

obtained in the enjoyment of God; and that is real misery in which a person has nothing left to comfort him, and this is not but in being utterly rejected by God.

5. Labour to be humble. Humility lets us see our true worth that it is nothing, and so fences us against complaining, Gen. xxxii. 10. It makes a person wonder that he hath any comfort at all left him; and so lets him into the mystery of, *in every thing to give thanks.*

6. Do not dwell and pore upon your crosses, for that feeds the complaining humour. Turn your eyes on your mercies left you, and be thankful for them.

7. Learn to unbosom yourself in all your griefs unto the Lord by prayer and supplication. This gave Hannah a happy ease. And go to your Bibles and get your souls refreshed with the good news from the far country, Psal. cxix. 92.

8. Exercise yourself always in some honest business. In those that are idle, Satan is busy to foster the complaining humour.

9. Resist this humour in its beginnings.

Lastly, Live by faith. By this your souls will be stayed on the promises; in all events have a favourable view of the design of God in afflictions, and fix on the things that are not seen, as the object of your chief care, and the great spring of your comfort. Amen.

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*Ettrick, August, 1717.*

#### THE PLEASURES OF REAL RELIGION.

#### SERMON XXIV.

PROVERBS iii. 17.

*Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.*

THE Hebrew name of this book imports sentences well pressed together, and powerful to command our assent and regulate our conduct. In this context wisdom, or real religion is commended in the 16th verse from what she hath. They get much with her who get her. She brings to them in both hands. In the text she is commended for her discipline, the way and manner of life to which she directs her votaries. This is that which chiefly prejudices the men of the world against her, so that they cannot think to live with her. It is represented here in these two, her ways and her paths. *Her*

*ways*, that is the ways in which she directs us to walk through the world. She has ways of her own that are not the ways of the world, but ways peculiar to herself, that are chalked out by the holy commands of God. It is called the way of faith and holiness.

*Her paths*, that is her strait ways, as the word signifies. Amongst her ways there are some very strait ones, and these are most frightful to the world. They are so strait, that they cannot endure them. But they are mistaken. Behold the commendation of them, in two points. First, they are sweet, *they are ways of pleasantness*. They are like pleasant walks, which invite men to walk in them, by the pleasures that are about them, with the trees, flowers, and other things which surround them. Such a pleasantness the word imports, ver. 18. "She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her; and happy is every one that retaineth her. Issachar saw that rest was good, and the land pleasant." They are so far from being unpleasant and melancholy, that they are ways of pleasantness, very pleasant. They are, secondly, safe. Many ways are sweet that are not safe; pleasant that are not profitable; but both sweetly centre here. *Her paths are peace*, that is, they are paths of peace. There is no danger in them, nothing to annoy the traveller, while he but keeps straight forward. They are peace itself, most peaceful. That is, all prosperity attends them, and so some versions read it, for so the Hebrew expresseth all prosperity and welfare.

Next observe the extent of the commendation. *All her paths are peace*. Even those of them that seem most rugged and unpleasant are peace. There are both pleasure and profit wrapped up in them. There is no contrariety amongst them. One does not embitter another, as it is in the ways of the world. The pleasures of religion are full of peace.

*Doctrine* I. The way of religion is the way of wisdom. They that are truly religious are wise, and the following of religion is the wisest course in the world. Here I shall,

I. Present to you some of the scriptural characters of the way of religion.

II. I shall show that this way of religion, is the way of wisdom. I am then,

I. To present to you some of the scriptural characters of the way of religion,

1. The way of religion is the way of truth. The apostle Peter expressly calls it *the way of truth*. The faith of principles is a part of religion as well as the practice of holiness. And therefore faith is called wisdom, Eph. i. 8. The God of truth has revealed truth to us in the scriptures of truth, and requires us to believe it. And

the way of error is contrary to the way of religion, and is the product of the blindness of men's minds. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." This error proceeds also from their corrupt affections and can never be sanctified by all the plausible pretences with which it is set off. "Will ye speak wickedly for God? And talk deceitfully for him?" A wrong head may lead people out of the way of religion as well as a wrong heart.

2. The way of God's commandments. "I will run, says David, the way of thy commandments, when thou hast enlarged my heart." In this way then the soul labours to do what God requires, and to abstain from what he hath forbidden. So men are out of the way in transgressing these commands, doing what God forbids, and omitting what he requires. Nothing belongs to the way of religion, which is not hedged in by the commands of God on every side. What men offer to God as duty which he has not commanded, and what they account sin, which his law makes not so, is but superstition, and not in religion; and in this men are apt to abound when religion falls into decay among them, as appears in all formalists.

