceit that you are already converted, when you are not. This is it that is most like to hinder our work, and to undo your souls. And therefore for the Lord's sake, sirs, deny me not this one request, to take a little pains to try whether you are converted. "For if any man think he is something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself."

4. Another reason that should make you never rest till you know that you are converted, is, because of the many exceeding benefits that the true knowledge of this one thing would afford you. For the truly converted, holding on to the death, shall certainly be saved. O sirs, if you had but this assurance once, you might live quietly, and abound with comforts! You might lie down, and nothing make you afraid: you might rejoice in the mercies of the Lord, as the tokens of his love; and bear his rod with greater

peace, as being the chastisement of a father. Had you but this assurance once, you might hear and read the word with comfort; and when you come to the promises, say, 'These are mine:' you might secretly and publicly pray with comfort, "and have access with boldness to the throne of grace<sup>e</sup>:" you might run to God when any thing aileth you, and call him your Father in confidence of his acceptance: you might gladly feast with the saints in the holy communion of the church: you might cheerfully sing God's praises, and glory in the thoughts of his great salvation. And when you are dying, you might look to heaven as your home, "and long to be dissolved and to be with Christ<sup>f</sup>." And might joyfully let go your departing souls, and say as Christ, "Father, into thy hand I commend my spirit." O sirs, what a blessed life is this, when a man can look upon every thing with comfort! If he look on the godly, he can say, 'They are my brethren:' if on the wicked, he can say, 'I am delivered from their sad estate.' If he look on any of the mercies which he possesseth, he can say, 'They are the fruits of the blood of Christ, and the tokens of his Father's love.' If on his poverty or want, he can say, 'My greater wants are supplied, and these prepare for the everduring riches.' If he look on the law, he can say, 'It hath nothing against him,' because he hath pardon through him that hath borne the curse. If on the Gospel, he can rejoice in it, as the glad tidings of his salvation. If he look on the threatening, he can say, 'It reacheth not a pardoned sinner:' if on the promise, he can say, 'It is my charter for heaven.' If he look upward to heaven, he can say, 'It is my own inheritance, thither I am going, and there I shall shortly be.' If he look downward, toward the place of torments, he can say, 'From thence did grace deliver me.' If there were any terror to a man's soul, it would be in sin, and satan, and death, and hell, but none of these are matter of terror to him. Not sin, for it is pardoned, and mortified in part, and will be perfectly ere long. Not satan, for he is conquered, and cast out of his possession. Not death, for it hath lost its sting, and is become the passage into everlasting life. Not hell, for it will be our perpetual joy, to see that we are delivered from such everlasting torments. In a word, because he can say,

<sup>e</sup> Heb. x. 19. Eph. iii. 12.<sup>f</sup> Phil. i. 23.

' God is my Father, Christ is my Saviour and my Head, the Holy Ghost is my Sanctifier;' therefore he can say, " All is mine, as I am Christ's, and Christ is God's <sup>g</sup>." O sirs, what would you give; nay, what would you not give, to be presently put into such a condition? Had you not as lief as have all the world now, that you were sure that you are converted, and in this state of life? Sure, if you were well in your wits, you had. Who would care what becomes of the world, if he were once sure of heaven? Or what become of his corruptible flesh, if he were sure it should go well with his soul, and that flesh itself should rise again to glory. O what a terrible thing it is, for a soul to go out of the body, and not know whither! And how much more to depart under the curse of God! From the damnation of the law, to the condemnation of the judge. But how blessed is it, to remove from the state of a frail and sinful man, to live with Christ, to be " equal with the angels <sup>h</sup>."

What say you now, beloved hearers? Is there not weight enough in these reasons to persuade you to try whether you are converted or not? Dare you say there is not? If you dare not, you are witness yourselves that you are convinced. You see it is your duty; or see it is necessary for your own good. Your labour will be small in comparison of the profit: the loss will be nothing; the commodity may be unspeakable. Shall I then as your minister beseech you presently to fall to this work? As a messenger of Christ shall I entreat it of you? As a friend to your souls shall I entreat it of you? It is for yourselves: it is no unreasonable matter, you see, that I ask of you. Conscience shall witness one day to the face of refusers, that it was not unreasonable. Neighbours, I pray you for the Lord's sake, and for your soul's sake, do not deny it me. I profess in the presence of the Lord, I had rather you would grant me this small request, than give me all you have in the world: even that you would but make it your business to try, and thoroughly try, whether you are yet converted, or no? But then, let me entreat you to do it seriously, and make somewhat of it, and leave it not till you have done your best to be resolved whether it be so with you or not. You do not need to ask me what aileth me to be so earnest with you for such a thing.

<sup>g</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 21    2 Cor. iv. 15.

<sup>h</sup> Luke xx 36.



You have heard by the foregoing reasons what aileth me. You may see here in my text what aileth me. When Christ himself saith, "Except you be converted, and become as little children, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." This is the thing then that I entreat you to do : that you would betake yourselves at your next opportunity without delay into some private place, and there bethink yourselves what you have heard ; or at least what is said here in my text : and say thus with yourselves ; ' I see there is no hope of salvation without conversion ; my heart must be turned from the world, and flesh, and sin, to God by Christ, or else I cannot enter into heaven. I know I shall shortly leave this life : doth it not concern me then to see betimes that I be converted ? Was ever such a change as this wrought in my heart, or not ? There is no dissembling with God ; he will not be mocked. What sayest thou, conscience ? Have I ever had such a change, or not ? Thus follow on the inquiry, and leave it not, till you can say off or on whether you have been converted, or not. Or at least till you have some more light into the business than you had before. And if you cannot do it at one time, as it is likely you cannot fully, go do it again and again : think on it as you lie in bed : think on it when you are alone, and say to yourselves, ' Seeing I must be converted or condemned, is it not time for me to know whether it be so with me, or not ? ' And if you cannot get the case well resolved, let me entreat one thing more, which I have often entreated of you ; that you would come to one of us that are your teachers, or go to some judicious, able Christian, and ask advice to help you in trial : for in so great a business, it is dangerous to be mistaken. I do not speak all this to those Christians that have lived long in the fear of God, and have doubts raised in their minds by the temptations of the enemy, or by their own great care of the matter of their salvation, and have asked help of ministers, and taken pains, and done what lieth in them to be resolved, and yet find some doubts remaining. It is not these that I now speak to. Though I would not grudge my labour to these whensoever I can have time for it, to do them any good I could. Yet I would rather advise them to acknowledge the light of grace that shineth in their eyes, and not forget their own experiences,

nor make light of the abundance of that mercy, which hath translated them from darkness into the kingdom of Christ, and feed upon that glory that is propounded to their faith. But I speak to those that either never did yet set to the work of examination, or never followed it, till they discerned their miserable estate, or at least not till they got out of it, but are still sticking in the world and flesh : and also to those young, unsettled Christians that be not yet well resolved for a change ; or at least those that never yet had the advice of any minister, or judicious person, for the right settling of their spiritual estate : for all these, but especially for those that never set upon examination before, I would entreat them, if they find themselves in the dark, and cannot well manage it themselves, or cannot find whether they are converted or not, that they would come to us, and seek advice. I pray you, neighbours, do not think that we are either so stout, or so careless of your souls, as to despise you, or to think it much to take this pains with you. The poorest beggar in town shall be welcome to us, that will come to us on this errand. Indeed, ministers are set in every church, as the physician is in the town, for all that are in distress to resort to for advice, that their diseases may not prove their death. It is not only to preach to you that we are made ministers, but especially to give advice and direction for their salvation to all that have special need, and come to us. Indeed for small matters you should no more trouble a minister, than you should trouble a physician for a cut finger, because you have others enough at hand to give you advice. If all the people of England would use their ministers to this kind of employment, it would be happier for their souls, and happy for the nation, and would make men know better the nature and need of the office of the ministry. We do not desire you to come to us, as the Papist priests make all their people do, to confess every secret sin that they have committed in Lent, before they receive the sacrament at Easter. But when you hear out of the word of God, that no man can be saved except he be converted, and you set yourselves to try whether you are converted or not, and cannot find it out : here your salvation lieth much on the business, and therefore common reason telleth you, that you should take the best advice you can,

and that presently, without delay. And so, you may be much better resolved, and your minds more quieted, and you may go upon surer grounds for your salvation, than perhaps you would otherwise do. There is never an honest minister in England, but would be willing to forbear his meat, or sleep, as far as nature would bear, to help his people in such straits as these; when they come to us, and tell us, 'I have taken some pains to try whether I am converted truly, or not, and I am not able to discern; I know it is your office to help me; I pray you help to resolve my doubt, for I am resolved I will not venture my soul so carelessly as I have done till now.' You do not know what good you might get, if you would but take this course to be resolved. For God will bless his own ordinances. I pray you, therefore, let no carelessness, or bashfulness hinder you; for matters of salvation are not such things that you should either be careless, or ashamed of. However, say not but we offered you our help.

But perhaps you will ask me, When I am examining my conscience, how shall you know whether I am converted or not? By what marks may it be discerned? To this I answer, I have so often given you divers marks already, in the sermons I have preached, and the books that I have written for your use, that I am loath to do the same thing over too often. But for this time it may suffice, if you will but remember that description of the work of conversion, which I gave you before. For in that are all the marks that are necessary.

When you are examining your own hearts inquire then :

(1.) Whether you ever found that change upon your mind that I before mentioned. Are you soundly persuaded of the truth of the word of God, and the life to come? And do you know and believe how vile a thing sin is? And what need you have of Christ? and what he hath done for you, and offereth to do? And do you esteem of the love of God, and the hopes of salvation above all things in this world, and account of all but as dung, that you may win Christ? Are you fully persuaded of the riches of free grace, and of the necessity of a holy life, how much soever you may have slighted them heretofore?

(2.) And have your hearts been so far changed hereupon,

as that you have laid up your treasure and hopes in the life to come; and that is it that you take for your felicity: so that you can truly say, that the main bent and drift of your life is, not for the pleasure or profits of the world, but how to please God, and be happy for ever? Though you may step out of the way by human infirmity, yet this is the bent and scope of your life: this is your chief care, and this hath your most serious thoughts and business. Can you truly say, you use the world for God and for heaven, and do not serve God for the world? And that you take all these outward things, but as necessities in your journey, but look at heaven as your home and happiness? And that God hath the highest room in your hearts, and the world and flesh stand under him; and that you do not prefer these things before him? And that you are resolved, whatsoever it cost you, to stick to God though you lose the world; and not stick to the world, when it loses you the favour of God? And that God shall be first served, and that the world shall have his leavings; and not the world first served, and God have its leavings? Have you tasted of the infinite love, which he hath manifested for your salvation in the blood of his Son, and admired that free grace, that hath thus purchased your redemption? And fled to Christ, as the only refuge of a guilty soul, from the curse of the law, and the wrath of God; renouncing all conceits of any merits, or legal righteousness of your own, taking Christ and his merits for your righteousness? Do you find that you hate the former sins that you loved, and take pleasure in those holy ways that you had no pleasure in before? And are you resolved thus to hold on to the death?

(3.) Is all this to be seen in your life? Have you in good sadness changed your former courses, and resolved to turn to them no more? Have you left your own ungodly company further than your calling, or necessity, or charity requireth you to be with them? And have you betaken yourselves into the company of those that fear God, and take pleasure in their holy communion, and in their help and company in the way to heaven? Especially do you avoid those great transgressions, by which you were carried away in your ignorance! And are you willing to destroy the remains of your sin, whatsoever it cost you, and not to

spare, or cherish, or befriend it? So that there is no known sin, that you wilfully live in; nor known duty that you wilfully cast off. But you would fain be what God would have you be, and your greatest sorrow is, that you can be no better. And if you fall by any temptation, you rise again with shame and grief, and free confession, and renew your resolution by the grace of God, to take better heed for the time to come.

This is the sum of the work of conversion, and this is the state of a gracious soul. I have left out divers particulars, lest I should be too long, because you may see them together before you; but the rest are implied in these.

When you go then to examine your hearts, set these few questions before you, and put them to your hearts, or else peruse those marks that I have given you in my "Directions of Peace of Conscience," or those in my "Treatise of Judgment," or those in my "Book of Rest." You do not need to be at a loss for marks to try by. Books will help you, or ministers will help you, or friends will help you. But all the difficulty is in two things. 1. To get your heart to the work. 2. To be able to know your own hearts. For they are so dark and deceitful, that without a special light and diligence, you may easily be mistaken in yourselves.

Well, brethren, I again renew my request to you, that seeing you must be converted, or condemned, will you set yourselves to try whether you are converted or not? I hope you be not willing to be deceived; and I hope you do not think that salvation is not worth this much labour. I should hope that I might request as much as this from you, if it were for myself, or a friend; how much more, when it is for your salvation. Tell me, therefore, will you do this much at my request, at Christ's request, yea, and at his command, or will you not? Will you bestow now and then a secret hour about it, and follow it on till you get resolution, and know whether you are converted or not? Truly, neighbours, I do not speak these words to you carelessly or customarily, as matters that I shall never look after when I am out of the pulpit; or as if I cared not whether you ever more minded them, or not. But it is the matter of practice that I regard: whether you will do the thing that I am desiring of you. I am loath you should spend another day in a state of condemnation,

and not know it. I am loath you should spend another day in negligent uncertainty of your everlasting state. If you are converted, I would fain have you know it; if I could procure it, I would have you sure to go to heaven when you die, before you pass another week, or before you go this night to bed. And if you are not yet converted, I would fain have you know it, that you may lay to heart your condition, and without any more delay, may make out for the grace of Christ, that must recover you. I pray you do not think that it is utter despair that I am driving you to. If you should upon trial find that you are unconverted, you need not despair, and say, 'there is no hope.' No, but you must know, that there is mercy before you. Christ hath prepared it for you, and offereth it to you, and is willing you should have part in it if you be willing. Only you must consent to be changed now at last, and resolve to go no further in the old way. It is conversion, and not desperation, that God requireth. And I hope a man may seek after his error to amend it, rather than to despair of the amendment. What, if upon examination, you should perceive that till this hour, you have been in a state of death? It doth not follow, that you must live and die so; but that you must make haste to get out of it, which you will hardly ever do, till you find that you are in it. It were a foolish traveller that will say, 'I will not ask the way, lest I find that I have missed it, and then I have no hope of getting home.' But rather he should ask the way, that if he have missed it, he may know it, and get in the right way before it be night. And because it is my present business, rather to convince the unconverted for their recovery, than the converted for their comfort, I shall here tell you for the negative, who they be that are yet unconverted, and must be changed, if ever they will be saved.

(1.) That man or woman, that never yet perceived and felt that sin is a great and detestable evil, deserving the wrath of God, and that never felt what need they stand in of the pardon of sin, by the blood of the Lord Jesus, nor was ever humbled in the apprehension of his unworthy dealing with God, but can bear his sin as a tolerable burthen, is yet unconverted; and without conversion cannot be saved<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xi. 28. Luke xiii. 3, 51. Psal. li. 17. Isa. lvii. 15. Luke xiv. 11. xviii. 14.

(2.) That man or woman that was never driven to Christ for deliverance, nor beaten out of the conceits of merit, or sufficiency in himself; nor brought to admire the glorious design of God in the great work of redemption; nor savoured the sweetness of the glad tidings of salvation, which are brought to distressed sinners in the Gospel. So that his heart was never warmed with the sense of the Redeemer's love and blood; but heareth and readeth the Gospel as a common story. Or, as if it were not he that was thus redeemed, is yet unconverted, whatsoever he may seem<sup>k</sup>.

(3.) That person that hath not his heart and hopes in heaven, and looketh not at that as his only happiness, and doth not make it the business of his life to attain it; but setteth his heart more upon the things of this life, is certainly unconverted, whatever he may pretend<sup>l</sup>.

(4.) That person that is not weary of all known sin, and hateth it not, and would not be rid of it with all his heart, and is not willing to be at the labour or cost of duty, in the use of those means which God hath required for the obtaining of a conquest; but will venture his soul upon a careless life, rather than he will be brought to diligent godliness; and taketh up godliness in part upon mere necessity, having rather let it alone if he durst, and taketh it for a grievous thing to be hindred from his sin: that person is not as yet converted, but must have a further change before he can be brought into a state of life<sup>m</sup>.

(5.) That person that doth not set himself to the duties of holiness to God and righteousness, and mercy toward man, that hath not the Spirit of Christ within him, and the image of God upon him, and doth not express it in his worship and obedience, and is not loving, compassionate, and merciful to others, nor humble and low in his own eyes, nor delighteth in doing good, nor is willing to do as he would be done by; I say, that person is not yet truly converted, whatsoever seemings of conversion he may have; but must yet be otherwise converted, or be condemned<sup>n</sup>.

<sup>k</sup> Phil. iii. 8, 9. Eph. iii. 18, 19. Luke vii. 47, 48. Rom. x. 15. Acts xiii. 32.

<sup>l</sup> Phil. iii. 21. Matt. vi. 21. Rom. v. 2. Tit. i. 2. Heb. xi. 1 Cor. xv. 19. Col. i. 5. 23.

<sup>m</sup> Luke xviii. 25, 24. Rom. vi. 14. 16, 17. 21. vii. 13. 22. 24. Psal. cxix. 5.

<sup>n</sup> Matt. v. Heb. xii. 14. 1 Pet. i. 15, 16. ii. 5. 2 Pet. iii. 11. Heb. iii. 1. Psal. i. 2.

(6.) That man or woman that hath any thing in this world, that is so dear to them that they cannot spare it, and part with it for Christ, and obedience to his command, but will rather venture their souls upon his threatenings, and will only take up so much of religion as may stand with their worldly prosperity or seeming felicity, and are not resolved by strength of grace, rather to let go all than Christ: I say, that person is yet unconverted, and must have a further change, or be condemned °.

Now, the Lord have mercy on poor sinners! What a world of them are yet in the state of death! And how little do they believe it, or lay it to heart! I wonder what men think of such words in Scripture, when they meet with them. Sure they cannot choose but consider that they concern them as well as others. And if no man can be saved without conversion, they must needs know they cannot. What then do these men think of themselves? Do they think that they are converted, or that they are not? If they think they are not, then surely they durst not rest till they are. For I do not think they are willing to be damned. It must needs be, therefore, that they think they are converted, when they are not; and that is the thing that deceiveth and quieteth them in their misery. But it is worth inquiry to find out what it is that so deceiveth men, that the grossest worldling, or the vilest sensualist, are yet persuaded that they are converted, gracious men; and I find among others these three things are the cause. 1. They do not know what conversion is, but take that to be true conversion, which is no such thing. 2. They do not know themselves, but take themselves to have what they have not, and do what they do not, and be what they be not. And 3. They are resolved to believe what they would have to be true, be it never so false; and therefore will rather think they are well already, than they will be at the trouble to know that it is otherwise, and to use the means for a thorough discovery.

*Use III.* By the foregoing inquiry, we have certainly found, that conversion is too strange a thing in the world; and that the greatest part of the world, yea, of those that are called by the preaching of the Gospel, are yet unconverted. The consideration of this must needs be a grief to

° Matt. xvi. 24. x. 37, 38. Luke xiv. 33. Phil. iii. 19. Matt. xiii. 6. 20, 21.



the heart of every faithful minister, that knoweth the misery of an unconverted man, and foreseeth his latter end. It will be a grief to any honest physician, if he have a whole hospital of sick persons under cure, to see that the most of their diseases are mortal, and to find but few recovered by the greatest skill and care that he can use; how much more must the everlasting danger of men's souls begrievous to those that are appointed to watch over them? Would the Lord but cause you to know your own misery, as we know it, and to compassionate yourselves, as we must compassionate you, we should have the more hope of your recovery. Will you now join with us in lamenting your own condition, and lay to heart what a case it is to be unconverted? Truly humanity, and much more Christianity, doth bind us to think on your condition with lamentation. Should we see an enemy; should we see a very dog in torment, and have no compassion? How much less, so many men and women that are so near us, and so dear to us in the flesh? Alas, that there is such a glory, and most men will miss of it! That there is such a fire prepared for the devil and his angels, and the most will run themselves wilfully into it! Why, faith maketh things absent as if they were present. That which will be so one of these days, I look on it as if it were even so already. Oh! methinks I see the thousands of the unconverted, departing from the face of an angry Judge; who hath newly shut them up under his final sentence, "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire<sup>p</sup>." If you ask me, why I tell you of such sad things? Truly, brethren it is, because they are much more sad to suffer, than to hear of; and because you are yet alive in a possibility of preventing them. If you marvel that I should believe such things, when no man seeth them: it is because I am a Christian. And if you believe them not as well as I, you would do well to say so plainly, and do not dissemble any longer, and take on you to be Christians, when you are not; and to believe God's word, when you do not. I profess to you, I should take it but for a paltry profession, to ride up and down to preach the Gospel, and trouble the minds of men in vain, and get the ill will of most of our neighbours, and tire and spend ourselves in this work, if it

were not certainly true, which we must tell them ; and if the Gospel were a fable or human device. If the word of God were not true, ministers have the most unworthy employment upon earth. But if it be true (as nothing is more certain), O Lord, what hard hearts then have we, that we are no more affected with your condition ! And what hearts have you, that are no more affected with your own ! The Lord knows, if I were not confident that this word is true, that telleth us of the danger of all that are unconverted, I would not have been here to-day ; nay, I would shut up my books, and take another trade in hand, and never preach more. But shall a man that knows the unconverted will be condemned, forbear to tell them of the misery that is near them ? Then were our case more sinful than yours, for you know it not, and therefore love not to hear of it. I believe it, and know it, and yet should I silence it ? I know it is unpleasant doctrine, but it is necessary, and it is most true ! God never yet did prove a liar ; if he were not true, he were not God. You will believe yourselves the things that you see not, upon common experience ; and why should not I believe that which I see not, upon a better ground ? You see not the sun at midnight, and yet you believe that it will rise the next morning, because it useth to do so. You see no flowers or fruits on the earth in winter, and yet you believe that you shall see them the next year, because they use to come in their seasons. You are now all alive, and see not your graves digged, nor your friends about you, there laying you, and leaving you in darkness to the worms, and yet you know that such a day will come, though now you see it not ; as truly do I know, that there is endless woe to every sinner that dieth unconverted. I see not the flames, nor do I hear the cries of damned souls, but yet I know that there they are, while we sit here, and there they will be to all eternity. It is like the man in Luke xvi. was a gentleman of quality, that had so bountiful a table, and was clothed so gorgeously every day. Alas, his poor brethren it is like, did little think what was become of his soul, when they had laid his body in the earth. If a preacher should have told them he was afraid he was in hell, do you think they would not have been ready to fly in his face, or account him intolerably self-conceited, or precise ; and yet

the Lord Jesus brings us news that he was in hell-torment, wishing that one might be sent from the dead, to warn those his poor brethren that he had left behind him on the earth. No doubt, he knew that they were all of the same mind as he was, when he was alive; and as fleshly, and worldly, and careless of their salvation, and therefore were in the road-way to the same condemnation; or else if he had known them to be godly, heavenly-minded men, he would never have thought them in such danger, as it seems he did. But we read not that they had any such fears of themselves as he had. If one had come to them from the dead, and told them, that their late worshipful brother was in hell for his sin, and knowing them to be all in the way to the same misery, had sent to them to beseech them presently to be converted, lest they also come to that place of torment: what welcome do you think such a messenger would have had? I know not well what fear of a dead man appearing to them, might have done; but I partly imagine what entertainment a minister should have had, that had said the like. Verily, sirs, the case of careless sinners is never the safer, because they see not, and fear not the danger. A man in a consumption or dropsy, is never the further from death, though he be never so confident that he shall not die. If a thief at the gallows have a conceit that he shall escape, that will not save his life. What if you should have an hundred men that you had known on earth, sent to you from the dead one after another, and all of them should tell you this one sentence in my text, That there is none enter into heaven but converted souls; would you not begin to look about you, and say to yourselves, Am I converted or not? What a case am I in then, that am yet in the flesh? It may be if one appeared to you in your chamber in the night, and told you this news, it would only affright you a little, and you would forget it. Perhaps if two or three only should appear to you, and tell you it, you might forget it again; but if twenty should tell it you, methinks it should awaken you. Why, sirs, the words of the Lord are of more weight, than the words of a thousand dead men are. "If you will not believe him, neither will you be persuaded though one rise from the dead<sup>a</sup>." Seeing these things are

<sup>a</sup> Luke xvi. 31.

so, I do not blame ministers, if they be plain and earnest with you, though some may think them precise, and besides themselves. Paul was put to make this answer; "For whether we be besides ourselves, it is to God; or whether we be sober, it is for your cause<sup>r</sup>." Truly, we are like a physician, that seeth a foolish man eating arsenic, or mercury, and telleth him, O what are you doing? it is deadly poison, you must presently take a vomit, or it will kill you. But because it is sweet, derides the physician, and bids him look to himself, he hopes he shall do as well as he, till he feel the griping and burning at his heart, and then he will believe it. Oh! the gripes of a damned man's conscience, when he reflects on the day of grace which he lost on earth! We tell you not of this to drive you to despair, but to persuade you to take the vomit of repentance, and to cast up your sins before you are past hope. Do not think we wrong you, to foretel you what will come of it, if you die unconverted. If there were any wrong in it, it must be laid on God that can do no wrong. If he have not bid us tell you of them, then take us for your enemies and spare not: call us liars, if we shew you not his word for it. But alas, when God hath revealed your danger, must we hide it? And that when he hath foretold us, that if we tell you not of it, your blood shall be required at our hands, Ezek. iii. 18. Read that text well, and tell me then, whether you would have us such cruel enemies; I had almost said such devils to you and to ourselves, as to hide a matter of such inconceivable moment from your eyes? What good would it do you to be thus flattered into hell? What good would it do you to have us to be damned with you, for being unfaithful for the preventing of your damnation? Who will laugh at this but satan, the great enemy both of us and you? Alas, you may easily think with yourselves that it is no pleasure to a minister to tell you so sad a story of your misery. But, if a Balaam must say, "If Balak would give me the house full of gold and silver, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord, to do less or more<sup>s</sup>;" must not Christ's ministers be as faithful? I say again, if this Gospel were not true, I would be a sweeper of channels, rather than a preacher; and I would join in a petition to have all ministers banished the

<sup>r</sup> 2 Cor. v. 13.<sup>s</sup> Numb. xxii. 18.

land : but seeing it is otherwise, I appeal to your consciences, who it is that wrongeth you : whether Christ and his ministers to tell you of your danger, or yourselves to make light of it, and to refuse the cure ?

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## CHAPTER IV.

THUS much I have spoken to you, to make you willing to hear and know the truth of your condition ; my next desire is, that you will lay it well to heart. You will never make out aright for the remedy, till you feel your misery. Alas, what abundance of people are there in the world that never were converted, and yet live as carelessly as if all were well with them ! Come among twenty that are as merry as the best, and ask them one by one, whether they are converted or not ? And some will tell you, they hope so, they cannot tell ; and some will deride you ; and most of them perhaps know not what conversion is, nor ever much minded any such thing ; and yet these very men do read, or hear the word of God, that telleth them so plainly, that, "Except they be converted, they shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." What do you think, sirs, of such words, when you hear them, or read them ? Are you never touched at the heart with them, and doth conscience never make you cry out, Alas, then, what will become of me ? Well, because I would have you sensible of your condition, lest you should rest in it to your undoing, I will tell you a little further, what it is in some particulars : and the Lord awake you to lay them to heart !

1. As long as you are unconverted, you are no true children of God, nor members of Jesus Christ. And therefore you have no part in that fatherly, special love, but still stand before his eyes as enemies. For your hearts are not towards him, but toward the things below, as you know, or might know if you would. The world is divided into two sorts, the children of God, and the children of the devil : the converted, and they only, are the children of God, as you may see, John i. 10, 11. Rom. viii. 9. All the unconverted are the children of the devil, as Christ himself calls some of them, John viii. 44. And so 1 John iii. 10. it is said of

them all ; and long ago they were called the seed of the serpent, Gen. iii. 15. It is by faith in Christ Jesus that we are made the sons of God <sup>a</sup>; and the unconverted have not true faith. When you go to God in prayer, if you cannot call him your Father, what comfort can you expect? If you look up for a blessing on your labours, and for supply of your wants, if it be not to a father's hand that you look, how cold will the comfort of them be! Why, it is conversion that turneth the heart to God, and if he have not your hearts, you are not his children, and therefore none of the unconverted are his children. You are "all by nature the children of wrath <sup>b</sup>;" and therefore not the children of God. And by regeneration you are new-born children of God: and it is conversion that is this regeneration. You may call him Father as long as you will, but he will never call you children till you are converted. You may think you have as good right in him as another, but he will never own you, till you are converted. You may call him, Lord, Lord, even to the last, but he will tell you, "he knoweth you not <sup>c</sup>." It is not nature, but renewing grace, that putteth upon you his image, and putteth within you his Spirit and holy nature, and if you have not that image, that Spirit, that holy nature, whatsoever you may think yourselves, he will never take you for his children <sup>d</sup>. All the children of God are somewhat like him: "they are holy, as he is holy <sup>e</sup>." And it is conversion that maketh men in their places and measure like to God. It is plain therefore, that the unconverted are none of his children ; and then how can they expect his fatherly love, or his fatherly care of them in the time of their necessity? The goodness of God is the foundation of all the creature's hopes, but if you will keep out of the way of his goodness, and yet expect the benefit of it, you are like to be deceived ; for an enemy or a stranger cannot look for the portion of a child.

And as you are no children of God, so you are no members of Christ without conversion ; for we are adopted only in Christ ; and therefore children of God, because members of Christ, who is his natural son. It is conversion that makes us members of Christ. I suppose you will confess,

<sup>a</sup> Gal. iii. 26. Eph. iii. 17.

<sup>b</sup> Eph. ii. 3.

<sup>c</sup> Matt. vii. 22.

<sup>d</sup> Gal. iv. 6. Rom. viii. 9. 1 Pet. i. 14.

<sup>e</sup> 1 Pet. i. 16.

that if you were not Christians, you were miserable: and if you be not converted, you are not true Christians. You may have the name, but you have not the nature. You may keep a room among those that profess themselves Christians; but God that knoweth the heart will ask you, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment <sup>f</sup>?" And then you will be speechless. That man that hath no part in Christ, how sad and miserable a condition is he in! It was the terrible description of the case of Simon Magus, "Thou hast no part nor lot in this matter; thou art yet in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity <sup>g</sup>." And the proof was, "because his heart was not right in the sight of God <sup>h</sup>." He was baptized, and had a kind of belief, but yet he was not converted, and therefore had no part in Christ. All the hopes and life of the world, is laid up in Jesus Christ, 1 John v. 11, 12. He therefore that hath no part in him, hath no hope, no life, no ground of peace, or comfort. Without a Saviour, how dare you draw near to God in prayer? How dare you think of death or judgment? What a sad appearance are you there like to make? Oh! woe, and ten thousand woes to that man, that must stand at the bar of God, without a part in the blood of Christ, and must answer there without that advocate. Nay, he will be judge himself, and will justify none but those that are his members. You will sure confess yourselves, that if you have no part in Christ, you are in a most miserable case. Why brethren, the case is as plain in Scripture as the high way, 'That if you are yet unconverted, you are no true Christians, and have no part in Christ, as to any saving interest. You are by nature in another stock, and it is converting grace that must cut you out, and plant you into Christ, the living vine. This is the very nature of true conversion: therefore must men be humbled, and mortified, and broken off from themselves and all creatures, that they may be removed and planted into Jesus Christ; and may abide in him, and he in them, and that in him they may bring forth fruit; for out of him you are nothing, and can do nothing. And whatsoever you may profess, you are but withered branches, and must be gathered up, and cast away, and burnt in the fire <sup>i</sup>. It is all one to be a man, and not to

<sup>f</sup> Matt. xxiv. 12.<sup>g</sup> Acts viii. 23.<sup>h</sup> Acts viii. 21.<sup>i</sup> John xv. 1. 4—6.

be born ; as to be a true Christian, and not to be new-born : for as our conception and birth is the passage into the life and world of nature, so our conversion or new-birth is the passage into the life of grace. We that know not your hearts, do call you all Christians that seem to be so ; but if we certainly knew who they be that are yet unconverted, we should tell these men to their faces, they are no Christians. Their souls are not yet washed with the blood of Christ, nor are they sanctified by his Spirit, and therefore having not his Spirit, they are none of his <sup>k</sup>. O therefore in the name of God look about you sirs, and you that have lived so long unconverted, remember you have lived so long without a part in Christ. And therefore lament that you have taken on you to be Christians so long, when it is not so, and now be such as you have seemed to be. The union between Christ and true Christians, is internal, in the heart : mere words and ceremonies unite not men to Christ.

2. Consider further, I beseech you ; there is no hope of the salvation of any unconverted man, that so liveth and dieth. This is true, whether you like it or not. If you are offended at this saying, you are offended with the saying of Christ that redeemed you : and it were better for you to be offended with your sins, than with Christ that condemneth them. If you say, it is a hard saying, I am sure it is a true saying, for God cannot lie. I gave you the proofs of it before at large : if you forget them, remember my text, and you need no more. What hypocrites then are those wretches, that say they will not believe it, and yet for all that, will take on them to be Christians, and to believe the word of God. You read here that Christ protesteth, “ Verrily, that except ye be converted ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” And when you read it, yet you say, you will not believe it. And yet you will say, that you are Christians and believe Christ. What contradictions are these ! What ! wilt thou worship a God, whom thou takest to be a liar ? This cannot be : no man can heartily trust him, especially in so great a matter as his salvation, whom he takes for a liar. Thou wouldst not give God the lie ? If he be not perfectly good, he is not God : and wilt thou then feign a God that is like to liars, or wicked men ? No

<sup>k</sup> Rom. viii. 9.



marvel then if you be liars yourselves, if you think God be one; for no man is bound to be better than God. And therefore I will never marvel to see any man do that evil which he conceits that God himself will do.

But what will sinners get by this unbelief? It is but the way of their own self-delusion, and undoing. He that will not believe God, I cannot expect he should believe me, or any man: nor can he rationally expect to be believed himself. Yet I will ask him the question.

You that see what Christ saith, and yet say you will not believe it, but that unconverted men may be saved; what say you? Do you know any man in the world that you will believe, if he speak to you with such protestation as Christ here doth? If you do not, it seems you measure other men by yourselves. If you do, I would fain know of you, whether you think that any man is better than God? I had rather believe that God is true, and every man a liar, than that men are true, and God is a liar, Rom. iii. 4. And I would further ask you; would you have any man believe you, or take your words? If you say no, he is not wise that will have any thing to do with you, if he can choose: and then you openly proclaim what you are, even such liars that you would not wish men to believe you: but if you say aye, then I would further ask you, whether you dare take on you to be better than God? Why, thou sinful lump of clay, thou frail, imperfect, mutable wretch, wouldst thou be believed thyself, and wilt thou not believe God? Darest thou say that thou art truer and better than God, and that thy word is to be taken before his word? If thou dare, do not blame him if he shortly stop that presumptuous mouth of thine, with his confounding indignation; and if he make that blaspheming tongue to be speechless, when he shall say, "Take him, bind him hand and foot, and cast him into utter darkness<sup>1</sup>." And then thou wilt have weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Well then, if God be not to be believed, no one is; and if God be to be believed, then no unconverted man shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. And is it not time for you then to consider of your condition, and look about, whether you be converted or not? I pray you be not so

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxii. 12, 13.

silly, as to take these words as mine, and so to think that it is I that make the matter so terrible. If I had not found them in the Bible, I had never preached them to you; and we have nothing to preach, but what we here find, and to open this to you, that you may understand it. It will be nevertheless true, if neither I, nor any preacher in England should tell you of it; or if none of us did believe it. For our unbelief maketh not the word of God of none effect. I do therefore entreat you all, as you are men of reason, see that you be truly converted, because no unconverted man shall be saved; it is God that saith it, it is the devil that denieth it, and will you believe the devil before God? This was it that brought destruction first upon the world, when God told our first parents, that if they sinned they should die; and the devil told them, they should not die, and they believed the devil rather than God. And have you this warning, and will you do so too? Is that a Christian, yea, is that a man, or worthy the name of a man, that will considerately believe the devil before God? And believe his own flesh and carnal reason before God? Whether is God or the devil think you, the better, and the more to be believed, and the better friend to your souls, and more to be trusted and regarded? O horrible wickedness! that ever men should put us on such a question, or make any comparison! And what are you, that you should presume to set your reason against Christ? God saith, 'Verily the unconverted shall not be saved,' and you say, for all this you hope they shall: and what are you, that you should be believed before God? What, do you know more than he? Why, where had you that knowledge? Is there any knowledge in the world, that comes not from God? And doth he give you more than he hath himself? Is a dungeon lighter than the sun? Or is there any light here below, but what comes from the sun mediately or immediately? Why, a dungeon may better compare with the sun, and say, 'I have more light than thou;' than thou canst compare with God, and say, 'I have more knowledge than thou.' Oh! that ever dust and ashes should be so blind, as not to know this! And that ever they should prefer their blindness, to the infinite knowledge of him that made them! If you do not, how dare you say, you hope that will prove false which God

hath spoken? But do you think that this unbelief will make your danger ever the less? No, it is this that increaseth your danger. What if a man in the midst of evil, will wink, or put his eyes out, is he therefore safe, because he seeth not his danger? Again, therefore, I beseech you, if you be men of reason, if you be not resolved to be your own enemies, and to do the worst you can against yourselves, if you do not long for damnation; O, then believe God, and take time while you have it, and make out for conversion without delay. And instead of hoping to be saved against the word of God, and as it were in despite of him, and whether he will or no; see that you presently yield to the word, by which he would convert you, if you do not resist it. Believe your present misery, and look out presently to Christ for the remedy, and thank God that you may, and that the day of his patience is not past. And if the devil and sin do still so harden your hearts, that you will not believe, nor take this counsel, remember that thou wast told, that the unconverted shall not enter into heaven. Remember that this was preached to thee from the word of God, and thou wouldst not believe it. Yea, thou shalt remember it whether thou wilt or no.

3. I beseech you consider further; that while a man is unconverted, he hath no sin pardoned; all the sin that ever he committed, is yet upon his own score, and he shall answer for it before God, and suffer for it for ever, if he thus continue. I do not speak this either of my own head: I will now give you but three texts of Scripture to prove it, which is as good as three hundred. Mark iv. 12. When Christ speaks of those that were judicially hardened, because they had wilfully resisted grace, he addeth, "Lest at any time they should be converted, and their sin should be forgiven them." By which you see, that till men are converted, their sin is not forgiven them. And Acts xxvi. 18. "I send thee to open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance," &c. You see then, that men receive not forgiveness of sins, till they are turned from the power of sin to God. Rom. viii. 30. This is the order of God's saving grace. "Whom he calleth, (that is, converteth) them he justifieth; and whom

he justifieth, them he glorifieth." So that no man is justified, before he be called.

Consider then, what a fearful case it is to have a load of unpardoned sin upon your souls. One unpardoned sin would as sure condemn a man for ever, as one stab at the heart would kill a man. What then will so many thousands do? Poor sinner, if Christianity, and humanity did not bind me to compassionate thy soul, I would not tell thee these things to trouble thee. But I cannot forbear, unless I would be cruel to thee. It seemeth an easy matter to a felon to think of his crime, while he is not apprehended, because he lives in hope to escape, and therefore he can laugh when he talks of the gallows; but when he comes to it, the case is altered: offenders may escape the justice of men, but no man can so escape the hand of God. It may now seem a small and easy matter to you, to think and talk of unpardoned sin; but the day is coming when you would give all the world if you had it, for a pardon, as light as you do now make of it: all are sinners, but all are not unpardoned sinners: it is not all sinners that shall perish; for then we should all perish; but all unpardoned sinners shall perish; and all unconverted sinners are unpardoned. When sin is pardoned, the terror of it is gone; then a man hath a sure refuge against the accusation: he can say at judgment, if he be accused of his sin, that he hath a pardon of all through the blood of Christ, and then there is no more to be done against him: but so cannot the unpardoned. O, heavy case for a poor trembling sinner to hear, 'At such a time thou didst abuse God's creatures, and his name, and his word, and his ordinances; at such a time thou didst neglect duty, and misspend thy time, even the Lord's day,' and to have nothing to say against the accusation. What a sight will it be for him, to have all his sins set in order before him<sup>1</sup>! All the sins of his youth, and his riper age; of ignorance, and of knowledge, and have no remedy against the justice and the wrath of God! Once there was a remedy offered them, but being finally neglected, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, "but a certain looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation that shall devour the adversary<sup>m</sup>." Tell me, I beseech you, sirs, what do you think

<sup>1</sup> Psal. l. 21.

<sup>m</sup> Heb. x. 26.

to do by the sins that you are guilty of? Do you believe that you shall come to judgment for them, or not? If not; what do you here among Christians? If you do, will you tell me what you mean to say, or how do you think to come off, and to escape? Either you must have a pardon, or not: if you have not pardon, what do you think will become of you? There is no question of it, but an unpardoned sinner must be damned, as sure as the devils themselves are damned: for Christ telleth you this will be the sentence, "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." O, woe to that man that ever he was born, that shall stand at God's bar with unpardoned sin. It will be heavier upon thy soul; than a mountain upon thy body, and press thee down to everlasting misery. Unpardoned sin is the very fuel of hell. If angels and men should all join together to save an unpardoned sinner at judgment, they could not do it. What hope have you then to escape, or to see the face of God with comfort? I beseech you, bethink you what you mean to say, or how you think to come off? Should a wise man be going to such a judgment, and never once think what to say for himself, or how to escape when he comes thither? Will you then plead, that 'you hope you are pardoned by the blood of Christ?' Why, alas! that will be utterly vain; for there is no hope that God will be false to his word; and God hath assured you, that the blood of Christ and the mercy of God shall never pardon any sinner, but he that repenteth and is converted of his sin. Will you say, 'Though I am not pardoned now, yet I hope I may beg pardon then.' And do you think to cry aloud, and persuade the Judge? Oh! if that would do, what a cry would there then be! How many thousand and thousand souls would cry, 'Mercy, mercy, Lord, on a poor miserable wretch! O pity a lost sinner! O do not condemn thy creature; do not deliver me up to the tormentor; do not send me away from thy presence into those flames! O, as ever thou hadst pity on a sinner, have pity on me.' If crying, and praying would then serve the turn, how would they ring in the ears of Christ! Oh! but it is then too late! too late, sinners! you should have done this sooner. The day of grace is now past, and there is no remedy. Now

prayer might do good (with forsaking sin through the blood of Christ) and men will not use it, but then it will do no good at all.

Do not say that I make this terrible doctrine of myself; the Scripture is full of it. Christ hath told you over and over of it: that if you are then found without the oil of saving grace in your lamps, you shall in vain cry 'Lord, Lord, open to us;' and long enough may you knock, before you can have any hearing; but Christ will say, "Verily, I know you not<sup>o</sup>." It is not they that will cry "Lord, Lord, that shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but they that do the will of our Father which is in heaven." For many in that day will plead acquaintance with Christ, to whom he will profess, "I never knew you, depart from me all ye that work iniquity." They are his own words in Matt. vii. 21—23. I tell you again, if all the angels in heaven should fall down before the Lord Jesus Christ, and beg for you, (which they will never do) and beseech him to pardon your sins, he will not do it. For it is in this life that pardon must be gotten, or never. We have no hope to be wholly free from sin, but we may procure the pardon of it through Christ, and if it be not done now, it will never be done. Now must the pardon be procured, and sued out, and then it must be brought forth that you may not be condemned.

Now, as ever you would stand with boldness in judgment; sinners, repent and be converted, that you all may have the pardon of all your sins. As ever you would stand then at Christ's right hand, and not be sent into everlasting torment, look about you now for the pardon of your sins; for there was never man that got a pardon after he was dead, who died unpardoned. I give you but the same counsel which Peter gave the Jews: "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord<sup>p</sup>." I pray you mark these words; you see there no man's sins will then be blotted out, but those that now repent and are converted.

4. The next thing that I would entreat you to consider, is this; that as long as you are unconverted, you are the servants and slaves of satan, and under his power, and led

<sup>o</sup> Matt. xxv. 11, 12.

<sup>p</sup> Acts iii. 19.

about as his captives at his will. It may be you do not think so much, nor believe this, but perhaps would take it ill to be told so. But God hath told us that so it is. There are but two sorts of men in the world, the slaves of sin, and the servants of Christ. All the world is in two armies: satan is the general of one, and Christ of the other, and these two are in continual conflict with one another. In his first assault with Adam our first father, satan overcame him by drawing him to sin, and thereby got him and his posterity into his power. The Lord Jesus comes of purpose to rescue us out of his hands, and this he doth by converting grace, and justification thereupon. So that, till a man be converted, he remaineth in the bondage and slavery of the devil; and when he is converted, he is entered among the freemen and sons of God.

What think you of this? Is it not a miserable state to be the devil's bond-slaves? Why, if you will believe God, it is the case of all that are unconverted: nay, you may feel it in yourselves. Do you not feel that your wills are to do evil? That he leadeth you to worldliness, to drunkenness, or wickedness at his will? If he bid you rail or swear, you do it. If he bid you neglect everlasting life, you do it, and you have no heart to God and the life to come. Why, these are the marks of satan's bondage. Hear whether the Sripture speaks it not plainly: "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" "He that committeth sin is of the devil. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doth not righteousness, is not of God." The meaning of both is, that he that hath the main bent of his heart and life for sin, that is, for the flesh and the world, is of the devil: and he that hath the main bent of his heart and life for God, that is, for righteousness, is a converted child of God. So, 2 Pet. ii. 19. "For of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage." And in 2 Tim. ii. 26. they are said to be in the "snare of the devil, taken captive of him at his will." And in Acts xxvi. 18. it is expressly said, that conversion "turneth men from the power of satan unto God." So

¶ Rom. vi. 16.

¶ 1 John iii. 8. 10.

that you see the case is plain in Scripture: that, till men are converted, they are in the power of satan.

It may be you perceive not the misery of your condition; and no marvel, for satan's servants are all volunteers, and he useth to keep his possession in peace, till a stronger than he shall come upon him, and cast him out; Luke xi. 21. O that the eyes of poor sinners were but opened to see who it is that leadeth them about! Poor soul! didst thou but see that the devil is thy ruler, that he standeth by thee, and puts thee on in all thy wickedness, it would sure make thee desire to change thy master. You are afraid of seeing him appear to you in any shape, and if you should but see him, it would make your joints to tremble. O! why are you not afraid to be ruled by him, and to follow him to your destruction? Why are you not more afraid, lest you should dwell with him for ever? A man that is in the favour of God, were not much the worse if he should see all the devils in hell, no more than a soldier to see the enemies, when they are conquered; but a man that is unconverted, whether he see them or not, should tremble to think that he is yet in their snares. O that you did but know, and well consider, that it is the devil himself within you that cavilleth against the word of God, and contradicteth the truth, and draweth you to doubt, and enticeth you to sin. If you did hear the devil say to you with a voice, 'Come, follow me to the alehouse,' it would sure frighten you from going. Or if you heard him speak out, and say against the Gospel, 'It is not true, do not you believe it,' how would this affect you? Why, it is he that speaks this in you, whenever you have these thoughts in your hearts. Your own corrupt hearts are the mother, but he is the father of them all. When you feel such thoughts as these within you, that sin is a small matter, and that God doth not hate it so much as preachers talk of, and that God will not condemn all the unconverted, that so live and die, and that men may be saved without a holy life, and that this is but preciseness, and more ado than needs, all this is as truly the very inward persuasions and motions of the devil, as if you heard him speak it openly in a voice. It is he that bids you 'go on in sin and fear not, and yet at least take a little more of your fleshly pleasure, and if you must turn, let it not be



yet.' It is he that bids you hate them that endeavour your conversion, and make a scorn of those that fear God. It is he that bids you lose your time, especially on the Lord's day, and talk of filthiness or vanity, and rail, or lie, or back-bite, or hate your brother; as truly as if you saw and heard him, this is he. The Scripture telleth us so, that this is his work, which Christ did come into the world to destroy<sup>s</sup>. We can certainly know the workman by his work. So bad a work hath no better an author. I beseech you, therefore, in the name of God, bethink you where you are, and what a case you are in. Have you known all this while, that you were in the power and captivity of the devil? What, and yet be so merry or careless as you have been? What, sleep quietly, and live quietly, and yet be in such a case? Why, if a man be taken prisoner by the Turks, and laid in a dungeon, or put into their gallies, how sadly doth he take it? How many a sigh and groan comes from him, to think where he is, and what a case he is in, in comparison of other men! And many a time he cries, 'O that I were free!' And yet all the servants of satan are willing of their bondage. This is it that makes you deserve the less pity, because it is your own doing, and you will not be delivered. A Turkish slave would be delivered if he could, and would give a thousand thanks to him that would deliver him: but you might be delivered and will not. Christ hath provided a remedy in his blood, he offereth it to you, and entreateth you to accept it, and yet you will not. He hath commanded us to entreat you, and you will not be entreated. "God would have all men saved, and come to the knowledge of his truth," and many will not be saved. Christ "would gather them as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wing, and they will not<sup>t</sup>." When God offers you help, and ministers offer you help, and godly friends offer you help, and fain they would have you delivered, and you will not; what pity do you deserve, if you perish everlastingly? It is a strange thing to see how people hate the devil, and yet love his service! How they speak ill of him and yet obey him! How they even spit at his name, as men that abhor him, and yet will not be persuaded by any means that we can use, to come out of this captivity, when the doors are set

<sup>s</sup> 1 John iii. 8.

<sup>t</sup> 1 Tim. ii. 4. Matt. xxiii. 37.

open by Christ that bought them. Not that I suspect that any of you do really love him ; for I know that God hath put an enmity in the beginning, even between the nature of satan and of man<sup>u</sup>. I know you hate him, even while you wilfully serve him. But the matter lieth here ; though you hate him, you love the sin, because it is pleasant to flesh and blood, and you do not know, or will not consider that it is he indeed that leadeth you to it ; or else you durst not continue in that case. Well sirs, lay this to heart, and believe that all men are slaves to satan till they be converted ; and if you are not willing to live and die his slaves, and to be used for ever as his slaves, delay not your conversion.

5. Moreover, the misery of the unconverted doth further appear in this ; that while men are unconverted, nothing that they do can truly please God. There are many works which, for the matter of them, are commanded, which such men may do, but yet there are so many defects, and so much of the venom of their corruption mixt in them, that God hath no delight in them, but doth abhor them. I would not be misunderstood in this, as if I said or thought, that therefore, all that the unconverted can do, is to no purpose, in order to their salvation : and that, therefore, it is as good for them to let all alone, and sit still and be careless till God shall convert them ; or as if it were better, or as good for them not to pray, as to pray, and not to hear or read, or ask advice, as to do it, because that all is displeasing to God. But I mean, and say, that there is more in their best duties to displease God, than to please him, and that they are such as he hath made them no promise of accepting, so far as to give them any special grace, or reward thereupon. Or if this please not any, yet this much is out of controversy, that the duties of no unconverted man are pleasing to God, so as to prove their persons pleasing to him, as his own servants are ; and that God takes no delight in their duties, as he doth in those that are performed by the righteous. And thus at least you may take it as beyond all question, that God is comparatively displeased with, and abhors even the best works that are performed by the unconverted. The works of wicked men are of four sorts. (1.) Some are such as have no tendency to their con-

<sup>u</sup> Gen. iii. 15.

version and recovery, nor to the good of any others, but are either plainly wicked for the substance, or but indifferent for the matter, and wicked in the ends and manner. These God abhors in the highest degree. (2.) And there are some that are common civil actions, in themselves neither good or evil. But yet, because the common ends of such are wrong, and the manner sinful, these therefore are said to be abomination to the Lord. (3.) And then there are their best works which are done by them with evil intents, to settle them in their present state, without any thoughts of turning from it, as their alms-deeds which are done to merit, or to quiet their consciences in a sinful state, or the like. These also God abhorreth, for all the good that is in them. For these they do as wicked men, wickedly, for all the goodness that is in the action. (4.) But then, there are some actions of the unconverted, that are in order to their conversion, and these God accepteth not, so as to accept their persons, as of one reconciled to him in Christ, nor as he accepteth the works of his people; nor so as to be engaged by promise for their reward. But yet he so far accepteth them, that they are ordinarily the way in which he will be found; and in which he will give them greater things. They are means of his appointing for the conversion of their souls, which he hath not appointed them to use in vain. So that by this time you may see my meaning here in this particular. The three first sorts of the works of wicked men, God doth plainly abhor, even their works that are both such for matter and end; and their civil and natural works, that are wicked for the end; and their religious works, that are wicked for the end. But the fourth sort, which are works that are done in order to their conversion, though they please not God as the works of the regenerate do, yet he abhorreth them not as he doth the rest: for as they come from a common faith, though not from a special faith, so they may please God in a common manner, though not in a special. And as they have an end that is good in its place; that is, the saving of their souls by turning from their sins, though they have not the true ultimate end of the saints; that is, the glory and pleasing of God everlastingly, and the enjoyment of him therein, so are they proportionably acceptable to God. So that it is the first three sorts of action that I mean in this

application. And in regard of them, I say it is a matter of great terror to the unconverted, that God abhorreth all that they do.

I will first prove it to you, and then shew you the terror of it. As for their wicked works, there is no question, they are abominable to God, and he hateth them. See Jer. lxiv. 4. Psal. liii. 1. 14. Ezek. xvi. 52. Tit. i. 16. Prov. viii. 16. xi. 1. 20. xii. 22. And the "very thoughts of the wicked are abominable to him," as Prov. xv. 26. But the question is of their better works. And we find in Scripture, that their very trades, and works of their callings, are sin. The "ploughing of the wicked is sin<sup>x</sup>;" or if perhaps the sense of that text may be that their preparations and contrivances are sinful, which are metaphorically called ploughing, yet of their best works the Scripture is plain. The "sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is his delight<sup>y</sup>." Note, that he saith not, the humiliation or the repentance, or thoughts of conversion that may be in a wicked man, but his sacrifice, which is somewhat that he thinketh God should accept, as a matter of worth. And therefore it was that Cain's sacrifice was abhorred, when Abel's was accepted. And that you may see that it is not only because of the wicked designs that they may have in it, the Spirit of God speaketh of both. "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination, how much more when he bringeth it with a wicked mind<sup>z</sup>." Yea, the very prayer of wicked men is abominable. Yet do not say that God is a respecter of persons, and will take that well from one, which he hateth from another without any just cause. For there is just cause. If you will not do the main things that God requireth, he careth not for the rest. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination<sup>a</sup>." The law of God commandeth you to take another course, and condemneth your wicked life, and if you will turn away your ear from this law, that would turn away your heart from sin, God will not accept your prayer. "If I regard iniquity in my heart God will not hear my prayer<sup>b</sup>." "He that calleth on the name of the Lord, must depart from iniquity<sup>c</sup>." Yea, the

<sup>x</sup> Prov. xxi. 4.

<sup>y</sup> Prov. xv. 18.

<sup>z</sup> Prov. xxi. 27.

<sup>a</sup> Prov. xxviii. 9.

<sup>b</sup> Psal. lxxvi. 18.

<sup>c</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 19.

fasting and self-afflicting of the wicked, is disregarded<sup>c</sup>. Little doth a poor blind sinner think when he is boasting of his praying and religious duties, that God abhorreth them; but if they be unconverted, they will find it so. “Ye are they that justify yourselves before men, but God knoweth your hearts<sup>d</sup>.” For that which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God. And one reason is, because that the person himself is such as God doth hate; and therefore no wonder if he hate his works. For a fig-tree beareth not thorns and thistles, nor the bramble grapes, but as the tree is, so is the fruit. “Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity. The wicked is made for the day of evil, and every one that is proud in heart, is an abomination to the Lord<sup>e</sup>.” Though men bless, yet the Lord abhorreth them<sup>f</sup>. When he seeth their wickedness, he abhors, even those that profess themselves his people<sup>g</sup>. Yea, and his own sanctuary, and the very place of his worship<sup>h</sup>. Especially when they often deal falsely with him<sup>i</sup>. And no wonder when wicked men do loathe the Lord and his service, if he do also loathe them. “My soul loatheth them, and their soul also abhorreth me<sup>k</sup>.” Sinners, the case in a word is this: God is a Spirit, and will be worshipped in spirit and in truth, and such worshippers only doth he choose; and wicked men can give him but the shell, and the shadow of his service. God made all things for himself, and will accept of nothing but what is intended for himself. But wicked men are turned from God, and do all for their carnal selves, even when they pretend to do it for God. It is your hearts that God hath lost, and your hearts that he regardeth, and your hearts he will have again, or he will have nothing; but you may even keep all to yourselves if you will, except you will give him this. What need hath God of your prayers, or other services, or what good can you do him by all? It is yourselves that he desireth, and then he will accept your service, though he need it not, and will make it good to you, though it can do no good to him. Therefore this is his first demand: “My son, give me thine heart<sup>l</sup>;” and if you deny him this, you deny him all. He careth not

<sup>c</sup> Isa. lviii. 2, 3.<sup>d</sup> Luke xvi. 15.<sup>e</sup> Psal. v. 5. Prov. iv. 5.<sup>f</sup> Psal. x. 3.<sup>g</sup> Deut. iii. 19.<sup>h</sup> Lament. ii. 7.<sup>i</sup> Psal. lxxviii. 59.<sup>j</sup> Zech. xi. 8.<sup>k</sup> Prov. xxiii. 26.

for your lips, nor your religious duties, without it. If you will not first give him yourselves, he will not accept of any thing that you offer him. And, indeed, when it is not in a returning way, but in an offering way that wicked men will serve him, he plainly telleth them it is in vain, and telleth them he hateth it, and bids them keep it with them; for he will have none of it till they leave their sins, and give up themselves to him. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me? saith the Lord: I am full of your burnt-offerings. When you come to appear before me, who required this at your hands, to tread in my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination to me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with, it is iniquity, even the solemn meetings: your new moons, and your appointed feasts, my soul hateth, they are a trouble to me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of blood. Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord <sup>m</sup>." If a prince have subjects, that are in rebellion, he will not take any gift at their hands, till they come in themselves: no more will God at your hands. There is no true minister of the Gospel, but feeleth some exposition of this in his own heart. If the people would send us any tokens of their love and expressions of kindness, if it were not for exasperating them, who would not return it them with contempt, as long as they refuse to be reformed, and will not yield to the word of the Gospel? To let go their goods, if it were all they have, for us, is a matter that we regard not, if they will not let go their sins; because we seek not theirs, but them: and much more is it so with Jesus Christ. If you should be as punctual in his worship as any, and give him never so much of your knees or tongues, yea, or your goods, and all you have, he will not take it as a thing that pleaseth him, unless withal you give him yourselves. "If I suffer my body to be burnt," saith Paul, "and have not love, it availeth nothing <sup>n</sup>." Many a poor unconverted wretch considereth not this, that comes

<sup>m</sup> Isa. i. 11—14.<sup>n</sup> 1 Cor. xiii. 3.

constantly to church, and receiveth the sacrament, and useth some kind of praying every day, and thinks, that if God should not accept of such as them, there should almost nobody be saved ; and therefore he makes no question of his acceptance. O but one thing is necessary, and that is yet wanting. If God had your hearts first, then he would take the rest in good part : but when the world hath your hearts, and though you sit and hear with some delight, as if you were his people, yet your “ heart goeth after your covetousness<sup>p</sup>.” When your fleshly pleasure and profit have your hearts, God will not regard your service, were it much more.

Now it is the work of conversion to bring the heart to God, that was never brought to him, and set upon him before : therefore till this work be done, all is but abominable. “ For without faith it is impossible to please God<sup>q</sup>.” You think to live to the flesh, and then to please God by your good praying and meanings, or by being of the right religion, or by some good works ; but remember what God himself hath told you, who best knoweth what it is that pleaseth him ; “ They that are in the flesh cannot please God<sup>r</sup> ;” and all that are unconverted, are said to be in the flesh, because they “ mind the things of the flesh,” and live according to their carnal inclinations, and for carnal ends. O what a sad consideration would this be to your hearts, if you did but understand and feel your own condition ! You talk against this man and that man for being of a wrong religion, and you think you are better than this party or that, whereas you are miserable, whatsoever your religion be, because you are heartily of no religion. You think God will be pleased with your service, and it doth but add to the load of your sin. You read the word, and think you do God service by it, when you do but read your own condemnation, because you have your hearts against the doctrine that you read. You think you serve God by coming to church, but if you refuse to let the word convert you, how should God be pleased with such a service as this ? It is as if you should tell your servant what you have for him to do, and because he hath given you the hearing, he thinks he should have his wages, though he do nothing of that which you set him to do. Were not this an unreasonable servant ? Or would you

<sup>p</sup> Ezek. xxxiii. 31.<sup>q</sup> Heb. xi. 7.<sup>r</sup> Rom. viii. 8.

give him according to his expectation? It is a strange thing that men should think that God will save them for dissembling with him; and save them for abusing his name and ordinances. Every time you hear, or pray, or praise God, or receive the sacrament, while you deny God your heart, and remain unconverted, you do but despise him, and shew more of your rebellion than your obedience. Would you take him for a good tenant, that at every rent-day would duly wait on you, and put off his hat to you, but bring you never a penny of rent? Or would you take him for a good debtor, that brings you nothing but an empty purse, and expects you should take that for payment? God biddeth you come to church, and hear the word; and so you do, and so far you do well: but withal, he chargeth you to suffer the word to work upon your hearts, and to take it home and consider of it, and obey it, and cast away your former courses, and give up your hearts and lives to him; and this you will not do. And yet you think that he will accept of your service. Dare you plead such services with God for a reward, and say, 'Lord, though we shut thee out of our hearts, yet we gave thee the hearing.'

Sirs, I beseech you lay this well to heart, What will you do in a day of affliction? What will you do at an hour of death? Will you not fall a praying? Will you not call to God for mercy, when you see that nothing but his mercy can relieve you? Why, if you be unconverted, God will not hear your prayers; he abhorreth them, because he hath not your hearts. O sad case for a man in misery to look about him, and see no hope in heaven or earth but God alone, and when he begins to cry for help to him, he will loathe their prayers, and turn away his ears, and will not hear! Hear his own word, Prov. i. 26—29. "Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched forth my hands, and no man regarded," &c. to the end of that chapter. For my part, I foresee the day is coming, when I would not take all the world to be without a God to pray to. O then, to have a man's prayers themselves thought but iniquity, and charged on him as his sin, when he must have present help or perish, what sadder case can there be? For a man that is going into another world, and calls to God to receive his soul, to have prayers and soul cast out together, how sad a case is it?



Sirs, do not mistake me, as if I took you off from prayers or other holy duties by this; but I tell you, that if you go on in any kind of duty, and remain unconverted, you cannot look that God should take any kind of pleasure in them or in you. If you say then, 'It is as good never a whit, as never the better:' I answer, do your great duty first, and then all the rest will be accepted; yield to the word and Spirit, resist not the grace of God any longer; give him your hearts, and give them no longer to this deceitful world; and then come and welcome. And for the duties that tend to conversion, as, hearing the word, and begging true grace of God, which may convert you, and considering of those truths that must be the instruments to do it; these are the very beginnings of the work, and therefore it is not these that we discourage you from: it is time for you to use these, that the rest may be accepted.

6. Another sad consideration, concerning the state of an unconverted man, is this, as long as they remain in that condition, They live in continual danger of damnation. They are under the wrath of God; and though patience have long forborne them, to try whether they will repent, yet are they not sure whether it will stay for them one day longer: they are under the curse of the law, and when it will be executed they cannot tell. I have told you already from the word of God, that an unconverted man cannot be saved, and I need not tell you sure, that he is uncertain how long he shall continue in this world. And methinks a man that is sure to go to hell if he dieth, and knoweth not whether it may not be this day, should have little comfort in his life till he were changed. Now the Lord have mercy on poor, hard-hearted sinners, what do they mean then that they look no more about them? Why will not the word of the living God awaken them, which telleth them how near they are to perdition? I do here make known to you from the word of truth, that if there be any unconverted souls in this assembly, they are not certain to be out of hell an hour. God knows, sirs, I would not tell you of this if it were needless. But alas! what do you mean to continue in such a case as this? As sure as the word of God is true, every soul that goeth unconverted out of the body, is shut out of all hope of mercy for ever, and entereth into a remediless misery. Remember then,

man, in the name of God, every morning thou arisest, and every night thou liest down, that thou art uncertain to be out of hell till the next day. Alas! it is enough to amaze a poor Christian, that is indeed converted, when he doth but find himself in doubt of it; how much more should it awaken them that are yet in the flesh? Many a one that truly feared God, having wanted assurance at the time of death, O how terrible hath it made death to them! To look before them and think they must be gone, and they know not whither; to think that it is but one day or two more, and my soul will be among angels or devils, and I know not which of the two it will be! O what a dreadful thought is this, even to many that are converted, for want of assurance at the time of death! But alas! this is but a small matter in comparison of the case of the unconverted: for as soon as the soul is out of the flesh, all the fears of the godly are at end, and they shall never more have a doubting thought; but for the rest, if you should die with never so great confidence, death would dispel it all; and as soon as you were out of the body, your eyes would be opened to see that which would never let you have a thought of hope or comfort more. I speak none of this of myself. "When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish; and the hope of the unjust man perisheth<sup>s</sup>." "For what is the hope of the wicked, though he have gained, when God taketh away his soul? Will God hear his cry, when trouble cometh upon him<sup>t</sup>?" "So are the paths of all that forget God, and the hypocrite's hope shall perish; whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web. He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand; he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure<sup>u</sup>." "The eyes of the wicked shall fail, and they shall not escape, and their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost<sup>x</sup>." Take this home with you then, and let it cause you to have no rest till you are truly converted, that till then you are never certain to be one day or hour more in safety.

7. From all this you may see another sad consideration, which is, That as long as a man is unconverted, he hath no ground for one hour's true peace or comfort, but hath reason to live in continual terror, and to be the grief of all that know his misery. For should a man be merry that is in such a

<sup>s</sup> Prov. xi. 7.<sup>t</sup> Job xxvii. 8.<sup>u</sup> Job viii. 13. 18.<sup>x</sup> Job xi. 20.

case as this? O no, if his eyes were opened, it would certainly affright him, either out of his sins, or out of his wits. Many worldly vanities and sensual delights such men may have, to delight their thoughts; but this is their weakness, and not their happiness. Some malefactors when they are to be hanged, will make themselves drunk beforehand, that death may not be terrible to them; but this is but a medicine against repentance, and not against hell. So do thousands of poor sinners make themselves drunk with merry company, and false conceits, and worldly businesses, and fleshly pleasures; but though this do ease their hearts awhile, and keep away the feeling of their misery, it will not do so long, but only till the hope of cure be past. Brethren, the desire of my soul is to advance the consolation of the saints, and to take from you no peace or hope, but what death will take from you, if it be not done before; and if I had any hopes that your merry days would last after death, and would not end in everlasting sorrow, I would not be one that should interrupt your mirth. Truly you should hold on in your careless, drowsy course for me, if I did not see the after-reckoning; but seeing the case is such as I have proved, with all that are unconverted, I must say to all in that condition, that mirth is very unsuitable to your state, and laughter doth ill become you. And if ever a man might say of it, as Solomon, 'Thou art mad,' it is when it appeareth in the face of such a man that stands all the while on the very brink of hell. What! be merry in the power of satan, under the wrath of God, before you are pardoned, and before you know whether ever you shall be saved, or escape the everlasting pains of hell? O doleful mirth! What wise man would be partner with you in such pleasure? Now sirs, I beseech you that are in this case, for your poor souls' sake, when you are next among your merry companions, let this thought come into your mind, 'O, but I am not yet converted.' When you are next in your worldly cares and businesses, or careless of your souls, bethink you then, 'O, but I am not yet converted.' And every day and night wherever you are, whatever you do, O think still, 'I am yet unconverted;' that so you may look about you, and come to yourselves, and get into that condition, wherein you may have cause indeed to be merry. Methinks

every time you hear the bell toll, it should frighten you; every time you go among the sick, or see any brought to the grave, it should frighten you: yea, every thing that you look on, should be matter of terror to you till you are out of this condition. Sure there is no believing friend that you have that knows your case, but must needs pity you. They are bound to lament you. Only this comfort doth yet remain, that a sufficient remedy is provided in the blood of Christ, which will recover you, if you do not proceed to make light of it. This is all your comfort, that your case is not remediless, as long as you are under the calls of grace. Take heed, in the name of God take heed, of going on any longer in that condition, lest you make it remediless; there is yet a possibility of your salvation, but not without your conversion; you have to do with a merciful God, and that you find by experience, or else you had not been here now. But O go not out of the reach of mercy: never did God's mercy save one unconverted soul, any other way than by converting them. And the greater are your possibilities now, and the more freely the blood of Christ is offered you, the greater will be your sorrow if you lose all this, and by neglecting it, do make your case remediless.

8. Consider further, The warnings that the unconverted have of their danger, are so many, and so great, that if they be neglected, they will multiply their misery. To be an unconverted man among the Turks or heathens, is no wonder, any more than to be in the dark at midnight. To be unconverted among Papists, is not so much wonder, any more than to miss your way by moonshine: but to be unconverted in the midst of Gospel-light, this is a sin that hath no excuse, and a misery that liveth in despite of the remedy. All the preachers that have told you of your misery, and persuaded you to return, shall be witnesses against you: yea, all the examples of the wicked that have gone before you, that were set forth for your bettering, shall be witnesses against you. The way to hell is a beaten road, and most of the world do tread it continually; and therefore you might have known and avoided it, when God had told you how to know it. God hath not left you in darkness, but you shut your eyes; the light shines round about you, and you will not see; you have Bibles, and you have other good books, and

you have teachers, and you may have neighbours that are able and willing to help you, but you will not make use of them. O sirs, consider I beseech you, to get well to heaven, is a business and not a play. It is a matter to be inquired after, and prayed for, and learned with all diligence and care, and not to be put off with heartless shews. Hear then, O hear the call of God that soundeth in thine ears, to bring thee to conversion: wilt thou run on when God is calling after thee? He calleth by his word; he calleth by his ministers; he calleth by his judgments, and by his mercies, by conscience, and by his Spirit; and will you stop your ears, and slight them all? Many an one hath come in at the first call that ever they had by the preaching of the Gospel, and you have had an hundred and an hundred, and yet will not return! Believe it, sirs, the calls of God will convert you, or confound you: his word will not return in vain: you cannot resist his grace after all this warning, at such easy and cheap rates as many others in the world may do. Your impenitency and wilfulness hath the more obstinacy in it, by how much the greater light you do resist. If the Gospel do not convert you, you will wish you had never heard or read it. Hear what Christ himself saith of those that were not converted by his word. "Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your word, when you depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet; verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city." Christ did upbraid the cities where his works were done, because they repented not: "Woe to thee Chorazin, woe to thee Bethsaida, for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they had repented long ago, in sackcloth and ashes; but I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And thou Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works which have been done in thee", &c.' The Lord grant that I may never hear Christ upbraiding any of this congregation with the warnings that they did neglect. It is a heavy case, that when Christ sendeth to men the Gospel of salvation, they must be upbraided with it, be-

7 Matt. x. 14, 15.

8 Matt. xi. 20—23.

cause they would not be saved by it. And that Sodom and Gomorrah, those places of abomination that bore the most remarkable plagues of God, being consumed with fire and brimstone from the Lord, should yet speed better in the day of judgment, than many of our poor people that sit under our teaching from day to day. In a word, sirs, remember this, all unconverted sinners that so lived and died, shall be condemned, but those that had the greatest means and warnings, shall have the greatest condemnation.

9. Consider further, That the further men go on in an unconverted state, the deeper is their sin, the harder is their cure, and the greater will be their punishment. It is not a state wherein you may safely abide, no, not a day, if you were sure to have time for repentance. Is it a small thing to go on in sin, and to add to that heap that is so great already, and to increase that mountain which is so insupportable? As long as you are unconverted, you live in the continual abuse of God, and all his mercies: you abuse him most unworthily, for you prefer the unworthy creature before him, as if he and his glory were no better than this earth, nor so good neither: you abuse him by denying him that which is his own; you deny him your hearts; you deny him your service; that which he hath made and redeemed; you deny him that which none can lay claim to but himself. You abuse his word by rejecting it; you abuse his sabbaths by profaning them; you abuse his image in his servants by contemning it; you abuse his name by taking it in vain; you abuse his mercy, and all his creatures by beholding them in vain, and receiving them in vain; and by advancing them into the throne, and giving them that which is not their due: though you worship not sun and moon, yet you worship meat, and drink, and ease, and money: and thus you live in the abuse of all things, and besides the rest, you abuse your own souls. They were made for the High God, and fitted to love him and honour him, and live to him here, and to see his face in glory hereafter; and all unconverted men do abuse them to the basest drudgery of the devil: they make them sinks of sin, and dunghills to receive the excrements of the earth. God hath advanced you above the beasts that perish, and made you for a life with angels in his glory, if you would but believe it, and set your hearts

upon it: and you debase your own souls, and make them brutish, as if they had no better a happiness than a swine! or as if you were worms that live in the earth; or rather beetles that live in dung. Who can marvel, if a carnal man abuse God, and the godly, and all things else, when he wilfully and delightfully doth so abuse himself? It may turn the passion of those they abuse into compassion, when they consider, whatsoever they do against others, they do an hundred times more against themselves: they scorn us, and they wound themselves: they tempt others to sin, but they cast themselves into it: they wrong our names, or estates, or bodies, and they damn their own souls. Alas, poor wretches, who would have thoughts of revenge on such men that are the most cruel persecutors and destroyers of themselves? O what a base indignity do they put upon a noble and immortal soul, to make it like the body, inclining unto earth, as if it had been taken hence as the body was, to take it down from living upon God, and engage it in a life of mere vanity!

Moreover consider, that all the while you continue unconverted, you grow hardened in your sin; and as you forsake God more, so doth his Spirit withdraw from you: and custom will still make you worse and worse. Your recovery will be harder the next week than this, and therefore it is not a state to be continued in: but of this we shall speak, when we come to the particular exhortation.

10. As long as you remain in an unconverted state, you Deprive yourselves of a world of happiness, that God doth offer you, and you might possess. You might have God instead of the creature; and Christ instead of a carnal self; and the Spirit instead of the devil that doth deceive you: you might have holiness instead of the filth of wickedness; and justification for condemnation; and a blessing for the curse; and the state of reconciledness, instead of the enmity that you are in to God: you might have peace of conscience instead of terrors or groundless security: you might serve a better master now and in better company; and have better wages both here and hereafter. You do not know what you lose every day that you remain unconverted, more than all the pleasures of sin can afford you. Ask any of them that have escaped out of that condition that you are in, whether

they are willing to return? You see not perhaps that they have got any thing by the change, and therefore you think you lose nothing by continuing as you are; but their gains are out of sight: it is almost out of their own sight, and therefore it may well be out of yours. But if themselves should deny it, it is not therefore an uncertain or contemptible thing; for the foundation of God standeth sure; he knoweth who are his. If it were but to be employed upon higher things, and to escape the deadly wounds of conscience which you give yourselves, or else prepare for, it is no small gain to be a true believer; and if they found themselves in no better a case than they were before, they would be tempted to return to their former state; but that they will not do for a world. I dare say, if you did know but the danger and horrible misery of the life that you now live, you would make as much haste out of it, as a man would do out of a house that was on fire over his head; or as a man that was at sea in a leaking vessel, that if he did not bestir himself as for his life to get it to the shore, would sink and drown him. And if you knew but the case of a converted soul, even of those that walk most heavily, and most bewail their own condition, you would not be out of it one day longer, if you could possibly help it. Well, I have shewed you what it is to be unconverted: if any of you dare yet go on in such a case, and unbelievably cavil at the word of God, or carelessly trample it under your feet; if God do forsake you and leave you to yourselves, and if death do find you in that sad estate, you may thank yourselves.

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## CHAPTER V.

HAVING said thus much to you by way of terror, if it may be to drive you from an unconverted state, I shall not so leave you; but shall next say somewhat also by way of allurements to draw you to a better state. For as there is enough in your misery to drive a sober man from it, so is there enough in the hope that is set before you, to draw any believing heart to embrace it. The Gospel is a joyful message, and bringeth glad tidings of salvation to all that entertain it; if you will not shut your eyes by unbelief, or incon-



siderateness, you shall see that God calls you not to your hurt or loss. If there be not more to be had in his service than in the service of the world, the flesh, or the devil, take your course, and never regard me more. If I do not give you sufficient reason to prove to you that you may make a better bargain by speedy conversion, than by continuing in your carnal, unconverted state, I am contented that you never more give me the hearing: for my part, I would not persuade you to your hurt or loss, nor make such a stir about an uncertain gain; nor about a small matter, were it never so certain: but my principal arguments are yet behind. Fear is not the principal affection of a true convert; and therefore terrifying arguments are not the principal means; yet these must be used, or else God had never put such an affection into man's heart; nor such terrifying passages into his word: and we all feel the need and usefulness of it; for in reason he that is in danger should know it. But yet, it is love that must be the predominant affection, and therefore it is the discovery of the amiableness of God, and the wonderful gain that comes by godliness that must be the principal argument that we must use with you. For we know that men will not be directly affrighted into love, though they must be affrighted from the contrary that hindereth it: do not think that God hath no better argument to use with you, than to take you by the throat, and say, 'Love me or I will damn thee.' Thus he will use to wean you from the contrary love, and to let you know the fruit of your folly, that he may equally carry on his work upon all the affections of your souls together. But he that principally requireth your love, doth give you undeniable reason, why you should love him: and he that calls for your hearts, doth shew you that which might take with your hearts, and effectually win them, if your eyes were opened to see what he sheweth you. He draweth them as the loadstone doth the iron, by the force of his attractive love. If there be not more in God that is worth your love than in all the world, if all were yours, then hold on your present course and spare not. But why make I any comparison in such a case? It were a dangerous irreverence in me, but that your necessity requireth it; because wicked men do not only make a comparison first, but also prefer the world before God, though

not in their tongues, yet in their hearts and lives : if I were but able to make you thoroughly know what that condition is that I persuade you to, I would desire no better argument to prevail with you ; were it in my power but to open your eyes to make you know what conversion is, and what it doth for those that have it, I should make no doubt of your speedy conversion : for none withdraw their hearts from God, but for want of knowing him ; and none are against a holy life, but those that understand not sufficiently what it is : and none do prefer this world, and the pleasures and profits of it before the glorious things that God doth offer them, but only they that are cheated and bewitched by it, and know not what it is that they dote upon. If I were but able to give you such a sight as Stephen had, (Acts vii, 56.), when he saw the heavens opened, and Christ standing at the right hand of God, I should have no need to call you from your fleshly vanities. O how contemptuously would you throw away your former pleasure, and run to see and be possessors of that glory ! If I could but bring you with Paul into the third heaven, to see the unutterable things that every true believer shall possess, I would give you no thanks to cast off this world, and presently to turn to God. Nay, if you had but the light about you that Paul had at his conversion, it would do much : but what talk I of these extraordinary things ? If you did but know by a sound belief such as all the converted have, what a blessed life it is that we invite you to, away you would come without delay ; as the apostles when Christ called them from their trades and friends, and bid them follow him, they presently left all, though they saw nothing in the world to draw them on ; so would you, if you were but well illuminated. And because all that I can do in this work, is to propound to your understandings the excellency of that condition which I persuade you to, I shall next fall upon that, and leave the issue to God, desiring him to open your eyes, to see what shall be propounded.