3. The way of faith and not of sense. *We walk by faith and not by sight.* Religion sets a man chiefly in pursuit of unseen things. The cry of the world is *who will shew us any good.* But religion leads a person to make choice of an unseen Christ for his portion, unseen hopes, joys of pleasures, yea, "to look to all the things which are not seen, and which are eternal." Others value themselves on what they have in hand; they on what they have in hope. The way of religion is the way of trust and dependence for all on God in Christ, for light, life and strength. "They live by the faith of the Son of God." They go out of this way, who trust in themselves and live upon their own stock.

4. The way of holiness. "It shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it. As he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." Religion teaches holiness, in heart and life, piety towards God, and righteousness towards men. It allows no sin, however small the world accounts it to be. Nay the very appearance of evil, religion teaches to eschew. It gives one holy rule, by which to regulate heart, lip, and life, the conversation at home and abroad, in public before the world, and in secret before God alone, in our personal and relative conversation.

5. The way of irreconcilable opposition to the devil, the world, and the flesh. And therefore the Christian life is called a warfare. The way of worldly ease, to row with the stream is not the way of

religion. They who enter upon religion, must encounter the powers of hell, and as it is Satan's business to tempt, it is theirs to resist and wrestle against him. They commence nonconformists to the world. For the command is, *be not conformed to this world*. They make a practical separation from the world lying in wickedness, holding quite a contrary course to that, which the gale of the world's example would drive them. "The Lord preserves them from this generation for ever." They deny the cravings and lusts of the flesh, "with all ungodliness, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." They strive to mortify irregular passions and affections. "For they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts."

6. The way of spiritual worship. "For we are the circumcision which worship God in the Spirit." In this a man aims at inward obedience, consecrating his heart as a temple to the Lord, in which to offer the spiritual sacrifices of faith, fear, love, thankfulness and other parts of unseen religion. They who take up with the form of religion and mere external duties are out of the way. "Having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof." True religion teaches to give spiritual service to God, because he is a Spirit; and to join the power of godliness with the form of it.

7. The strait and narrow way. "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find, and walk in it." The multitude chooseth the broad way of sin, in which they find room for their beloved lusts, and walk at all adventures without a certain rule, but as their corrupt inclinations draw them. There is no such room in the way of religion. They must deny themselves the latitude of thoughts, words, and actions, that others freely take to themselves, endeavouring in all things to think, speak, and act by rule, the rule of the holy law.

8. The way of universal obedience. "Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect to all thy commandments." The first step which a person takes in that way, the soul says, *Lord what wilt thou have me to do?* They dare not wilfully neglect any of God's commandments. Some persons neglect the duties of piety towards God, and deal fairly with their neighbours. Some take an opposite course. They pretend to piety and neglect morality. Some fix on the substantial duties, with a slighting of circumstantials; others are so taken up with the circumstantials, that they juggle out the weighty matters of the law, but the way of real religion joins both. For while it requires the weighty matters of the law, *judgment, mercy, and faith to be done*, it enjoins also *not to leave the other undone*.

Lastly, The good old way. "Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in

the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." If you have a mind to walk heavenward, you must go by the footsteps of the flock. The way which the saints have trodden, in the several ages of the church. It is the way in which we will see the cloud of witnesses that have gone before us. We are directed to their steps, whom the world hath counted fools, because they could not be satisfied to take the way of the world. We proceed now,

II. To shew that this way of religion, is the way of wisdom.

1. The only wise God has directed the children of men unto the way of religion, and therefore it must be the way of wisdom. Do they not act wisely that take the course to which God has directed men. What is our Bible, but a system of precepts of religion. It is God's word commanding and recommending this way to us. This was the way in which God set man at first. When by sin he lost his way, it pleased God to make a new revelation of his will and to set him on his way again, the way of religion in faith and holiness.

2. Our Lord Jesus Christ brings his people to this way and leads them in it to the end. "He is given to be a leader and commander to the people." He that is the wisdom of the Father, is the guide that hath gone on the head of the blessed company that travel this way through the world: and they run looking unto Jesus the author and the finisher of their faith. He leads his people off from the way of sin and of the world, into the way of religion. He guides them in it and keeps them on it unto the end. "For this God is our God for ever; he will be our guide even unto death." He knows what is the wisest and best course for them to take, and his love to them engages him to lead them to it, therefore let who will account it folly, it is the way of wisdom only.