1. When a sinner is converted, he is delivered from the power of satan, Acts xxvi. 18. The bonds of your captivity will all be broken in your return to Christ, as Peter's chains fell off him, and the prison doors were set open, when the angel raised him up, (Acts xii. 7.) ; so will it be with thy soul when God converteth thee. Ignorance and wilfulness in

fleshly pleasures, and the love of this world, these are the chains that satan holds men in; and conversion will bring thee "from darkness to light," Acts xxvi. 18. Even from the "power of darkness into the kingdom of Christ," Col. i. 13. It will bring such a marvellous light into thy mind, as thou never hadst before, which will make thee marvel at the riches of grace and glory, and marvel at the wonderful love of God, and wonder at that thy former folly that couldst neglect it. Thus will God bring thee "out of darkness into his marvellous light," 1 Pet. ii. 9. Telling you what this light is, will not be sufficient to make you know it, till you see it yourselves. You shall then have other apprehensions of things than now you have, even of the same things which you see and seem to know. You will have another knowledge of the world, and of Christ, and grace, and duty, and all spiritual things, even of good and evil than now you have. As the first sin did open Adam's eyes to know good and evil by sad experience, as having lost the good and felt the evil, and also to know them in a separated sense, as distinct and separated in his thoughts from God; so true conversion will open your eyes to know good and evil by a blessed experience, even to see God the chiefest good, as recovered to you for your felicity; and sin and hell the greatest evils from which you are delivered; and to see God in all the creatures, and the respect and tendency they have all to him. I cannot by bare telling you make you conceive what a marvellous change will be in your understanding; what an excellent and marvellous light you will see, when once conversion hath opened your eyes. Let me endeavour by a familiar comparison to acquaint you with somewhat of it in general, though I cannot give you the thing itself. You know that a dog that liveth in the house with you doth see the same things, and place, and persons in the house as you do; he knoweth every room, and every person in the house: suppose now that God should turn this dog suddenly into a man; do you think there would not be a marvellous change in his apprehension? Would he not see something in every thing, and place, and person to marvel at? Would he not know all these things in another manner than before he did? I do not say, that the change which conversion makes is just of such a kind as this; but it is very marvellous, and

we may by such a similitude help our apprehensions of it. When some of the poor naked Indians have been brought into this land, how strange did every thing seem to them? When they came into London, with what wondering would they gaze about them, as if they had been in another world? And will not a poor converted soul do so, when God hath newly opened his eyes, and made him see that which he never saw before? O then he sees that evil in sin that maketh him wonder! That ravishing love in Christ that maketh him wonder! That amiable glory in the face of God, and that truth in the promises of eternal blessedness, that makes him wonder! When before he could see nothing to wonder at in any of them. Oh! sirs, if you knew but the pleasure of this marvellous light that God by conversion would let into your souls, you would never rest till you found yourselves converted. Every man hath a natural desire of knowledge, and in a natural way they are seeking after it; and many do even in the use of these means, which should be spiritual, employ themselves but in natural seeking. One man thinks that common learning can help him to this light, and therefore he readeth and studieth day and night; and I deny not but in its place it is good. Another thinks that among this or that party it is to be found, and in the discovery of this or that low opinion it doth consist; but when all is done, it is the great and common truths that are most wonderful, and converting grace that must shew men the glory of them. It is not in rarities of new discoveries, nor strange principles that were never heard of till now, that this light is to be found. But it is in the substance of Christian verity. I tell you, sirs, you that now use to mutter over your creed for a prayer, and hear the catechism without understanding it, if your eyes were opened by converting grace, you would marvel at the very doctrine of the creed and catechism. You would see that excellency, and feel that weight in common truths, that would exceedingly take up your very hearts. You now know not what it is to believe in God the Father, the Son, and Holy Ghost; but then these three words would seem to you of greater glory, than the sun at noon-day; they would find you both work and wonder, and yet delight, if you had no more than these to think of.

And do you love the darkness rather than such light? Have you been so long in the dungeon, that you are fallen in love with it, and are loath to come out? Is all this light so small a matter in your eyes? Are you like an owl or bat that cannot endure the light of the sun? Or rather like a thief that hates the daylight, because he is afraid of being made known? Oh! sinners, I beseech you come away and leave your dungeon state of darkness, and live in the light of the countenance of God. "It is a pleasant thing for the eyes to see the sun<sup>a</sup>." Deprive not yourselves of the pleasure which is offered you.

And it is not only your chains of darkness, but also your wilfulness and blind affections that converting grace will turn you from: these bonds of worldly profits and pleasure that seem so strong to others that they cannot overcome them, you will shake them off as Samson did his bonds, and they will not be able to separate you from the love of God: the same tempter that so easily prevails with others, will not be able to prevail against you; "The God of peace will tread him under your feet<sup>b</sup>." In the work of conversion Christ layeth siege to the heart of a sinner, which naturally is satan's garrison, and he battereth it, and starveth it, and forceth it to yield, "and bindeth that strong man that possesseth it in peace<sup>c</sup>." So he is cast out of his possession by converting grace; he hath not the same power there that he had before; once he could have commanded the man to swear, or be drunk, or neglect his soul, and he would have done it; but now he hath no such power: once he could have turned their thoughts against Christ, and their tongues to cavil against his word, but now he cannot; they are now under another government. They have now that repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth, by which they are recovered out of the snares of the devil, who formerly led them captive at his will<sup>d</sup>. The very first day that you are converted, you are the freemen of Christ, who were the bond-slaves of the devil all your lives before. As ever then you would partake of this blessed privilege, resist no longer, but yield to the call of grace, that you may be converted.

2. Another excellent privilege of a converted soul, is this; As soon as ever a man is converted, he is united or joined

<sup>a</sup> Eccles. xi. 7.<sup>b</sup> Rom. xvi. 20.<sup>c</sup> Luke xi. 21.<sup>d</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 25.

to Jesus Christ. This is the very root of all the rest. Conversion turneth men from satan to God; it breaketh them off from their former lovers, and uniteth them to Christ as the husband of their souls. He is “the vine, and we are the branches, and into him we must be grafted, if we will have life<sup>e</sup>.” He is the Head, and conversion is it that makes us his members; giving us that faith, by which we receive him to dwell in our hearts<sup>f</sup>: so that as the sovereign and subject make one commonwealth; as the head and the body make one man, so Christ and his church are one. Whether or no the union be any more than relative, taking union in the strictest sense; yet it is wonderful and glorious, and a communication of holy qualifications doth follow it. We are one in relation, and one in judgment, as being of the same mind; and one in affection, and one in regard of the similitude of nature, and many ways one in a larger sense. Here is the root of the saints’ felicity. If you were one with the prince, you would not fear the want of honour or riches; you would not fear any thing that he could save you from. When Jonathan loved David as his own soul, he ventured his life to save him from his father’s indignation: when Lazarus, whom Christ loved, was sick, he raised him from the dead. If you be once so near to Christ as to be one with him, what will he not do for you? Will he neglect his own members? Will he hurt himself? The apostle could use this argument with husbands to love their wives, because they are as their own body; and “whoever hated his own flesh? But nourisheth it and cherisheth it, even as Christ doth the church.” From hence doth the apostle fetch the example of conjugal love; “husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church:” yea, from this union; “for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones<sup>g</sup>.” “This is a mystery,” saith the apostle, speaking of Christ and the church<sup>h</sup>;” and a mystery of unspeakable consolation to the saints. O therefore resist not that grace that should convert you. If you would be united to Christ, come to him, and yield to the drawings of his love that you may be one with him, who is one with the Father, according to your capacity, for that is his will, concerning all that are truly converted. Judge now, whether it be not a most ho-

<sup>e</sup> John xv.<sup>f</sup> Eph. iii. 17.<sup>g</sup> Eph. v. 25. 28—30.<sup>h</sup> Ver. 32.

nourable and inconceivable felicity, that conversion doth advance the soul into. It was the greatest miracle of all God's works, that ever he revealed to the sons of men, to take the human nature into union with the divine; that Christ, who was God, should condescend to be made man: and the next is, that he will take his church into union with himself, and will magnify his love, in such a wonderful advancement of poor sinners, that without his grace they could not well believe it.

3. Another benefit that followeth conversion, is this; As soon as ever a man is truly converted, he is made a member of the true church of Christ: for he is at once united to the head and to the body. A man may be a member of the visible church, or rather, be visibly made a member of the church before conversion: but that is but as a wooden leg to the body; or, as Bellarmine himself acknowledgeth, they are not living but dead members: and as many of his friends whom he mentioneth, confess, they are but as the hair, or the nails, which are not properly members of the body, though they are in the body. Or, as Austin saith, like the chaff among the corn, which is so a part of the field, as to be an appurtenance of the corn. So that till conversion, even the baptized and the most understanding men, are but as the straw and chaff in God's barn, and as the tares in his field, as Christ himself compareth them. But conversion doth effectually ingraft them into the body, and make them living members; and so "by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body<sup>i</sup>;" and so, "we are the body of Christ and members in particular<sup>k</sup>." "All are not Israel that are of Israel," saith the apostle to the Romans. And "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature, and faith that worketh by love<sup>l</sup>." "For circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter<sup>m</sup>." "They are the circumcision that worship God in the spirit<sup>n</sup>." And it is not the mere baptism of water, but the baptism of the Holy Ghost, which is given in conversion that maketh you living members of the body.

4. As soon as ever a sinner is truly converted, he hath a pardon of all the sins that ever he committed, be they never

<sup>i</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 13.

<sup>k</sup> Ver. 27.

<sup>l</sup> Gal. vi. 5. 15. Col. iii. 11.

<sup>m</sup> Rom. ii. 29.

<sup>n</sup> Phil. iii. 3.

so many, and never so great. Though with Paul he have been a persecutor of the church of God; though he have with Manasseh, been a very sorcerer; though he have hated godliness, and made a mock at it; though his very heart hath been against Christ all his days; yet when he is once truly converted, he is pardoned. Though he have spent the flower of his youth in vanity; though he have been a drudge for this world, and forgotten his soul, and the world to come; though he have hindered others from conversion and salvation; yet when he is once truly converted, he is forgiven. Though he have long resisted grace, and strove against his own salvation; though he have stifled many convictions of conscience, and broke many purposes and promises, and much abused the patience of God; yet, if the work of conversion be true, all this shall be pardoned and done away. For the Lord Jesus hath made satisfaction for all; and thereupon hath made a conditional promise, that all that truly repent and believe, shall be pardoned: and as soon as ever they perform the condition through his grace, the promise becomes effectual to them, and their iniquities are therein forgiven them.

O what news is this to a weary, heavy-laden sinner; to them that are bruised and broken under the sense of sin and wrath, that would give a world if they had it, for a pardon! Why, come to Christ, sinner, and take it freely. He hath purchased it, and he freely offereth it; but only to them that take himself: for God hath made these benefits appurtenances to himself; take Christ himself, and all is thine. O what comfort is it to such a sinner as Mary, that lay wiping Christ's feet with the hairs of her head, and washed them with her tears, to hear him say, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." Those sins that do so terrify the conscience, and those that lie asleep till conscience be enlightened; thy secret sins, which the world knoweth not of, and thy open sins that have been thy shame, at the very hour of true conversion will be pardoned. All thy sinful thoughts, words, and actions; sins against knowledge, conscience, consideration; sins of ignorance, and presumptuous sins, all shall be done away. "Whom he calleth, them he justifieth <sup>p</sup>." "Christ is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and for-

<sup>o</sup> Acts xxvi. 18. Mark iv. 12.

<sup>p</sup> Rom. viii. 30.



givenness of sins<sup>q</sup>." And thus doth "he bless them, in turning them from their iniquities<sup>r</sup>;" and in turning away from them the punishment of that iniquity. He that sent John Baptist first to preach "repentance, for the remission of sins<sup>s</sup>;" and hath shed "his own blood for the remission of sins<sup>t</sup>;" and calleth men to repent for that end<sup>u</sup>;" hath promised to give it to all that thus repent and believe in him, and are converted to him<sup>x</sup>; and commanded his ministers to join these together, and "that repentance and remission of sin be preached in his name<sup>y</sup>." And may we not say with David, and after him with Paul, that they "are blessed whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered, and to whom the Lord will not impute sin<sup>z</sup>?" O therefore receive converting grace, that you may be made partakers of this blessedness. Take the counsel of Peter to Simon Magus, "Repent of thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thoughts of thy heart may be forgiven thee<sup>a</sup>." Or as the same Peter to the Jews, "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out<sup>b</sup>." O blessed hour that freeth the soul from such a load, that else would have sunk it as low as hell! A day and a mercy that must never be forgotten by us.

5. Another benefit is this; As soon as a sinner is converted, he is reconciled to God: the former enmity is done away: though this be in substance the same with the former, yet doth it shew us our happiness in another consideration. A future reconciliation was purchased before by the blood of Christ, and a conditional reconciliation given out in the Gospel; but the soul was never actually reconciled till the time of conversion. Before, a sinner did either presumptuously intrude into the presence of God to his own danger, or else fled back through the terrors of his conscience. Oh! the frowns of the face of God, were enough to deter a guilty soul! What comfort could that man have to think of God, that lay under his continual curse and wrath? But when once they are converted, the face of God then smileth on them, and his arms are open to embrace them, as the father's were to the returning prodigal. God cannot shew himself

<sup>q</sup> Acts v. 32.<sup>r</sup> Acts iii. 26.<sup>s</sup> Mark i. 4. Luke iii. 3.<sup>t</sup> Matt. xxvi. 28.<sup>u</sup> Acts ii. 38.<sup>x</sup> Acts x. 43.<sup>y</sup> Luke xxiv. 47.<sup>z</sup> Psal. xxxii. 1. Rom. iv. 7.<sup>a</sup> Acts viii. 22.<sup>b</sup> Acts iii. 19.

pleased with a graceless, carnal soul; nor can he choose but be reconciled to the soul that is once possessed of his image, and reconciled unto him. As you are, so will he be to you. He did but stay for the turning of your hearts, that you might be fit to receive that kindness from him, which you are not fit for in the bondage of your sins. This is the happiness of a converted soul, that he hath the love and favour of Almighty God. Therefore doth Christ call them his friends<sup>c</sup>. And what is it that he will not do for his friends, that did so much for us while we were enemies<sup>d</sup>. O therefore yield to the calls of God. The word of conversion is a word of reconciliation; and this it is that he hath committed to us, that we might "beseech men in his name and stead to be reconciled to God<sup>e</sup>." Which is only by being converted to God. Did you know the worth of peace with God you would quickly yield to return unto him.

6. Another precious benefit to the converted, is, That they are the adopted sons of God; which is a step higher, than to be barely reconciled and his friends. When they are planted into Christ the natural Son, they become adopted sons. For "God sent his own Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons; wherefore we are no more servants only but sons<sup>f</sup>." This is a benefit not common to all. It is as "many as are led by the Spirit of God that are his sons<sup>g</sup>." And they that are in their measure "blameless and harmless, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom they shine as lights in the world<sup>h</sup>." Christians, know your own felicity, that you may rejoice in it, and give glory to God. You may boldly draw near him, and call him your Father, and look for the love and bounty of a Father, at his hands. O wretched world, to despise so great a mercy as this is! Doth it seem a small thing to them to be the sons of God? It raised the blessed apostles into an admiration: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God<sup>i</sup>." And as a Father tendereth a son that he delights in, so doth the Lord the poorest of his

<sup>c</sup> John xv. 13—15. James ii. 23.

<sup>d</sup> Rom. v. 10.

<sup>e</sup> 2 Cor. v. 18—20.

<sup>f</sup> Gal. iv. 4, 5, 7.

<sup>g</sup> Rom. viii. 14.

<sup>h</sup> Phil. ii. 15.

<sup>i</sup> 1 John iii. 1.

people. The world, I told you, is divided into the children of God, and the children of the devil. And it is by conversion from sin to God, that men are known to be the children of God. If, therefore, you value this wonderful privilege, yield then to the grace of God, which would convert you.

7. Another benefit of the converted, is, That they have the Spirit of Christ within them. By it doth Christ possess and govern them; by it doth he make them like to himself, and work out all that is contrary to his holiness. For it is a cleansing Spirit, and a Spirit of holiness<sup>k</sup>. By this he helpeth them against the flesh, and effectually mortifieth it<sup>l</sup>. By this doth he quicken them to newness of life; for it is a “quickeningspirit<sup>m</sup>.” By this it is that “he helpeth their infirmities, and teacheth them to pray<sup>n</sup>.” By this he “teacheth them his law, and writeth it in their hearts<sup>o</sup>.” By this he possesseth them with filial affection, and causeth them to “cry to him, Abba, Father<sup>p</sup>.” By this one Spirit, all his people have access to him<sup>q</sup>. And by this they are made his habitation<sup>r</sup>. And in the unity of this Spirit, they are one with the Lord, and among themselves<sup>s</sup>. This Spirit is the earnest of their future glory<sup>t</sup>. And where this Spirit is, there is liberty from former slavery<sup>u</sup>. So that you see how great a mercy it is to have the Spirit of Jesus Christ within us; and this is the case of all that are converted, and none but them. “For if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, the same is none of his<sup>x</sup>.” If you did but know what it is to be possessed by the Holy Ghost, when ungodly men have the spirit of uncleanness, you would not rest without this blessedness.

8. Another part of the happiness of the converted, is, That all the promises of grace are theirs. They are the children of the promise, and God is, as it were, obliged to them, and hath engaged his word for their security<sup>y</sup>. All the promises are in Christ, yea, and amen<sup>z</sup>. They, therefore, that are in Christ, must needs have part in them. O how full is the book of God, of free and precious promises to his peo-

<sup>k</sup> Rom. i. 4.

<sup>l</sup> Gal. v. 16, 17. Rom. viii. 1, 2. 14.

<sup>m</sup> Rom. viii. 11,

<sup>n</sup> Rom. viii. 26. Eph. vi. 18. <sup>o</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 3.

<sup>p</sup> Gal. iv. 6.

<sup>q</sup> Eph. ii. 18.

<sup>r</sup> Eph. ii. 22.

<sup>s</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 17. xii. 12, 13.

<sup>t</sup> 2 Cor. i. 22. v. 5

<sup>u</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 17.

<sup>x</sup> Rom. viii. 9.

<sup>y</sup> Gal. iv. 28. iii. 22. Eph. iii. 6.

<sup>z</sup> 2 Cor. i. 20.

ple! and all belong to thee that art converted. There hast thou promises for remission; and promises for assistance against temptation; and promises for acceptance of thy person, and duties; and promises for protection and deliverance from evil; and when thou readest them, thou mayst say 'all those are mine.' He that knoweth that God is true, will not take a promise as an inconsiderable mercy. If men account it such a matter to have a lease, or deed of gift of land, and worldly riches, how should we value that covenant and testament of our Lord? In a word, "Godliness is profitable to all things; having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come<sup>b</sup>. And what can any man desire more?

Yield therefore to the voice of grace, that you may be converted, and all the promises of grace will be yours: and then it will be an unspeakable comfort to you, that whatsoever condition you are in, you have a promise of God that you shall be better. If you be in poverty, if in sickness, if at the hour of death, yet you have a promise, which is enough to support a believing soul. As one saith, 'I had rather be at the bottom of the sea with a promise, than in paradise without it.' For there is no misery so deep, but we shall certainly be delivered from it, if we have but a promise. But without it, Adam was not safe in innocency.

9. Another benefit of the converted, is, That all their duties are pleasing to God. I mean not their sins, nor the failings of their duties; for God will never be reconciled to these, when he is reconciled to the sinner. But the failings of all their duties are forgiven them, through the blood of Christ; and the failing being forgiven, the duty is accepted and well-pleasing to God. "By faith Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts. By faith Enoch had this testimony that he pleased God<sup>c</sup>. The "sacrifice of their good works is pleasing to him<sup>d</sup>." Their "prayer and alms-deeds come up before him; for in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him<sup>e</sup>." And it is their study and work to do those things that please him, and walking in all pleasingness is

<sup>b</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 8.

<sup>c</sup> Heb. xi. 4, 5.

<sup>d</sup> Heb. xiii. 16.

<sup>e</sup> Acts x. 4. 35.

accepted of him<sup>f</sup>. And all this is through Christ in whom the Father was first well pleased<sup>g</sup>. O how great a consolation is this to the saints! See that you be truly converted, and go to God, and fear not lest he reject you further than is necessary to reverence and caution. When he abhorreth the gilded sacrifice of the hypocrite, he will accept that which seemeth weaker from thee. He will hear thy very groans and tears, and broken expressions. Lament over thy weaknesses, and see that thou disown them, and then thou shalt find, that God will not disown thy services for them. O what a comfort is this in a time of extremity, in trouble of conscience, in sickness, and at death, to have God to be well pleased with all our duties, and to know that he will not abhor our prayers. The time is near, Christian, when thou wilt find this privilege more worth to thee than a thousand worlds, that God will let thee come near him with acceptance, and bid thee welcome, and hear thy prayers; and the time is coming when unconverted sinners would give a world if they had it, for such a privilege, and say, O that I could go to God, and have a gracious hearing as well as they! But it will not be, because they knew not the day of their visitation.

10. Another benefit of the converted, is this; The angels of God have a special order and commission to attend them. They are all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation<sup>h</sup>. Note here, that angels are servants, not to us, but to God for us; and that it is in a special manner for the heirs of salvation: and that it seems it is all the angels that are designed to this office. I say not, all the glorious spirits that are before the throne of God. For, I presume not to determine whether there be not other spirits besides the angels; for the word angel signifieth a messenger, and therefore it is only these that are employed as God's messengers, that are called by that name; and those that believe in Christ, are said to have their own angels always beholding the face of God<sup>i</sup>. These doth he send to deliver his servants in distress, as they did, Dan. iii. 21. vi. 22. And Peter, Acts xii. For, "he giveth his angels charge over them to keep them in all their ways, they

<sup>f</sup> Heb. iii. 21. Phil. iv. 18. <sup>1</sup> John iii. 22. Col. i. 10. <sup>g</sup> Matt. iii. 17. xvii. 5.

<sup>h</sup> Heb. i. 14.

<sup>i</sup> Matt. xviii. 10.

shall bear them up in their hands, lest they dash their foot against a stone<sup>k</sup>." Yea, they have their office also for the good of souls. An angel appeared to Christ himself, and strengthened him in his agony<sup>l</sup>. And as evil spirits can hurt the souls of the wicked, so no doubt but the good can help the souls of the righteous; and, therefore, when satan comes to deceive, he is said to be transformed into an angel of light<sup>m</sup>. Yea, when the soul goeth out of the body, these angels are the conductors of it into the presence of God<sup>n</sup>, where we shall be made equal to the angels themselves<sup>o</sup>. O, if the eyes of true Christians were but opened to see their glorious attendance, they would be more sensible of this privilege, and thankful for it, than now they be. God could do all things for us without instruments if he pleased, but as he rather chooseth to work by instruments and second causes for our bodies, so also by these invisible instruments both for body and soul. When Saul had sinned against God, and was forsaken by him, the good Spirit was taken from him, and an evil spirit given him. Some common benefits even common men may have by these angels while they forfeit not their helps, but not that special benefit as the saints. The world cannot distinguish the righteous from the wicked, but the angels of God can; for they must needs know their own charge, and who it is that Christ hath especially committed to their trust.

11. Another excellent benefit of the converted, is this, As they are true members of the catholic church, (whatsoever any schismatics may say to the contrary, that would confine the catholic church to their own party,) so have they communion with the whole church, and many spiritual advantages by that communion. Besides that external communion in church order and ordinances, which the ungodly may have as well as they, there is a spiritual internal communion, which is proper to the living, converted members. All the saints have one Spirit of holiness, to animate them<sup>p</sup>. And they all intend the same end, and conspire in the same way for the accomplishment. God is their common end, as he is their common original<sup>q</sup>. They have all "one God,

<sup>k</sup> Psal. xci. 11, 12.

<sup>l</sup> Luke xxii. 43.

<sup>m</sup> 2 Cor. xi. 14.

<sup>n</sup> Luke xvi. 22.

<sup>o</sup> Luke xx. 36.

<sup>p</sup> Rom. viii. 9. 1 Cor. xii.

<sup>q</sup> Rom. xi. 36. 1 Cor. viii. 6. 11, 12.

one Christ, one faith," though they may differ in many smaller opinions, and to "every one of them is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ<sup>r</sup>." And so they "are all one body and one Spirit," and must endeavour to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace<sup>s</sup>." They are members of one heavenly city, "even Jerusalem, which is above, the mother of us all," where they shall be perfected<sup>t</sup>. And of the militant church, the city of God, while they are here on earth. It is the design of God in the fulness of time, to gather them all into one, in Christ, yea, to make them and the angels in heaven to be one body<sup>u</sup>. They have here the same officers and means, even apostles, and prophets, and their holy writings, pastors and teachers, and the use of ordinances, and this for the edifying and perfection of the body, "till they all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. That speaking the truth in love, they may grow up into him in all things which is the head, Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, to the edifying of itself in love<sup>x</sup>."

Moreover, all the whole church doth constantly pray for every member; not only as for those that are yet unconverted, that they may have grace, because they have no absolute promise to be heard in that; and that they shall not be heard for all men in general, they are certain, and therefore may not so ask it. But when they pray for the godly, it is as for those for whom they have a promise. As they live in the constant love of one another, which is the mark by which the world must know them, and an effect of the Spirit which doth animate the whole body<sup>y</sup>, so doth this love express itself in the breathings forth of constant desires for the prosperity of the whole, and each part. O Christians, what an excellent privilege is this, that the poorest man or woman of you that is converted, hath thousands and thousands of the prayers of the saints going for you to God from

<sup>r</sup> Eph. iv. 5—7.<sup>s</sup> Eph. iv. 3, 4.<sup>t</sup> Heb. xii. 22, 23.<sup>u</sup> Eph. i. 10.<sup>x</sup> Eph. iv. 12, 13, 15, 16. <sup>y</sup> 1 Pet. i. 22. 1 John iv.

7, 8. John xlii. 34, 35.

day to day. Which way ever you are going, or whatsoever you are doing, this stock is improving for you, this work is going on. When you are about other matters and think not of it, there are thousands of holy people praying for you. When you grow cold and faint in prayer, there are thousands of fervent Christians at prayer for you. When you have caught a fall, and conscience is troubled, and you dare scarce go to God again, there are thousands of Christians that are at prayer for you, that have clearer consciences and boldness with God. Is not this a comfort when your graces are weak, when temptations are strong, and troubles, and fears, and doubts are many, to remember you have thousands of the people of God at prayer for you? Is not this a great comfort in the greatest dangers, when you are afraid of your salvation, to remember how many thousands are at prayer for your salvation? Nay, it is even all the whole church of God. And you may well think that God will not easily deny the prayer of his whole church. He that hath promised to hear two or three, yea, every single person, that asketh any thing in the name of Christ according to his will, is unlikely to deny his whole church, when they join together for any such thing. And this is a matter that is according to his will, that his truly converted people should persevere, and be preserved in his love, and safely brought on to his heavenly kingdom<sup>2</sup>. O remember this in your doubts and troubles, that all the church of Christ is daily at prayer with God for your salvation. And is not this a great comfort to you; in time of sickness, or at the hour of death, to remember, that now the whole church of God is at prayer for you? You send to this friend and that friend which you think have interest in God, and you are glad if you can but get them to pray for you. How glad then should you be, that all the church prayeth for you, who most certainly have so great an interest in him? The spirit of prayer, which teacheth the people of God to pray, will not forget you, nor suffer them to forget you, but will make them pray for all the body, and every member of it; as the very tenor of the Lord's prayer sheweth you: and Col. i. 3. Eph. vi. 18. Col. iv. 3. 1 Tim. ii. 1. Rom. i. 9. xv. 30. O then, sirs, if you be wise, yield to that grace of Christ that would convert you, that you may

<sup>2</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 18.



be members of this body, and live in the spiritual communion of it. For, alas! to join externally in the communion of the church, when you have not communion with them in the Spirit, will but increase your condemnation at the last. You are every day among the saints of God, but you know them not, nor the Spirit by which they live, nor the spiritual part of the work which they do. Such a communion as the dead corps have together which you tread upon (whose bones and dust lie mingled in the earth) in comparison of our communion that are here together in the presence of God among the living; even such a communion have the unconverted in the visible church, in comparison of that spiritual communion with the people that are converted.

12. Another excellent benefit to the converted, is, That they have the constant intercession of Jesus Christ, God and man, in his heavenly priesthood, at his Father's right hand in the heavenly glory. Their head is not insensible of their wants, nor doth he disregard them; the wrong that is done you, he takes as done to himself. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" said he to one that trod upon his foot<sup>a</sup>. And the good that is done to you, or denied to you by others, he takes as done or denied to himself, as may be seen in Matt. xxv. 40. 45. Surely then he doth not forget us, though he be exalted to his glory. He is not like the poor silly creatures, that cannot bear exaltation without being puffed up, and forgetting themselves; yea, their friends and their God. No; his exaltation is spiritual and heavenly, perfecting his human nature to the greatest height that it is capable of: he liveth in the face of God who is love; nay, into the personal union with the Godhead which is love, hath he assumed our nature long ago; he was never more tender of Jerusalem, when he wept over them<sup>b</sup>; or of his people when he wept, and bled, and died for them, than he is now of them in his glory. Though he cannot weep or grieve now as he did on earth, yet he can love now as much as ever he loved; and therefore his eye is still upon our wants, his heart is set upon us for our good, he looks down from heaven upon every particular member; he seeth that this man wants this grace, and that man wants that, and the other is in danger of this or that corruption or temptation;

<sup>a</sup> Acts ix. 4.

<sup>b</sup> Luke xix. 41.

and he is daily carrying on the cure. It is he that sends this minister and the other minister as his apothecaries, with his medicines, and persuadeth you to take them for your good ; it is he that directeth this or that affliction to be a purge for some dangerous disease, when he seeth that easier means prevail not. You see not your chief Physician, he standeth out of your sight ; but he seeth you, and it is he that doth all for you that is done : as he prepared a medicine of his own blood to cure sick souls, while he was here upon earth, so he is now continually applying it to them for their cure. Do not think that all his love was shewed upon the cross, or that all that he doth for you by his blood was then done ; no : he is still pleading as it were that blood on your behalf unto his Father, and offering the sacrifice for you again in the holiest, which he once offered for you on the cross ; and is there a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek <sup>c</sup>. And “because he continueth ever, he hath an unchangeable priesthood ; wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them <sup>d</sup>.” “For as by his own blood he entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption : so shall this blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge our consciences from dead works to serve the living God <sup>e</sup>.” For Christ “is not entered into the holy place made with hands, which is the figure of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God, for us <sup>f</sup>.” For “after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever, he is sat down on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till his (and our) enemies be made his footstool ; for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified <sup>g</sup>.” So that we have a perfect high-priest that perfectly loveth us, who is representing our case before his Father, and pleading a perfect sacrifice for us ; and through him it is that we ourselves have “boldness to enter into the holiest, even by his blood, by the new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, even his flesh : for, “having such an high-priest over the house of God, we may draw near in full assurance of faith,” if we have a “true heart

<sup>c</sup> Heb. viii. 1—4.    vii. 3. 11. 15.

<sup>d</sup> Heb. vii. 24, 25.

<sup>e</sup> Heb. ix. 11. 14.

<sup>f</sup> Heb. ix. 24.

<sup>g</sup> Heb. x. 12—14.

sprinkled from an evil conscience, as our bodies are washed with his baptismal water<sup>h</sup>." O what an unspeakable comfort is this, to every truly converted soul! The Son of God is at prayer for thee, Christian. If thou think that God will not hear thy own prayers; no, nor hear the whole church's prayers; dost thou think he will hear his Son's prayers, or not? The poor man that was born blind, could tell that "God heareth not sinners," that is, unconverted sinners; but "if any man be a worshipper of God, and doth his will, him he heareth<sup>i</sup>." How then can he choose but hear him that had no sin? and hear him that taketh away the sins of the world? He that said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased, hear him;" will sure hear him himself, because he is so. He telleth his Father, "I know that thou hearest me always<sup>k</sup>;" and it is not only his common intercession for his common salvation, which he giveth to the world: for so, when "he poured out his soul to death, and was numbered among the transgressors, and bare the sins of many, he made intercession for the transgressors<sup>l</sup>." And said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And so he procureth them a conditional pardon and salvation, with the means and mercies that have a tendency thereto. But it is the special intercession for that special grace which he communiceth to none but his living members. Read that excellent prayer, John xvii. which he putteth up to the Father for his own, and remember that these requests are for you, and that it is for all that shall believe in him through the world that he thus intercedeth, verse 20. O what a comfort is it to a poor Christian, that in his greatest infirmities, and deepest sense of unworthiness, he hath the beloved of the Father to take his prayers and present them to God, and to plead his cause more effectually than he can do his own. What say you then to this, you that are yet in the flesh, and unacquainted with the life of grace; would you have a Saviour to speak for you to the Father? Yea, one who hath all power in heaven and earth committed to him, and "is able to save to the uttermost, all those that come to God by him." O yield then speedily to converting grace, and rest not till this work be wrought upon your

<sup>h</sup> Heb. x. 19—22.<sup>i</sup> John ix. 31.<sup>k</sup> John xi. 42.<sup>l</sup> Isa. liii. 12.

souls: this blessed state may be yours as well as other men's, if you do not now neglect it and refuse it.

13. Another excellent benefit to the converted, is, That God hath assured them that all things are theirs, and shall work to their good. The promise is expressed, 2 Cor. iv. 15. 1 Cor. iii. 21. Rom. viii. 28. Not that they have a propriety in other men's possessions in civil respects; but finally, other men, and their possessions, and all the world are for their good. As the world at first was made for Adam and his offspring, so is it redeemed from ruin for the second Adam and his offspring, in a special manner; the earthly proprietors shall have it in possession, and many of them not have a thousandth part of the benefit by it as others that possess it not: the physician hath his skill in his own profession: but the patient that is recovered by it, may have more benefit by it than he that possesseth it: the whole frame of heaven and earth are in perpetual motion for the glory of the saints; are all conjoined by the overruling Providence, and are carrying on the same design of God, when they seem at the greatest odds among themselves. When the instruments themselves are unacquainted with their own employment, and know not what it is that they are doing, yet God knoweth, who seeth and ruleth them all. The business that God hath in hand is to build the heavenly Jerusalem, to gather to himself the whole number of his elect that are scattered through the world<sup>m</sup>. And to make them a city for his own habitation, and a people for his everlasting praise: and the very persecutors of the church are but now hewing them and squaring them, and fitting them for the building: when God seeth us sick of a pleurisy, he often useth the sword of an enemy to let us blood, which shall as certainly do the cure as the tenderest hand. The medicine knoweth not that it is healing a man's disease; the lancet knoweth not that it is saving a man's life by taking away his blood, but he that useth them knoweth what he is doing. Herod and Pilate, and the people of the Jews thought they had been securing their own seats, and the liberty of their nation, by crucifying one that called himself King of the Jews: they little knew that they were shedding that blood that was to be a sacrifice for the sins of the world,

<sup>m</sup> Matt. xxiv. 31. John xi. 52.

and crucifying that flesh that was given for the life of the world<sup>a</sup>: but God knew what he was doing by them: for, they did nothing but what his counsel had determined should come to pass°. Pharaoh thought he was securing his interest; but God knew he was getting himself glory, and his people a wonderful deliverance by his obstinacy. And even satan himself is as much overreached in his devices and enterprises against the saints as their earthly enemies are. He is but exercising their graces, and driving them to Christ, and honouring the power of his blood and Spirit eventually, when he seeketh to devour them: his temptations do but make them the more watchful: or if they fall, they rise with the greater hatred of sin, and love to Christ, and thankfulness for his blood and pardoning grace, and renewed resolution to walk more carefully for the time to come: O blessed state, where all the world, both good and bad, both friends and foes, both angels and devils are all carrying on the work of our salvation, some with delight, and some unwillingly, some with understanding, and some not knowing what they do! What a state of comfort hath that man, that may be assured that whatsoever befalleth him, shall be for his good, and that all things do work together for the best! I confess I have had myself so much comfort from that one promise, Rom. viii. 28. that I would not have been without it for a world. When I have had no particular discovery of the tendency of a providence, and under affliction, and the appearance of death, have had nothing from below to support me, that one promise hath appeared so full, that I thought if there were no more, it might abundantly supply my soul with consolation: what fear should we have of want, or enemies, of sickness, or death, or any thing that may be terrible to the flesh, as long as we know that all things do but conspire to our salvation? And though none of the wheels in the chariot of providence should know which way or whither they are moving themselves, yet do they all serve to convey us to our glory: it is a matter that is past the belief of the carnal world, but it is a certain, sealed truth, that when the persecutor is treading down and tormenting the poor, despised saints, it is the saint that is the gainer, and all this is for his good, and his ignorant enemy

<sup>a</sup> John vi. 51.<sup>o</sup> Acts iv. 28.

is scouring off his rust, and preparing him for his master's use, and for his glory, and is himself the loser, and the miserable wretch, when he is highest in his honour, and deepest in his cruelty, and proudest in his triumphs. Why poor sinners, do not your hearts within you long to be partakers of this blessed state? Is it not worth all that you can do or suffer, yea, worth ten thousand worlds, to be such an one as I have now described to you? Why, you may be such if your own folly and neglect exclude you not, God hath not shut you out of the promise; O do not shut out yourselves by refusing his converting grace.

14. Another most excellent benefit to the converted, is, That they are past their greatest danger, and have done the greatest business of their lives, and now are ready for death and judgment, whensoever it shall come. Not that all danger is over, or all enemies yet overcome, or all their work done, nor that they are yet perfectly ready to die; but the main work is done, and the main conquest of the enemy is over, and the main danger is past, and in the main they are prepared for their change. What had we to do here but to prepare for glory, and in this short and troublesome life to get interest in a better, that shall never end? And with all that are truly converted this is done: at the very hour that God converted them, he made them his sons, he pardoned their sins, and gave them right to everlasting glory: when he gives you Christ, he gives you all things, or puts you into a condition wherein you may well think he will give you all things, Rom. viii. 32. O, happy day! may that man or woman say, as long as they live, when God did translate them out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son! Many keep their birth-days as a day of rejoicing or feasting while they live, when Solomon saith, "the day of death is better than the day of birth<sup>p</sup>." But they that know the day of their new birth may well make that a day of rejoicing while they live. Oh! sirs, what a blessed change doth that one day or hour make, when God shall presently bring up the heart of a sinner to himself, and join them truly to Jesus Christ, and forgive all the sins that ever they did, and give them right to everlasting glory! You are like a man that is pursued by his enemies, and as

<sup>p</sup> Eccles. vii. 1.

soon as ever he can but get into such a castle or garrison, he is safe : so, when you first get into Christ by a living, effectual faith, that very hour were you out of the reach of the prevailing, commanding power of hell ; then was the strong man cast out of your souls ; then were you brought from under the curse of the law, and the wrath of God. If death had found you one hour before that change, you had been damned wretches in hell for ever : and if death should come but one hour after that change, you will certainly be glorified saints with Christ. This is true, sirs, how strange soever it may seem to you : and the reason is at hand, because that the hour before your conversion, you were the members of satan, you were in the flesh, and had no saving interest in Christ or in the promise : and the hour after true conversion, you are members of Christ and children of the promise, and have part in him who is Lord of all. I deny not but you must still “ watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation ;” and for all the “ promise that is left you of entering into rest,” you must “ fear lest you should seem to come short of it.” And you must still stand on your guard in all the spiritual armour, and work and fight out your salvation, and quit yourselves like men to the end : but yet I may well say that the main brunt is over ; the enemy is dispossessed of his chiefest hold ; he that ruled you is now cast out, and though he be not quite under your feet, yet he shortly will be : and your greatest business now is to keep him out and to stand on your defence, and “ keep that you have, that none may take your crown from you ;” and to follow on the conquered enemy, in the pursuit, till none remain : and to “ grow in grace, and perfect your holiness in the fear of God,” and cast out the remnants of your former filthiness<sup>r</sup>. Hearken, therefore, poor sinners, and as ever you are friends to your own souls, neglect not that grace that would bring you into this condition. Would you not think yourselves happy, if it were thus with you ?

15. Another most excellent benefit of the converted, is, That they are the rightful heirs of everlasting glory, and as soon as the soul is gone out of the body, they shall have possession of it : and at the day of judgment they shall have a blessed resurrection, and shall themselves be justified in

<sup>r</sup> Heb. iv. 1

<sup>r</sup> 2 Pet. iii. ult. 2 Cor. vii. 1. xiii. 9. Heb. vi. 1.

judgment, and also with Christ shall judge the world, and so shall be fully possessed of that glory in soul and body, and shall live in the everlasting praise of their Redeemer. Here are many particular benefits, which for brevity I join together. (1.) They are now the heirs of glory, for being the sons of God, they are co-heirs with Christ, though they must follow him in sufferings, before they come to the possession of their inheritance. "The Spirit witnesseth with our spirits that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified together<sup>\*</sup>." Though now in our minority we differ not from servants, yet "being sons we are heirs of all<sup>†</sup>." When moved with holy fear we prepare the ark, and hide ourselves in Christ by faith, and become the heirs of the righteousness of faith, even then also do we become heirs of the end of that righteousness<sup>‡</sup>. When we receive our interest in the promise, that promise makes us heirs<sup>§</sup>. O, brethren, that you could but conceive the greatness of this blessedness, which even the poorest beggar in the world may have that is rich in faith; for even they "are heirs of that kingdom which God hath promised to them that love him<sup>¶</sup>." How certainly shall these be partakers of that glory, when they "have finished their course, and fought the good fight<sup>‡</sup>." For God hath "laid up a crown of salvation, for all such as love his appearing." And it is conversion that bringeth us into this blessed state, and the unconverted have no part or fellowship in it. See Tit. iii. 4—7. "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour: that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." So that it is conversion that bringeth us into this happy condition: O, therefore, bless God if you find he hath wrought this work upon your souls. Yet be not careless for the time to come, but "let every one of you shew the same diligence to the full assu-

\* Rom. viii. 16, 17.

† Gal. iii. 29.

‡ Gal. iv. 1. 7.

¶ James ii. 5.

§ Heb. xi. 7.

‡ 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.



rance of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful, but followers of them that through faith and patience inherit the promise." And then doubt not, for God hath confirmed your salvation by his oath. "For God being willing abundantly to shew to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath;" saith the apostle, "that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before us, which hope we have as an anchor of the soul both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that which is within the vail; whither Jesus Christ the forerunner, is for us entered <sup>a</sup>."

(2.) Hereupon it follows that whensoever the righteous die, their souls are conveyed by angels into that glory <sup>b</sup>. And when they "depart, they are with Christ <sup>c</sup>." And when they are "absent from the body, they are present with the Lord <sup>d</sup>." Of which they may "be confident as walking by faith, and not by sight, and knowing that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;" and therefore may "groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven <sup>e</sup>." And when we die, we may say with Stephen, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit <sup>f</sup>." And were our death as ignominious as the thieves on the cross, yet that day should we be with Christ in paradise, Luke xxiii. 43. O blessed people that live in such a case, so near the door of a more blessed life! How can you endure to be out of this condition of hope and peace, one day or hour? Oh! that you did but know the blessedness that you neglect.

(3.) But yet, this is not all, but the greatest part of the blessedness remains till the day of judgment, and then there are these four benefits to be received. 1. The righteous shall have a blessed resurrection; not the resurrection of damnation, which will be the lot of all the rest; but the resurrection of life, as Christ distinguisheth them, John v. 28, 29. The graves shall be no longer able to detain them, but he that conquered death by his own resurrection, will by the same divine power again overcome it by the resurrection of

<sup>a</sup> Heb. vi. 11, 12. 17—20.

<sup>b</sup> Luke xvi. 22.

<sup>c</sup> Phil. i. 23.

<sup>d</sup> 2 Cor. v. 8.

<sup>e</sup> 2 Cor. v. 1—3. 6, 7.

<sup>f</sup> Acts vii. 59.

his people. And as his natural body hath already triumphed over it, so shall his mystical body at that day: he that made heaven and earth of nothing, will by the same almightiness accomplish this: read 1 Cor. xv. throughout. 2. And being raised and brought to judgment, the next benefit will be their final justification. They have now the justification and pardon of the Gospel, and then they shall have the final justification of the Judge. For he will give to every man according to right, and his promise made this their right through the blood of Christ. For, "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit<sup>g</sup>." Whatsoever sin can then be charged on them, they can answer all by shewing the Gospel pardon in the blood of Christ, and if their title be questioned, they can prove it by their faith and sincere obedience. So all that repent and are converted, will then "have their sins blotted out, when that time of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord<sup>h</sup>." It is not possible that Christ should condemn his own body and condemn those that have believed in him, and sincerely loved him: so dear a friend, so tender-hearted a Saviour, that hath bought us so dearly, and sanctified us and cleansed us, and given us a right to that justification by his promise, cannot possibly condemn us after all this. As certainly as Christ himself is justified, and his promise true, and his love unchangeable, so certainly shall all the converted be then absolved. 3. And not only so, but also with Christ they shall judge the world: for so is the plain word of promise, 1 Cor. vi. 2. Yea, they shall judge the angels themselves.

(4.) And lastly, they shall take possession of their glory; and enter into the joy of their Lord<sup>i</sup>. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, when the wicked are cast into that furnace of fire, where shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth<sup>k</sup>." "He that hath ears to hear let him hear," saith Christ, when he had spoken these words: and he that will not hear such things as these, and regard them, will one day wish that he never had ears, and never had a heart in his breast, or else that it had been better.

Oh! dear friends! that I were but able to make you

<sup>g</sup> Rom. viii. 1.

<sup>h</sup> Acts iii. 19.

<sup>i</sup> Matt. xxv. 21. 23.

<sup>k</sup> Matt. xiii. 42, 43.

know the difference between the righteous and the wicked at that day. Surely I should not need then to say any more to you to make you apprehensive of the necessity of conversion, and to make haste to entertain that grace that is offered you. If the crown of glory be worth seeking, then must converting grace be sought: if an everlasting blessedness with Christ and his holy angels be worth the having, renewing grace is worth the having. Lift up your heads then Christians, and rejoice in the hope that is set before you. O bless the Lord that ever he brought you into the kingdom of grace, which is but the beginning of the kingdom of glory. As sure as your natural birth was your entrance into this natural world, so sure was your new birth the entrance into a better world. For your life eternal was begun when you began to have the saving knowledge of God, and his Son Jesus Christ. He that hath given you the earnest of his Spirit, and who "hath sealed us with the holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, till the redemption of the purchased possession<sup>1</sup>," will doubtless give us the inheritance itself. Fear not, Christian, the Lord that hath promised will not deceive thee, for he never yet deceived any. But as sure as the sun doth shine in the firmament, so sure shalt thou live in the heavenly Jerusalem, and be joined with the holy angels of God in his everlasting praises, and then thou wilt better know than now thou canst do, what God did for thee that day that he did convert thee. I know it is the business of the enemy of thy salvation, if it might be, to draw thee back into thy former state of death and darkness; and when he cannot do that, to rob thee at least of the comfort of thy felicity, that thou mightest doubt, and fear, and live in perplexity, as if thou wert not the heir of glory. Because as he is loath to be tormented before the time, so is he loath that thou shouldst be comforted before the time; but do not thou believe him; suffer him not to hide thy blessedness from thine eyes; O, remember it cannot be loved, if it be not believed; thou wilt lose thy joy and God his praise, if the tempter prevail with thee to deny thy mercy. Believe then, and give God the glory by believing.

16. Another of the blessings of a converted man, is, That

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. i. 22. v. 5.

new life which he hath begun, is a life of health, and peace, and comfort, and the very beginning of his everlasting peace and life; and the more he hath of it, the more happy will his life be. It is not only our suffering that is the way to reigning, and our tribulation by which we must enter into the kingdom of God; but we have also peace the way to peace, and life the way to life, and joy the way to joy and glory. Our tribulation and sufferings are but some accidental attendants of this our militant state; but the life itself consists of other kind of matter. How blessed a life is it to live in so near a relation to God, as is above mentioned! And how pleasant a thing is the believing exercise of his graces! O how sweet is it to live here in any lively beginnings of the love of God! How pleasant is it to know that we are beloved of him! How sweet is it to draw near to him, and plead our cause with him in faith, and to call him Father in confidence through Christ! How sweet is it to live under the power of his ordinances, when by his Spirit he blesseth them to our souls! What a joy is it believingly to think beforehand of their eternal blessedness! And what comfortable communion have the people of God together, and what good doth it do them to hear and speak of the glory that they shall possess! O poor deceived sinners, that think the way of the Lord to be so grievous, and fly from it, as if it were an insufferable toil. Did you but know the safety and the comfort which the life of godliness doth afford, you would be of another mind, and take another course than you do. I do profess to you all in the name of the Lord, that you will never have a safe, nor truly peaceable and comfortable life, till you are converted, and live a spiritual and heavenly life. The joy of the world is sorrow in comparison of that which you might have from Christ. The laughter of a fool doth not so much differ from the highest content of the greatest prince on earth, as your carnal mirth and peace doth differ from that which is fetched by true faith from the face of God, and the life to come. You fly from godliness for fear of sorrow and trouble, and I tell you it is joy and peace that you fly from, and sorrow and trouble that you continue in, and that you are preparing for. Believe the Lord Jesus himself, if you will not believe those that have tried. "Come unto me all you that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will

give you rest; take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light<sup>m</sup>.” “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous<sup>n</sup>.” “Being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also we have access by faith unto this grace, wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God: and not only so, but we glory in tribulation<sup>o</sup>.” “Whom not having seen, ye love; though now you see him not, yet believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls<sup>p</sup>.” “We are the circumcision that worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh<sup>q</sup>.” “Rejoice evermore<sup>r</sup>.” “Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice<sup>s</sup>.” “Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous, for praise is comely for the upright<sup>t</sup>.” “Ye that love the Lord, hate evil; he preserveth the souls of his saints, he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous, and shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart<sup>u</sup>.”

What say you to all this now? Is it a life of trouble and misery that God hath prescribed for his people to live in? Is this a burdensome, grievous life? Will you not believe him, concerning his own way? I tell you again, and declare to you from the Lord, that you shall never have any true peace and comfort till you are converted, and lead a holy life. And you that say you shall never have a merry day more, if you leave your sins, and give up yourselves to a life of holiness, I do profess and proclaim to you, that you shall never have a merry life indeed till you do it: I mean, you shall never have that solid and lasting joy, which beseemeth a man of wisdom to regard. Believe the Lord himself that hath told you it twice over; Isa. xlviii. 32., “There is no peace saith the Lord to the wicked;” Isa. li. 21., “There is no peace saith my God to the wicked.” “The way of peace they know not, there is no judgment in their goings; they

<sup>m</sup> Matt. xi. 27, 28.

<sup>p</sup> 1 Pet. i. 8, 9.

<sup>s</sup> Phil. iv. 4.

<sup>n</sup> 1 John v. 3.

<sup>q</sup> Phil. iii. 3.

<sup>t</sup> Psal. xxxiii. 1.

<sup>o</sup> Rom. v. 1—3.

<sup>r</sup> 1 Thess. v. 16.

<sup>u</sup> Psal. lxxix. 10—12.

have made them crooked paths; whosoever goeth therein, shall not know peace<sup>x</sup>." I confess, a carnal peace you may awhile maintain, and for a time may have a merry dream, but the day is near, when you will have a terrible awakening. And you may think that the godly have no such joy, because you see it not, or because you see them sad and heavy: but their "joy is such as strangers meddle not with." I know the righteous have many troubles, and are oftener in tears and groans than others; but that is from the remnants of their sins, which as it consisteth with prevailing grace, so doth that sorrow with prevailing joy, or may do at least. A dead man groaneth not, when a sick man doth: and yet that is no disparagement to life. What is sweeter than life? and yet sickness may make it grievous; but we do not therefore prefer death before life, because some are sick: so what is sweeter than the life of grace? and yet spiritual sickness may make us walk heavily, and yet we do not therefore prefer a death in sin before it. O come and try, sinners, the pleasures that be in the ways of God, and do not for shame speak against them, till you have thoroughly tried them. The Lord himself doth testify of them, Prov. iii. 13. xxi. 20. "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding; for the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared to her. Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is every one that retaineth her." You see then that conversion is the beginning of consolation.

17. Another of the privileges of the converted, is this; As he hath cause of continual joy, so no evil that can befall him, is a sufficient reason to lay by these joys, as to the habit at least, and the prevailing degree. I know that so far as we have sin, we may, we shall, we must have sorrow: but then, so far as we have that sin pardoned and mortified, we may, we should have greater joy. And because a converted man hath no unmortified, unpardoned sin, therefore his cause of joy is greater than his cause of sorrow. Though yet

<sup>x</sup> Isa. lix. 8.

I must say, that there are seasons when sorrow must be most expressed, as in days of humiliation, and in great falls, and in some afflictions; yet habitually then our joy should be the greater, though it be not the season to express it. But my special meaning here is about the evil of affliction, which is sanctified to the godly, and hath lost its sting, and is turned by a hand of grace to their advantage. Should not that man live in continual joy, that is the heir of heaven, and a friend of God, and a member of Christ, and doth but wait for the hour of death to be possessed of that unspeakable, endless glory? What should trouble the heart of him that is escaped out of the power of satan, and the greatest trouble, which is the wrath of God, and the danger of everlasting misery? That which may torment the heart of another day and night, even the thoughts of the endless flames of hell; this is not only taken out of his way, but turned into the matter of his joy and praise, to think but of the fearful misery that he hath escaped. O what heart that hath received a pardon of all sins, and is saved thereby from the everlasting torments, can choose but daily rejoice in that salvation? Would not a Judas have been glad, while he was hanging himself in despair, if any one would have given him assurance, yea, or but hope of that salvation? Go to any despairing sinner, or any one under the terrors of the Lord, and ask them whether or no they would be glad if they could but be assured that they should escape that misery which they fear? You need not doubt what answer they would give you. They would be glad, and a thousand times glad; much more if you could assure them of an everlasting glory, instead of that deserved misery. O then, what a blessed state are all those in that are truly converted! How many times doth the mouth of Christ pronounce them blessed! "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for their's is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness's sake, for their's is the kingdom of God." What case soever that man be in that is the heir of heaven, he cannot choose but be a blessed man. If any thing might make him seem miserable, it would be to be persecuted and hated, and made

the scorn of the world; and yet Christ saith, that even then he is blessed; and biddeth them even then "rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you." That man that hath a reward in heaven, may be exceeding glad, whatsoever befall him here on earth. Will a prince be troubled for the loss of a farthing, or the barking of a dog? That man that hath not clothes to his back, nor a house to put his head in, nor a good word from any about him, and yet hath assurance of living in glory with God and his holy angels, as soon as ever he is gone out of the flesh, I think is a happy man in the eye of reason itself. And he that professeth to have assurance of such a glory, and yet liveth not comfortably in every condition, I will not believe him, whatsoever he profess. Sure I am the great monarchs and princes of the world, when they are parting with their crowns, would be glad to have assurance of the everlasting crown, on condition they had lived as poor as the vilest beggar on the earth. There is not the stoutest gallant and proudest sinner but would be glad to change states with the poorest saint, when he seeth the end. O, but they must be wise in time, that will be ever the better for their wisdom. Balaam could say, "O that I may die the death of the righteous, and that my last end may be like his<sup>z</sup>." All the world would say at last as the foolish virgins, if it would do any good, "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are out<sup>a</sup>." Who would not be a saint, when he is past the pleasure of his sin, and cast off by the world, which deceived him in his prosperity?

Methinks the greatest men on earth should tremble in the midst of all their glory, to remember the everlasting misery that they are near, if they be not living members of Christ, as Belshazzar did in the midst of his joviality<sup>b</sup>. And methinks the poorest true believer should have his heart abound with joy, to remember the things that God hath promised him, and which he must certainly ere long possess. O think not what you are, Christians, but what you shall be. Yet a little while, and you shall groan, and weep, and complain no more: you shall not know what poverty, or trouble, or any other sufferings do mean. You are almost past all your sorrow, as the unconverted are almost

<sup>z</sup> Numb. xxiii. 10.

<sup>a</sup> Matt. xxv. 8.

<sup>b</sup> Dan. v. 6.



past their joy. O what difference is between their part and yours; between the good things which they have here, and the portion which you have there! Is it not better go by the dunghill to the everlasting crown, than by a fading crown to everlasting torments? They will forget their honour and delicious fare, when they want a drop of water to cool their tongues; and you will forget your present sorrow, when you are in Abraham's bosom, or in the presence of the Lamb. If one day in the courts of God on earth seemed better to David than a thousand elsewhere, what will an endless life in glory seem to a believing soul? O sirs, we want nothing but soundness of faith, and spiritual life and seriousness to make our hearts to leap within us, and to make our lives a foretaste of heaven, and to make us pity poor worldlings in the height of their vain-glory. What should be a terror to that man that hath overcome the prince of terrors? That hath God on his side, that hath a promise of everlasting life, and that hath evidence to shew for his interest in the promise, and a lively faith to improve it, and live upon it? Methinks if the devils should appear to him in his way; if they should walk before him in the ugliest shape, he should but look upon them as conquered miscreants. Methinks if he were passing by death from this world, it would be a joyful hour to him, that is presently to step into a world of glory. And now, dearly beloved neighbours and friends, I beseech you for the Lord's sake, hear these things, as men that believe the word of God. Is it not a thousand pities, that God should offer you such consolations as these, and you refuse them? Is it not a thousand follies that you should neglect such a blessed state as this, when it is set before you? God hath made you for high and excellent things, even to live with angels in the heavens in glory. Yield but to the work of converting grace, and see that Christ be formed in you once, and all is yours. These things are far off you, and out of sight, and therefore seem strange to flesh and blood, and carnal hearts will not believe them; but they are true as the living God is true. The souls of all the converted that are dead in Christ from the beginning to this day, are now in the possession of that glory that I am speaking of. They see it, though we do not; and we shall see it, if unbelief and neglect do not hinder us: believing is the

only way to seeing and possessing. I told you before what a miserable case it is that every unconverted sinner is in, that he is not sure to be safe an hour; and would you not be out of that state? Would it not be a blessed state for you to be sure that you shall live with Christ an endless life? Then you may challenge death with Paul, "O death where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Then you may challenge all the world, even earth and hell, as he did. "If God be for us, who shall be against us? It is God that justifieth, who shall condemn? Who shall separate us from the love of God? Shall life or death," &c. I do here proclaim to you in the name of the Lord, that you may have this blessedness if you will be converted, and that without conversion it will never be had. Get once into this state, and you may have cause to joy as long as you live, and far greater cause when your present life is ended. I tell you, a true converted man is never in so sad or low a case, but still he hath more matter for his joy than for his sorrow. O therefore do not set light by such a happiness, and choose not to yourselves a life of terror, when you may have better if you will.

18. Another great benefit of the converted, is this; The longer they go on, and the further they proceed, the greater will be their felicity: the case of the wicked, is, the longer the worse; but the case of the converted, is, the longer the better: when a wicked man hath had the sweetness, it may kill his heart to think what a bitter cup is kept for the last: but when the godly have had the bitterest here, it may sweeten all to think of what remaineth. If a wicked man should have never so much trouble in the flesh, there is another kind of trouble to be endured hereafter: the worst of their condition is still behind; but the best is still behind with the converted: you shall have what is good for you here; you shall have pardon of sin, and peace with God through Jesus Christ, and access to him in peace, when other men are shut out; and help in your distress, and strength in your temptation: but all this is as nothing in comparison of that which is yet to come. You know partly what you have, but you know not what you shall be, but only in general, that when Christ appeareth, you shall be

<sup>c</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 55.

<sup>d</sup> Rom. viii. 31. 33. 38.

like him<sup>e</sup>. Your glory is not within the sight of flesh and blood. You walk here as other men in the same frail flesh, and compassed with infirmities, and as men of sorrows; and the world knoweth not that you are the children of the God of heaven, and that you shall reign with him in glory: for the heir in his minority differeth not to outward appearance from a servant<sup>f</sup>; but yet by right he is lord of all: no wonder if it be thus with you, for so it was with your head the Lord of all: he was found in shape as a man, and there appeared no worldly glory or comeliness in him, for which he should be desired, but was despised, and became a man of sorrows, bearing our iniquity, and the chastisement of our peace<sup>g</sup>. But he that was, among men, of no reputation, was worshipped by angels, and dearly beloved by the Father, and for his humiliation is highly exalted, and hath a name given him above every name, and hath seen of the travail of his soul, and been satisfied<sup>h</sup>. And so it is also in their measure with his members; for if you suffer with him, you shall also reign with him; and if you be made conformable to him in his death, so shall you also be in his resurrection and glorification<sup>i</sup>. Though your way to heaven may seem uneven and troublesome, yet still the further you go, the nearer you are to it; and though sometimes you must pass through the valley of the shadow of death, where the place of your happiness may seem out of sight, yet still you are going on towards it; and the foul way as well as the fair, is the way to heaven, and the waves and storms shall help you to the harbour. Though you be delivered to death for Jesus' sake, it is that the life of Jesus might be manifested in you. And though you always bear about in the body, the dying of the Lord Jesus, it is that his life may be manifested in your bodies<sup>k</sup>. "For we know that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, will also raise us up by Jesus; for which cause we faint not; for though our outward man perish, yet our inward man is renewed day by day: for our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that

<sup>e</sup> John iii. 2.<sup>f</sup> Gal. iv. 1.<sup>g</sup> Phil. ii. 7, 8. Isa. liii. 2—4.<sup>h</sup> Phil. ii. 7, 9, 10. Isa. liii. 11, 12.<sup>i</sup> Rom. viii. 17. vi. 5. Phil. iii. 10, 11.<sup>k</sup> 2 Cor. 10, 11.

are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal<sup>l</sup>." Great cause therefore have we to "groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed with our house, which is from heaven, that immortality may be swallowed up of life<sup>m</sup>." As Christ was nearer his glory on the cross, and in the grave than before, when no man laid hands on him; so are his members in the last of their afflictions: for though the last enemy, death, must yet be encountered with, yet he also shall be overcome through the strength of him that hath conquered him for us; and who through death destroyed him that had the power of death<sup>n</sup>.

O sirs, if there were but this one thing to shew you the difference between a converted and an unconverted state, methinks it should sink down into your hearts, that the last day of the ungodly is still the worst, because that all endeth in their eternal misery; and the last state of converted souls is still the best, because all will end in everlasting glory. Careless sinners do seem to have some merry days for awhile; but O, how will they answer that question of Peter's, "Judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinners appear<sup>o</sup>?" "Their ways do now seem right in their own eyes, but the end thereof are the ways of death<sup>p</sup>." "O that they were wise to consider this, and that they would remember their latter end<sup>q</sup>." The not considering of their end, is the cause that it proveth so miserable<sup>r</sup>. But the end of a believing, holy life is another kind of end. "Mark the upright man, and behold the just, for the end of that man is peace. But transgressors shall be destroyed together; the end of the wicked shall be cut off<sup>s</sup>." "For eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man, what God hath prepared for them that love him<sup>t</sup>." And this end is not far off: we have but a little while to wait, and we shall see the Lord upon the throne of his glory, and see the accomplishment of his promise to his saints. "For yet a lit-

<sup>l</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 14. 16—18.

<sup>m</sup> 2 Cor. v. 2. 4. 7.

<sup>n</sup> Heb. ii. 14.

<sup>o</sup> 1 Pet. iv. 17, 18.

<sup>p</sup> Prov. xiv. 12. xvi. 25.

<sup>q</sup> Deut. xxxii. 29.

<sup>r</sup> Isa. xlvii. 7. Lam. i. 9.

<sup>s</sup> Psal. vii. 37, 38.

<sup>t</sup> 1 Cor. li. 9.

tle while, and he that cometh will come, and will not tarry <sup>u</sup>.” It is many ages since the apostle said, “ the end of all things is at hand <sup>x</sup>.” “ Seeing therefore all things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness <sup>y</sup>.” O therefore yield to that grace that would convert you. Conversion is the first gate, and an holy life the way to heaven. Though this gate be strait, and this way be narrow, and few find it, yet the end is it that will pay for all : as ever you would have this blessed end, see that you make this happy beginning.

19. Yet this is not all ; but besides all these benefits to yourselves, Conversion will make you useful to others : it will make you become a blessing to the place where you live : as a wicked man hath a curse upon him, so usually he is a curse to others ; and judgments many times follow him, and those about him may fare the worse for his sake. And as a true Christian hath a heart full of the blessing of God’s right hand, and is himself a blessed man, so is he usually a blessing to others, and many fare the better for his sake. As you may see in the case of Joseph, Gen. xxxix. 3. 5. While you are ignorant and ungodly, what are you but hinderers of other men’s salvation ; and temptations to those about you ? But when God hath illuminated you, and changed your hearts, you will be forward to do good to others, and to help them to that life and hope, which you have received. If they want instruction, you will be more able to instruct them : if they are ignorant or careless, you will have some words to say to them for the awakening of their souls : if they be in danger, you can tell them of it ; and you can go to God, and pray for them in their distress : you have a spirit of prayer which you had not before ; and you have interest in God, which you had not before, and therefore you may speed better for others, though not so certainly as for yourselves. I tell you, sinners, the stoutest of you all may be glad of the fellowship of a godly man, if it be but for the benefit of his prayers. Jeroboam that did stretch forth his hand against the prophet, was glad to beg his prayers, for the restoring of that hand <sup>z</sup>. And Simon Magus was glad to crave the prayer of Peter <sup>a</sup>. A few more

<sup>u</sup> Heb. x. 37.

<sup>x</sup> 1 Pet. iv. 7.

<sup>y</sup> 2 Pet. iii. 11.

<sup>z</sup> 1 Kings xiii. 6.

<sup>a</sup> Acts viii. 24.

such as Lot was, might have saved Sodom from the flames, when his ungodly neighbours were the cause of that heavy judgment. You are made the fitter for to do God's service, when you are converted, for that is it that maketh you his servants; this is it that bendeth your hearts and thoughts to God, and causeth you to devote yourselves, and all that you have to him, and therefore you can never do him acceptable service till this work be wrought. That is the most happy and honourable nation, that hath most of these converted people in it. Let the world think of them as basely as they please, it is these that are the honour and safety of your country, and of your towns and parishes, and of the families where they live. If England be any better than the nations of infidels, it is by the godly. If the Lord would make this town to abound more with true converts and godliness than any other, I dare say, it would be a happier town than any other. I tell you that is the best place where there is most of the fear of God; that is the best family in the town that hath most true converted persons in it; or where those that are, are the most eminent in holiness. Were there but such hearts within you, that you would all agree together to yield to the saving work of the Gospel, and set yourselves in good earnest to the work of your salvation, this would make you the happiest, the most honourable place in the world. Every good man is a common good: their light shines abroad to others, and such light will not be hid: the heat of their graces doth help to warm others, and happy are they that live near them, and have but the opportunity of conversing with them, so they have but hearts to improve such opportunities.

20. If all this be not enough to shew you the blessedness of the truly converted; consider in the last place, That it is not only to themselves, nor only to the world about them, that the comfort doth redound, but the heavenly host of God do in some sort partake of it. For the Lord Jesus telleth us, "there is joy in heaven at the conversion of a sinner that repenteth"<sup>b</sup>. Harken to this all you that live a worldly, fleshly life; it would be the very joy of angels to see your true conversion; and will you rob them of their joy? They know what good this change would do you, when you do

<sup>b</sup> Luke xv. 10,

not know it ; and therefore they have compassion of you in your misery, and it would rejoice them to see your recovery. O that you did believe this, and that you did consider it. Can you find in your hearts to stand out any longer, when you consider how many would be glad of your conversion ? Turn then, O turn to Christ poor sinners, and make glad the very angels of God by your returning.

Yea, more than so. 2. The Son of God himself would rejoice at your conversion. For the recovery of sinners is the fruit of his blood ; and when he “ seeth the travail of his soul, he will be satisfied.” He that came into the wilderness of this world to seek such lost and scattered sheep, doth bring them home with joy, when he findeth them<sup>c</sup>. “ He came to seek, and save that which is lost<sup>d</sup>.” “ He came not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved<sup>e</sup>.” Though he must and will condemn them, if they reject his salvation. Nothing pleaseth him better than the conversion and salvation of straying souls : or else he would never have done so much to accomplish it as he hath done. He would never have sent abroad the doctrine of salvation, and established a ministry in the church to that end, if a returning sinner were not his delight. O that you knew, sirs, how welcome you would be to Christ after all the wrong that you have done him, if you would but speedily and heartily return. Those arms that were nailed open upon the cross, are still ready to embrace a returning soul. He that had tears to weep over his enemies in their obstinacy<sup>f</sup>, hath joy for them that return from their impenitency. He that would have gathered Jerusalem, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wing, if they would have been gathered<sup>g</sup>, doth shew what kind and tender welcome repenting sinners should find with him. If you had but hearts to repent, you would find that Christ hath a heart to receive you. I have formerly told you how tenderly he would meet a poor sinner half way, and fall upon his neck, and comfort his broken heart, and forget his miscarriages, and never hit him in the teeth with his sin ; as the father did by the returning prodigal<sup>h</sup>. If you did but know the worth of Christ’s embraces, and tender love that he hath to shew toward you, you

<sup>c</sup> Luke xv.<sup>d</sup> Luke xix. 10.<sup>e</sup> John iii. 17.<sup>f</sup> Luke xix. 41.<sup>g</sup> Matt. xxiii. 37.<sup>h</sup> Luke xv.

could not find in your heart to stand out so long. You would rather be in your Saviour's arms, than among the swine where you have nothing but the husks. Can you find in your hearts to delay your return, and to despise this love? In the name of God take heed what you do; for I must tell you, if you are so barbarous, and will so abuse that grace that would save you, you will find that he hath wrath as well as grace; and the Lamb of God is a lion to his enemies, and will slay those without mercy, that would not have him rule over them, nor accept of his mercy<sup>i</sup>. Abuse not mercy too much, lest it turn to unavoidable indignation. For "our God is also a consuming fire<sup>k</sup>." And "if his wrath be kindled, yea, but a little, then blessed are they that put their trust in him." Then blessed are they that were converted by his grace, for only they shall be saved from his burning indignation, and be made partakers of the kingdom of his glory.

By this time you may see, if you be not wilfully blinded, that when we persuade you to be converted, we are not drawing you into a miserable life; and that it is no ill bargain, which we offer you from the Lord. If I had nothing to plead with you, but the danger of damnation; I might justly expect you should believe and tremble, and yield such obedience as fear alone can cause. But I could not expect that you should receive it with love, nor yield the delightful obedience of the saints. But now you may see that we move you, not to your loss. I dare say I have shewn you enough to win the heart of any man that is not obstinately blind and wicked. If you would be rich, I have shewed you the only riches; if you would be honourable, it is only conversion that can make you so; if you would have pleasure, I have shewed you the way to pleasure, and how you may be possessed even of your Master's joy. In a word, if you would be happy, I have shewed you the only way to happiness; a life of peace and safety hath been offered you; a life of honour and pleasure hath been offered you; and remember that it was offered you. If you refuse it, remember you might have been happy if you would. You might have lived with the image of God upon your souls, and the Holy Ghost within you, and the everlasting kingdom a little be-

<sup>i</sup> Luke xix. 27.<sup>k</sup> Heb. xii. 29.



fore you, and with the eye of faith upon the promise of it in the word, and the eye of hope upon the glory that is promised. With the love of God in your hearts, now breathing after him in holy desires, which, when you have reached him, and are come to him, will turn into those endless and inconceivable enjoyments. You might have lived here in the spiritual communion of the saints, in the spiritual and fruitful use of God's ordinances, the chariots to convey your souls to life, and that glass in which you may see the Lord; you might have been much freed from the terrible gripes of conscience which the guilty feel, or certainly shall feel; and secured from that sin that "lieth at the door<sup>1</sup>," and from all the everlasting misery that now waiteth for you. In a word, instead of a life of brutish sensuality and folly, and slavery to satan, and preparation to eternal torment, you were offered that life which consisteth in "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost<sup>m</sup>. Beloved hearers, I now beseech you, in the name of the Lord, that you would not wilfully refuse to be happy; and that you would not neglect so great salvation. Our office obligeth us to invite you, and to be earnest with you; and O that we were able even to compel you to come in<sup>n</sup>. The nature of Christian charity obligeth us to desire that you might partake of that felicity that is offered you. We know that you may live everlastingly in glory, if you prefer not the world and your flesh before it. Through the great mercy of God, we have tasted somewhat of this felicity ourselves, and cannot choose but wish that you might be companions of our joy. Methinks I should be of so much credit with you myself, as that you should take my word in a matter that I have tried. Why, if you will take my word, sirs, I do profess to you before the Searcher of hearts, that the safety and peace, and comfort of a converted state, is such, that I would not be without it for all the world. Shall I say, I would not change it for a life of drunkenness, or filthiness, or fleshly pleasure, or for all the gains of a covetous worldling? I am ashamed of the comparison. As bad as we know our own hearts to be, I will confidently say, through the grace of God, if the kingdoms of the world were offered us in exchange, we should scorn them, and tread them under foot. I give you my word

<sup>1</sup> Gen. iv. 7.<sup>m</sup> Rom. xiv. 17.<sup>n</sup> Luke xiv. 23.

and experience, but to persuade you to come near and try. But, alas ! if you will not believe God, how can I expect my words should be believed. O that you would but come and try, and when you have tried the way of holiness, but a quarter as much as you have done the ways of the world and the flesh, then if you like it not, take your course. If you find by experience that the way of sin is safer and better, when you have tried both, then turn back again and spare not ; I would trouble you no more, would you but come and try ; it is all that I now desire of you. But to think hardly of a state that you never tried ; to draw back from a life that you never tried ; this is not equal dealing with God, nor impartial faithful dealing for your souls. I know some that have forborne some outward sins awhile, and stepped into an outward profession, and into the company of the godly, have fallen back again. But if you will but try the inward nature, and spiritual life of a saint ; the love, the trust, the zeal, the joy, the endeavours, and the hopes of a saint, then judge and spare not, as experience shall direct you, and forsake God if you really find that the flesh and the world are better. Remember what I say to you. It will leave you unexcusable, and be the confusion of your faces, when you shall answer this another day, that when your everlasting joy or torment did lie upon it, you would not be persuaded by all that we could say, so much as to leave your sins awhile, and come and make trial of a godly life. O wretches ! you will one day be ready to eat your own hearts, to think that you refused, and wilfully refused, and impenitently and obstinately refused, so fair, so necessary, so good a motion.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### *Use of Exhortation.*

BELOVED hearers, I am not come hither to-day of my own head, nor in my own name, nor on my own business ; but in the name of Christ, and on the business of your salvation. I know this great assembly will be all very shortly in another world, and we shall meet ere long in a far greater assembly at the day of Christ's judgment, which will be upon

us for all the seeming delay, before the careless world is aware. That you may be ready for that day, and stand with boldness before the Judge, when the unconverted world stands trembling and amazed, as overwhelmed with the unexpected terrors of the Lord, this is the business that I come hither about to day; no less, no lower business than this. That I have not trifled with you, and filled your ears with witty toys and strange matters, I hope you will easily pardon me, when you have considered your condition, and the business of our office. I hate that preaching that passeth over the one thing necessary, and only tickleth the ears of miserable men, when it should endeavour their relief. If the town were on fire, it were no commendable matter to be fiddling and dancing, when you should quench it. If I saw you but sinking in a broken vessel, and ready to drown, if you had not help, it would seem no part of wisdom to me to make a learned oration to you, when I should be helping you out of present danger. I must tell you, therefore, that I came not hither only to talk to you, that you might go home and say, you had heard a fine or a learned sermon; but I come to help you out of the misery of an unconverted state. I see the gulf of remediless destruction is a little before you, and I come to require you in the name of the Lord to make a stand, and go no further in the way of wickedness: but look about you and consider your way, and presently return. Have you been ignorant, inconsiderate worldlings, and forgotten that God that should have had your hearts, and forgotten the life where you must live for ever? Be awakened then, and look before you; lift up the eye of faith, and see that joy or torment that is even at hand. Have you lived to the flesh, as if you had nothing but it to care for? and thought it more ado than needs to provide for everlastingness? In a word, have your hearts been set more on this life, than on that to come? and on the things below, than on God above? If this be so, flatter not yourselves in vain hopes. Delay not a day longer, but presently return from that condition. Believe the word of God, it will else be thy undoing. “For if you live after the flesh, ye shall die<sup>a</sup>.” “For they that are far from thee shall perish; but it is good for me to draw nigh to God<sup>b</sup>.” “Where your

<sup>a</sup> Rom. viii. 13.<sup>b</sup> Psal. lxxiii. 27.

treasure is, there will your hearts be also <sup>c</sup>." What say you, sirs, will you return to God from the lusts of the flesh, and the love of this world, and a lazy, careless, ungodly life, or will you not? Will you justify yourselves no longer in a state of death, nor excuse, nor befriend the sins that have endangered you, but yield to the converting work of the Spirit, and strive not against that grace that would recover you? I pray you give me not the bare hearing, but let your hearts make answer, aye or no. Will you return and be converted, or will you not? Dare any of you say, no? I hope you dare not. But it is next to saying no, if your hearts say nothing. Tell me not of your cold wishes and purposes, and you hope you shall. A thousand such faint and heartless meanings have left souls to perish in endless misery. It is resolution, strong resolution, and present resolution that you must have, and that God expects. What say you? Are you resolved to return, or are you not? Take heed what you say, for God is here present and seeth your hearts. Do not halt between two opinions; but if Baal be God follow him; if the flesh and the world be God, and will make you happy, follow them; but if the Lord be God, follow him <sup>d</sup>. Do not put me off with to-morrow, or sometime hereafter, as if it were not yet time, or you could not spare your sin, as yet. No resolution is sincere, but present resolution: he that would keep his sins a day longer, would keep them a year, and seven years, and for ever if he might. He that would not close with Christ to-day, would never do it by his good will. No man loveth God, that longeth not presently to be such as God would have him be. Again, therefore, I ask you, are you resolved presently to return, or not? This is the business I come hither upon, and I do not mean to go away thus, till I have my errand, unless you say me shameful nay; I am resolved to leave you better or worse, either converted, or more inexcusable than you were before, and to say that which shall be a witness against you, if it convert you not. And here, first, if you be not yet resolved, I shall desire that you will soberly answer me these few questions following:

*Quest. 1.* What do you think had come of you, if God had cut you off by death all this while before you were con-

<sup>c</sup> Matt. vi. 21.

<sup>d</sup> 1 Kings xviii. 21.

verted? Where do you think you should have been this very hour, if death had found you in an unconverted state? Do you not know? Why, doth not my text tell you? Will not you believe Jesus Christ? I know, if you do not, you had been as sure in hell, as you are now on earth. Oh! sirs, how many a fair advantage hath God had against you! He could have killed you with one frown; with a bit of bread, with a draught of drink, by the turning of a hand, by the slipping of a foot, by the stumbling of a horse; besides many hundred diseases that would have opened the door, or rather have broken down your dusty cottages, and let out your guilty, unprepared souls into another world. Oh! you cannot now apprehend what a dreadful thing it is for an unchanged soul to appear before the Holy God! Doth it not sometimes amaze the best to think what a change it is that death makes? And what it is for a man that hath lived among mortals on earth, to find himself in a moment among angels and other spirits? How much more should the thoughts of a more lamentable change amaze the unconverted? It is only, or chiefly some doubts, and some strangeness to that heavenly place, that amazeth the godly; which will all be dispelled at the twink of an eye, by that joy and glory that they shall find themselves possessed of. But it is another kind of matter, even the everlasting misery that should amaze the wicked. O, dear friends, what a case had you been in, if you had died before conversion? Your hearts are not able to conceive of the thousandth part of the misery that you would have been in. And have you lived all this while in so much danger, and will you live in it still? God forbid. Hath a wonder of mercy kept you out of hell so long, and will you loiter yet longer in the old condition? Methinks I look upon you as imitating Lot, when he was called out of Sodom<sup>e</sup>; that after he had been warned by the angel to get away out of Sodom with all that he had, as he loved his life; yet sons and daughters, or one thing or other so long detain him, that he lingereth away the time, till God being merciful unto him, the angels did even carry him forth<sup>f</sup>, and said, "Escape now for thy life, look not behind thee, and make no stay<sup>g</sup>." So God hath mercifully called you out of the Sodom of your sins, and you have lingered

<sup>e</sup> Gen. xix.<sup>f</sup> Ver. 16.<sup>g</sup> Ver. 17.

till now. Oh! that the Lord would be so merciful to you as to lay hands as it were upon those hearts, and take them off the world and your lusts, and bring you away! This warning however I am bound to give you: 'Escape now for your lives, look not behind you, stay not any longer, lest you perish in your negligence.' So much for my first question, 'What had become of you, if you had died before conversion?'

*Quest. 2.* My next question is this; Are you sure if you delay returning another day, that you shall be that day out of hell? If you refuse this offer that God maketh you now, are you sure you shall ever have another? Can you say, that your bodies shall not lie in the churchyard, and your souls past hope and help in misery, before the next meeting in this place, if you so long delay and harden your hearts? You are not sure of it; if you are, let us see your evidence of security. Hath God any where promised you another day's time? Why, can you live a day whether God will or not? You know you cannot; I dare say you know it. You know that many an one as strong as you, and that feared death as little, hath been quickly gone; and go you must, however, at the last. Well, brethren, do I need to ask you such a question now, whether it be wisdom, or madness rather, for any man wilfully or negligently to live one day or night longer in such a condition, as if you should die in it, you were undone for ever? Will you venture to live another day in such a case in which you cannot be sure that one day to be out of hell? O, methinks, while you are unconverted, this saying of Christ should be still ringing in your ears; "Verily, I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." And methinks every night when you lie down in bed, you should think with yourselves, 'What if I should die in an unconverted state before the next morning?' Methinks the very dreams of this should awake you with terror. Methinks when you rise in the morning, you should think with yourselves, 'What if I should die in an unconverted state before night?' Methinks the daily thoughts of this should mar your mirth, and sour to you all the sweetness of the world. How can you forbear in such a danger to think of it, in your shops, and at your plough; at home and

abroad, which way soever you go, or whatsoever you are doing? If you say, 'Though I am not sure to live a day, yet I am likely, for I have many an one already, when I had no assurance of it. I answer, but who would leave such a matter as his everlasting salvation upon such hazard? I warn thee therefore from God, in the words of God, "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for who knoweth what a day may bring forth<sup>h</sup>?

*Quest. 3.* My third question to you is this; Which dost thou really think is better, God or the creature, heaven or earth, a life in glory, or the present pleasure of sin? Is it indeed thy settled judgment, that it is better be drunk than sober, and better take the delight of thy flesh, and follow this world, than live to God here, and with God hereafter? Is this thy settled judgment, or is it not? If it be, thou art an infidel, or an atheist, and not a Christian. Nay worse than most infidels or heathens in the world. If it be not thy judgment, how darest thou do it? Wilt thou go against thy own knowledge? Wilt thou not do that which thou knowest is both pleasing to God, and best for thyself? Shall God shew thee thy misery, and wilt thou wilfully run into it? And shall he shew thee thy happiness, and wilt thou wilfully forsake it? Dost thou think that it is better to be converted, or not? If thou think it to be a better state, how darest thou neglect it, or refuse it as thou dost? Who can help thee, if thou know that thou dost evil, and yet wilt do it? If thou know that thy way is the way of death, and yet wilt go on in it? And who shall pity thee, if knowingly thou wilt damn thyself?