3. The Spirit of Christ effectually determines his people to this way, moves and excites and strengthens them to walk forward in it. "This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." The Spirit searcheth the deep things of God, and the same that is the Spirit of wisdom, is the Spirit of holiness and sanctification. And therefore the way of holiness must be the wisest course we can take.

4. Would you know what way God himself would take if he were walking among men on this earth? We may know this already. The Son of God became man, and dwelt among us, and the way which he took was not the way of the world, but the way of religion and unspotted holiness. "He left us an example, that we should follow his steps." He kept himself unspotted by sin. "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." He was not charmed

with the world's good things, when they were offered to him, nor driven out of his way by its evil things. "When he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." They were the unseen things of another world which he proposed to himself to obtain, even *the joy set before him*.

5. It is the way that is most agreeable to right reason. Devoting ourselves wholly to God, *is our reasonable service*. The way of sin is most pleasing to our lusts and passions, which being blind as rejecting the government of reason, cannot cease to lead us wrong. But the way which our passions do condemn, is in the mean time the way that reason and conscience do justify. The way of our passions thrusts us down, into the order of brutes, which follow their appetites; but the way of religion advances us to walk in the way of rational creatures.

6. It is the only way to happiness here or hereafter. "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding." All the happiness of the creatures consists in assimilation to God. The more holy, the more like God; and so the more holy, the more happy. It is impossible a man can be happy in the way of sin, even in the world, while there is a holy God above him angry with him every day, and a conscience within him ready at occasions to disturb his rest. *There is no peace, saith my God to the wicked*. But in the midst of troubles the pious are happy in the favour of God, and the testimony of conscience. With God and in Christ they have peace. "And our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." And when they come to the end of their days, the difference is vastly greater, for then the happiness of the godly is completed, and the misery of the wicked is completed also. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together, the end of the wicked shall be cut off."

*Use 1.* Of information. Is the way of religion the way of wisdom? Then first, there is little wisdom in the world, for true religion is very rare. *Few there be, says our Lord, that find this way*. Man is born like a wild ass's colt, and he goes on in his folly all his days, till the Spirit of God teaches him the wisdom that is from above. But when once his eyes are opened by the Holy Spirit, and he is made truly wise, to know what belongs to his peace, he is no more in a doubt what to choose. And to the natural blindness of the human mind, the neglect and contempt of religion is to be imputed.

2. The way of sin and wickedness must needs be the way of folly, and they are fools that follow it. "How long ye simple ones will ye love simplicity? And the scornors delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?" The Spirit of God brands all the ungodly with the name of fools; and they are the greatest fools in the world that live strangers to religion and true godliness, whatever opinion themselves or the world may have of their wisdom. They live fools, whatever way they live, while they live strangers to religion and the power of godliness. They have three marks of a fool. (1.) They are easily cheated out of their most valuable things. Satan goes about these simple ones, till they are tricked out of their souls, their part of Christ and heaven, and all the happiness of another world. "And what is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" And wherefore do they part with them, but for the gratifying of a lust; a more foolish course than if one should part with an estate for a childish toy. Esau was a cunning hunter, but in the matter of the blessing he acted as if he had been a fool or an idiot. (2.) They suffer the best bargain to slip through their fingers again and again while they are enamoured of those things which are of no value in comparison of it. "Wherefore then is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it." They have no heart for the enriching treasure in the field of the gospel, because they have no judgment to discern the worth of it, while they are busied with vanities that pass away with the using. Their precious time and opportunities are spent in grasping of shadows in many things, while the one thing needful is forgotten. (3.) They feed themselves with dreams and fancies, in which there is no reality. They are foolish virgins with lamps without oil; foolish builders on the sand. Their life is one continued dream, in which they judge aright of nothing, neither of God, heaven, hell, nor even the world. So that there must be a terrible awakening, when they do awaken out of their dream. Again, living impenitent, they die like fools. The rich man in the gospel is called a fool at his death. Then indeed the folly of all such appears. Time spent and nothing laid up for eternity; another world to be gone into, but no preparation for it; what has got their most serious thoughts evanisheth, and what they never minded to purpose to that they must now go.

3. Then the way of religion is preferable to the way of sin, as wisdom is to folly, light to darkness. This men will not see now, but they shall see it, when the great God has determined, who have been wise and who fools. Then it will appear clearly in another world, what is so much controverted in this, whether they be wisest that seek their portion in hand, or those that desire to have it in

hope. Then folly will be written on the foreheads of many now in high reputation for wisdom ; and others now deemed fools will appear to have taken the wisest course.