*Quest. 4.* My fourth question to thee is this; Dost thou believe that man is made for this world only, or for a better? If heaven were never so desirable, if it be not attainable, it is in vain to seek it: but if it may be had, what hearts have they that will neglect it, or prefer any other thing before it? Do you think that man was only made to take a life of pleasure on this earth, and go no further, and there is an end of him? If you think so, you are blinder than most heathens in the world. Three sorts of creatures did God create; one sort are pure spirits without flesh; and these were placed in their happiness at the first to be nearest to God, and em-

<sup>h</sup> Prov. xxvii. 1.

ployed by him in his noblest works ; only being not at first confirmed, some of them fell away, and are become devils : another sort of creatures have flesh without immortal souls, having no other life than what is fitted to their earthly state ; I mean beasts and birds and all other unreasonable creatures : these are not capable of any higher felicity than they here enjoy : they were never intended for it, and therefore their natures are not fitted to it. But man is of a middle sort, partaking somewhat of both these ; he hath flesh like the beasts, because he must live on earth as they, and so must eat, and drink, and sleep, and die, and his flesh must perish as well as theirs : but with this flesh he hath a soul that is akin to angels, and therefore is capable of an endless life, and fitted for it : so that so far as he is fleshly, so far he is earthly, and is like the beasts that perish ; but as he is a living soul, he is disposed to an endless life, and may there be like to the angels of God, Luke xx. 36. You may see this difference between brutes and men, in their very natures here. They know not that there is another life, and we do : they live not in hopes and fears of another life, but we do. Experience certainly discovers this, they fear but one death, and we fear two, in fearing a misery after death. We govern them only by present objects ; but God ruleth us by promises and threatenings of unseen things, and by the hopes and fears of another life : it is our nature to be thus governed, and theirs to be ruled by sensual objects.

Well then, if man was made for higher things, should he not seek them, and live for them ? Remember then, I beseech you, that the work of conversion is but to set your hearts on the things that you were made for : it is to make you know that you are men and not beasts, and to bring you to live the life of men. Sin doth unman us, and in a sort even brutify us ; and conversion restoreth us, in our present measure to the ends that we were created for, and to the image of God that we were created in, which disposeth us to those ends : if you believe then that man is not a beast, but made for an everlasting life with God, away with fleshly, worldly vanities, and live as strangers here, and as those that are heirs of that everlasting life.

*Quest. 5.* My next question to you is ; Have you ever soberly and considerably compared the gain and the loss



that conversion will bring you? Did you ever on the one side consider of all the present peace and safety, and that everlasting glory, which is the portion of them that cleave to God, and of the misery of all others, as I have before discovered it to you? And on the other side, have you considered how small a matter it is that you can lose, if you yield to that grace that would prepare you for this glory? Sure if you had ever considered both of the winning and the losing, and laid one in the one end of the scales, and the other in the other, the case might have been resolved with you long before now. Sinners, when God and his ministers make such a stir with you to persuade you to be converted, and all will not serve, but year after year you are still the same, there is somewhat sure that is the cause. If somewhat did not stick with you, you would have yielded before this time. Somewhat there is sure that you are afraid of losing by the change, or else what should be the matter that you refuse, or delay? Well, let us hear what it is that you are afraid it will deprive you of. Is it any thing that is better than God, than heaven, than the saving of your souls? This is the benefit that conversion bringeth, and if it would take from you any thing that is better, refuse it then, and spare not. I tell you, sinners, God hath no need of you; it is for your own good, and that honour and pleasure that he takes in doing good, that he is so earnest with you to come in. And if any of you dare charge the God of heaven with dissembling, as if he meant your hurt, while he thus pretendeth your good, and would take from you more than he offereth you, or would give you; make good thy charge if thou canst, or rather take heed, if thou love thyself, of such blasphemous imaginations. O poor soul, if God would do thee harm, who dost thou think will do thee good? If the chief good be not good, where wilt thou find good? Dost thou fear lest the sun should deprive thee of thy light, when thou canst have none but what it affordeth thee? Dost thou run away from the fire, lest it should make thee cold? What, fear lest God should do thee harm, when there is no good but what doth stream from him? Who wilt thou go to for any good, if thou flee from him? Hath any creature the least relief for thee, except they receive it from God, and he send it thee by their hands? They have nothing but what

he lendeth them, nor can they give thee any succour, but by his consent. What is it then that thou art afraid of losing, by being converted? Is it any thing that is worth the keeping? It is incredible that God should envy thee thy happiness; that is the work of the devil, which moved him to tempt us from it. And dare you make God like him, or father on God his nature, or his works? It is incredible wrong that men do to God while they question his goodness, and dislike his holy laws and ways, and quarrel with him, as if he were their enemy: and when he would draw them out of the prison of the devil, and the power of sin, they draw back, as if he would draw them into bondage. O base, unthankful wretches! must salvation be so dearly bought, and so kindly offered you, and do you thus reject it? Oh! foolish self-destroying wretches, are you so far delivered from all your enemies, that your happiness is brought to your own choice, and you may freely have it if you will, and now will you not have it? And will you be the last and deadly enemy to yourselves? Why, what is it that you are so loath to leave? Is it your sins? Is it your fleshly pleasures? Or your worldly profits, or your ease, or credit, or which of these? Is it not a sad case that reasonable men should come to such a pass, that they are afraid of returning to the favour of God, and of coming from the thralldom of the devil, into his service, lest they should lose their pleasure? As if there were less delight in the love of God, than in fleshpleasing filthiness; or as if the joys of heaven were less than the mirth of an alehouse. Is it not a sad case that ever men should be afraid of being losers by God? or of missing their money, or their houses, or lands, when they come to heaven? As if there were any want there where all are glorious kings: and as if Lazarus had not changed his state. And is it not a shameful thing, that men should be ashamed to be the servants of the God of heaven, and think it a discredit to be the heirs of glory? Is it to any purpose to talk to such men as these? Will they ever hear reason that are so unreasonable? If preaching were not the ordinance of God, which he hath commanded us to use, and therefore may set it in with his blessing, when he pleaseth, we should even throw by all, and look on such as these as madmen, and think, till God shall bring them to their wits, there

is no good to be done by speaking to them. If a man will fly from God, to an alehouse, or gaming-house for pleasure, or from God to the world for profit or honour, what shall we say to such a man, but even take him in this as besides himself? For who will think better of him that will run into a prison, or to his enemies, for his liberty? or that will tumble in the chanel, or lie down in the sink, and will not come out for fear of being befouled? I would ask the drunkard, or fornicator, or worldling, or whosoever he be that hath the most that sin can do for him; dost thou think that thou hast a more comfortable life than those that are furthest from thy sin? Dost thou think that they that abhor thy drunkenness, whoredom, or worldly courses of life, have not a more comfortable life than thou? Besides that which they shall have in heaven, when sin hath brought thee into torment (if true conversion do not prevent it), even in this life, which, think you, have the more peaceable and comfortable life? I am even ashamed to make the comparison. A wise and godly man doth abhor these things that are the felicity of ungodly men. Your filthy lives, which you are loath to leave, would make the heart of a sober man to rise to think of them. What wise man would not think it a misery, if he were condemned to live your lives but a few days. A swine takes pleasure to tumble in the mire, but a man in his wits will take no pleasure to bear him company. And is this all that you are like to lose by it; if you be converted, and yet will you stand off? Well, I say no more of it now but this: If, after all this, you take the world to be better than God, and the pleasures of sin to be greater than the pleasures of a holy life, and the joy that God would give you with himself. And if you are afraid of turning to God lest you be losers by him, you may take your course, and stay till the end shall make you wiser to your cost.

*Quest. 6.* My next question to you, is this: Have you now any reason to give against your speedy effectual conversion, which you will undertake to stand to, and justify at the bar of God? Do you know any harm by that state and life that God by converting grace would bring you to? You have heard much that may be said for it; what now have you to say against it? I know that a great many of senseless words are poured out by foolish sinners against

the holy ways of God. But they are such as shew their folly and malice, and proceed from wilfulness and not from reason. Not one of all these that you hear in a corner scorning at godliness, or reasoning against it, dare stand to these reasons when God shall deal with him. For my part, sirs, I would persuade you to nothing unreasonable and unfit. I have told you my reasons for the necessity of conversion: if you are against it now, either you have reason to be against it, or you have not; if you have no reason for it, how dare you, how can you do it? What! will you renounce your reason in the greatest matters, where you have the greatest use for it? or, will you be wilfully brutes? Or will you set yourselves knowingly against God and your own souls? In the name of God consider first what you do. It must be either deluded reason or mere wilfulness that cause you now to refuse or delay to be converted. I beseech you let me have the answer of your hearts here before the Lord. Deal truly, have you any reason why you should not be converted and turn to God before to-morrow? I pray you do not pass it over carelessly, but give me your answer: Have you any reason for it, or have you not? If you have not, your conscience is then witness that you are wilful in your neglect. You turn not to God because you will not turn. You go on in sin, because you will go on. You do then in your hearts, as it were, set God at defiance, and say, 'I confess I have no reason to sin, but yet I will do it: I have no reason to delay my return to God an hour, but yet I will do it. And I will do it, though reason as well as the word of God cry out against it.' Who can you blame then, if the plagues of God shall reach such a rebel, and if he deal with you as wilful sinners should be dealt with? If you had done it ignorantly, you had some excuse, or you might have been beaten with the fewer stripes: but wilful sin hath no excuse, and as such the Lord will pour out his wrath. If your own reason tell you, you should presently return to God, and you will not, how can you expect in reason to find mercy with the Lord? O that you knew what a heinous thing it is to sin wilfully after the knowledge of the truth: it would make every joint of you to tremble, lest if you go a little further, there should be no more sacrifice for sin, "but a certain looking for of judgment, and fire which de-

vouresth the adversary<sup>1</sup>." Well, sirs, let me again put the question to you: What say you? Will you presently return to God, or will you not? Halt not between both, but resolve off, or on. Say plainly, you will, or you will not: if you will not, tell me then, why will you not? Have you any reason for it, or have you none? If none, how dare you be wilful? but if you have any reason, I pray you answer my next question. Is your reason such as you will undertake to stand to at the bar of God? It is an easy matter to deceive yourselves and others, and to daub over a cause that is apparently naught, and to bring fair pretences for the most foul actions. Something men will have to say, to stop the mouth of those that would convince them, be their course never so ungodly: but the question is, whether you have any reasons for your sin, and against your speedy and effectual return, which you will undertake to stand to before the Lord. I pray you bethink yourselves soberly of an answer, before you hold on your course any longer; lest you be at the bar before you are aware. One man's reason is, his sin is sweet, and he hopes he may safely keep it a little longer, and then he means to let it go. It seemeth, then, you had rather sin than not; and that shews that at present thou art a graceless wretch. But is the sweetness of thy sin a sufficient reason for thee to refuse the sweetness of a pardon, and the sweetness of the reconciled face of God, and the sweetness of everlasting glory? Dare you stand to such a reason as this is before God? I know you dare not. How then dare you delay your conversion upon such reasons? Is sin sweet to thee, and is not holiness sweeter? is not pardon, and life, and grace, and Christ, and God, and glory sweeter? O what kind of reasons be these for a reasonable man to venture his salvation upon? I shall not stand to try the rest of them, because they will fall under a more particular consideration hereafter. Only in general I charge and require you, plead not such reasons as you dare not stand to at the bar of God.

*Quest. 7.* My next question to you, is this; Have you ever well considered who they be that are for your conversion, and who they be that are against it? You may easily conjecture by this, whether it be good or bad. You

<sup>1</sup> Heb. x. 26.

have heard already who they be that are for it: God is for it, Christ is for it, the Holy Ghost is for it, the angels of heaven are for it, the ministers of the Gospel are for it, and every wise and godly man is for it. God is so much for it, that he sent his Son to purchase it, and his word to command and call you to it, and to give you directions how it must be done, and his ministers to persuade you to hear and submit. He is so much for it, that he hath sworn that he hath "no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he return and live;" and pleadeth the case with you, and asketh you, "Why you will die<sup>k</sup>." Christ is so much for it, that he hath made it his office; he took the nature of man on him to that end, that he might seek and save that which was lost; and for that end he submitted to the cursed death of the cross, and for that end hath he made the promises of his Gospel, and sent abroad his ministers to proclaim them. He is so much for it, that he is purposely become the "Captain of our salvation;" and having first given us his own example, doth lead us on in all encounters, and calleth us to follow him, that we may conquer as he hath done. He is so much for it, that upon this very ground will he condemn at last the impenitent world, because they would not be converted by him. The Holy Ghost is so much for it, that he moveth and importuneth sinners thereunto, and effectually worketh it in all the elect. The angels of heaven, as you have heard, are so much for it, that it is their joy when a sinner is converted. The ministers of Christ are so much for it, that they make it their business and study, and preach and pray, and suffer, and think nothing too much if they might but accomplish it. "They are willing to spend and be spent for this end<sup>l</sup>." "They account not their lives dear to them, so they may but finish their course with joy, and the ministry which they have received of the Lord in preaching the Gospel of the grace of God<sup>m</sup>." They are content to "instruct those in meekness that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, that they may escape out of the snares of satan<sup>n</sup>." All the godly are so much for it, that it is their daily prayer and earnest desire: and they would do any thing they could to accomplish it. O how heartily do they pray for your conversion, that the kingdom of God may

<sup>k</sup> Ezek. xxxiii. 11.<sup>l</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 15.<sup>m</sup> Acts xx. 24.<sup>n</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 25.

come into your hearts! How glad are they when they hear of the conversion of a sinner! Well, sinners, methinks you should consider with yourselves, 'For what reason do all these desire my conversion? Who is it that shall be the gainer by it? What doth God get by it? What doth Christ the Redeemer get by it? What doth the Spirit that moveth me get by it? What profit is it to the ministers of the Gospel? Might they not as easily let me alone, and please me in my sins, and tell me of no danger? What profit is it to all my godly friends, that they should so earnestly desire it, and pray for it? Is it not I that am like to have the gain? And should I set against all the friends I have that endeavour my own good, even my everlasting good?

You see who they be that are for your conversion: will you now consider who they be that are against it? Are they better than God? Are they truer friends to you than Christ and his ministers, and those that persuade you to repent and live? Are they such as love you better than all these do? Why, who are they? First, the chiefest enemy to your conversion is the devil himself. It is he that dissuadeth you; that raiseth doubts and temptations in your mind, and casteth so many rubs in your way. He would not have you converted if he could hinder it. If all his subtlety can hinder it; if all his power and malice can hinder it; if all the instruments that he can raise up against it, can hinder it, you shall never be converted. He knows he shall lose a servant and subject of his kingdom; he shall be cast out of that possession which he hath kept in peace. If he do not rule you, he shall not torment you, which is pleasant to his malice. No one in all the world is so much against your conversion as the devil. When you say, you will never be so pure, nor so godly, nor live so holy and heavenly a life, O how you please him! You could not have said a word that he more delighteth to hear; for it is as if you had said, 'I will never leave my master, the devil, to serve Christ.' Nay, it is all one as if you said, 'I am resolved, I will never be saved, seeing there is no salvation without conversion.' When you say you will do as your forefathers have done; and you will take your pleasure and follow the world; and not be so precise, nor trouble your minds so much about the case of your souls, or the matters

of eternal life ; O how you please the devil by this ! This is that he would have. You speak even as he would have you speak ; for indeed it is he that tempteth you to speak it. But for God's sake, and your soul's sake, sinners, will you consider whether God or the devil is your better friend ? You are the cause that I am put upon such a strange question to you : whether that be liker to be for your good, which God would have, and Christ would have, and the holy Ghost would have, and ministers would have, and all godly people would have ; or that which the devil himself would have ? Do I need to bid you consider of this ? A little consideration sure may resolve it. Can you think that all these forementioned are against you, and satan for you ? That all these are your enemies, and satan is for your friend ? If you will indeed take God, and Christ, and his Spirit, and people, and all for your enemies, and him that is your greatest enemy, for your friend, and that after such warnings, as you have had ; you may reap those fruits of his friendship which you little think of.

But there are some other besides the devil against your conversion. True ; but who be they ? None, but his agents, and those that are deceived by him themselves. Perhaps you will hardly think so ; for one may be your father, another your mother, another your husband or wife, or those that profess themselves your friends, and some perhaps may be thought wise and learned in the world. But what doth God say of them, who is most to be believed ? He telleth you, they are foolish, and wicked, and enemies to the cross of Christ. You call them friends, but God tells you they are your enemies. If you think I speak too hardly of them, in telling you they are ignorant, blinded sinners, believe God that saith the same. I hope you will not accuse him of wronging them, or any one. Never man spake against conversion that knew what he said, and was converted himself. It is only those that never knew or tried the ways of God, that persuade you from them. Will you go to the blind for direction ? or to the slaves of satan for counsel whether you should return to God ? If they were wise men they would return themselves ; and if they be not wise they are unfit to give you counsel. And methinks your own reason might tell you, that that man cannot be wise that would draw the



hearts of others from God, and would have them venture upon the drawn sword of his vengeance; and do that which he hath threatened everlasting destruction to. Can that be a wise man that doth himself prefer this dunghill world, and the swinish mirth of a sinner before all the holy joy and glory of the saints, even before the present life of grace, and the future life of glory? Ask your reason whether this can be a wise man? I may boldly say, then, that there is none but the devil and wicked fools that are against your conversion. Tell them how I call them, and spare not; for God calls them more, and their own consciences will call them so for ever, if they do not do that themselves which they would dissuade you from doing. I say it again, there is not one in the world, but the devil and wicked fools that are against your conversion. And if these shall be your counsellors, and ye will be ruled more by them than God, and all the truest friends you have in the world, let your own consciences judge whether you have dealt well with God, or with yourselves?

*Quest. 8.* Yet I have some more questions to ask you, and my next is this; Had you rather die in a converted, or unconverted state? And in which of these had you rather appear before the Lord? I pray you put this question to your own hearts, and soberly answer it. I say, which of these two conditions had you rather be in at death and judgment? Had you rather die the death of the righteous, or of the wicked? And had you rather stand among the unconverted, or the converted, at the bar of God? Had you rather that death should find you with clean hands, an innocent life, and an heavenly mind, delighting in God, and hoping for Christ's appearing; or that it should find you either in your ignorance, or worldliness, or fornication, or drunkenness, or with the guilt of any of these upon your souls, and with an heart that is not unfeignedly turned from them unto God? I do not think there is the most blockish or stout-hearted sinners among you; no, not they that make a mock at godliness, and discourage others from it, but they had rather be among the godly, than the ungodly, at the last. And is it not a strange thing, that men should set against that course, which they would wish to be found in? and should live contrary to it, when yet at the same time they

had rather die in it, than as they are? Sinners, should you not be now such as you would be found then? And should you not live in that state as you would die in? Will it be best then, and is it worst now? how can that be? Believe it, sirs, you have neither your lives, nor the grace of God at your will. If you would be found among the converted at the last, become such quickly, lest the last should come before you are aware. If life forsake you not, you cannot tell whether the Spirit of God may forsake you. If grace must be had, or else you are undone, take it while you may have it, lest you be given over to the hardness of your hearts.

*Quest.* 9. My next question is this; If God should send an angel from heaven to you, to plead against your sinful course, and to persuade you to be converted, would you hearken to him and obey him; or would you not? If he should appear to you in your careless and worldly course of life, or if he should come to you in the very act of your sin, and tell you how the Lord abhorreth your iniquity, and how his vengeance hangs over your head, and will fall upon you, if you speedily repent not; and should persuade and entreat you to lament your folly, and turn to God with all your heart, without delay, what would you do? and what answer would you give? Would you tell him to his face, 'I will not be converted; I will take my pleasure, and follow the world, and venture my soul rather than live so strict a life? Would you say thus to him? You would not, sure you durst not do it! Would you not tell him, 'I am sorry for my sins, and resolve to turn without delay;' but if you should so tell him, if you did not do it, your promise would but prove you hypocrites, and rise up against you to your condemnation. O, you do not know how such a sight would amaze you, and awaken you from security. An hand that appeared writing upon a wall, did make the knees of a sensual king to tremble; it loosed his very loins, it changed his countenance, it troubled his thoughts, Dan. v. 6. The appearance of an angel, at the resurrection of Christ, did make the keepers of the grave to shake, and become as dead men, Matt. xxviii. 4. How an angel's appearance affected Cornelius; and an earthquake with the effects did move the jailor, may be seen in Acts x. and xvi. and many the like examples we might give you. What if an angel of God

should but come and speak over this text to you, that I am preaching: "Verily, except you be converted, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven," would you yield, or would you not? If you would not, you are hardened with a witness. If you would, let me follow my question a little further with you. Should not the written word of Christ himself, and the voice of his messengers that speak in his name, and all the judgments and mercies that second these; I say, should not all these prevail with you as much, and more than an angel's voice? You have here the protestation, or vehement asseveration of the Lord himself, and should not that be of greatest authority with us? Angels are but servants of Christ and ministering spirits for the good of his elect: would you hear them, and will you not hear their master? Would you hear an unusual messenger, and will you not learn in Christ's appointed way? If it be a doctrine to be received from angels, tell me, if you can, why it should not be received now from the word of God, and from his ministers?

*Quest. 10.* The last question that I shall now trouble you with, is this; Do you think that man who after all this shall refuse to turn to God, and after all this shall remain unconverted; will have any just excuse before the Lord? Or will he not be left speechless, and under the condemnation of his own conscience for ever? Is it any pity to cast away that man, that will without all pity cast away himself, and no saying will serve him, and no reason will satisfy him? Or when he is convinced and silenced, yet for all that will not be converted? When it is their own doing, and they were their own undoing; and when God did not spare for cost and persuasion to have done them good; and when he shall say after all, as in Isa. v. 4. "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?" What should I have said more to this sinner, than I have said? What plea is left for such a sinner? Or what can he say why he should not be sentenced to perdition? Will you say you did it ignorantly, or you had no warning? You cannot say it. Indians may say it, and many barbarous nations of the world may say it; but England cannot say it, nor you that hear me cannot say it. You have warning after warning, and all said to you that we knew how to say, that was

likely to move the heart of a sinner. Will you say that you were not able, because it was a work above your power? Why, you cannot thus excuse your sin: for if you had been but truly willing, you might have done it? Your disability lay in your obstinate unwillingness. Are you willing this day, unfeignedly willing, to turn to God, or are you not? If you be, you will return without delay. For if you are willing, who can hinder you? But if you be not truly willing, how can you say, that you would have done it if you could? Or how can you excuse yourselves by your disability? Unwillingness is a disability which excuseth no men, but aggravateth their sin. If you could have said that you would have returned with all your hearts, but were not able for all that you were willing, then you had some excuse; but now you have nothing to say for yourselves.

*Object.* We know there is no pleading for ourselves, nor any excuse to be made with God, but yet we hope we may be saved for all that?

*Answ.* How can you have any hope, if you have no ground of hope to shew? If you have no reason to give against the sentence of your condemnation, how can you think to escape it? God is just, and will judge in righteousness according to his word; and they that have not now a title in the word for their justification at judgment, shall never be there justified, whatsoever they may dream.

Beloved hearers, I have been all this while pleading with you by the reasons of the word of God, to see if it were possible for me to persuade you to yield to the light, and be converted, that you may live. I have meant you no harm, unless salvation be your harm. The threatening of the Scripture, and the miserable state of unconverted souls were all this while before me, which moved me to use so many persuasions with you. Have I prevailed with you, or have I not? Are you resolved for conversion, fully resolved, or are you not? God hath all this while stood by and heard what I have said to you, and seeth now what answer is in your hearts, and what effect these words have had. Shall all this be lost? And when we have said all that we can, must we sit down in sorrow, and say, who hath believed our reports? Is there one man or woman of you that dare go on in an unconverted state, and draw back from God, and loiter out your

time, and still return to your former sins after all that I have said? If you do so, do it at your peril; and when you find yourselves in hell, remember the sermons that have been preached to you on this text, and blame not me, but your wilful negligence. Think not much that I bid you remember these sermons when you find yourselves in hell, for you shall do it then, whether you will or not. There is not a soul of you that shall live or die in an unconverted state, but shall remember the warnings that I have now and formerly given you. Sermons will be remembered in hell, that are forgotten on earth; and they that were weary to hear them here, and would not be at the small labour to repeat them, or hear them repeated, or else ponder in secret of what they heard, shall there think of it, and think again to their sorrow. As Abraham said to the condemned worldling, "Remember that thou in thy life receivedst thy good things, and Lazarus his evil things; but now he is comforted and thou art tormented<sup>o</sup>." So shall you remember the time, and means, and warnings that you once had. If you ask me how I know that? Why because the word of God doth tell me, that the consciences of wicked men will be their accusers<sup>p</sup>. And that they shall mourn at the last, and say, "How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof, and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me<sup>q</sup>?" And many other Scriptures assure me of the same. O how much better were it now to believe the Lord, and foresee this evil, and think of your way while you have opportunity to escape? How much safer were this for you! And how much more pleasing would it be to God and us? O do not cast away your souls, and displease God, and all the true friends you have, only to please the devil and your flesh! Let me urge you a little further in the words of your Maker, and I charge you to regard them, as you will answer the contempt of them at your peril. Did you never observe how God doth pity the stir that poor sinners make in the world for nothing, and the unprofitable trade of sinning that they drive on, and how he inviteth them to himself, as the true gain and felicity? "Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Harken diligently unto

<sup>o</sup> Luke xvi. 25.<sup>p</sup> Rom. ii. 15.<sup>q</sup> Prov. v. 11—13.

me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear and your soul shall live<sup>r</sup>." "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes: cease to do evil; learn to do well. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow<sup>s</sup>." "How long ye simple ones will ye love simplicity? And ye scorers delight in scorning? And fools hate knowledge? Turn ye at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you. I will make known my words unto you<sup>t</sup>." "Turn ye even to me with all your hearts; with fasting, and weeping, and mourning: rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn to the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful to them that turn, but not to them that go on in their iniquity<sup>u</sup>." "When a wicked man turneth away from his wickedness, which he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin. For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth; wherefore turn yourselves and live ye<sup>x</sup>." The like I recited to you from Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

These are the calls of the God of mercy, inviting you into the way wherein his saving mercy is only to be found. O how glad would many thousands be that are now past hope, if they had but the call of God to repent, as you have this day! How glad should you be that you have such an offer, and that it is not yet too late? And therefore how cheerfully should you yield to be converted? I shall in conclusion say but this; If ever a man or woman of you all shall appear before the Lord in judgment, in a carnal, unconverted state, after all the warnings you have received, I hope God will not charge it upon me, who faithfully, though weakly, endeavoured to prevent it.

<sup>r</sup> Isa. lv. 1—3.

<sup>s</sup> Isa. i. 16.

<sup>t</sup> Prov. i. 22, 23.

<sup>u</sup> Josh. ii. 12.

<sup>x</sup> Ezek. xviii. 23. 30—32.

## CHAPTER VII.

By this time I hope many of you are willing to be converted, and are ready to inquire what you should do to that end? and whether there be any thing on your parts to be done that may further it? And in hope that you are willing, I shall next proceed to give you my best advice herein. And if it were so that you could do nothing to further it, because I am sure you may do much to hinder it, and have done all this while, or else it had been better with you than it is; therefore I shall shew you what are the common hindrances of conversion, which you must carefully endeavour to remove or conquer; and with them I shall adjoin the contrary directions, which concern your necessary duty to this end. And though some of their contraries are real parts of conversion, yet the reason that I mention them here is, because the not yielding to the initial acts in the understanding, is the hindrance of the completive acts on the heart and life.

*Hindrance* 1. The first hindrance of conversion that I shall warn you of, is, The wilful neglect of those ordinary means which God hath appointed for the work of conversion. When God will give any man saving grace, ordinarily he will do it by the means of grace. He that hath appointed his ordinances to that end, will so far stand to his own appointment, and honour his own ordinances, as to work by them, and not ordinarily without them. If men therefore will not use God's means, no wonder if they go without his grace. For, 1. Such are out of the way of grace, and when they avoid the causes, they cannot in reason look for the effects. 2. And moreover, they do provoke God to withhold and deny his grace when they set so light by it, as that they will not so much as use the means to get it. A man by the help of common grace may see the absence and the necessity of special grace, and may do something in the use of means to obtain it if he will; and when men will not so far use their common grace, it is just with God to deny them special grace. For example:

(1.) One particular means of conversion, is, The hearing of the word preached by the ministers of Christ in the pub-

lic assembly. "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? So then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God<sup>a</sup>." God sent Paul "to open men's eyes and convert them<sup>b</sup>." God would so far favour Cornelius, as to send an angel to him, but not to preach the Gospel, but only to bid him send for a preacher, because he would keep to his standing ordinance, and make use of his ministers and appointed means. So he would stop Paul by a vision in his way, and do more for him in acquainting him extraordinarily with his name, than he doth with others; and yet he sendeth him to Ananias for instruction<sup>c</sup>. It was by hearing Peter preach that the Jews were pricked at the heart, and converted, and three thousand were added to the church at once<sup>d</sup>. It was God that must open the heart of Lydia; but what did he open it for, but to attend the things that were spoken by Paul, that thereby she might be converted<sup>e</sup>? God would vouchsafe an earthquake to prepare the heart of the jailor for conversion, but he would not convert him without the preaching of Paul and Silas<sup>f</sup>. It was those that had ears and heard not, and hearts that were hardened against the word, that were not converted, healed or forgiven<sup>g</sup>. By teaching sinners the way to God, David assured himself, they shall be converted to him<sup>h</sup>. The word of God is the seed of life, which is sown and takes root in the hearts of them that God will save<sup>i</sup>. It is the word of God which "abideth for ever," which is "the incorruptible seed by which we are born again<sup>k</sup>." God hath made those promises of a blessing on his word, which should draw us to attend it: "Incline your ears, come unto me, hear and your souls shall live<sup>l</sup>." And he hath threatened those that will not hear and obey, severely, Matt. x. 14. If a people will not hear the ministers of Christ, they must "shake off the dust of their feet in witness against them." And Christ hath attested that it "shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that people." It is by his ministers that Christ doth teach his church, and every

<sup>a</sup> Rom x. 14. 17.    <sup>b</sup> Acts xxvi. 17, 18.    x. 3. 5.

<sup>c</sup> Acts ix. 6. 10.

<sup>d</sup> Acts ii. 37. 41.    <sup>e</sup> Acts xvi. 14.

<sup>f</sup> Acts xvi. 32.

<sup>g</sup> Mark iv. 12. John xii. 40. Acts xxviii. 27.

<sup>h</sup> Psal. li. 13.

<sup>i</sup> Matt. xiii. 8. 19. 23. Luke viii. 11.

<sup>k</sup> 1 Pet. i. 23. 25.

<sup>l</sup> Prov. i. 23. Isa. lv. 3.



soul that heareth not him, shall be cut off from his people <sup>m</sup>. If you will be at home when the message of God is delivered to the congregation, you cannot expect the blessing and benefit of it. If you can find something else to do when you should hear the word of God, God will find something else to do when he should give you his saving grace.

*Object.* 'But the minister is but a weak man, and I cannot profit by him.'

*Answ.* Doth he not deliver the profitable word of God? Doth he not preach the doctrine of faith, and repentance, and justification by Christ, and shew you the way of life? If you can hear the doctrine of everlasting life, and not profit by it, because the minister is not so able as others, blame your own hearts, and give more attendance and regard to what you hear; and lament that ignorance or carelessness of your own that hindereth you from profiting.

*Object.* 'But I have more temptations in the congregation, than I have when I sit at home. Satan is troubling me with vain thoughts, and I cannot attend.'

*Answ.* Is that a reason against duty, and so necessary a duty? Will you think to overcome the devil's temptations by yielding to them? That is it that he would have. If he could drive you from God's ordinances, he hath his will. Will you make your own sin a pretence against your necessary duty? That is to make one sin a pretence for another; yea, a lesser sin a pretence for a greater: it is your sin to hear with a careless, wandering mind, but it is a greater sin not to hear at all.

*Object.* 'I can profit as much by staying at home, and reading the Scripture, or some good book: it is the word of God which they preach, and it is that which I read at home. The books that are written by learned men, are better than the sermons that are preached by our ministers.'

*Answ.* 1. What foolish pretences are these against the plain command of God, and our own necessary duty? When God hath appointed you your duty, will he allow you to forsake it upon your own reason, as if you were wiser than God, and knew what will profit you better than he? If your physician give you a medicine, and bid you take it for the cure of your disease, will you be wiser than he, and say, why may

not such and such a thing serve turn as well, or better? If you will needs be your own physician, and forsake God's direction, and cure yourselves, do it as well as you can; and what will become of it. It is a strange thing that a sottish sinner should think himself wiser than God, and take upon him to mend his word, and find out a better way to heaven than he hath prescribed him.

2. Can you have grace think you without the gift of God? If you cannot, do you think God will give it you in a way of disobedience, when you run from his appointed means; or rather in a way of duty and obedience, when you wait on him in that which he hath promised to bless? Find you such promises to those that turn their back on God's public ordinances, as we can shew you to them that diligently use them, if you can.

3. Is it not horrible pride in you to think that you are able to understand the word of God as well without a teacher, as with one? The eunuch said to Philip, when he asked him whether he understood what he read; "How can I except some man should guide me?" And yet you think you can read the word at home as profitably without a guide: as if your children that go to school should say, 'We have the same books at home, and therefore we will not go to school, our master doth but teach us our grammar, and other books, and these we can read at home.' You are wise men that while, that know no more of your own ignorance; and humble men, that think you have no need of teaching; as if God had appointed his ministers and ordinances in vain.

4. It is a certain mark that you never heard or read as you should; or else your hearing or reading would have taught you, that both must go together, and not one shut out the other; and that the greatest, which is God's public work, must be preferred. It is a mark of a graceless heart and worse; even of one that hath much blinded common reason itself, when wretched sinners do know no more of their own necessity, but think they can live as well without God's public means as with it. If ever sermon or book had done you saving good, and you had the least spark of grace, and had felt the power of divine truth upon your soul, you would have been far from these conceits; you would feel

<sup>n</sup> Acts viii. 30, 31.

the necessity of the preaching of the word, as an hungry man feeleth the need of his food. Your own necessity would drive you, and the good which you feel by the word would draw you, and your love to it would not suffer you to forbear. If you were necessarily kept away by any business, you would take it for your loss, when it is not your sin, and would lament that you were deprived of that which you find so sweet and profitable. To find no profit by the preaching of the word of God, nor any great need of it, is a mark of a dead and graceless soul.

5. Look through the Scripture, and see whether the common way of conversion were not by the hearing the word of God preached.

6. If you may thus forbear it, then why may not all others? And then all Christian assemblies should be dissolved, and forborn; and then what churches should we have? And do you think that this is the will of God? All sorts of Christians in the world would have assemblies. Papists have their meetings, and Anabaptists have theirs; and even the Separatists have theirs; and would you have none? Doth not God expressly charge you, that "you forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is." And to what end else hath he appointed ministers in his church?

7. Do you think that there should be any ministers, or not? If not, then no church, no baptism, and then no Christ, and no salvation. If there should, what should they do, if not preach the Gospel? Paul so far preferred it before other ordinances, that he thanketh God that he baptized not any himself save some few among them, because of an inconveniency that might have followed. "For God sent me not" saith he, "to baptise, but to preach the Gospel." If you would have no preaching, you should have no ministers. And if you would have us preach, who should we preach to? to walls, or to men? If to men, why not to you as well as to others? Are others bound to hear any more than you? And how can we preach without hearers? Paul saith, and so must we, "Necessity is laid upon me, and woe to me if I preach not the Gospel." And may we not then say, necessity is laid on you, and woe to you if you

hear not the Gospel? The Scripture saith, "How beautiful are the very feet of them that bring the glad tidings of peace!" And you can profit as well without them at home. Is not your spirit then contrary to God's Spirit, which thus speaks<sup>9</sup>: and what spirit is it that is contrary to God's Spirit but the devil's?

8. It was never God's end in writing the Scripture, nor the end of ministers in writing good books to keep you from the public hearing of the word. Each duty must know its place. I had rather the books that I have written were all burnt, than that men should by them be kept from the public and greater ordinances. Do not these very books which you say you read, command you to hear, and condemn those that do not hear? Do they not shew you that your words are the words of wickedness; and say, as much for hearing as now I do? What an hypocritical trick of you is this, when the Bible and other good books do command you to be constant hearers, and condemn you if you will not, that you will say you can profit more by reading these books than by hearing? What, can you profit more by reading your duty, when you refuse to do it, than by obedient doing it? Can you profit most by reading your own condemnation? You read in Scripture that "he that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination<sup>r</sup>." The truth is, you shew by this, that you do but make reading a pretence against hearing, when indeed you never did either of them with understanding and grace in your hearts.

9. What do you by withdrawing from the public assemblies, but excommunicate yourselves? And is it not our duty then to excommunicate or avoid you if you continue obstinate after admonition? Do you believe the communion of saints, and yet do you avoid it? Well, if you had any grace in your hearts, you would make the assembly and public worship of God, the delight of your souls, and it would do you so much good to call on God, and praise him with his people, and hear his instruction, that you could not be without it. You would do as David, when he was banished from the temple and worship of God, he crieth out, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my

<sup>9</sup> Rom. x. 15.

<sup>r</sup> Prov. xxviii. 9.

soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God : when shall I come and appear before God ? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say to me, Where is thy God ? When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me ; for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God ; with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy-day<sup>s</sup>.”

The sixth council at Constantinople decreed, that whosoever was absent from the congregation three Lord's days together without necessity ; if he were a minister, should be put from the ministry, and if he were a private man, he should be cast from the communion of the church. If you cast out yourselves, blame not us if we cast you out.

*Object.* ‘ But, say some (that the Quakers have taught,) when a minister preacheth a month, or two, or three, or a year upon one text, how can he choose but add to the word of God, and therefore why should we hear them ?’

*Ans.* A foolish cavil. What ! is expounding and applying the word of God, adding to it ? Do we tell you that any thing is the word of God that is not ? Why doth not one of these ignorant objectors come and tell us in any one particular, what it is that we have added to the word of God ? I am now persuading you to hear the word of God, is this adding to it ? Doth not the word do the like ? And doth not God in the word bid us acquaint you with it, and make it plain to you, and press it upon you ? What if a lawyer bestow a day, or twenty days in pleading your cause before the judge, that he may save your estate, or your life from the malice of an adversary ? Will you say, that this lawyer doth add to the law of the land by his pleading ? What if the judge pass sentence according to law, and give the reason of it ? Or what if he make a charge of many hours long wherever he comes ; doth he add to, or diminish from the law by so doing ? I must crave pardon of the hearers that are of common reason, that I have spent so much time in answering such senseless, sottish cavils as these. But they must consider that such people we have to deal with, and the more unreasonable and blockish they are, the greater need they have to be taught.

<sup>s</sup> Paul. xlii.

(2.) Another means that God hath appointed for conversion, is ; The reading of his word, and of such good books as are written for the opening and applying of it. Though this must not thrust out hearing, yet is it an excellent means in its own time and place, or else God would not have appointed it as he hath done<sup>1</sup>. Many a soul hath had happy experience of the success of reading. The word read is the word, and therefore may convert, for “the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul<sup>2</sup>.” It is a very great privilege to have the truths of God before our eyes, where we may view them over and over at our leisure, till they be fastened in our hearts.

(3.) Another means that God hath appointed us to use for the obtainment of his grace, is, A serious inquiry of those that should and can instruct us. In common, easy matters, you may go either to ministers or private Christians as you see fit ; but in matters of great difficulty, where private men are in danger of mistaking, or are not able to do it as your case requires, there it is your duty especially to repair to your teachers ; or the most able, faithful ministers that you can well get, and make known your case to them, and desire their direction for your effectual recovery. Nicodemus came to Jesus by night for counsel, because he perceived that he was a teacher sent from God : and Christ thereupon did give him advice in the matter of the new birth. So Matt. xix. 16. Another inquireth what he shall do that he may have eternal life. The eunuch desires instruction of Philip<sup>3</sup> ; and Paul of Ananias, and Cornelius of Peter, as was said before. The Jews that were pricked at the heart, ask Peter and the rest of the apostles what they shall do<sup>4</sup>. And the jailor asks Paul and Silas, what he shall do to be saved ? See further, Mal. ii. 7. “The priest’s lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth<sup>5</sup>; for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts.” Luke xii. 42. Col. i. 28. If poor unconverted sinners would but take this course, and go to their teachers for direction for their salvation, and resolve to practise it when it is given them, con-

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xxiv. 7. Josh. viii. 34, 35. <sup>2</sup> Chron. xxxiv. 30. Neh. viii. 3. 8. 18. ix. 3. Matt. xii. 3. 5. xxi. 26. xxii. 31. Acts xiii. 27. xv. 21. Deut. xxxi. 11. Acts viii. 30. Col. iv. 16. Rev. i. 3. 1 Tim. iv. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Psal. xix. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Acts viii.

<sup>5</sup> Acts ii. 37.

version would not be so rare, nor so many miscarry as now do; but most are so careless that they feel no need of it, and think it were but to trouble themselves and their teachers to no purpose; and others are so stout that they will not stoop to it; but if we send for them to come and speak with us, that we may afford them the best advice we can, they ask us by what authority we do it; and think it too much to come near us, and speak to us: others are so sinfully bashful, that they cannot open their mouths, when their salvation is concerned in the matter; and others are conceited beforehand that ministers will but slight them, and are too stout to speak to them, at least with any seriousness and tenderness of their case. And thus satan keeps men from grace, by keeping them from the means of grace.

(4.) Another means of conversion, is, The frequent company of those that fear God, and would afford us their help in the way to heaven, and conference with them about these things. Company hath a transforming power, and the speeches and examples of heavenly Christians, will do much to bring others to a consideration of their ways. Commonly men are, or seem to be, such as their familiar company is.

(5.) Another means for conversion, is, Frequent and earnest prayers to God. When we know we want grace, and that God is the giver of it, what should we do but betake ourselves to him, and ask saving grace and "wisdom of him, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not?" I know some would persuade us that we may not exhort unconverted men to pray; because their prayer is an abomination to God, and without faith they cannot please God. To whom I answer briefly. 1. Nature itself teacheth a man in misery to cry to him, that is able to relieve him, and to beg pardon of him whom he hath offended, and especially when he knoweth that he is of a merciful nature: and may we not persuade men to that which the very light of nature doth direct them to, and the law of nature oblige them to? Or will these men go against the light and law of nature? 2. Scripture commandeth these to pray, and seek God, "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his ways; and the unrighteous man his thoughts." Peter exhorts Simon Magus to

<sup>2</sup> James i. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Isa. lv. 6, 7. So Hos. x. 12. iii. 5. Amos v. 6.

“ pray, if perhaps the thoughts of his heart may be forgiven him,” when he pronounceth him “ in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity <sup>b</sup>.” 3. We do not exhort men to pray, while they continue wicked, but to return with prayer in their mouths from their wickedness. Our exhortation is as those before mentioned, “ Let the wicked forsake his way ;” and thus seek the Lord. “ Repent of this thy wickedness,” and so pray for pardon as Peter exhorteth. When we bid them pray, we bid them desire, for desire is the soul of prayer, and words are but the body ; and when we exhort them to desire grace, we exhort them to the beginning of grace. Prayer is a returning act, and when we exhort them to pray, we exhort them to return, and by prayer to begin the work, and so this beginning may be a means of the rest of the change that is yet behind.

*Direct.* 1. Having shewed you the first hindrance of conversion, I come to give you the first direction, which is contrary thereto ; and that is, That you would presently fall upon the use of these means, that God hath appointed you to use for your conversion. Are you sensible of the necessity of it ? and are you truly willing to be converted, or are you not ? If you would, let us see your willingness in the use of the means without delay. Particularly, let me entreat of you these following things.

(1.) See that you be constant hearers of the word preached, and take delight in the public assembly of the church, and let nothing but necessity keep you at home. Live under the ablest ministry that you can : and neglect not one such opportunity for your souls. If you be absent without necessity but from one sermon, God may justly deny you the blessing of the rest : and you know not which it is that is most suitable to your condition, and therefore miss not any. The devil is aware what a minister is studying about all the week, and when he seeth that we have provided that which is likeliest to do you good, he will do all that he can to keep you away that day. He will find one business or other, or tempt you to be negligent ; because he is afraid, lest if you come, you should be converted. Miss not one sermon, therefore, lest you miss that one that should have done you good. And as you hear, so take heed

<sup>b</sup> Acts viii. 22.



how you hear, and attend to it as to a message sent from God, concerning your salvation; and "set your hearts to all the words that you hear, for it is not a vain thing, but it is for your life." "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear," saith Christ often in cases of greatest moment! And he that will not hear, and diligently hear a message from free grace for the saving of his soul, is unworthy to have ears.

(2.) If you would be converted by the word, do not let it slip as soon as you have heard it; but call it to remembrance again, and bring it home to your hearts: ponder of what you have heard, and speak of it to those about you. And if you be not able to remember it, through the weakness of your memories, go to some of your neighbours' houses that do repeat it, that you may have the benefit of their assistance. Have not you as much need as they? and should not you be at as much pains as they? Make the word your own before you leave it.

(3.) Be much in reading the word of God, and such practical books as will help you to apply it? And lay to heart the truths you shall read.

(4.) Especially do all this on the Lord's day, which is purposely set apart for such holy works. Lose none of that precious season of grace: but when the public worship is over, betake yourselves with your families, and in secret to the improvement of it; and take as much pains that day for your souls, as you do on the rest of the days of the week for your bodies. You cannot then pretend that you have no leisure, when it is at a time that is wholly to be employed in such things. O make the best of that day, and seek after the knowledge of God therein, if you would be partakers of his grace.

(5.) Will you go, in case you want direction, to those that are able to direct you? Especially to your teachers, and ask them what course you must take for conversion, and tell them your case, and the hindrances that you meet with, and resolve to obey the counsel that they shall give you?

(6.) Will you betake yourselves daily to God in hearty prayer, and beg of him that he would give you converting grace? Beseech him to open your eyes, and shew you the

greatness of your sin and misery, till you be unfeignedly humbled; and that he would shew you the need of his grace in Christ, till you can thirst after him and his righteousness; and that he would shew you the certainty and excellency of his glory, till your hearts be set upon it above all? O beg hard of God that he would not let you live unconverted any longer, lest death should find you in that miserable state. Beseech him to pardon all your former rebellions and resistance of his Spirit, and now at last to give you that grace that you have set so lightly by; and bring you into the hatred of those ways of sinful pleasure or profit, which had your hearts before.

These are the means that God hath appointed to bring you into a state of saving grace. What say you? Are you willing? Are you resolved to use these means, or are you not? If you think that this is too much ado, and that your salvation is not worth it, you may take your ease and go without it. But if God have not given you up to so much unreasonableness, but that you had rather be at the sweet and comfortable pains of duty, than endure the intolerable pains of hell: if you do not set more by the ease of your flesh for a few days, than the ease and peace of soul and body for ever, then take my counsel, and set upon these means without delay. Look who doth most for God, and their salvation, of all that you know, and strive to do as much as they. You have the same God, and the same law, and the same, and greater necessity, than they: you are farther behind hand: you have more work undone which must be done: your danger is greater, and your souls should be as precious to you, as theirs to them. O, therefore, take time while you have it, and set yourselves to the work.

*Hindrance 2.* The second hindrance of conversion, which I shall mention, is bad company. It is a dangerous thing to be wilfully a companion of ignorant, careless, ungodly men. If they will say nothing directly against that which is good, yet will they do much to hinder your salvation, by keeping your thoughts, and talk, and delight upon other things, and by giving you an evil example, as if these matters were not necessary. Vain talk, and vain practices, settle the minds of men in vanity, and in a forgetfulness and neglect of heavenly things. Besides, they will be enticing

you to such kind of business and delight, as strengthen the flesh, and contradict the Spirit, and fasten you in sin, and are the common causes of the perdition of the world. The noise of their foolish laughter and giddy discourse, will drown the voice of conscience, and of the Spirit of God. It is hard keeping the heart in a sense of duty, or the evil of sin, in the midst of sin. As it is certainly a vain and graceless heart that delighteth most in vain company, so such will make the heart more vain. When men sit over their pots, cherishing their flesh, (which they once vowed to fight against as their enemies,) pouring out a deal of foolish, senseless discourse; the sense of the evil of sin and of the love of Christ, and of the worth of glory, is then far from the heart: and if they do make any mention of God or holy things, it is commonly irreverently and most abusively, taking the name of God in vain, and sinning more by their Scripture discourse, than by any other. And it is a wonder if the devil and their fleshly reason do not lead them to plead against God, and to take part with the flesh, and perhaps to make a scorn of godliness. O what a dangerous thing it is to live among such company as will be still hindering, but never helping, in the way to heaven! Especially among those who are worldly or sensual, or that are enemies to godliness, and set themselves against it to their power. In a way that is up hill, and all against the interest and inclination of our flesh, and in which we are so weak and backward ourselves, we had need of all the help that we can get, and a little hindrance may be our undoing. But when poor sinners shall live among such, where they shall hear almost no discourse, but vain, and almost no talk of religion, but in distaste and contempt of it, despising the way to heaven, which is in effect, to despise heaven itself; how can it be expected that such should be brought to the knowledge of the truth, and the love of those ways that they hear so much reproached? I know God can do it, and sometimes doth, where people are unavoidably cast into such company; but if men will choose such, when they may avoid it, the case is dangerous indeed. "He that walketh with wise men shall be yet wiser, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." Some of these ungodly wretches are so cunning in their discourse, that weak, silly people be not able to dis-

cern their folly. Some of them also have some worldly interest in them, and therefore are the liker to do them hurt. When those that they dwell with, and those that they depend upon, and those that seem to love them are ungodly, and speak against the way of salvation, it commonly takes so much with the ignorant, that they either say as they say, and are of their minds, or at least it hindereth them from thorough conversion, and setting themselves diligently to the saving of their souls. Thousands have been everlastingly undone by evil company.

*Direct. 2.* The second direction, therefore, that I shall give you is this; Do all that you can to avoid the company of those that would hinder you, and to live in the company of those that would help you, in the matters of your salvation. I do not mean, that a servant that is bound should go from his master before he hath served according to their agreement; nor that a child should forsake his parents that are ungodly; nor that a woman should forsake her husband, or a man his wife on this account; for here they are not at their own choice, but are fixed to their relations, which tie them to duty and faithfulness to their places; but I mean, that no man shall willingly cast himself into evil company, that can avoid it. Particularly. 1. If a master be to take a servant, takenot such as are ungodly, if you can have better. If a servant be to choose a master, come not into an ungodly family, if you can help it. If young people be intended to marry, take heed of being yoked unequally, and joining yourselves with the members of the devil, and the enemies of Christ, and those that are likely to be hinderers of your salvation, and so to prove the damnation of your souls. You will be backward enough and bad enough in the best company that you get; what then will you be in the worst? Especially when it is so near you, and continually with you, and that of your own choice. I confess a minister or other Christian when he hath a call to endeavour the good of such, and to reprove their sin, may go among them as a physician among the sick; and so did Christ himself when he was on earth. But to make them our companions willingly, we may not. Grace is hardly got, and hardly kept, and more hardly increased in such company as this.

On the other side, get into the company of such as will further you. "The tongue of the just is as choice silver; the heart of the wicked is little worth; the lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for want of wisdom. The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable, but the mouth of the wicked speaketh frowardness. Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge<sup>d</sup>." If you were children of God yourselves, you would delight in those that are such. For, "by this we know that we are translated from death to life, because we love the brethren." And David saith, "the saints on the earth, and the excellent are all his delight<sup>e</sup>." Get therefore, if it be possible, into the company of such; with them you shall hear that which may humble you for sin, and you shall hear that of Christ which may tend to kindle the love of him in your breasts; and you shall hear that of the goodness of God, and his way, and the privilege of the saints; the precious promises of the Gospel, the life of grace, and the hopes of everlasting glory which may make your hearts to burn within you. When you live with those that by their example disgrace sin to you, and draw you from it, and watch over you against it, and that will be still minding you of those truths that should sanctify your hearts, O what an advantage is this to your salvation! If you be ignorant, they will teach you; if you are unskilful in prayer, or other holy duties, they will help you by their instruction and example. Choose, therefore, the best company you can get, if you be free, and all little enough. Live among that company on earth, that you must live with in heaven, if ever you come thither.

*Hindrance* 3. The next hindrance of conversion, is, A gross ignorance of those truths which should be the instruments of their conversion. He that turneth to God, must needs know God; and he that turneth from sin, must needs know the evil and danger of sin. No man will make so great a change, and not know why. No man will part with his present contents, and set upon a course that his nature is against; nor forsake all the world, even that which is dearest to him, till he know that there is a flat necessity of so doing, or know of something better to be had by the

<sup>d</sup> Prov. x. 20, 21. 32. xiv. 7.<sup>e</sup> Psal. xvi. 3.

change. When we find that even men of knowledge are too often ungodly, and they will not leave sin when they know the evil of it, and know that everlasting damnation is threatened against it. How then can they forsake it that know not this? When many that can speak of the vanity of this world, and the glory of the saints in the life to come, and the amiableness of God, and his all-sufficiency to make them happy, do yet cleave to this world, and neglect God and the glory which they so extol, how then can we expect that they should turn to God, and set their minds to seek his kingdom that do not know him? All the wickedness in the world is cherished by ignorance, total or partial. Even those that say they know these things, and yet live ungodly, do not soundly know them, but hold them as an opinion, and not as a point of saving faith. O, if poor sinners, that set so light by the everlasting kingdom, did but thoroughly know what they slight, they would quickly change their mind and courses. If you knew heaven as well as you knew your own houses and lands, and if you saw what the souls do now enjoy that depart in the faith, as you see what is done in the houses where you dwell, I would not thank the worst of you all to become far more devout and diligent than the best in the town or country is now. I would not thank the vilest worldling to become heavenly; or the vilest drunkard to become sober; or the scorner of godliness to be the most godly in the country. If you knew heaven as well as you know earth, it were no thanks to you if every family of you were a society of saints, but this cannot be expected. God will not have us live by sight and sense, but by faith. But yet a knowledge of divine revelation we may and must have. No man loveth sin but for want of knowing what he loveth. No man doteth upon this deceitful world, but for want of knowing the worthlessness of it; no man makes light of eternal glory, but for want of knowing what he makes light of; and no man is against a holy life, but he that knoweth not what it is, nor what will be the end of it. O, sirs, if you knew God, your hearts would be inflamed in love to him. There are some of you now stand wondering at the diligence of the godly, and some of you are secretly reproaching them, and casting forth your ignorant scorns against them; but if you did but know what it

is that they are doing, and who it is that setteth them on work, and what it is that they make all this ado for, you would wonder more at your own folly, and would be as forward as they, and would presently take that course which you now reproach. Alas ! poor sinners durst not sport with sin if they knew what they did ; they durst not run in crowds to damnation if they knew what they did. The kingdom of satan is a kingdom of darkness ; and his works are the works of darkness ; and himself the ruler of the darkness of this world, and under chains of darkness is he reserved to the judgment of the great day ; and the mist and blackness of darkness is reserved to him and his servants for ever. “ If the Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost ; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the glorious Gospel of Christ who is the image of God should shine unto them. He that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth<sup>e</sup>.” They that are converted can truly say, “ we were sometimes darkness, but now we are light in the Lord<sup>f</sup>.” For they are “ translated from the power of darkness.”

*Direct.* 3. If ever you would be converted, labour for true knowledge : come into the light that your deeds may be manifested ; and that your own hearts may be manifest to yourselves. Nothing but light will expel your darkness, the devil haunteth men in the night of ignorance, and seldom appeareth in the open daylight : bring in but the saving light of knowledge, and he will vanish and be gone : the first part of saving grace is illumination. The opening of the eye causeth the opening of the heart : Oh if you had but a little of the heavenly light of the saints, it would shew you that which would turn your hearts ; you could not be of the same mind as you are, if you had but saving light : now you think highly of the world, and meanly of the world to come ; you now think nothing too much for your flesh, and all too much that is done for heaven ; you could not be of this mind if you had the light of the Spirit : you labour now for that which profiteth not, and neglect that which would pay

<sup>e</sup> Luke xxii. 53. John i. 5. iii. 19. Rom. xiii. 12. 2 Cor. vi. 14. Eph. vi. 12. Col. i. 13. 2 Pet. ii. 4. 17. Jude 6. 13. Matt. xxii. 13. xlv. 20. John xii. 35.

<sup>f</sup> Eph. v. 8.

you for your labour: you vilify Christ, and grace, and holiness, while you magnify the dreams and dung of the world; you could not do thus if you were savingly illuminated. I beseech you, therefore, if ever you would be converted and saved, labour presently to know the Lord, and his will and ways; lament your former ignorance and negligence which did maintain it. It is not so great a shame for you to be ignorant how to do your work in the world; no, nor how to eat or drink, or how to dress yourselves, as it is to be ignorant of the kingdom of heaven, and the way thereto: you will never hit the way to heaven if you do not know it: he that knoweth most, knoweth too little; what then will they do that know almost nothing at all? O think not knowledge a needless thing, but make out after it, and rest not till you do obtain it; to which end you must use these means following.

(1.) Be much in hearing and reading the word of God, as was before directed; for that is it that “giveth light to the simple<sup>s</sup>,” this “will make you wise unto salvation<sup>h</sup>.”

(2.) Read good books that are written for the expounding and applying of the Scripture. Many have received much information by these. (3.) Converse with wise and godly men: these are the means of knowledge that were before made mention of.

*Object.* ‘We are not learned, and therefore God will not require much knowledge at our hands.’

*Ans.* You may say, ‘Therefore God will not require learning at your hands, further than you are without it through your own neglect.’ But first, every man that hath a reasonable soul should know God that made him; and the end for which he should live; and know the way to his eternal happiness as well as the learned: have not you souls to save or lose as well as the learned have? 2. God hath made plain his will to you in his word; he hath given you teachers and many other helps; so that you have no excuse if you are ignorant; you must know how to be Christians if you are no scholars. You may hit the way to heaven in English, though you have no skill in Hebrew or Greek: but in the darkness of ignorance you can never hit it. 3. Will not God judge you as well as the learned? And will not

<sup>s</sup> Psal. cxix. 105. 130.

<sup>h</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 15.



he require an account of the talents which you possess? He hath set you on his work as well as others, and therefore you must know how to do his work. If you think therefore that you may be excused from knowledge, you may as well think that you may be excused from love and from all obedience; for there can be none of this without knowledge.

*Object.* 'But I am not of so quick an apprehension as others; and therefore I cannot learn so well. And I have been brought up in ignorance, and therefore it cannot be expected from me.'

*Ans.* Can any man have excuse for ignorance that liveth among such teaching, and books, and Christian company as we now do? You may as well shut your eyes at noon-day, and say you cannot do your work for want of light. Were you but as willing to get the knowledge of God and heavenly things as you are to know how to work in your trade, you would have set yourselves to it before this day, and you would have spared no cost or pains till you had got it. But you account seven years little enough to learn your trade, and will not bestow one day in seven in diligent learning the matters of your salvation. Is there not many an opportunity of getting knowledge, which you miss of through your own neglect? You are at home or upon other business, when you might have been hearing the word of God, and in the company of diligent Christians, that are inquiring and learning these necessary things; and when you neglect the means, you think to be excused for your ignorance. The way that God commandeth you for getting knowledge, is, that you receive the word of God, and hide his commandments with you; and incline your ears to wisdom, and apply your hearts to understand, and that you cry after knowledge: and lift up your voice for understanding, and seek it as silver, and search for it as hid treasures. And if you would do thus, the Lord hath promised that you shall understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God<sup>1</sup>. Methinks light itself should be pleasant to you. Did Adam so desire unnecessary knowledge as to undo himself and his posterity to procure it? and will not you so desire that knowledge which is necessary to your salvation, and by which you may be recovered from that miserable estate<sup>2</sup>? How many years study will men spend

<sup>1</sup> Prov. ii. 1—5.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xxvi. 18.

to know a little of the creature, and will you not take pains to know the Maker and End of the whole creation?

*Object.* ' But we hope we may be saved without so much knowledge.'

*Ans.* Not without knowing the necessary, fundamental points of Christianity; and a desire to know more. Doth Christ say, "It is life eternal to know God and Jesus Christ<sup>1</sup>," and do you think to have life eternal without it? God saith of people that have no understanding, "That he that made them will not save them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour<sup>m</sup>:" and that "Christ shall come in flaming fire to render vengeance to them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ<sup>n</sup>." And that they shall be "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord."

*Hindrance* 4. The next hindrance of conversion, is, Unbelief: when men will not be persuaded that the word of God is true, but doubt of the things which he hath revealed to them, concerning the everlasting state of men. Men have but a slight opinion of the truth of the word of God, which will not serve turn to prevail against their fleshly inclination.

Three great enemies of the Christian faith we have to deal with, which if we overcome not, we lose all. 1. The one is our own unbelieving hearts, and our carnal inclinations and interests; flesh and blood cannot reveal the things of God to us, nor discern them when they are revealed<sup>o</sup>. A sound belief of the life to come, and of the whole Christian faith, would certainly turn the heart to God, and turn the course of all your lives. It is this faith that purifieth the heart<sup>p</sup>; and without it no wonder if the word be unprofitable<sup>q</sup>, as to the producing of any further work of sanctification, for it must first beget faith before it can do the rest. 2. Another enemy to the Christian faith, is the devil; who believeth and trembleth himself, but laboureth to keep others unbelieving and secure. So great is his malice against Christ and our souls, that when he seeth that he cannot make a poor sinner forget God, and make light of his word any longer, he flieth openly in the very face of God, and disturbeth the soul with blasphemous suggestions,

<sup>1</sup> John xvii. 3.

<sup>m</sup> Isa. xxvii. 11.

<sup>n</sup> 2 Thess. i. 8, 9.

<sup>o</sup> Matt. xvi. 17. 1 Cor. ii. 14.

<sup>p</sup> Acts xv. 9.

<sup>q</sup> Heb. iv. 3.

and tempteth them to doubt whether there be a God, or not, or whether Scripture be his word, or whether it be true. It was his first way of deceiving, to make the woman doubt of the truth of God's word, which had told her, that if she sinned, she should die. And experience teacheth him to follow on this course, which he hath found to be so successful ; most of the world are destroyed by this unbelief. How sensible is many a poor Christian of the incessant malice of satan in this point ; when he followeth them from day to day with such violence, that their hearts are ready to be overwhelmed with the horror of the temptation. But the ungodly do yield to them without so much reluctance.

3. Another sort of enemies of the Christian faith, are, notorious ungodly men ; such as either by the power of their own unbelieving hearts, have prevailed against the light that should have drawn them to believe, or such as have by the reasonings of infidels, been made infidels themselves, and are desirous to make others such as they are : these are the devil's instruments to draw men to unbelief.

*Direct.* 4. If ever you would be savingly converted, see that you soundly believe the word of God : believe soundly that there is an everlasting happiness, which is the reward of a holy life, and an everlasting torment, which is the punishment of ungodliness ; and you cannot choose but forsake your ungodliness, and become holy. To this end observe these few things following. 1. Watch over your carnal hearts with jealousy : do not take your hearts to be clear and impartial ; and therefore commit not the matter to their trust : they are naturally enemies to the word of God, and therefore no wonder if they hardly believe it. 2. Do not think too highly of your own understandings, as if you were able to comprehend the depths of God ; or were competent judges of each passage in his word, before you have had time and means to understand them, or before you have improved your time and means by diligent study and prayer to God ; search the Scripture, as a learner, and not as a foolish caviller. 3. Abhor the very first temptation of satan that tends to draw your souls to unbelief, and suffer not his malice to make too deep impressions in your fancies : cast out such horrid thoughts with detestation, and give them not the least countenance or willing entertainment. 4. De-

test the company of atheistical men, or any infidels that dare open their mouths to speak against the word of God. Yea, though they pretend to do it but by way of question. Hear every word against the Scripture from such deceivers, as if you heard it from the devil himself, or as if you saw him behind them, prompting them what to say, and putting them on: for it is he that doth it by their mouth. As it was satan that caused Judas to betray Christ, and filled the heart of Ananias and Sapphira to lie against the Holy Ghost<sup>r</sup>, so is it satan that filleth the hearts of these unbelievers to speak against Christ, and to contradict the word, which the Holy Ghost hath delivered. 5. Labour to understand the sense of Scripture, and the great evidence of its truth, and of the Christian faith; and have recourse to those for your confirmation that are of better understandings herein than yourselves, and read those books that are written to that end, to manifest the divine authority of Scripture. 6. Submit to the truth, which you know, and strive not against the light, but let it have its due impress upon your souls, that you may have the experience of its power and excellency to confirm you: by these means you may do much to overcome your unbelief; and if that were once done, the rest of the work would go on apace.

*Hindrance* 5. The next hindrance, is, Inconsiderateness: of which I spoke in the beginning, but shall add somewhat in this place. When truths are not considered of, they are but as medicines that lie in a box, and therefore are not like to work; it is the work of consideration to bring down truths from the understanding to the heart, and to hold them there till they do work. We cannot get poor sinners so much as soberly to bethink them of their ways, and to call to mind the things we speak to them, and consider of them for their good. Because I intend, if the Lord will, to speak hereafter more fully of this subject, I shall pass it over now thus briefly.

*Direct.* 5. If ever you would be converted, use to consider frequently and seriously of those truths of God that must do the work. The word of God is pure and powerful to convert the soul, but can you look it should convert you, if you will not so much as soberly think upon it? How can

<sup>r</sup> Luke xxii. 3. Acts v. 3.

that work upon your hearts, which is out of your minds? It is you that must join with us for your own conversion, and do the rest of the work, when you come home, and not think that a sermon can do it, when you forget it, and never mind it more. If you seek to the ablest physician for your body, he can but give you physic, it is you that must take it and keep it, and observe directions till it work. If you will presently cast it up again, how can it do you good? We tell you of those truths that are most useful to your conversion, and if you will take them home, and keep them, and ponder of them when you are alone, till they sink into your hearts, and take rooting, you may be happy men; but if you will cast them all up again, and will not be persuaded to bestow now and then a few of your deepest serious thoughts for the further entertainment of them, how should they do you saving good? If I could prevail with this congregation to be but considerate, and now and then to bestow some time to get the truth to their hearts, I should have great hopes of the conversion of you all; for light is stronger than darkness: if you would but open the window by consideration, and let it in, you should find the darkness presently dispelled, and it would be day with you that have sat in the shadow of death. The Spirit of God is able to overcome the flesh, and Christ is able to conquer satan, and bind him, and cast him out of your souls. And if you would but set in, and take his part, and open him the door by sober consideration, when he knocks and seeks admittance, and not discourage him by your wilful neglect, you would feel the working of his power to your salvation. There have now been many sermons preached to you on this text; have you considered of them when you came home? Have you taken yourselves alone, and asked your own hearts, whether you are converted or not? And have you bethought you of the blessedness of the converted, and the misery of the unconverted, which you have heard? Have you dwelt upon these thoughts, till they have sunk down into your hearts? If you have, I dare say this doctrine hath done you good; but if you have not, what wonder if you be unconverted still, and if you live and die so, and if you be damned among the unconverted, when you will not be persuaded so much as seriously to consider of the matter? If it be not a matter

worthy the thinking of, it is not worth the hearing, and if this be not to be thought on, I know not what is. We do not go home with you from church into your houses, nor see what you think of there in secret, nor whether you fall down there before the Lord, and pray over the sermons that you hear; nor do we hear what you say of it to others; but God followeth you home, and he seeth and heareth all; and he that is here ready with his grace to enter into your hearts, if you do not resist or slight him, is there also ready to help you to make use of what you have heard, if you do not wilfully throw it off yourselves. O, did you but earnestly consider what God is, and what your duty is, and what you were made for, and whither you are going, and what sin and the world are, and what grace is, and what Christ is, and hath done for you, and what death is, and what judgment is, and what heaven is, and what hell is, how is it possible you should continue unconverted? How is it possible but you should presently run out of your present carnal, worldly state, as you should do out of a house that is all on fire over your head; and should become most zealous and diligent Christians? Certainly consideration would do very much to your conversion. "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet to thy testimonies, I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments<sup>a</sup>."

*Hindrance 6.* The next great impediment to your conversion, is, Hardness of heart, and searedness of conscience. Though every man have some of this in his original corruption, yet resisting of light and motions of grace doth usually bring men to a far greater measure of it; both by the nature of the thing, and by the just judgment of God. When men have sinned often or long against knowledge and conscience, and receive not the truth in the love of it that they may be saved, but suppress the light, and live not up to the convictions that are upon their consciences, it is usual for such to grow blockish and senseless, and for the brutish part so far to prevail, that they are in a sort "unreasonable men<sup>b</sup>." Men are naturally dead in sin, but when they have sinned wilfully, they grow more dead; that is, they are more insensible, and have more of death upon them. And when they fall, especially from former conviction and profession, they

<sup>a</sup> Psal. cxix. 59.

<sup>b</sup> 2 Thess. iii. 2.

“become twice dead, and plucked up by the roots”; and then the work of conversion is hard indeed. When the heart is thus hardened, no words are much regarded by them: no saying will serve; you speak as to a post. We shoot our arrows as at a wall of flint, where they will not enter: the dew of holy instructions doth fall upon a stone where no fruit can be expected. You cannot devise what to say that will touch them, because they are stupid, and will not lay it to heart: you cannot tell how to sharpen your words to make them enter. The Lord have mercy upon poor wretches, for their case is lamentable. It would make a man of consideration wonder to see what piercing, weighty truths a hard heart will make light of. Speak to them as from the God that made them, and they regard you not: speak to them of their everlasting state, and they regard you not: tell them of the heinous evil of sin, and all its aggravations, and they take it all but as words of course; and will say, ‘God help us, we are all sinners,’ and there is an end. Tell them of the infinite love of God, and the precious blood of Christ that was shed for them, and the free pardon that is offered, and the rich abundant grace, which they might have, and it will increase their presumption and security, but it will not raise their estimation of it, nor quicken their desire after it, nor make them forsake all and follow Christ. Tell them of an everlasting state of glory, which they may obtain in the presence of the Lord, and they make light of it, and hear it as they do a story of the fortunate islands, or the Elysian fields: tell them of the endless torments of the damned that despised grace in the day of their visitation, and either they feel not, and fear not what you say; or if they fear a little, it is not so much as to move them from their courses, nor bring them to a change of heart and life. O what a sad work it is to have to deal with a hardened heart! It is to hew at a stone; and to cleave a knotty block that will not receive the wedge; to plough and sow on a rock, where you cannot make the plough to enter. This is the trouble of a preacher’s life; this dulleth his hopes, this wearieth and tireth him; this maketh him say, ‘I have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for nought:’ and this hath broken many of their hearts. Alas! to see

our poor people within a few days or years of eternal fire, which they might prevent if they would look about them in time, and we cannot get them to lay it to heart! Alas! to hear what a feeling they must have for ever, and yet we cannot get them to feel or fear, and prevent it now. Oh! thinks a poor minister, if I could but awaken him, and make him regard the case of his soul, I should have hope yet to prevent his damnation: for no man can destroy him against his will; and the light is so clear, that methinks he should see it, if he would not wilfully shut his eyes. But alas! we cannot get them to regard it. How sad a case is it to think of an everlasting glory, which they might have, and how freely Christ hath purchased it, and how freely he doth offer it to them, and they might have it if they would, and if they did not wilfully slight it and reject it. And yet that we cannot awaken them to consideration, nor bring such matters as these to their hearts; I have formerly said it, and I will say it again, that I profess that I often marvel that the weight of everlasting matters doth not rather overmatch your spirits, and overwhelm them. I have wondered that it doth not even amaze and astonish you to think how great a change you are near, and what a thing it is to be everlastingly in heaven or in hell: and yet we cannot get our people to feel or lay to heart these things. O, what lamentable hearts are these! What will they regard and feel if they will not feel everlasting matters? What words will ever pierce their hearts if the words of the living God will not do it, and the words by which they know they shall be judged? Do but call one of them by some disgraceful name, and he will quickly feel: threaten him with death; promise him but a hundred pounds, and he will regard it: but let God declare his sin and misery to him, and he will not feel it: let God threaten him with hell, and promise him everlasting life, if he will return, and he will not regard it. O, what a happy life might a minister have if it were not for hard-hearted men! If we could deal with them, but on such terms for their souls as we do for their bodies, how certainly should we prevail, and then how comfortable would our employments be. If a lawyer tell them their evidence, or cause is nought, they will hear and regard him: if a physician tell them they must take physic or die, they will lay



it to heart. If their landlord tell them they must pay their rent, or be turned out of their houses, they can feel what he saith ; but if we tell them that they must repent and be converted, or be condemned for ever, and miss of salvation, we cannot be regarded ; their hearts are blocked up from us, by the world, and pride, and lust, and sin, and we cannot get into their bosom : we know not how to come at their hearts. Alas ! if it were not for their own sakes this trouble were small to us ; for what good else should it do us to trouble them, and break their hearts and change them ? But when we consider, if we could but convert them we should save them ; and if we could help them to grace, we might meet them in everlasting glory, this maketh us long for better success. Fain then would we get them to hear, and regard, and feel what we say, that it might go well with them for ever ; but we cannot. Alas ! to the grief of our hearts we cannot. It is a tiring life to have none but hard-hearted sinners to persuade ; we lose our study for them ; we lose our breath upon them. Some of them can think of other things while we are speaking to them of the greatest matters in all the world ; and some of them can drop asleep under it, and some of them sit as dull as blocks ; and some of them will look upon us as if they were affected, and yet it never goes to the quick ; and some of them that seem to be somewhat sensible, do shake off all again in a few days time, and when they have been awhile among their old companions, and about their old business, they shew us that they are the old men, and that it is one thing to be a little affrighted for a few days, and another thing to have a changed, softened heart. Were it not for this sin of hardness of heart, it were not possible that so many sermons should be lost ; nor that so many ministers in England should see so little fruit of their labours. Why, alas ! sinners, what else can be the matter ? We come on as reasonable an errand as any men in the world can come on ; it is but that men would accept salvation that is freely purchased and offered them, and that they would be content to change a life of sin and misery, for a life of grace and everlasting glory. One would think that such a message as this should take with every man and woman in the congregation ; especially when it is sent from God himself, and brought to them with such evidence of

certain truth, and themselves profess to believe what we say. One would think a message so reasonable as this should prevail with every man in a whole country or kingdom where it comes : and yet it doth not. Nay, alas ! how few are they with whom it doth prevail ! If we came hither to offer every man in this congregation that he should live in a palace as a prince, on condition he would leave his cottage and accept it, who would make any question of the success ? I should not doubt but every man and woman of you would yield : and yet when we come in the name of God to offer them grace and glory on free cost, if they will but let go sin and the world, they will not be persuaded ;—say what we can, though they will not tell us so, yet they will not be persuaded : and whence can this come but from a hardened heart ? Did we not speak to men that have lost their sense and reason, and are past feeling, it could not be : when every man naturally desireth his own happiness, and yet men will not be happy when it is offered them.

Yea, this is not all ; but when the heart is thus hardened, some of them are given over to such a desperate case that they hear the word with a malicious mind ; and instead of receiving it in power to their salvation, they do but cavil at it, and pick quarrels with it, to their condemnation ; and prate among their companions against that which they understand not, nor ever laid to heart. If a physician would heal them for nothing, and they should maliciously reproach him or quarrel with all that he doth for them, did they not deserve to be left to perish by the disease ? If they had forfeited their lives and a free pardon were offered them, what would you think of him, that instead of a thankful accepting of the pardon, would pick quarrels with it, and prove it nonsense, or scorn the messenger ? This is the case of many of our hearers. Poor souls, their lives declare their misery, and God sendeth us to them with the offers of a remedy, and one goes home and makes a jest of it ; and another foolishly cavilleth against it, and another thinks it a needless thing ; and this is our success with hard-hearted men. Now the Lord have mercy upon you that hear me in this congregation, and grant that this may be none of your case, or if it be, that he would powerfully and quickly cure it : for it is one of the saddest cases in this world : and of all sorts of

men, there are few or none that we have so little hope of as hard-hearted men. If a man were never so much mistaken and never so far out of the way, yet if he had but any regard or feeling with him, we might hope by the force of reason and the light of the word of God, to bring him to himself, and set him in the way: but when men are past feeling, what shall we say to them, or what can we do for them? Nay, it is not only words but even the works of God that are lost upon such men: mercies do but harden them, and judgments themselves do but harden them, which one would think, should humble and soften them, if any outward means could do it. When the Jews had sinned, God punished them with war, and let loose plundering, robbing soldiers upon their estates, and destroyers upon their bodies; and yet they were so far from being humbled and softened by it, that they did not so much as regard the cause, nor the hand that did it. "Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? Did not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned? For they would not walk in his way; neither were they obedient to his law. Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle, and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not, and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart."<sup>x</sup> And hath not this been our own case in England? Who would have thought, if people had but had life, and sense, and reason in them, but that so many years' war should have humbled them for their sins, and made them willing to learn and to be reformed? Who would have thought but they would have searched and tried their ways, and turned to the Lord that did afflict them; and have loved his word, and have given up themselves to his will, and even in the open assemblies have voluntarily acknowledged and bewailed their iniquities? And yet we see how many are the same. As the sword found them, so it hath left them, if not worse: and if the fury of God's anger cannot be felt, no wonder if they cannot feel our preaching: and if they lay not to heart the fire that burneth them up, what wonder if they lay not to heart the message we deliver? If Peter and Paul, yea, or Christ himself, had preached to one of these hardened sinners, they would have made light of it; or gone home

<sup>x</sup> Isa. xlii. 24, 25.

and ignorantly cavilled against them as they do against the ministers now, unless the powerful arm of God had inwardly concurred to the softening of their hearts : for indeed they did thus by Christ and his apostles while they were upon earth : and by all the prophets that went before them ; Ezek. iii. 7. saith the Lord, ver. 4. “ Son of man, get thee to the house of Israel, and speak with my words to them. Not to many people of a strange speech and a hard language, whose words thou canst not understand. Surely had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened to thee, but the house of Israel will not hearken to thee, for they will not hearken to me, for all the house of Israel are impudent and hard-hearted.” And Christ himself when he had wrought even miracles to confirm his doctrine, was put to grieve for the hardness of their hearts<sup>y</sup>. And when the apostles preached the Gospel of salvation, “ divers were hardened and believed not, but spoke evil of the way of God before the people,” till the apostles resolved to leave them to themselves<sup>z</sup>. So that, hardness of heart is the great impediment of conversion.

*Direct.* 6. The advice therefore that I would give you for this work of conversion, is, That you especially take heed of this dangerous case of an hardened heart. In the name of God see that you run not into this miserable state ; or if you be in it, O that I could awaken you, that you might speedily be brought out of it. Have you yet time of repentance ? And are your souls and bodies yet together ? Yet hath God’s patience kept you out of hell ? O harden not your hearts, lest time be gone, and death and darkness be upon you before you are aware. “ Behold, now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation,” saith the Holy Ghost<sup>a</sup>. Doth God give you warning once again before he smiteth you into everlasting vengeance, and doth he once more call you to repent before he summon you to judgment ? O take the counsel of the Holy Ghost ; “ To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts<sup>b</sup>.” I say, to-day, lest he bear not with thee till to-morrow, “ Boast not of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth<sup>c</sup>.” And if God do call thine impenitent soul out of this world before our next meeting in this place, or at least,

<sup>y</sup> Mark iii. 5.

<sup>z</sup> Acts ix. 9.

<sup>a</sup> 2 Cor. vi. 2.

<sup>b</sup> Heb. iii. 7, 8. 15. Psal. xcvi. 8.

<sup>c</sup> Prov. xxvii. 1.

ere long, remember then that thou hadst time to have prevented the misery which thou must feel to all eternity.