4. The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour, as the wise man is more excellent than the fool. God who judges according to truth, judges so, and so will we all at length. While all the rest of the world act the part of fools and madmen, they behave themselves wisely, and the end will crown their work, which will show that grace is better than gold, and things that are not seen, are preferable to things that are.

*Use 2.* For comfort and encouragement to those that are truly godly. And thus it may be, in case being looked upon as fools by the world. Alas ! the generation is come to that, that seriousness in religion is sufficient to expose a person to the scorn of those that are unacquainted with it. But if they think you are fools, look you to the Bible, and you will see that they are fools. " If any man will be wise, let him become a fool." It may be also in case of your being defective in worldly wisdom. Our Lord tells us " that the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." But if you be wise to salvation, bless God and be thankful. It may comfort you also, in case of being condemned by onlookers in matters in which you have the testimony of God's word and your own consciences. Many a time a man walking straight by the rule in a particular action, will be condemned as a fool by such as do not see the springs and reasons of his acting in that way, when the searcher of hearts will approve him.

*Use 3.* Of reproof. And it may serve to convince and reprove as fools,

1. Those who value themselves on their carnal worldly wisdom, while they neglect religion in the reality and power of it. There is a generation who make it their great business to gain the world : upon it their hearts are set continually, while religion at best is but an occasional work, and they attain to a certain dexterity in it by this mean, as being the thing that is their constant study and in which they place their greatest satisfaction. But alas ! they are wise in trifles and foolish in matters of the greatest importance ; they gain a mite, they lose a talent ; the case of their souls goes to wreck, and by their boasted wisdom they are fooled out of their most valuable concerns. " For whosoever will be of the world is the enemy of God."

2. Those that are wise to do evil, but to do good have no knowledge. Many have sufficient cunning to contrive mischief, who can do nothing truly good for themselves and others. As for such wisdom, behold the character of it, *It is earthly, sensual, devilish.*

3. Those who account religion folly. O how is the spiritual taste of many depraved, how contrary their judgment of spiritual things to God's thoughts of them. Folly is by them accounted wisdom, and true wisdom folly. "Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter."

*Use 4.* Of exhortation. Study to get religion, since it is true wisdom. Enter on that course, since it is the wisest course you can follow.

*Motive 1.* As reason distinguisheth men from brutes and sets them in a higher sphere, so religion is a piece of wisdom that distinguishes one man from another, and makes him more excellent than his neighbour. The nearer one comes to God, who is a perfect being, he must needs be the more excellent. The truly religious are *partakers of a divine nature*, and of all men on the earth resemble the God of heaven most, as *being followers of God and partakers of his holiness*.

2. Religion is that wisdom which is preferable to all things else that come under that name in the world.—All earthly wisdom possessed and valued by men of the earth is but a shadow, a dream in comparison of this. For it is practical wisdom. This only is to know the Lord. What avail the profound speculations of natural men in all the learned sciences, the dry and sapless notions of religion in formal professors, which never make them better men though more knowing. The excellency of this wisdom is, that it casts the soul into the mould of truth, sanctifies the heart, and regulates the life, in a conformity to the divine nature and will; and thereby perfects human nature, raising up a glorious fabric out of the ruins in which it lay by reason of the fall.

Again, Religion is wisdom for the one thing needful, the better part. The wisdom of the world is low and grovelling in the advantage with which it is attended. It may make a man more fit to manage his worldly business, more acceptable and useful in civil conversation. But also all this reaches only to the outworks, in the mean time the soul in its greatest concerns is neglected. But religion advanceth the life of the soul, in the favour of a communion with God, evidenceth the person's title to heaven, and carries him forward in the way to everlasting happiness. For, saith wisdom, "whose findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord."

Farther, it is wisdom for the better world. "For the wise shall inherit glory." What pitiful wisdom is that, whose designs and advantages are confined within the limits of time. The profits of the worldly-wise man as to himself must die with him; *in that very day his thoughts perish*. But the works of the spiritually wise follow

him into the other world, Rev. xiv. 13. There they joyfully reap through eternity, what they have sown in time.

Lastly, If you be not religious indeed you must be arrant fools. Fools for time and fools for eternity.—Without it you remain in the fallen miserable state in which you were born, and without it you will die in the same state without God, without Christ, and without hope, and thus be miserable for ever. “For without holiness no man shall see the Lord.”

*Doctrine II.*—The ways of religion are the most pleasant and peaceful ways.

There are two things to be handled here, the pleasantness, and peace to be enjoyed in the ways of true religion.

We are to speak first of the pleasantness of the ways of religion. If one be for a pleasant life, let him lead a religious life. This is a paradox not easy to be believed, but by those who find it so in their own experience. Let us here,

I. Inquire to whom are the ways of religion pleasant.

II. Evince the ways of religion to be pleasant.

III. I shall evince the ways of religion to be the most pleasant ways. We are then,

I. To inquire to whom are the ways of religion pleasant?

1. To those who have the art of walking in them.—As in all trades there is a certain art, which, when persons have attained, the trade turns easy and pleasant to them; so it is in religion. Thus Paul had learned a contentment in every lot, Philip. iv. 11. so that he could walk with pleasure in every condition in which providence placed him. The reason why we have so little pleasure in religion is, we are but bunglers at it, it seldom goes right with us, the work is often notably marred.

2. To those who habituate themselves to close walking with God. *Enoch walked with God.* And says Paul, *our conversation is in heaven.* Such descriptions of the Christian life evidently imply that there is a pleasantness in it. The beginning of a new course of life is commonly the most difficult and unpleasant. And that which makes religion so difficult and unpleasant to us, is either, that we are yet but to begin it in earnest, or that we stay not at the work and hold hand to it, but make such interruptions, as that we are always as it were but beginning. Whereas when the first difficulties are surmounted, if we could then hold on steadily, the work would become easy and pleasant.

Lastly, In respect of the pleasure that springs up from them. “Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.” The most harsh and bitter ways of religion, as of repen-

tance, sorrow, mortification and the like, have a pleasure that in due time ariseth from them, like the pangs of a travailing woman, which end in the joy of a man-child brought into the world. Even of these thorns men gather figs, and in these bitter sorrows, and sharp exercises and conflicts, are the seeds of joy and pleasure; and from under that cloud will bright beams burst forth. For these are but the path of pain leading into a paradise of pleasure, and at length the poor mourning, tempted Christian will go on like Samson, when he took the honey out of the dead lion, and went on eating; saying, "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." For such darkness is as the dawn of the morning which goes on to broad day. We proceed,

II. To evince the ways of religion to be pleasant, even ways of pleasantness. This appears if we consider,

1. The testimony of the saints who in all ages have given this for their verdict of the ways of God to the world. And though the graceless world contradict this, we may decline them as incompetent judges in this matter; for how can blind men judge of colours, or men whose taste is vitiated, judge of savoury meats. One eye-witness is worth an hundred ear-witnesses.—The testimony of the saints is to be regarded, as of those who declare, "what they have seen, and tasted, and handled of the word of life," to which others cannot pretend. Now we have the verbal testimony of the saints. Job gives them a noble testimony. "I have, says he, esteemed the words of his mouth, more than my necessary food." How amply does David speak of them. "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and wine encreased." He preferred a day in waiting upon God to a thousand. Paul tells us from his experience of a joy in the most rugged parts of the way. "I take pleasure, says he, in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions; in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong." Peter speaking of afflicted saints, speaks forth even their pleasure found in the ways of religion. "Believing, says he, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

We have also their real testimony, their deeds and practices witnessing the pleasure in the way of religion. Joseph would rather venture all, than exchange the pleasure which he had in his untainted chastity, with the sensual pleasure of sin. "Moses chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Daniel would rather be cast into a lion's den, or fiery furnace, than forego his religion. How many of the saints have chosen a stake or a gibbet, rather than leave the

way of religion. They were not insensible of pleasure, for they were men as well as saints, but behold the mystery of it. "They took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance." In the mean time they could say, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God we have had our conversation in the world."

2. Pleasure, innocence, and holiness, arrive always together at their height. The world was never so pleasant, as while Adam stood in his integrity. Whenever sin entered, there followed a train of miseries and disgusts. When sin shall be expelled, and the saints lodged in heaven, *they shall drink of rivers of pleasure*, for then holiness shall be perfected. Now this plainly discovers sin is the course of all displeasure to us; and therefore the ways of religion must needs be ways of pleasantness, where it is to be found for the present, and which leads to the perfection of pleasure in the life to come.

The way of religion is the most god-like way and life in the world. They who walk in it, *are to be followers of God as dear children*. Our Lord Jesus Christ followed this way. "My meat, said he, is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." He followed it exactly in all points, and gave us the copy of a perfect religious walk. Now God being the chief good, and most happy in himself, as the fountain of all happiness, he has infinite complacency, delight and satisfaction in himself and his own perfections; and therefore the way of religion must be the way of pleasantness, for it makes us to resemble God.