There is not a more fearful plague on earth than a hardened heart; none is more like to be sealed up to damnation than such an one. Dost thou hear of the greatness of thy sin, and hear of judgment and eternal life, and hear of the love and severity of the Lord, and yet dost thou not feel it? O sad case, and sadly to be lamented by all that understand it! For from thyself it cannot be expected. Believe it, sinner, God hath a voice that will be heard and regarded. If the voice of mercy be made light of, the voice of judgment shall not be made light of. When we have told thee of thy danger, and of the remedy by Christ, thou canst go home and cast it out of thy mind. But when God hath said, "Go ye cursed to everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," then make light of that if thou canst. When he hath newly said, "Take him and bind him hand and foot, and cast him into utter darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth;" then forget this, and cast this out of thy mind if thou canst. O poor wretch, if thou hadst to do but with such an one as I, or any one of the sons of men, perhaps thou mightest think to escape well enough: but thou hast to do with the eternal Majesty, and how then wilt thou escape? Canst thou grapple with his Almighty strength? Or canst thou make good thy part against him? When we call on thee to repent and reform, thou wilt not; when we call on thee to a holy and heavenly life, thou wilt not; but when he shall say, 'Depart from me, thou cursed wretch,' wilt thou then say, thou wilt not? When he shall deliver thee to the devils to be tormented by them for ever, who deceived thee in thy lifetime, and bid them take thee to everlasting flames, wilt thou then say, thou wilt not go? Alas, poor wretch! What power hast thou to resist? It is the same Almighty God that made all the world of nothing, and beareth it up in his hand, and disposeth of it at his will, which then will command thee to remediless perdition. If he bid the sun in the firmament move, it moveth; and once when he bad it stand still, it did stand still, and nothing is able to resist his power; and canst thou resist it? Why, if he send but a disease upon thee, thou art unable to resist it! If he bid thee die, wilt thou say, I will not die? Alas! If

sinner could have resisted God, and saved themselves from the stroke of justice, the church-yard would not have been so full of graves, nor hell so full of damned souls as it is at this day. "But who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered<sup>d</sup>?" Name me the man, and tell me where he dwells, that hardened his heart against the Lord, and sped well by it in the latter end? I tell you again, if sermons cannot make you feel; if mercies and warning, if threatening and affliction cannot make you feel, judgment and hell shall make you feel. Say not, but thou wast told so, and remember this when thou seest not me. Remember that I foretold thee that God will not be always jested with, or abused, and that thou canst not make so light of hell, as thou didst of the warnings of God and man. If thou be turned into a rock, God hath a hammer that can batter and dash in pieces that rock.

*Object.* 'But if God will harden my heart, how can I help it? It is he that hardened Pharaoh's heart, and so he did the Jews<sup>e</sup>. And if he will do it, what remedy?'

*Ans.* 1. Dost thou think to have any excuse or comfort by accusing the righteous and holy God? O what a foolish thing is sin, and how it bereaveth poor sinners of their understanding! Thou mightest better have laid the blame upon any one in the world, than upon the righteous and most holy God. For never sin came from him, nor was caused by him. Dost thou think he will not be justified in his judging? God's hardening men is but his leaving them to themselves, to go on in that hardness that he found them in, and denying them that grace which he no way oweth them. 2. And God doth not this neither, till thou abusest his grace, and strivest against the light, and castest away thy own mercy; and is it not just then that he should take his mercy from thee? If children will play with their meat, or cast it to the dogs, and tread it under feet, it is time to take it away. This is God's hardening of the hearts of sinners; he leaveth them as he found them, after they have abused and refused his grace. And withal, he letteth loose the tempter upon them, that seeing they will be wicked, they may be taken in their own wickedness, and destroy themselves by it; as you will lay a purse in the way to catch a

<sup>d</sup> Job ix. 4,

<sup>e</sup> Mark iv. 12.

thief by, when you do not make him thievish ; so God will try and catch a sinner when yet he never gives him any inclination to the sin. But when he seeth that they are and will be such, it is just with him to let them take their course, and smart by their folly. And as, if you see a thief that is running into a pit, you are not bound to keep him out ; no more is God to keep a sinner from destroying of himself, especially when he hath so often refused his assistance.

*Quest.* ‘ But what can I do for the softening of my own heart ?’

*Answ.* O that thou wert but willing to do what thou shouldst and mightest do. If thou be willing ; 1. Get alone and consider of the misery of thy condition ; and of the time when thou shalt feel whether thou wilt or no. 2. Keep under the most powerful preaching of the word, which is God’s ordinary means for the melting of the heart. 3. Keep in the company of those that will remember thee of those holy truths which have a softening nature, and will bring everlasting things into thy mind. 4. Keep out of the company of foolish and ungodly men, who by their words and practices will harden thee more. 5. Resolve that thou go not on in the practice of thy known sin ; no, not once more. For sinning against knowledge doth harden the heart, and tempt the Lord to leave thee to thyself. If thou wilt be drunk when thou knowest it to be a sin ; and wilt be worldly, and wilt be fleshly, when God and conscience speak against it ; this will desperately harden thy heart. 6. Beg daily of God that he would soften thy heart. Beseech him upon thy knees to pardon those sins by which thou hast hardened it, and to give thee his Spirit which must deliver thee from this misery : and follow him hard with these requests from day to day ; for if thou prevail not, thou art undone and lost for ever. For, saith the Holy Ghost, “ he that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but he that confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mercy. Happy is the man that feareth always, but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.” “ He that being often reprov’d, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”

*Hindrance 7.* Another hindrance of conversion, is, The

<sup>f</sup> Prov. xxviii. 13, 14.

<sup>g</sup> Prov. xxix. 1.



too great esteem that men have of this world, and the great interest that it hath gotten in their hearts. By this it is that God is shut out, that Christ is so neglected, that heavenly things are so much undervalued; because men have that in their hands already, or at least in their eyes, which they like better. God and mammon cannot be loved; these two masters cannot be both served. While the world is leaned to, Christ will be made light of. The glory to come can never be obtained, but by the hearty forsaking of this present world. It is this that stole the heart from God; and it is this that possesseth it, till grace recovereth it to God again: and therefore it is the work of grace to cast out the world, and to set up God; to dethrone this usurper, and to give God again the possession of his own. As truly as darkness goeth out of the room when light comes in, so truly doth the love of the world depart where the love of God doth enter into the soul. For "if any man (predominantly) love the world, the love of the Father is not in him<sup>h</sup>." Men cannot make God their end, and the world their end too. They cannot love God above all, and the world above all too. They cannot set their hearts on heaven, nor make it their treasure and their chiefest good, while they set their hearts on earth, and make it their treasure, "For where their treasure is, their hearts will be<sup>i</sup>." When men are drowned in worldly cares, and taken up so much with worldly contrivances and businesses, there is then no room for the matters of their salvation. If they would go to consider of their sin and misery, and think of these things that might further their conversion, their worldly matters step in, and turn away their thoughts; so that, when they are alone, and have opportunity for such considerations, yet they have no hearts to such a work. When they are considering, and begin to perceive that they must either change or perish, and that this life will not serve the turn, presently the world doth turn their minds, and telleth them of other matters to be minded, and so all is forgotten again. If their hearts be a little wakened and troubled for sin, the pleasure or business of the world doth quiet them, and while it maketh them forget their misery, they live as if it were cured, and all their trouble vanisheth away. If they are moved to set up the worship of God in

<sup>h</sup> 1 John ii. 15.<sup>i</sup> Matt. vi. 21.



their families, to read, and pray, and instruct those that are under them, the world will not give them leave, they have somewhat else to mind, which it seemeth they think of greater necessity. And thus the world is an enemy to God, and the love of it keepeth out the love of God, and the serving of it excludeth his service, and they that are friends of it, are certainly his enemies <sup>k</sup>." And this is a grievous hindrance of conversion.

*Direct.* 7. Let go the world then, if ever you would be converted. You renounced it in your baptism, see that your hearts now unfeignedly renounce it, unless you will renounce your part in Christ and the world to come. Think not to keep both, and make up a felicity to yourselves between them. It is now become your enemy, and as an enemy it must be affected and used, or else as an enemy it will effectually destroy you. It is a killing, conquering enemy, to those that take it not heartily for their enemy. But it is only a troubling, but a conquered enemy to them that take it and use it as an enemy. O that poor worldlings did but know what a feather, what a shadow, what an empty unprofitable thing they do pursue. You run after it eagerly, but when you overtake it, you will befool yourselves, and say, 'What have I gotten? Is this all that I have cared and toiled for? Is this all that I forsook God and my salvation for?' For your souls' sake, sinners, forsake not God till you know for what. Neglect not heaven till you have somewhat better to regard. Renounce not your salvation till you know such reason for it as you dare own, and stand to at death and judgment. Is a little plenty of wealth and worldly trifles a matter for a man to sell his soul for? You think, I know, that you do not sell your salvation for it, because you hope that you may have both: but this is but your wilful delusion. If you will not believe God now that telleth you you cannot have two portions, two treasures, two ends, or two masters, you will find it true when your deceit hath undone you. Doth God tell you that you cannot love both, and that the world and he cannot both have your hearts, and will you not believe him? If the world be better than God, then take it, and let him go. If it be more durable than heaven, then follow it and spare not. But,

<sup>k</sup> James iv. 8.

alas ! what a dream, what a shadow is it. How soon will it be gone ! Will you always dwell in these houses ? or will your friends and riches stay with you for ever ? Will you carry your lands and wealth, and fleshly provision to another world ? Alas, that men should wilfully undo themselves ! There is not a worldling, but will confess all this to be true that I say, and yet their hearts are still the same, and the world hath their love, and care, and pleasure, and worldlings they will be still. O what a self-condemning sinner is a worldling, and how much against his knowledge doth he sin ! He knows that he mis-placeth his affections, and yet he will do it. He foreseeth that the world will deceive him at the last, and yet he will follow it, to the neglect of his salvation. Christ hath made but “ one thing necessary<sup>1</sup>. ” Do that and do all : get that and get all. But they needlessly incumber themselves about many things, and make themselves more work than God hath made them ; and will not see that they have lost their labour, till they find that they have lost their souls. O poor foolish sinners, that now are so busy for you know not what, and rejoicing in your possessions as if you were happy, when “ your souls shall be required of you, whose then shall these things be<sup>m</sup> ? ” When death and judgment shall awaken you to your account, and help you better to understand your reckoning, then make your boast of the world, and boast of your gain, if you find it worth your boasting of. Then tell us who was the wiser merchant, he that sold all for the pearl of grace and glory, or he that let go that treasure for the world. Then tell us whether a heavenly or an earthly conversation was the wiser course ; and who it was that choose the better part.

*Hindrance* 8. Another great impediment to conversion, is, When custom in sinning hath given it the mastery, and made the flesh the ruler of your reason, and made men think that they have a kind of necessity to sin. Nature as corrupted, doth bring forth sin in too great strength ; but custom doth make it stronger, and blotteth out the remnants of moral wisdom and honesty from the soul. When men have long taken a custom of sinning, they grow hardened and senseless, as the high way doth by being often trod

<sup>1</sup> Luke x. 42.

<sup>m</sup> Luke xli. 10.

upon, or as a labourer's hand grows hard by constant labour. And so sin becometh familiar to them, and they become "past feeling," and are "given up to work uncleanness with greediness". A custom of sinning against reason doth make men in a sort unreasonable, by giving their sensuality the rule of their reason. We see by sad experience, when men grow old in ignorance, how hardly they are brought to knowledge, yea, or to be willing to learn. And when men are often drunk, or commit any other heinous sin, how it prostituteth their souls to the next temptation, and maketh sin as familiar to them as water to the fish. It must be by a miracle, or next to a miracle, that an old, ignorant, worldly or sensual sinner must be converted. By often sinning they have lost their understandings, and hardened their hearts, and think the greatest good to be evil, and think they cannot live without their sin. But as a man in a fever calls for cold water, so do they for the pleasure of their flesh. They must have it, they cannot forbear it, their flesh will have no nay. "If the blackmore can change his skin, or the leopard his spots, then may they that are accustomed to do evil, learn to do well". We see in public cases, what a power custom hath. If men be but used to any thing in God's worship, that is unmeet or contrary to the word of God, they will not hearken to the Scripture, but cry out, 'Custom, custom,' against that plain word that must judge them, and should direct them; as if the custom of their forefathers were of more authority than the word of God. No wonder then if a custom of swearing, or drunkenness, or worldliness, or wickedness, or contempt of a religious, godly life, do prevail with thousands to harden them to perdition; and this be a grievous hindrance to their conversion.

*Direct.* 8. You that are yet young, take heed of a custom in sin, and you that are hardened in it already, in the fear of God make a stand and go no further. It is sad that you have gone so far. But if you wilfully go on but one day more, you know not but God may leave you to yourselves; and if you wilfully add but one sin more to the heap, it may seal you to perdition, it may break your backs, and sink you into hell. O what a folly is it then for men to delay their repentance to the last, when custom in sinning doth make

<sup>a</sup> Eph. iv. 19, 20.

<sup>o</sup> Jer. xiii. 23.

the work of their conversion to be more difficult. Remember, I beseech you, that your custom is the aggravation of your sin, and not any just excuse. What! if you had taken a custom of spitting in the face of your own father or dearest friend, or any way abusing him, would you think it good excuse for you to continue it, because you are accustomed to it? Why, the oftener you have sinned, the oftener you have wronged God; and the oftener you have wronged him, the more should you now bewail it, and not therefore go on to wrong him more. If you had oftentimes hurt yourselves by falls, or cut your fingers by negligence or carelessness, will you do so still to keep a custom? What greater madness can there be than to plead custom for sinning against the living God, and hastening your own souls to everlasting perdition? You shall have custom for suffering then, as you have for sinning now, and see whether you will therefore love your suffering. If you will love sin, because you are accustomed to it, you shall try whether you can love hell, because you are accustomed to it.

*Hindrance 9.* Another hindrance of conversion, is, Foolish self-love, that makes men unwilling to know the worst of themselves, and so keepeth them from believing their sinfulness and misery; and causeth them to presume and keep up false deceiving hopes, that they may be saved whether they are converted or not; or that they are converted, when indeed they are not. They think it is every one's duty to hope well of themselves, and therefore they will do so; and so while they hope they are converted already, or may be saved without conversion, no wonder if they look not seriously after it. Like many a sick man that I have known in the beginning of a consumption, or some grievous disease, they hope there is no danger in it; or they hope it will go away of itself, and it is but some cold; or they hope that such or such an easy medicine may cure it, till they are past hope, and then they must give up these hopes, and their lives together, whether they will or no. Just so do poor wretches by their souls. They know that all is not well with them, but they hope God is so merciful, that he will not damn them, or they hope to be converted sometime hereafter, or they hope that less ado may serve turn, and that their good wishes and prayers may save their souls, and

that in these hopes they hold on, till they find themselves to be past remedy, and their hopes and they be dead together. I speak not this without the Scripture; Prov. xi. 17. "When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish, and the hope of the unjust man perisheth." Job xxvii. 8, 9. "What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he have gained, when God taketh away his soul? Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him?" Job xi. 20. "And the eyes of the wicked shall fail, and they shall not escape; and their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost." There is scarce a greater hindrance of conversion, than these false, deceiving hopes of sinners; that think they are converted when they are not; or hope to be saved, when they have no ground for their hopes. Were it not for this, men would look about them and return.

*Direct.* 9. I have formerly spoke and wrote to you of this point, and I have told you that it is none of my desire that any man should despair. But despair you must of ever being saved without conversion, or finding heaven in the way to hell. Till that kind of despair possess your hearts, we cannot expect a saving change. For men will not let go all their pleasure, and cast themselves upon these difficulties, which flesh and blood apprehendeth to be in the way of God, as long as they hope to do well enough without it. No wonder if men be unholy, that hope to be saved, whether they be holy or not. It is hope that keepeth your hearts from breaking, which must be broken for your former sins. It is hope of doing well enough in your present case, that keeps you from seeking out for a better: if you knew that you must be converted or condemned, and had no hopes of being saved, unless you were born again, then you would look about you, and run to God by prayer for his grace, and run to the word by reading for instruction, and run to the minister with inquiry for direction, and be glad of that company which would help you to heaven. I tell you, it is these carnal hopes that deceive the world, and hinder them from seeking Christ and life. The thing, therefore, that I request of you for the sake of your own souls, is but this, That you would but try your hopes by the word of God, and prove them sound before you trust them; and content not yourselves to say, I hope I shall be saved, but prove and try,

whether you are such as God hath promised salvation to, or not : for there are hopes that will never deceive men ; that is, those that are well grounded on the word of God : and there are hopes, as you have heard, that will die with men, and undo them ; that is, those that had no ground but their own self-love ; when men hope they shall be saved, because they would have it so, and hope to come to heaven, when they will not go the way to heaven. Is it not one of the dreadfullest sights in the world, to see a man ready to leave this world, and have no hopes but what will die when he dieth ? O, if you did but know what a terrible thing it will be for a man in his lifetime to hope for salvation, and as soon as he is dead to find himself in damnation, and all his hopes to vanish like a dream, you would sure be persuaded to try your hopes. Prove once by the marks of grace in your souls, that thou art one of those that God hath promised salvation to ; that is, one of the regenerate, the heavenly, and the holy, and then hope for salvation and spare not, and the Lord confirm and maintain thy hopes. For these hopes are grounded on the word of God, which never yet deceived any. But if you hope well, and know not why, and you have nothing to shew for your hopes of heaven, but what an ungodly man can shew, or the most of the world may shew that shall perish, and cannot prove that you are new creatures, and holy, and heavenly, these hopes do but hinder your conversion and salvation.

*Hindrance 10:* The next hindrance of conversion, is, Those counterfeit graces, or half-conversion, which are like to true graces, but are not them, and so do not bring over the soul to God, but strengthen the false hopes, which we mentioned before. There is somewhat in the heart of an unconverted man, which is like in his eyes to true conversion. Some fears and accusation of conscience he may have, and some change thereupon : he may be convinced of his sin and misery, and see the necessity of another course, and hereupon may change his company, and betake himself to many duties, and break off many of his former sins, and seem to himself to be truly converted, and glory in this as long as he liveth, and think verily that he is indeed a converted man. He may know the very time, the book, the sermon, the words that were the means of doing this work upon his

soul, and therefore think that it is truly done. He may remember so great change that was made on him, that he may confidently conclude that it was a saving change; and yet it may be but common preparation, or mere terrors or convictions, or some common works, which many that perish, partake of. He may have hereupon somewhat that in his eye is like to every grace of the Spirit, and therefore think that these are they indeed; and this is a fearful, deceiving state, and mightily quieteth men in a miserable condition; when these common gifts should be otherwise used.

*Direct.* 10. Take heed, therefore, of trusting to counterfeit graces, or superficial works that do not effectually convert the soul. Labour to discern by the light of the word of God, whether the work be savingly done or not; how you may discern it, I have told you before. If God be set up highest in your souls, and brought nearest to your hearts, and your hopes are set upon the life to come, and all things in this world seem vain to you in comparison of it; if sin be bitter to you, and Christ, and grace, and holiness be sweet, then you may conclude that it is a saving work, but otherwise not. And therefore rest not in common works.

*Hindrance* 11. Another hindrance, is, When men live among strong temptations, and occasions of sin; as when they depend upon some great men, or parents, or other friends that are enemies to godliness, and would undo them if they should follow it; or when they are so engaged in a course of sin, that they cannot break it off without their worldly undoing or suffering; when their credit or their gain depends upon it. As the oppressor liveth by oppression, and the ale-seller liveth by the sins of drunkards, or tippling, idle companions, and because they think this gain is sweet, therefore they will not leave the sin. As Acts xix. 24, 25. because Demetrius and the rest of the craftsmen had their wealth and living by making shrines for the idol Diana, therefore they stirred up the people against the Gospel and the preachers of it, that would take down the idol that caused their commodity. In like manner, when men that are addicted to drunkenness will live among such company, or temptations, as will draw them to it: when lustful persons will live among those that do provoke or tempt them: when ignorant, unresolved persons live among those that

speaking ill of godliness, it is a hard thing to be converted under these temptations; especially if men wilfully cast themselves upon them.

*Direct.* 11. Fly therefore the occasions and appearances of evil. If you would not be drowned, what do you so near the water-side? If you would not be wounded, why do you thrust yourselves among your enemies? If you would escape the hook, meddle not with the bait: walk not among the lime-twigs if you would not be entangled. You may fly from temptation, and yet resist the devil, and make him fly. Be not too confident of your own strength; consider whether it be safe to die in your sin and ungodliness? If not, why should you live in it? And if you may not live in it, why should you commit it? If you cannot digest it when it is down, but it must up again by repentance, or you perish, why then should you let it down? If you may not let it down, what reason have you to be tasting it? And if you may not take it, why should you once look upon it, to entice your taste? And if you may not look on, why should you think on it, and make your own fancy to be your tempter. Present and strong temptations have shaken those that seemed to be cedars; therefore take heed of them; for they may much more hinder the conversion of the impenitent, and such difficulties may easily block up the way of life to you.

*Hindrance* 12. Another common hindrance of conversion, is, The scandalous lives of the professors of religion; when those that seem godly, or indeed are so, shall fall into division among themselves, and withdraw from each other, and censure one another, and cry out against one another as deceived; when the common people see so many religions, as they think, and so many several minds and ways, they think it is as good to be of none, as to venture among so many, where they are not sure to hit on the right; and it maketh them question all, when they see so many that they know not which to own. When they see men change their opinions, which awhile ago they seemed so zealous for, this makes them think that the rest may be as uncertain as these. And thus we have seen by sad experience in these times, that many have been kept off from the approving, and practice of a godly life, because of the unhappy differences that are among us. And, alas! when they see one that seemed



religious to be worldly, and another to fall into this or that sin, this makes them think that religion is but hypocrisy, and themselves are already in as good a condition as the godly are.

*Direct.* 12. I will not excuse the sins of any. Offence must come, but woe to him by whom it comes. If they be godly, their profession doth aggravate it, and therefore I do not intend to extenuate it. But yet, as I must needs say, that the malice of the ungodly doth frequently make even holiness to be a crime, and virtue itself to be the greatest vice, and those to be faults that are really none, and those to be common that are seldom, and but the case of very few; and those to be great that are not so. So I must needs tell you, that there is no sufficient reason in the faults, and divisions of those that are religious to dissuade any from religion, or excuse them in their sin, or sinful neglect of their own salvation, For consider these things following.

(1.) It is not men's lives that are any disgrace to the word of God, any more than it is a dishonour to the sun that some men are blind, or others wilfully abuse his light. Will you fall a railing at the sun, because a thief may steal by the light of it, or a murderer may kill men by the light of it? or some men may miss their way? This is not long of it, but of themselves. (2.) Yea, consider that it is for want of being more religious that men are so bad, and not because they are religious. Can you prove that ever religion did teach men to be bad? Doth the word of God teach men to be worldly, to be proud, to divide the church, and abuse one another? You know it doth not: nay, you know that it forbiddeth and condemneth all this; and that no one in the world hath said and done so much against these sins as God hath done. And no religion is so much against them as the Christian religion. And is it not an abuse beyond all modesty then, to think ill of the word of God, or of his way, because men offend against it, and forsake it? To accuse the law, because men break it? To wrong God because others have wronged him? (3.) Consider, that the sins of others will be no excuse to you. Their fall should be your warnings, and not your hardening. Will God pardon or save without repentance and faith, because some that seemed religious have miscarried? If they are wicked while

they seem religious, they and you, if you so continue, shall be damned together. But if they rise by repentance, and hate and forsake the sins which they did fall into, and you stumble upon them, and will not rise with them, but quarrel with religion, because of their falls, they shall be pardoned, and you shall perish. I tell thee, man, if all the world should fall from God, he will not therefore change his law, nor admit one unconverted sinner into heaven. Do you think to be saved without holiness, because some men counterfeit holiness that have it not? Methinks this should cast you into greater terrors, and make you think with yourselves how much you have yet to do, that must go further, and be better than any hypocrite was, before you can have any durable hopes of salvation. If you will have any part in God, you must stick to him, though all men else should forsake him, and not forsake him, because you think that others do so that seemed to stick to him. (4.) Consider also, that as to the divisions that offend you, it is not every difference in judgment or practice that makes a new religion. While we are here we shall know but in part, and therefore shall differ in part, but as long as we all agree in the fundamentals, and live to God, we are of one religion, for all our differences. (5.) And can you think that it will excuse you to be of no religion, because that other men are of a wrong religion? Will you sit still and let heaven go, because some men have missed the way to it? Do you think that this is a reasonable conclusion? Surely they that would fain know the way if they could, and are diligent to seek it, are likelier to be accepted, though they fall into many errors, than those that mind it not, but prefer the things of the world before it. (6.) The more bye ways there be, the more need have you to look about you, and see that you miss not the way yourselves. Salvation is not a matter that we can spare, and therefore the difficulty must make us more diligent, and not more negligent. 7. Among all the religions and opinions in the world, God hath not left you at a loss, he hath given you his word to tell you which is the right, and many means to understand it. So that if proud and careless men will err, it followeth not that therefore the humble and diligent may not be certain, which way is the right. Go you to the Scripture with an humble reverence, willing to know

the will of God, that you may do it, and take the helps that you may have from ministers and private Christians, and shew not by your neglect that you despise the word of God, and your salvation, and then you shall have no cause to complain that you cannot find the right religion, and not hit the way to heaven, because there are so many opinions. (8.) I pray you consider of that which I have often answered you to this objection. Will you but faithfully practise that which all, or almost all these different parties are agreed in? If not, then make not their differences any more a pretence for your ungodliness. If you will, then consider, whether they be not all agreed of the necessity of conversion and a holy life. Will they not all acknowledge that there is no salvation without sanctification and newness of life? Let their agreement then move you, and do not for shame neglect so great and necessary a thing, which is owned by them all, who differ much in other things.

*Hindrance* 13. The next hindrance of conversion, is, The ill education of children: when they are trained up in ignorance, or kept unacquainted with the truths of God till they are grown hardened in their evil way; especially when they are taught from their childhood to think hardly of godliness, and speak reproachfully of it, and hear nothing of the godly, but by slander or contempt. That which people receive in their youth, doth usually possess them all their days: they receive it with more advantage, when they are most teachable and tractable: and when they receive it from parents, and those that have the greatest interest in their affections, and the most absolute rule over them. And therefore we see that most of the world are such as they were taught in their childhood to be: and it is hard to change them from the way that they were brought up in.

*Direct.* 13. O, you that have children, remember they are Christ's. (1.) If you are Christians, both you and yours are devoted to God: will you be so forward to devote them to God in baptism, and will you rob him afterwards of his own; and break these covenants, and, contrary to your own promises, will you hinder them from the knowledge and fear of God? O what desperate hypocrisy and wickedness is this? Will you come here in the face of the congregation, and consecrate and offer your children to Christ, and when

you have done, will you keep them from the way of Christ, and make them believe that godliness is more ado than needs, and that holiness is but foolish preciseness? Will you here undertake to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and when you have done, never once instruct them in his fear, nor persuade them to a holy life, nor restrain them from sin, but rather teach them to rail, and curse, and swear, and be carnal? O cruel wretches that dare thus murder your children's souls! To murder the body is an heinous sin, yea, though it were the body of an enemy; but to murder the soul, yea, and the soul of a child, and so to be guilty of their eternal damnation; what greater sin can you commit? O what a horror it will be to you to see your own children in eternal flames by your procurement; and to hear them there cry out against you, and say, you hardened them in evil, you discouraged them from good. You gave them ill examples, you used to rail, curse and swear before them: you took no pains to convince them of their natural sin and misery; and to get them to Christ that they might be healed by him. O pity your poor children, and do not hinder them from that glory that is offered them: if the devil be against their salvation, be not you so too. It is more excusable in the devil himself to seek to destroy the souls of your children, than it is in their own parents to do it: for nature and Christianity doth bind them to do otherwise. If you settle them in an ignorant, carnal course, they will remember it as long as they live; and if you possess them with hard thoughts of the holy ways of God, they will make this an argument against us, whenever we would seek to reform and convert them. Do we not hear it from them daily? Our fathers, say they, taught us otherwise, and we hope they are saved, and therefore we will venture to do as they did: so that it is the false conceits that you put into their minds in childhood, which ministers have to encounter with all their days after. The devil hath instruments enough to seek your children's damnation besides you: be not you his instruments as ever you would not lie with them in everlasting misery; take some more pity on yourselves and them. You could not find in your hearts to dash your children against the stones, or cut their throats, and if you should, the world would ring of

your wickedness, and the law of the land would deservedly put you to a painful death; and will you do them a greater mischief? Will you blind them, and keep them off from Christ and godliness? And will you embolden them in the way of sin, and help them to damnation? God forbid. But alas! they that have no more pity on their own souls, but to use them thus, what wonder if they have no more pity of others.

(2.) The next part of my Direction, therefore, is to you that have been brought up in ignorance and ungodliness from your youth. O look about you while you have time and means. If your parents have been false to you, be not false to God and your souls. If your parents have betrayed your souls, do not you betray your own. They kept you in ignorance because they were ignorant themselves; they bred you up in worldliness and ungodliness, because they were worldly and ungodly themselves; they spoke against holiness, because they knew it not, but were themselves unholy: but you have one that hath more interest in you than your parents, that calls to you for your conversion. Hearken to him if all the world should gainsay it: do not care as little for your own souls as your parents cared for them: do not take on you, even to love your parents so well as to follow them to damnation; their company will not make hell any easier to you. Should not the love of your heavenly Father do more to draw you to heaven, than the love of your parents to draw you to hell? O hearken then to God and to his word, though all the world should say against it.

*Hindrance 14.* Another hindrance of conversion, is, Striving against the Spirit of grace. When God would illuminate a sinner, and he is unwilling to see, when God would take off a sinner from his lusts and evil ways, and he is loath to be taken off; God sheweth him his sin to humble him, and he is unwilling to be humbled, but striveth against the Spirit, and runneth into worldly businesses, or merry company, or turneth his thoughts to other things. As Christ said to the Jews, "How oft would I have gathered you, but you would not?" so he may say to many a sinner, How oft did I shew thee a better way, and thou wouldst not walk in it; how oft did I shew thee the sinfulness and misery of thy

estate, and thou wouldst not come off from it. When men fight against Christ, and purposely wink because they hate the light that would reform them, and when they strive against the Spirit that would convert them, what wonder if they be unconverted !

*Direct.* 14. If ever you would be converted, yield to the Spirit of God that would convert you. It is his office to sanctify all that shall be saved : be not you unwilling to be sanctified by him. If you refuse help when it is offered you, you may justly be left helpless and perish for want of that which you did despise. You are baptized into the name of the Holy Ghost, by which you have professed to take him for your Sanctifier, and are you now unwilling to be sanctified by him ? And will you now strive against him when you are so solemnly engaged to him ? You cannot be saved unless you be sanctified, and you cannot be sanctified unless it be done by the Holy Ghost, whom you now resist. O how easily and prosperously doth the work go on, when the Spirit of God assisteth, and how impossible is it to be done without him ! They that would have a prosperous voyage will take wind and tide, and not be so foolish as to set against them when they stand to their advantage : he that would have health will not abuse the physician, and drive him away from him. O take heed how you use the Spirit of God if ever you would be converted !

*Hindrance* 15. Another hindrance of conversion, is, Unresolvedness and half-purposes ; when men will hang wavering between God and the world ; and though the light be never so clear to convince them, yet they will not be persuaded to resolve. “ A double-minded man,” saith James, “ is unstable in all his ways <sup>9</sup>.” O how many shall perish for want of resolution ! They have been convinced that they must be changed or else they are undone, and yet they would not resolve : they have long been inclining to a better course, and had some thoughts of it, but the world hindereth, or friends hinder, or the flesh hindereth, and they will not resolve ; and thus they hang loose from God, and never unfeignedly resign up themselves to him, till either God in judgment leave them to themselves, or death and hell do find them unresolved.

<sup>9</sup> James i. 8.

*Direct.* 15. If you would be converted and saved, do not stand wavering, but resolve, and presently turn to God. If it were a doubtful business, I would not persuade you to do it rashly, or if there were any danger to your souls in resolving, then I would say no more. But when it is a case that should be beyond all dispute with men of reason, why should you stand staggering, as if it were a doubtful case? What a horrible shame is it to be unresolved whether God or the world should have your hearts? Were it not a disgrace to that man's understanding that were unresolved whether gold or dung were better? or whether a bed of thorns, or a feather-bed were the easier? or whether the sun or a clod of earth were the more light and glorious? It is a far greater shame for a man to be unresolved, whether it be God or the world that must make him happy, and that should have his heart, and whether a life of sin or holiness be the better. What! have you read Scripture, and heard sermons so long, and yet are you unresolved of this? Nay, have you common reason, and do you believe that there is a God, and a world to come, and yet are you unresolved whether you must be godly or not? I say to you, as Elias did to Israel, "How long halt ye between two opinions? If God be God follow him, if Baal be God follow him<sup>r</sup>." If it be better to be damned than leave your sins, then keep them, and the curse of God with them. But if it be better to deny your flesh, than to suffer everlastingly the wrath of God, then away with your iniquities, and meddle with them no more; if it be better to live in an alehouse awhile, than in heaven for ever, then drink on and spare not; but if it be not, why do you not consider and come away. If God and godliness be not better than the world and wickedness, then take your course; but if they be, why do you stand wavering, and do not resolve to be the people of God with all your hearts? O what a blind and miserable creature is a wicked man, that such matters as these should seem doubtful to him! or that he should yet be unresolved of them! What, unresolved whether it be best to go to heaven, or not! and whether it be best to be damned, or not! And all this for the love of a stinking unprofitable lust! If this be wisdom, what then is folly?

<sup>r</sup> 1 Kings xviii. 21.

*Hindrance* 16. Another hindrance of conversion, is, Delay. When men are resolved that they must be converted or condemned, and purpose to let go sin, and to take another course, yet they delay and put off the time. They would yet have a little more of the pleasure of their sin before they part with it. Yet they cannot spare it, but shortly they will do it. They are yet young, and they hope they have daylight, and time enough before them. They are yet in health, and therefore they hope there is no such haste, but they may have time to think on it. Because God will receive a sinner whensoever he returneth, they think they may stay a little longer. And thus some grow hardened by custom in their sin, and others are cut off while they are purposing to return; and many thousand souls are lost for ever that once were purposed to have turned to God, and all because they delayed their return; as the sluggard saith, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber\*," so saith the sinner, yet I may sin a little while, till they have sinned themselves into a reprobate sense, or provoked God to leave them to themselves, and so they must perish everlastingly by their delay.

*Direct.* 16. O consider, therefore, sinners, that conversion is not a work to be delayed. Would a man lie under the wrath and curse of God one day, that knew what it is? Methinks he should not. Are you loath to come out of the bondage of the devil? Why, your delay doth shew that your heart is false, and that you be not willing truly to be converted. He that is loath to leave his sin this day or hour, would never leave it, if he knew how to keep it: if he did not love it, he would be willing to be rid of it without delay. He that loveth God, had rather return and be reconciled to him, and partake of the joy of his Spirit to-day, than to-morrow. Did you but know what God is, you would not delay your conversion to him. Did you but know what the glory is that he offereth you, you would not delay to make sure of it any longer. Did you but see the nature of sin, and know the miserable effects of it, O how hastily would you endeavour to be rid of it! If you had so many serpents or toads in your bosoms, you would not say, I will cast them out to-morrow, but how quickly would you shake them from you? If you

\* Prov. vi. 10. xxiv. 33.



had but felt the sting of sin, it would appear another matter to you than now it doth. It is one kind of face that sin hath in an alehouse, or in the height of your filthy lust, or in the seeming gain of your covetous practices; and it is another kind of face that it hath when God will reckon for it with the guilty soul. Should a man trifle in such a course, wherein, if he die, he is lost for ever? Why, poor, wretched sinner, how long wilt thou delay? And why wilt thou delay? Wilt thou delay till death shall seize upon thee, and thou drop into hell before thou art aware? Dost thou not know that sin gets advantage by thy delay? God hath not promised thee that ever his Spirit shall be offered to thee more; if thou refuse his assistance, and delay thy conversion but one day longer. And woe be to thee if he depart from thee<sup>1</sup>! When people will have none of God, nor will hearken to his voice, he often giveth them up to their own heart's lusts, to walk in their own counsels<sup>2</sup>." O unworthy wretch! if thou hadst any of the ingenuity of a Christian within thy breast, thou wouldst say, 'I have abused Christ and his grace so long, that I am utterly ashamed of it, and will abuse him no more; I have too long slighted Christ already, and too long hearkened to his enemy's voice. If thy dead heart were but well awakened to consider and feel thy own condition, thou wouldst be quickly affrighted out of thy delay, and run as hastily from thy state of sin, as thou wouldst out of a house that were all on fire over thy head, or out of a boat that were sinking under thee. What, hast thou not yet served the devil long enough? Hast thou not yet sufficiently abused Christ, not oft enough rejected the grace of God? Hast thou not yet wallowed long enough in the filth of sin? But must thou needs have more of it? Hast thou not yet done enough to the destruction of thy soul? Nor drunk in enough of that deadly poison, nor stabbed thyself sufficiently by thy wickedness, but thou must needs have more? Will sin come up easier, when it is deeper rooted? And canst thou more easily be converted, when thou hast driven away the Spirit of God that should convert thee? Wilt thou travel out of thy way till night, before thou wilt turn back again? And wilt thou drive the nail yet faster to the head, which thou knowest must be drawn out again? O be not wilfully

<sup>1</sup> Hos. ix. 12. Jer. vi. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Psal. lxxxi. 11, 12.

befooled by sin. Wilt thou be converted, or wilt thou not? If not, thou art a lost man. If thou know thou must, why not to-day rather than to-morrow? What reason have you for any longer delay? Is a state of sin, or a state of grace better? If sin be better, keep it, and make the best of it: but if grace, and holiness, and happiness be better, why then should you delay? If you were sick you would not care how soon you were well: and if you had a bone broken, you care not how soon it were set; and when your souls are in a state of sin and misery, are you afraid of being safe and happy too soon? Remember another day, that a day, and many a day of grace thou hadst; and if thou lose this day, thou mayst thank thyself, if thou lose thy soul, and if thou never have another day like this. “To-day, whilst it is called to-day, therefore, hear his voice, and harden not your hearts\*.” When David thought of his ways, he made haste and delayed not to turn to God, and keep his precepts, Psal. cxix. 60. as was aforesaid.

*Hindrance 17.* Another great hindrance of conversion, is, When good beginnings are not followed on, but suffered to die and come to nothing before they bring men over to God. Commonly preparing works of grace go before thorough sanctifying works; and men have many convictions, and half-reformations, and troubles of mind, before they come to close with Christ upon the terms that he is offered. These common preparatory works are the way to more: if men would but cherish these, and follow them on, and improve the light and motions which they have, they know not what a blessed issue they might see: but when they will forget the truth that once did move them, and lose the purposes that once they had, and turn back again to the sins they were in before; no wonder if these be left in their iniquities. Is not this the case of you that hear me this day? You have been convinced that God and your souls must be regarded, whatsoever else be neglected; and did you not thereupon begin to pray, and to use means, and take the helps in public and private that are necessary for your salvation? And have not some of you fallen into company that have taken you off by foolish cavils or vain objections, and evil examples, and enticing you to sin? And have not

\* Heb. iii. 7, 8.

others of you grown cold, and lost your feeling, as if you were not the same men, and had never heard or felt such things? And others of you turned to this present world, and choked the word with the cares of this life? And so the hopeful beginnings that you once had, are turned to a relapse into your old condition.

*Direct.* 17. If there be any such sinners that hear me this day, (as I fear there be too many,) consider whence you are fallen, and be zealous and amend<sup>y</sup>. Are you turned with “the dog to his vomit, and with the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire<sup>z</sup>?” What! Do you “look back when you had put your hand to the plough of God<sup>a</sup>?” Did Christ give you any cause to repent of his service, or to forsake him? Have you found indeed that the devil is the better master, and that the way of sin is the better way, and the wages of sin the better wages? What! did the thoughts of everlasting life once move you, and will they not move you now? Is heaven become as no heaven to you, and God as no God, and Christ as no Christ, and the promises as no promises? And are you grown abler to resist the terrors of the Lord? O poor souls, that you did but know the misery of apostates! The Lord hath professed, that “if any draw back, his soul shall have no pleasure in him<sup>b</sup>.” And they that draw back, shall find they do it to their own perdition; when they should have “believed and persevered to the saving of their souls<sup>c</sup>.” There are none of all the damned more miserable than they that were sometimes fair for heaven, and did once begin to look after godliness; for the “latter end of these men is worse than their beginning<sup>d</sup>.” Alas! how sad will it be to see the faces of such among the wicked and condemned at the last, and to think that once we saw the faces of these men among the godly, and once they seemed to set themselves for heaven, and are they fallen off to this! And is this the end of them? In the name of God, sirs, I warn and charge every one of you that ever had a thought of returning to God, and giving up yourselves to a holy life, that you presently bethink you, what is gone with these thoughts and purposes, and why did you turn from these beginnings? What reason had you for it? And what

<sup>y</sup> Rev. iii. 19.

<sup>z</sup> 2 Pet. ii. 22.

<sup>a</sup> Luke ix. 62.

<sup>b</sup> Heb. x. 38.

<sup>c</sup> Ver. 39.

<sup>d</sup> 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21.

cause hath Christ given you? What! will the world now be a faster friend to you than before? And will you now continue with it, and never die? Or can you better be without God and his grace than before? O be awakened from this desperate folly, and once again renew your former resolutions, and consider whether you are not nearer eternity than you were; and have not as much need of Christ as ever? And sleep not on till hell awake you.