4. Religion so far as it does prevail, frees us from the cause of our wo. We blame this and the other thing for our miseries, but there is a real cause *why God contendeth with us*. There are two causes which occasion to us all the misery with which we meet in the world. A guilty conscience and unsubdued lusts and affections. Take away these and we should be freed of all our piercing uneasinesses. The way of religion leads us to the blood of Christ, that frees us of the former. "The inhabitant of Zion, shall not say, I am sick; the people that dwell therein, shall be forgiven their iniquity." And religion also leads us to the Spirit, and by him our lusts are mortified, their power is subdued.—Now according to the measure in which the soul is freed from these, so will it enjoy a true pleasure. What pleasure a man who has been in a fever finds in coolness, that will a soul find in a victory over corrupt lusts, which made Paul cry, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me

from the body of this death? I thank God, through Jesus Christ my Lord." In a cutting manner did the moralist answer Alexander the Great, boasting that he was lord of the world. Thou art said he to him, a servant to my servants, a slave to those lusts over which I am lord.

5. The Lord leaves not his servants to walk in the ways of religion in their own strength, but directs and assists them by his Spirit. "I can do all things, says Paul, through Christ who strengtheneth me." This was one reason why Paul took pleasure in the most rugged parts of the way; "For when I am weak, says he, then I am strong." It is a pleasure to a child to go up a stair, when the father holds him by the hand and helps him up every step. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves: but our sufficiency is of God." Our Lord never enjoins his people to bear their burden alone, but says he, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord and he shall sustain thee." When he orders you to do a piece of duty, he lays in meat for the work, or to bear a cross, he strengthens for bearing it. Now, as it is pleasant sailing when the wind blows fair, so it is pleasant walking in the ways of religion under a gale of the Spirit.

6. The Lord binds upon his saints the walking in his ways with the softest and sweetest ties imaginable, the answering of which must needs create a pleasure in the doing thereof. I own that terrors and curses pursue the sinner till he has entered upon this way. But when once he has entered into it, his duty is bound upon him by the ties of the covenant of grace, even gospel ties, which is the word of his grace, and the law of love, John xv. 12—14. These have a sweet constraint, 2 Cor. v. 14. The covenant of grace hath no threatenings of eternal wrath, the gospel damns no man, it needs not, for the law will do it, to them that are not saved by the gospel. Much of unpleasantness of religion to us, flows from our acting under the influence of the covenant of works. But that is not true religion, and no wonder that it be not found a way of pleasantness.

7. There is a sweetness interwoven with the Christian walk. "In keeping God's commandments there is great reward." There is a pleasure that attends and is mixed with duty. As merchants invite men to taste their wines, to encourage them to buy; so the Lord gives his people a taste of his goodness to encourage them in his service. Hence the invitation unto the practice of religion runs thus, "O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him." God provided in his law, that the mouth of the ox should not be muzzled that treadeth out the corn. Upon which I may say with Paul, "Doth God take care for oxen? Or

saith he it altogether for our sakes? for our sakes, no doubt this is written; that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope, should be partaker of his hope." While the Lord sets his servants to his work, he sets them also to their meat. Each of them may say with Christ, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." There is a pleasure in doing good, which the gracious soul in a gracious frame enjoys. Religion is a reward to itself, and therefore it is a part of the happiness of heaven, where *his servants shall serve him*.

Lastly, There is such a transcendant pleasure at the end of the way that must needs make the way a way of pleasantness. As sin is called the way of death, because it leads to death, so religion is the way of pleasure because it leads to endless joy. "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." A great and noble end makes the means leading to it pleasant. Jacob's seven years service, "seemed to him but a few days for the love he had to Rachel." Where the reward is an eternal weight of glory, what burden can be too heavy to bear that we may gain it? It must needs reflect a pleasantness on the whole of the way leading to it.

III. I shall now evince the ways of religion to be the most pleasant ways. There are greater pleasures in them, than are to be found out of these ways, or in the way of sin.

1. Consider religion brings a calm into the soul which no other thing can do. It gives it a rest and satisfaction that is no where else to be found. "Come unto me, says Jesus, all ye that labour, and are 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 unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Religion takes a person's heart off the rack on which sin held it, and calms the stormy sea on which they were tossed before. "For the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast forth mire, and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God to the wicked." Religion brings them out of the slavery and bondage in which they were and gives them true liberty. "I will walk at liberty, says David, for I seek thy precepts." There are three things which will place this in its proper light.

First, religion breaks the reigning power of lusts and corruptions, which create the soul much uneasiness. *Sin shall not have dominion over you*. Lusts unmortified must needs have a restless soul. These are worse than so many Egyptian task-masters over the soul, all calling it to serve them. The soul has thus to *serve divers lusts and pleasures*, and these are contrary one to another. They draw the

heart in different directions at once. Pride lifts it up, covetousness presses it down, while envy, malice, and hatred, agitate and distract it. What a blessed calm must then be in the soul, at Christ's accession to the throne of the heart, when there is so many masters are subdued and deprived of their power.

Secondly, Religion brings the soul to the accomplishment of its desires, and to say, *I have all and abound*. It is impossible to satisfy the cravings of unmortified lusts. They are the true daughters of the horse-leech, and the more they are indulged, the more they still desire. But religion first contracts the desires of the soul, cutting off the luxurient appetites of the heart; bending the desire towards the one thing needful, and bringing them to the enjoyment of it; and then under many wants, "They are as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

While a person is in the way of sin, he is still seeking his rest under some created shadow, and there he can never have it, since the complication of all created things is not sufficient to satisfy the desires of a soul; nothing less than an infinite good can do it. "Open thy mouth wide, says God, and I will fill it." Now religion sets the soul on the breasts of the divine consolation and in them it finds enough. In God the soul returns into its rest; for in God there is enough to afford the soul a pleasant contentment, even in the midst of all outward wants. Besides, religion dries up the devouring depths of earthly desires which plagued the soul. "Whoever, saith Jesus, drinketh of the water, that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life." Christ becomes a covering of the eyes to the soul upon its having made the blessed change. For this pearl of great price, the person parts with all that he hath, that he may possess it.

Thirdly, Religion brings the soul into a state of resignation to the will of God. It discovers infinite wisdom tempered with love and good-will, in the ordering of our lot, and so the soul rests in that. *The will of the Lord be done*. That man must needs have a profound calm within, when nothing crosses his will, but what confusion must be then, where things are still contrary to the will. Now while there is a God in heaven, no man will get all his will. "For God's counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure." And though men's will stand against his like a rock, he will rend that rock to accomplish his pleasure; if it will not bow he will break it. Now the yielding bush stands fast in the earth, while the lofty oaks are turned over with a tempestuous wind. And thus while men out of the way of religion meet with many sharp disap-

pointments, nothing falls wrong to those who are in that way. If God will raise him high, he is pleased, or if he lays him low he is pleased. And thus in the midst of storms he enjoys a calm.

*Use 1.* Let this reconcile your hearts to the way of religion, as a pleasant way. There is an objection against it lies deep in the hearts of all natural men.—They consider God “as a hard master, reaping where he had not sown, and gathering where he had not strawed.” But it is a groundless prejudice, and for the removal of it nothing is necessary but come and see.—And O! it is sad that men should take up objections against religion merely on trust, and though they try many ways to find out a pleasant one which they may follow, yet they will not allow religion a fair trial also.

2. Let this engage you to prefer the way of religion to the way of sin, because it is the most pleasant way. You have known something of the impure pleasures of sin, but religion shows you a more excellent way, a way in which alone true pleasure is to be enjoyed.—There is a sweetness in religion to those that are so happy as to break the shell to come at the kernel. Get forward then to the inner court and you will be made to say, It is good to be here.

2. Consider that religion frees a man from much trouble, with which the way of sin always plagues him. Ungodly persons “will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity.” With how much ease and pleasure does a man walk, who, on his journey, goes straight on the highway, in comparison of him, who, having lost the way, traverseth hills and mountains, woods and marshes. This is the case between the saint and the sinner, as will appear from these considerations.

1. There are many corruptions and lusts, that in their own nature are a punishment to themselves. It was not without reason that envy hath been represented as a serpent gnawing its own tail; *for envy slayeth the silly one*. Covetousness and anxiety for the world stretch the heart on tenter hooks. Wrath and passion carry a man out of himself. Fretfulness and discontentment is a secret fire burning and consuming in the midst of the bowels. It is so in other cases. How pleasant a life then must a charitable frame of spirit, a holy carelessness, a meek and contented disposition make.

Again, How much trouble is there in making provision for lusts, and this religion cuts off. The covetous man rises early, sits up late, eats the bread of sorrow to accomplish his desire. “The eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight.” The drunkard bereaves himself of his sleep to satisfy his lust. The proud and ambitious man is at great trouble to accomplish his end. Now from all this

religion delivers a man, causing him to walk at ease and liberty. And for what end is all this waste in pursuit of lusts, but to buy destruction, or at best to lay in matter for bitter repentance.