*Hindrance* 18. The next hindrance of conversion to be mentioned, is, A misunderstanding of Scripture, and erroneous thoughts of the ways of God. If error possess the mind, it will keep out grace from possessing the heart, so far as the error prevaieth. I shall instance in some few particulars.

(1.) Some men know not what true grace or conversion is, and therefore think they have it when they have none, and do not set themselves to look after it. They think that it is but to forsake some gross sins, and to use some outward service of God, and do no one any wrong, and then they think they have true conversion; because they have turned from many sins that once they lived in. But these must know, that conversion is the withdrawing of the soul from the world, and from carnal self, and the devoting of ourselves, and all that we have to God. If you should be never so zealous in forms, and take up never so strict principles, and stick to the strictest party; this is no proof of true conversion, if your souls do not cleave to God, as your portion, and to Christ as the only way to God.

(2.) Some there be that do not think there is any such thing as saving grace, or true conversion in the world; because they have none themselves, they do not think that any one else hath. When they hear of a hope and heart in heaven, and of loving God above all creatures, they do not think that any one doth reach to it, but that men merely talk of such things, which they never had experience of. But these men must know, that it is an arrogant madness to contradict the scope of the word of God, and the common experience of the best men in the world; and all because they are so bad themselves. Doth God talk so much of sanctifying his people, and putting the Spirit of Jesus into their hearts, and ruling them, and dwelling in them, and crucify-

ing the world to them, and “purifying a peculiar people to himself, that are zealous of good works<sup>e</sup>; and now dare they say there is no such thing? Whether is God or they to be believed? What! hath Christ died to procure it, and is it the office of the Holy Ghost to work it, and now is there no such thing? Are the word, and ministers, and all the ordinances to that end, and now is there no such thing? God will make them know that such a thing was offered once to them, and such a thing as grace and a heavenly life were necessary to their salvation. And if they will not believe the experience of the saints, nor will see the graces of God, as they shine in the conversation of his people, they shall be forced one day to see, and be ashamed.

(3.) Others there be that think holiness is but needless preciseness; and that to meditate on God and heaven, and make it our main business, is but more ado than needs; and that this is but to be godly overmuch, and God will accept less; and this is the way even to drive men beside themselves.

*Answ.* Though I have formerly answered this objection, yet because it here again falls in my way, I shall distinctly answer it in these particulars.

*Quest.* 1. Tell me truly, do you think that God or you are fitter to be judges of what is necessary to the salvation of a sinner? Doth God command it? and dare you say it is more ado than needs? Why, what is this, but plainly to say, that God hath set us upon a needless work? Yea, what is it but to say, you are wiser than he? There is no master so foolish and unmerciful, as will set his servant to pick straws, and labour to no purpose: and will you impute such unmerciful folly to God? Dare you say he makes you more ado than needs?

*Quest.* 2. And then I ask, Is it more ado than Scripture doth require? Doth not the word of God make it necessary, which you call unnecessary? Read and judge.—“Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness<sup>f</sup>.” “The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force<sup>g</sup>.” “Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, shall

<sup>e</sup> Tit. ii. 14.

<sup>f</sup> Matt. vi. 19, 20, 23.

<sup>g</sup> Matt. xi. 12.

seek to enter in, and shall not be able<sup>b</sup>.” “Labour not for the food which perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life<sup>i</sup>.” “See then that ye walk circumspectly, redeeming the time<sup>k</sup>.” “What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness<sup>l</sup>?” And an hundred more such places may be mentioned. So that if it be an error to require so much ado for our salvation, it is God himself that is the cause of it. And who is most likely to be in the right? The Lord that made you, or such silly, ignorant worms as you? You scarce know good from bad; and will you take on you to be wiser than God, and to control his law?

*Quest. 3.* Do you think indeed in your consciences, that a man can do too much for heaven, (as long as he doth but what God bids him,) and that he can be at more cost and labour for it, than it is worth? Is that man worthy or meet to see the face of God in glory, that thinks it not worth his utmost diligence? Do you set so much by your labour, or do you set so light by God and glory, as to think the everlasting enjoyment of it to be unworthy of your pains?

*Quest. 4.* Do you think there ever was a man that got well to heaven, that repented of coming thither at so dear a rate; or that was there of your mind, that this godliness is more ado than needs? If we could but speak with one of the glorified saints that see the face of God, and put the case to him, which is the wiser man, he that doth all that he can to be saved, or he that saith what needs all this ado? which side do you think he would be on? Cannot you easily conjecture?

*Quest. 5.* Is Christ, or the apostles, or any of the servants of God of your mind? Judge by their conversations whether they thought it more ado than needs. The best of his saints never had so much grace but they longed for more; they never were so holy, but they longed to be better; and do you think that you are wiser than all they, and that neither prophets, apostles, nor any saints of God did know what they did?

*Quest. 6.* What is it that you think is so painful a life as to be too much for God and heaven? Do you know what you talk of? Why, it is the only joyful life on earth. It is

<sup>a</sup> Luke xiii. 24.

<sup>i</sup> John vi. 27.

<sup>k</sup> Eph. v. 15.

<sup>l</sup> 2 Pet. iii. 11.

more a receiving from God, than a giving to him. It is an employment that is suited both to the new nature of the saints, and to their necessity and good. What is holiness but a living in the love of God and joy of the Holy Ghost, and hope of the life to come, and a daily communion with God in the Spirit, in the use of his holy ordinances? To hear of his love, and the promise of his glory, and the pardon of our sins, and to beg of him what we want, and thank and praise him for what we have received? And do you think this is so tedious a life? Is it a toil to you to eat and drink of the best, when your bodies do require it? Or to rest when you are weary? Or to love your dearest friend, and to be in his company? If not, why should we think it a toil to live in the love of God, and in holy communion with him in his service?

*Quest. 7.* And is it not a certain mark of a graceless heart to think that this is such a grievous work? Sure that soul is void of the love of God, that thinks it a grievous thing to love him. A man that hates his wife, and loveth harlots, will say, 'I cannot love her, nor abide to dwell with her;' but if he loved her he would think otherwise. If you did not hate God you would not think it so grievous to live in the love of him, and to be much in his holy worship.

*Quest. 8.* Do you desire to come to heaven, or not? If not, then remember, if you are shut out, it is by your own consent. If you would come thither, then do you not know that all your employment there must be such as this, and much more holy and perfect than this? Will you account heaven itself grievous? And the praises of God there, to be more ado than needs? If not, how dare you say so of a far lower degree which we have in this life? If you are weary of this little, how weary would you be of heaven?

*Quest. 9.* I pray you tell me, do you think indeed that any man on earth is as good as he should be? Do you not know, that he that is best is too bad; and he that doth most comes unspeakably too short of what he should do? And dare you say then, that this is more ado than needs? Why if you had spoken to Peter or Paul, or the holiest man that ever lived, he would have rather complained that he could be no better, and cried out, 'O that I were more holy, and could be more taken up in the love of God, alas! I fall ex-



ceedingly short of what is my duty.' And shall such sinners as we are, yea, some of the vilest sinners, say, that this is more ado than needs? Why, thou proud, insensible wretch, dost thou no better know thy own needs than so? Doth not thy soul need this, and more than this? What, darest thou justify thyself in thy ungodliness, and judge of godliness as a needless thing?

*Quest. 10.* Canst thou tell me how long thou wilt be of that mind? When thou liest a dying wilt thou then think that holiness was more ado than needs? When thou seest that the world hath left thee, and that thou art presently to appear before the Lord, speak as thou thinkest, man, hadst thou not rather then be found in the case of the holiest and most diligent saints on earth, than in the case of the careless, proud, or carnal? Will holy duty, or the neglect and deriding of it, be then more comfortable? Wouldst thou not then change states with one of those that did the most for God, and for their souls, and wouldst thou not say with Balaam, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be as his?"

*Quest. 11.* What is it, do you think that is worth a man's pains and care, if God and everlasting glory be not? Is there any thing of greater worth? Man was not made for nothing, and idleness is no delight to him. Something he would be doing and looking after, and something he expects to make him happy, and that which he takes for his happiness, he cannot choose but think it worth all his pains. And have you found out any thing that is better than heaven? Will this world last longer? Or stand you in greater stead at last? Alas, that we should be put to ask or answer such questions as these! Why, sirs, either heaven or earth must have your love, and care and labour, and which do you think doth more deserve it? You can talk of the world from day to day, and you can work and toil for the world all the year long, and yet you never say it is more ado than needs. If your servant labour harder for you one day than God's servants do for him in a week, you will not tell him that he doth more than needs. Foolish worldlings, let me deal plainly with you, and tell you to your faces, it is you that make more ado than needs. Is the world worth all this care



and stir that you make about it? Is it worth your thoughts and unwearied diligences, and is it worth the venturing of your salvation to obtain it? I tell you it is not, and you partly know yourselves it is not. Why, where are your wits, to toil yourselves, all your lives for these trifles; and to tell them that labour for salvation, that they make more ado than needs? Well, hearken of the end, and then you shall see whether it be labour for heaven or for earth, that will be repented of. If you know not now, you shall shortly know it.

*Quest.* 12. One question more I shall yet put to you. Do you think the pains of duty to be greater than the pains of hell? If you do not, should not we choose the lesser to escape the greater? If you had not the love of God to make you delight in his service, methinks you should have that love of yourselves to make you fear his everlasting wrath. Never flatter yourselves with other thoughts. Believe it, if you will needs take it for a pain which should be your pleasure, you must undergo the pain of an unfeignedly holy life, or the pain of hell, choose you whether.

(4.) Another of their errors that hindereth conversion, is, That their own good meanings, and praying, and good works will make God amends for their sins, and after all will procure their acceptance with God. And if these will not do, they think the case is hard, for there is nothing else for us to do. And so they see not the evil of their own meanings and good works, and how much sin is in them to be wailed; nor do they see the need of a Christ in all, nor the need of a thorough change of their condition, that they may be made the justified sons of God, and have new hearts and new conversations. But they think while they live to the world and the flesh, to make up all and procure acceptance by good meaning, and good praying, and good works. I would not be misunderstood, as if I were speaking against that which is truly good in any. But I would desire these people well to consider; 1. That the meanings and works of unconverted men are not truly and properly good; but it is the end that denominateth the work; and seeing no unconverted man doth make God his ultimate end, therefore he hath properly no good meaning, nor work; for he meaneth all ultimately for his carnal self, for the flesh, and for the world, and for these are his works. As the true Chris-

tian doth make his worldly labour to be ultimately for God; so doth the ungodly make his seeming service of God to be ultimately for his flesh. 2. You should consider that all your good works must have a pardon themselves, and therefore cannot satisfy for your sins. 3. That if your works were perfectly good without any blemish, yet could they not satisfy for that sin which is past, but that must be expected only from the blood of Christ. It is, therefore, a lamentable case to hear many of the grossly ignorant people to talk of all their good meanings and praying, as if their confidence were all in these, while they make no mention of the blood of a Redeemer; or feel not the need of it; nor what it is that Christ hath done for them, nor how much they are beholden to him. 4. It is no patching up of your old unregenerate state, that will serve turn for your salvation, but you must be wholly made new. "He that is in Christ is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things have become new." It is not forsaking this or that sin, or falling to your prayers, that will serve turn; but you must have new hearts, and new ends, and a new conversation, and the main business and drift of your lives must be new. Those hearts that were set on the world before must be set on God; and those desires that run to the pleasures of the flesh, must run out after the pleasing of God. I say, it is not patching up the old condition, but all must be new.

(5.) Another error that hindereth conversion, is, The misunderstanding of those Scriptures that promise salvation to some particular graces or duties. As because the Scripture saith, "whosoever believeth in him shall not perish," therefore they say that they truly believe; and, therefore, though they have not such holiness of life, yet God hath promised them salvation. So, also, where it is said, that "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved," therefore they say, we call on the name of the Lord, and so shall be saved, though we be not converted, nor so holy as you require.

To these men I have these several things to say for the cure of this dangerous error.

1. Poor ignorant souls, they talk of they know not what: and suffer themselves to be deceived by words which

they understand not. If they did but know well what faith is, and what calling upon God is, they would never be troubled with this objection. To believe in Christ, is to believe him to be the Saviour of the church, to save them from their sins, and heartily to consent that he shall be so to us, to save us from our sins; and can you believe in him as a Saviour, and yet be unwilling to be saved by him? Sin is the mischief from which he saveth you, and conversion is one half of his saving work; and can you then say you believe, and therefore need not be converted? Why you may as well say, 'I take such a man for my physician, and I trust in him for a cure, and therefore I need not be cured.' Is not this nonsense, or a contradiction? And what is it better, to say, 'I believe in Christ as my Saviour, that is, to save me from my sins, and therefore I may be saved, though I be not saved from my sins.' These are the wise reasonings that many of our self-conceited hearers make use of to delude themselves and other men. And the very nature of faith is to take Christ as Christ, and as he is offered in the Gospel. As our teacher to guide us in the way of holiness, and as our king to rule us, as well as a sacrifice for our sins. And how can he do this for us, if we will not be converted?

2. Moreover, faith in Jesus Christ is always annexed to a belief in God the Father. "If you believe in God, believe also in me<sup>o</sup>." "This is life eternal to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent<sup>p</sup>." Now to believe in God, is to take him for our Maker, that hath absolute right in us, and absolute power over us, whom we must obey before all, and our happiness and chief good, whom we must love and desire above all. And can this be done without conversion?

3. To believe in Christ is ever accompanied with believing in the Holy Ghost, which is the receiving him to be our sanctifier; and can you do this, and yet be unconverted?

4. By this much that hath been said, you may perceive that conversion and faith is in a sort one and the same thing; to be a true believer, and to be converted, is all one; for conversion is to make you true believers. And is it not then a wise kind of cavil to say, that if you believe, you

<sup>o</sup> John xiv. 1.

<sup>p</sup> John xvii. 3.

may be saved without conversion? As much as to say, if I have the sunshine I may see without light; or if I have a soul, I need not life or understanding. I tell you there is no such thing as true faith without conversion.

5. Moreover, where true faith is, all other saving graces do accompany it; there is ever repentance, hope, love, humility, and a heavenly mind. So that it is no true faith which is separated from these, and which the ungodly deceive themselves with, but an opinion, and a mere ungrounded presumption.

(6.) Another error which hindereth men's conversion, is, Some false apprehensions of the doctrine of God's eternal decree of election or predestination; from which many desperate consequences are raised by them, to the deceiving of their own souls: and this I find abundance among us in this country deluded by; how the devil hath brought it to pass, I know not. They have many of them learned this foolish pretence; if God hath chosen us we shall be saved, and if he hath not, we shall not, whatsoever we do: no diligence will save a man that is not elected, and "it is not in him that willeth, nor in him that runneth, but in God that sheweth mercy." Those that God will save, shall be saved, whatsoever they be; and those that he will damn, shall be damned; and no man can have grace except God give it him; for we can do nothing of ourselves: and upon these grounds they think they may be secure, and cast all upon God, as a matter that they have little to do with; and think that their endeavours are to little purpose, if they should make never so much ado.

*Ans.* One would think common reason should teach men to answer such silly cavils as these; but because I find so many ignorant souls do stick at them, I shall give you a full answer in these particulars.

1. God electeth no man to the end without means, but to the end and means together. All that he electeth to salvation, he electeth to conversion and sanctification, and all that he denieth conversion to, he denieth salvation to also.

2. If therefore you care whether you are saved or damned, it concerneth you to make both your calling and election sure, 2 Pet. i. 10. Make but your calling sure, and you need not make any question of your election. Make

sure that you are converted, and hold fast what you have, and then you may be certain you shall be saved. You begin at the wrong end, if you would first ask whether you are elected, that you may know whether you shall be saved; but you must first try whether you are converted and saved from the power of sin, and then you may certainly gather that you are elected and shall be saved from hell. Will you begin at the top of the ladder, and not the bottom? Did God ever damn any man that was truly converted and sanctified, because he was not elected? No such matter: prove any such thing if you can: nay, we can fully prove the contrary, for he hath promised salvation to all that are truly converted and sanctified, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." With abundance the like which have been named frequently to you. And can you prove that ever God saved any man that was not converted, because he was elected? No such matter; for he electeth all that are converted. And he hath resolved to save none but the converted, as is plain, John iii. 3. Heb. xii. 14. and many other places formerly quoted.

3. These reasonings therefore of yours, if they keep you from conversion and a heavenly life, are a certain mark that you are without the evidence of your election; and if you so live and die, that you are none of the elect. And, therefore, by such reasonings you do but shew your own misery, like a man that hath the plague that will glory in his botch: it should make your hearts to tremble to find so sad a mark as this upon your souls, that you have a heart that dares hold off from conversion, and fetch vain pretences from the decree of God.

4. Consider also, that God's decrees are not the cause of your impenitency or any sin; though his grace be the cause of men's conversion; he is the beginner of our good, but we are the causes of our own evil: all our grace is from him, but all our sin is from ourselves: he giveth us grace before we so much as willed it, and accordingly he decreed to give it before the foresight of our own willing it; but he causeth not our sin, but only permitteth us to cause it, and accordingly he decreed not the event of sin before he did foresee that we would be sinners, and our wills of themselves

would turn from God, and so proceed till grace recover us. You have no more ground therefore of excusing yourselves, because of the decree of God, than if he had made no such decree at all. What if I could foretel, from the obstinate wickedness of such a thief, or such a drunkard, that he will never be cured; is it long of me because I foreknew it? What if the prophet foretel Hazael, what cruelty he shall commit on the children of Israel, is the prophet therefore the cause of it?

5. Consider also, that if you knew not how to answer any objection of this nature, yet you have the very principles of reason and all religion to assure you that God is most wise, and good, and just, and holy. And, therefore, that he cannot be the author of your sin, nor shall you ever be able to fetch any just excuse from him. You might better have looked about you any where in the world for one to bear the blame of your miscarriages than the most wise and holy God. For nothing is more certain, than that the Infinite Good cannot be the author of evil; and whosoever it comes from, it cannot come from him. O how easily will God stop their mouths that excuse themselves by accusing him in so foul a cause!

6. And why do you not consider what madness it would be to argue about your bodies as you do about your souls. It is as true that God hath decreed how many years and days you shall live, as that he hath decreed whether you shall be saved. And I will refer it to your own reason, what you would think of the wit of that man that would give over eating and drinking, and say, 'God hath decreed how long I shall live, and if he have decreed that I shall live any longer, I shall, whether I eat and drink or not. And if he have not decreed that I shall live, it is not eating nor drinking that will keep me alive?' What would you say to such a man but this, that God decreeth no man to live, but by the ordinary means of living. And therefore ordinarily if you will give over eating and drinking, it is certain that you will give over living: and that God hath made no decree to save you alive whether you eat and drink, or not? So if a man should have a journey to go on life or death, what would you think of that man that will say, 'If God have decreed that I shall come to my journey's end, I shall do it,

whether I go or not; and if he have not decreed it, I shall never come thither, though I travel never so hard?' This is true; but if you hence infer, that therefore it is as good to sit still as go, you will shew your own folly, and not procure an excuse for your neglect. Why even so it is in our present case. If you will say, 'If God have elected me, I shall be saved; and if he have not, I shall not, whatsoever I do, and therefore I may spare my pains,' it is no wiser than to give over eating and drinking, because God hath decreed how long you shall live; or to give over travelling because God hath decreed whether you shall come to your journey's end. Will you be thus mad about the matters of your trades and callings in the world? Why do not all the weavers in this town then give over their trades, and say, 'If God have decreed that I shall live well and be rich, I shall be so whether I labour or not; and if he have not, my labour will not serve?' Why do you not give over ploughing and sowing, and say, 'If God have decreed that I shall have a crop, I shall have one, whether I plough and sow or not; and if he have not, I shall not, whatsoever I do?' If you will needs be fools, let it be about these worldly things, which you may better spare. Try your own opinion awhile, and give over eating and drinking and working; but do not befool yourselves about the one thing necessary, and play not the madman about the flames of hell; and do not in such jest throw away your salvation. It were an hundred times a wiser course for a man to set his house on fire, and say, 'If God have decreed the saving of it, the fire shall not burn it; if he have not, it will perish whatsoever I do.' I tell you again, God hath not ordinarily decreed the end without the means; and if you will neglect the means of salvation, it is a certain mark that God hath not decreed you to salvation. But you shall find that he hath left you no excuse, because he hath not thus predestinated you.

(7.) But you say, We cannot convert ourselves; what can man do without the grace of God? And, therefore, if God give us not grace we are excusable.

*Answ.* Do your consciences justify you, that you have done all that you can? Can you not go to church when you stay at home? Can you not go among the servants of God when you go to your worldly businesses, or to an ale-

house? Cannot you keep out of evil company? or cannot you so much as consider of your ways, or bethink you of the things of the life to come? I say, cannot you do these things if you will? and have you done these, or have you not? Have you avoided temptations and occasions of evil, and used the means of grace, and attended God in the use of his ordinances, and marked diligently what is said to you, and considered it when you came home? Have you not sinned and neglected the means of grace, both knowingly and wilfully? Conscience may tell you that you have, and God shall make you know that you have; and shortly you shall be convinced past denial, that you did not all that you could, nor forbore the evil that you might have forborne. And if you will refuse and abuse the help of God, can you expect that he should follow you still with his assistance? God will make you know one day, that nobody carried you into an alehouse, nor opened your mouth, nor poured down the drink! and nobody forced you to swear, or to rail, or hate religion, or quarrel with the word that should have saved you, but it was the malicious wickedness of your naughty hearts.

And for the power of conversion and believing itself, you must know that there is a two-fold power, the one natural, the other moral. The natural faculty of understanding and willingness every man hath; and if they have the use of reason, they have no physical impediment but they may use them, and if they hear the word, they have no such absence of the necessary object, as may make the word impossible to them. The moral power is nothing but a disposition or habit of the soul to believe or repent, &c. or a freedom of contrary habits. And this it is acknowledged that none have, but those that have proportionably received that grace that doth affect it: or, to speak as plain as I can to you, there is a power which lieth in being able to believe and repent if you will, or to do whatsoever we will, that concerneth us to do; and there is a willingness itself to execute this power, and that both actual and habitual. The former every one hath, the latter none but the godly have in sincerity, and those that make so great a stir about this in the church, do seem to be agreed in it for the main, and do not know it. For every man on both parties confesseth



that all men have the natural faculty of understanding and will, and that they have so much power that they can believe and love God above all if they will, and on the other side, I hope we are all agreed that wicked, unregenerate men are not truly willing to repent and believe, and that they have not the habit and disposition thereto, but have the contrary habits. Experience telleth us this, without any more ado. The latter sort of power then, about which all the controversy lieth, is nothing but the very willingness or grace itself, actual or habitual, or the absence of the contrary. And, therefore, it is all one to ask whether a wicked man have power to believe; and to ask whether he be a believer actually or habitually, or not an unbeliever; so that when we are all agreed that the natural power or faculty is present, and the moral, which is but the willingness, is absent, you can ground none of your excuses on the differences of the churches in this point. And as I have formerly said to you, if you will but reduce this last kind of power and impotency to its most proper expression, you will open the shame of your excuses. For morally to be unable to believe, is no more than to be unwilling to believe. And if you should say, 'I will not believe or repent, and therefore I am excusable,' what would your own conscience say to such an excuse? Natural impotency excuseth faults. He that can say, 'I would believe, but cannot, is excusable;' but never a one of you all shall ever be able to say this; but moral impotency aggravateth faults: the more will, the more sin. All the government and justice in the world is grounded upon this principle, and therefore all rewards and punishments are founded in the will of man, and all moral virtue and vice is resolved into that. And if you can but prove that a man offended willingly, you have proved him culpable: for nature hath taught all the world to bring the fault to the will, and there to leave it, and look no further for the cause: unless, as seducers may be made accessory by their persuasions, which yet is no excuse to the offender.

(8.) And whereas you allege that of the apostle, "It is not in him that willeth, or in him that runneth, but in God that sheweth mercy."

I answer, that the meaning is not, that our salvation is not in him that willeth, or in him that runneth. The apos-

tle talketh of no such thing. But it is about the giving of the gospel to them that had it not, and taking it from them that had forfeited it by their sin ; or the giving of the first special grace to them that had it not, and the denying it them that had forfeited it by their neglects ; and the meaning is no more than this, that the reason why God giveth one man or nation the preaching of the Gospel, when others for their sins are left in darkness, is not from any merit or precedent willing or running of their own, but from his mere mercy. And the reason why he blesseth the Gospel to the conversion of some, when he leaveth others to despise it by their wilful obstinacy, is not from the merits of any of those unregenerate men, or from any willing or running of theirs, but from God that sheweth mercy. So that you must note that it is, 1. One thing to ask the cause of man's damnation in himself considered, and this is not said to be because God will damn him, but because he hath deserved it by his sin : and so the cause of his preterition in the matter of special grace, is not barely because God will pass him by, but because he hath deserved it ; for God denieth the Gospel, and faith by the Gospel, or his grace to effect it, to no man that hath not first deserved that denial. 2. It is another thing to ask the reason of men's salvation, which is not given in Scripture barely from the will of God, but from the faith and obedience of men, for it is an act of rewarding justice as well as of paternal love and mercy. 3. And it is yet another thing to ask the reason why God giveth any man the first special grace to repent and believe considering him simply in himself, and this is because that God is gracious, and no reason can be given but his own mercy ; and thus far most of us are agreed. 4. And it is yet another thing to ask the reason why God giveth the special grace to this man, rather than that, comparatively considered, when he might justly have denied it to them both, and neither of them could plead their desert of it ? And to this it is that the apostle's answer doth most square, or at least is fitly applied : " It is not in him that willeth or runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy : " so that, though no man can give any turning reason besides the mere will of God, why God should give this grace to Peter, rather than to Judas, yet we well know that he denieth it not to Judas without his own desert ; though he gives it to Peter contrary to his desert.

(9.) And whereas it is further objected, that "whom he will he hardeneth," and if God will harden us, how can we repent?"

*Ans.* 1. That he hardeneth no man without his own desert; it is not till you have forfeited his softening grace by your resisting and abuse of it. 2. That his hardening is but his leaving you to yourselves, and taking away or denying you that Spirit which you have quenched; or his carrying the just course of his providence so, as he knoweth your corrupt natures will be hardened thereby; but he doth not put any hardness into your hearts, and therefore these afford you no excuse.

(10.) Another error that hindereth conversion, is, The placing of holiness in holding of certain opinions, and so turning from the life of faith and love, to speculation and vain janglings. If once men place their religion in their opinions, they may as well be hypocrites and self-deceivers in a true opinion, as in a false. This is a habit by which the devil hath caught multitudes of souls in all ages of the church, and especially of late: when he cannot keep men in open profaneness, then he will tempt them to think that such a party and such a sect are the only right and holy people; and therefore if thou get but among them, and be one of that opinion and party, then thou shalt be saved. And hence it is that we see that men who are so zealous for their parties, and glory so much in several opinions, do yet many, and very many of them, live so unacquaintedly with God and heaven, and are such strangers to Christian charity, and can freely reproach both common Christians and ministers, and speak evil of the things they understand not, and take their railing accusations for their piety, and walk in discord, and hatred, and disunion from the church of God, and be glad when they can bear down the reputation of their brethren whose labours are necessary for the good of souls. And it is a common mark of an opinionative hypocrite, that he preferreth the interest of his opinion and party, before the interest of these common truths which salvation is clearly laid upon, and all Christians are agreed in. And he careth not to hinder ministers from propagating these common truths for the conversion of souls, so he might withal but hinder them from propagating that opinion which is con-

trary to his. And withal he layeth out more of his zeal and diligence for these opinions, than for the mortification of his lusts, and the maintaining of the union and communion of the saints, and walking holily with God, and uprightly with men.

I shall now say no more to these, but that "the kingdom of God consisteth not in meats and in drink, but in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost<sup>r</sup>:" and "that circumcision availeth nothing, nor uncircumcision, but faith that worketh by love<sup>s</sup>," "and the new creature<sup>t</sup>." "For in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Gentile, bond nor free, male nor female;" and why may I not say on the same ground, young nor old, "but Christ is all, and in all<sup>u</sup>." And that we have many promises of life and salvation to as many as repent and believe, and love God, and hope for the coming of Christ; but we have none to those that are of this or that party or opinion without these graces. And withal we know how tender God is of the unity of his church and people, and how much he hath spoken against division: and they that know not this, when they pretend to know things that are not half so clearly revealed, may be ashamed of their ignorance. I do not know where God hath commanded men to avoid them that hold this or that tolerable different opinion, or that follow this or that tolerable different practice; but I know where he hath commanded us to "mark them that cause division, and avoid them<sup>x</sup>."

(11.) Another error that hindereth conversion, is, When men have gotten false conceits against the lawfulness or necessity of those holy ordinances, that are used by the people of God. For the life of religion lieth so much in the use of ordinances, that if people be brought out of conceit with these, they will not know what it is to be religious, nor what necessity there is of it. To give you an instance in some particulars.

1. Some grow into doubt of the necessity of family duty, and ask, where hath God commanded us to pray in our families? And that so oft? To which I answer, That it is sufficient that he hath bid us "pray always, and in all

<sup>r</sup> Rom. xiv. 17.

<sup>s</sup> Gal. v. 6.

<sup>t</sup> Gal. vi. 15.

<sup>u</sup> Col. ii. 11. Gal. iii. 28.

<sup>x</sup> Rom. xvi. 17.

things make our requests known to God with prayers, supplication, and thanksgiving<sup>y</sup>.” “All things are sanctified by the word and prayer<sup>z</sup>.” And therefore our families and callings are so. What have we common reason for, but to circumstantiate these duties, that God hath commanded to us for the substance. And common reason telleth us, that as we daily need God, we must daily seek supply of our needs; and so not only our persons, but our families as families, do need this mercy, and receive his mercy, and are related to him as the Head: so our families as families must call on him, and praise him, and love his headship. Besides the example of Daniel, that prayed three times a day in his house, so openly that his enemies had matter of accusation from the matter of his prayer. But I have had occasion to write more largely of this, and therefore will not now stand on it.

2. Others are brought to question the lawfulness of joining with our solemn assemblies, in hearing, or praying, or other public worship of God. The reasons are such as I am ashamed to stand to mention and confute them, and shall be weary to go over them, they are so vain and superficial, and answered at large by many. Some of their reasons are, because we are so bad, when many of the accusers are such themselves, that they deserve to be severely censured by the church; and because the church will not deal with them, they will judge the church, and take themselves too good to have communion with it, and the church unworthy to have communion with them. In a word, they would have not one but many cast out, whom they never dealt with in Christ's way, by admonition; and because it is not done out of Christ's way, to save a labour, they will turn schismatics.

And others of them withdraw on the pretence that we have no ministry. And how prove they that? You may wait long enough till you can have a word of Scripture or reason for the proof, or before they can answer that sufficient proof that is brought to the contrary. And if you do but put them to tell you which is the true church and ministers, and where it hath been? you shall see what work they will make in the end.

<sup>y</sup> Phil. iv. 6.    <sup>z</sup> 1 Thess. v. 17.

<sup>z</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 4, 5.

Others withdraw on pretence that we are unbaptized, to which end they must coin a new baptism, or else they are at a loss. And their arguing with us, will be much like the Papists in the point of transubstantiation, which requireth that men renounce their sense, and say, that they see not that which they see, and feel not or taste not that which indeed they feel and taste, and then they may come to be in the right. And so we must believe that we see none baptized in our churches, nor hear it, nor know of any such thing, and then we may come to be a church. If these brethren had half so much humility, or Christian love, and sense of the unity of the church of Christ as they should have, they would think on it, and think again, before they would either say of the universal church of Christ for one age, much more so for many ages, that it was no church, or not to be joined with. For he that dares renounce communion with the whole, doth make it hard to be discerned that he is a part: and he that is not a member of the body, will not find another body of Christ, whose communion is desirable. For my part, I believe the church hath had many errors in many ages, but I know no age since the creation, in which, if I had lived, I durst have disclaimed communion with her. Much less dare I think of running out of the way to heaven, which almost all they went in that are there; or of separating from all the church of Christ, from Adam till within this two hundred years, or thereabout: for if there were no church till then, there was no Head, no Christ, and so no Christianity. Yea, if there were none but for any one time. O! if it were the will of God that we could have as clear light in some other weighty points, as we have in Scripture for the baptism of the children of believers; how much would it do to quiet the understandings of many that are willing to know.

3. Others there be that despise the solemn praises of the congregations, because some psalms are such as all cannot truly, they think, recite.

1. As if no recital were lawful, but that which personally owneth the words, which can never be proved.

2. And do they not know that God himself hath prevented their objection? And that it flieth in his own face? Who knoweth not that these psalms, or at least very

many of them, were appointed for the solemn praise of God in the temple and congregations of the Jews in those times? And if those could lawfully use them, whose hearts were generally no more fitted to them than ours, may not we do so too?

3. And do they not know that their scruple doth make not only against psalms, but all public prayer also to be unlawful? For you cannot so speak in any such public prayers or praises, but there will be somewhat which will not suit with the particular dispositions of many in the congregation personally to own, or else your duty will be very defective. If you express rejoicing, must all drooping spirits separate from the assembly that cannot rejoice? But I will trouble you no more with this. If any are unsatisfied, let them read but Mr. Cotton's book on this question, and Mr. Ford's, and they may receive satisfaction. And if they will in this, and the aforesaid cases of baptism, separation, and the rest, divide from the church, and venture on damnation to save themselves the labour of reading that which is written to give them information, they must take what they get by it. Who can help it?

*Hindrance* 19. Another hindrance of conversion, is, A proud, unteachable frame of spirit: when people are so wise in their own eyes, they think they know enough already; and they scorn to be taught. If the wisest minister in England should live with such, they would but despise his counsel in every thing almost that crosseth their conceits. As long as he will humour them, and say as they say, he shall be a good man, and well spoken of by all; but if he will trouble them, and cross them, and tell them that which is against their present opinion, they think themselves wiser in this than he, and if they do not bid him look to himself, and let them alone, at least they will give him little thanks, and shew it by their small regard. Some of them will not come near us, nor give us the hearing, when we would teach them; and others, though they hear, do think themselves too wise to believe or obey. And thus they are fixed in a state of misery.

*Direct.* 19. If ever you will be converted, humbly submit to the word of God, and the instructions of those whom he hath appointed to inform you. What unreasonable pride

is it in you that are ignorant, unlearned men, to despise the counsel of the most able, godly ministers, and that in points wherein the godly through all the world are agreed? Yea, where God himself doth lead them by his word? Are not they likely to know more than you that have studied it all their days? Discourse with them, and try whether they or you have more knowledge. Consider what you do when you proudly reason against the necessity of conversion and a holy life. What, are you wiser than your teachers, and than the ablest teachers in the land? Yea, than all the ministers in the world, and than all the godly people in the world? Silly souls, that scarce know any of the principles of religion, are yet so proud as to despise the instruction from the wisest whoever. But if you think yourselves wiser than all the ministers in the world, will you also think yourselves wiser than God? I tell you, either illuminating grace, or the conviction of God's judgment, shall take down your lofty hearts ere long, and make you wish you had stooped to instruction. The day is coming that will abate your pride, and make you talk a little more submissively. Harken therefore in time, lest that befall you that is mentioned, Prov. v. 11–13. “Lest thou mourn at last when thy flesh and body are consumed; and say, how have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof? And have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me?” If you are too wise to learn, you will prove in the end too foolish to be saved.

*Hindrance* 20 The last hindrance of conversion that I shall mention, is, Wilful obstinacy. When men have long resisted grace, they are given over oftentimes to themselves; and then they grow wilful: and when they have nothing else to say, why they should not be converted and become the people of God, they can say, they will not: they will never be so holy, nor deny their flesh, nor forsake the world, nor set themselves to a heavenly life: they will not believe that this is so necessary: nor will they ever yield to such a course: come on it what will, they are resolved against it; before they will do it they will venture their souls, and let God do with them what he will: and this desperate wilfulness is the devil's last hold.

*Direct.* 20. What direction should I give you against



this hindrance? When the will is so corrupt and obstinate, whatsoever I give it will be rejected. If you were but willing I should make no doubt but the work might prosper; or if you were but reasonable, and teachable, and persuadable, I should make no doubt, through the blessing of God, but the former means might make you yield; but if men be wilful and resolved to perish, what remedy? If men could give us any reason against conversion and a holy life, and did err through the mere mistake of their understandings, I should make no doubt, through the blessing of God, but by bare reason they might be rectified. But when their will is their reason, and they are resolved whatsoever comes of it, to hold on, and stop their ears against advice, what can we say to these men? All that I can do, is, to commend to them the former considerations, and to desire them to think of those motives before delivered, which may change their wills. But I have but little hope to prevail with them so much as soberly to think of it. And because so many of our poor people are of this strain, I am forced here to end this subject with lamentation.

I have preached now many sermons to you of conversion, and whether any souls be converted by it, the Lord knows, I know not. But the sad observation of the state of the world, and the uneffectualness of such endeavours, doth justly make me fear the issue. I know that both I and this congregation shall shortly appear before our Judge, to give a strict account of our lives, and if I have not preached these sermons in sincerity, with a true desire after the saving of your souls, then how shall I stand before the Lord, if the blood of Christ through faith and repentance prevail not for remission? And if any man or woman in this town or parish shall there appear in an unconverted state, what will they be able to say for themselves? Or how will they escape the threatened damnation? I am not out of hope that I shall meet some souls there, though yet I know not of them, that will be able to say, they were converted by these sermons; but I am so much afraid lest I shall meet abundance of you in an unconverted state, that I could even find in my heart to sit down and weep over these sermons now I have preached them. Alas! that you should be condemned by that which was intended to further your salva-

tion. Have I studied and preached all this to be a witness against you? I know, as true as you sit in these seats, that every soul of you shall be for ever in hell, that passeth out of the body in an unconverted state. And I know when you have heard so much of it, and been so often warned, and now are left without excuse, you will have a double condemnation. For now it is your mere wilfulness that must keep you unconverted. If you say, you cannot convert yourselves, I ask in a word, will you do what you can? Tell me, will you, or will you not? If you will not, what remedy? If you will, look over the directions I have given you, and set upon the faithful practice of them. Particularly, see that you presently search the Scriptures, and read good books, and forsake your evil company, and come not near them, but get among those that fear the Lord, and take all opportunities public and private, and inquire of your teachers and neighbours that can help you, what you shall do to be saved? And sin no more wilfully, but avoid the very temptations and appearances of evil, and be much with God in secret and open prayer: and dwell in the consideration of your own estate, of your own sin and danger, of Christ and duty, of grace and glory, and think not any pains too much for your salvation. What say you? Will you do but thus much, or will you not? If you will, you shall find no cause to repent of it, and God will not be wanting to that soul that doth not wilfully forsake him, but is willing to be conformed to the image of his Son; and to be what God would have him be. But, alas! it is this wilfulness, and obstinacy that undoes men: that is, that which shuts up the heart of God and man from compassionating the wicked in their everlasting misery. They did it wilfully; they would take no warning; they would hear no counsel; no saying would serve them; they chose their own destruction; it was their own doing; they were told of it a hundred times; they were entreated to consider, but they would not be entreated. What could have been said more to them? What could we do more for them? O that any one of you could tell me what I should say more, or what I should do now to save the souls of ignorant, fleshly, worldly sinners from damnation! And to convert the unconverted, and turn the hearts of men to God! O that you could but tell me how I might accom-

plish it ! Would I not do it ? The Lord knows, if any lawful and honest means would accomplish it I would do it, if I know my own heart. But if Christ could not be heard, why should I wonder if many will make light of what is said by such an one as I. If they will not hear the Lord that made them speaking in his word, why should I wonder if they will not hear him speaking by such a worm as I ? Sinners, what shall I say more to you ? I have told you of an everlasting glory which you might have ; if you will set light by it, and prefer your worldly things before it, who can help it ? I have told you of eternal misery that you are in danger of ; if you will venture on it, and not believe it till you feel it, and are past remedy, who can help it ? I have proved to you from the word of God, that without conversion there is no salvation : if you dare go on in an unconverted state, and keep your sin, and follow your fleshly desires and delights, and your worldly vanities and wicked company, if you will not be drawn to the ways of God, what remedy ? I have delivered my message, and I hope God will not require your blood at my hands. You shall all be forced to bear me witness that I told you there was no salvation without conversion ; and that I manifested to you the reasonableness of the offers of God : and if you be not converted, it is because you would not : and what a torment it will be everlastingly to your consciences to think that you wilfully damned yourselves, and to think that you wilfully refused your salvation ; and that you might have been in heaven as well as others, if you had not wilfully and obstinately rejected it. I say, what tormenting thoughts these will prove to you everlastingly, you cannot possibly now conceive, but then you shall know and feel it, if true conversion do not prevent it. Which that it may do, as it hath been the end of all these sermons, so shall it now, and as long as I have life and strength, be the matter of my prayers for you.