3. Much trouble arises from the disappointments with which men meet in the pursuit of their lusts, when they cannot be gratified. Ahithophel's wicked project miscarries and he hangs himself. Joseph's mistress is disappointed, and she boils with rage for revenge. —Disappointments in the way of sin are often galling and cut to the heart, as Jonah felt on the blasting of his gourd. But religion cutting off sinful desires and hopes, leaves no room for the trouble of these disappointments.

4. What trouble arises from lusts gratified. They bring forth bitter fruits which set the sinner's teeth on edge. Besides the sting which they leave in the conscience, they have such a cursed train of mischiefs following them, that, though men had no regard to conscience, yet regard to themselves might make them quit the way of sin. We often see how the gratifying of a lust exposeth to an untimely end. How does it often ruin families and particular persons. See what a multitude of miseries are grafted upon one sin. Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine, they that go to seek the mixed wine.

3. Consider that the most exquisite pleasures to be found in the way of sin, are nothing comparable to the pleasures to be found in the way of religion. "There be many, says David, that say, who will show us any good? Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time, when their corn and their wine increased." There are various things which confirm this truth.

1. The pleasures of true religion are of such an elevated nature that all others are but low and grovelling in comparison of them. I shall name some of these pleasures and may bid defiance to the world to find any like to them.

1. There is the pleasure which the soul finds in a victory obtained over lusts and corruptions. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." A soul is never in better case, than when it finds Christ letting blood of the heart vein of a lust, nor more solidly joyful than when they see them nailed to the cross.—"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." The pleasure which a person hath in gratifying of a lust, is the pleasure of a ser-

vant; but that in the victory over it, is that of a master. The former is a borrowed one, brought in from without himself, the other is from within. "For a good man shall be satisfied from himself."

2. There is the pleasure which persons find in the approbation and testimony of their own conscience upon their doing well. "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God we have had our conversation in the world." This is a feast that is enjoyed at the table of religion, it is enough to make a sick person well, it diffuses health through the soul and pleasure through the whole man. "Fear the Lord and depart from evil.—It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones." As the sting of conscience is the greatest pain, so the well grounded approbation of conscience must be amongst the most exquisite pleasures.

3. The pleasure which a person finds in the testimony of God's acceptance of his work. God often gives such testimonies of his approbation and acceptance of particular pieces of service done by his people. "Thou God meetest him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness: those that remember thee in thy ways. "And O how pleasant is that to the soul! "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works." Do but imagine what an earthly king's telling you, he kindly accepts, takes notice of and is well pleased what you had done for him, what a pleasure that would be? But what is all this to the pleasure of God's discovering to his people their acceptance with him.

4. The pleasure one finds in doing good and being useful to their fellow creatures, to mankind. "I have shewed you, says Paul, all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." While some stand as cyphers in the world, of no use to others; while some stand as blots to marr the beauty and comfort of society; as thorns and briars to make others uneasy about them; what pleasure must they have, whose business it is to make others happy, well and easy, so as their souls and loins may bless them. Would men do good to the needy, by these things, which they expend upon their lusts, they would have far more pleasure in the former, than the latter; especially in doing good to and winning souls, *even saving a soul from death.*

5. The pleasure one finds in communion with God; the wind blowing and the spices flowing out, influences of grace coming down from heaven on their souls, and they returning them again in duty, and the exercise of grace. All this is described in the Song, in these

words, "Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." Christ putting in his hand at the hole of the lock, and the soul opening to and embracing the welcome guest. All the world cannot produce such a pleasure as this, since it is a blessed intercourse with God, the fountain of all pleasures and the most glorious of all objects.

Finally, The pleasure that one enjoys in assurance of the Lord's love, and eternal salvation. This creates an unspeakable pleasure, even a thousand times more than if one were made sole emperor of the world. Now the saints, "Rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; receiving the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls." To think that God is their God, that heaven is theirs, and that come death when it will, it will consummate their happiness that shall never end; that their happiness for ever is secured; an assurance of this will give that pleasure, that nothing in all the world can be like it.

2. The properties of these pleasures of religion are such, that no other pleasures are comparable unto them. Consider,

1. They are refined and pure. "They are wines on the lees, fat things full of marrow, wines on the lees well refined." And so they must be the most exquisite ones, most powerfully and effectually pleasing the soul. All the pleasures of sin are gross and impure. They leave behind them a defilement in the soul and a sting in the conscience. So that however sweet they may be at the brim, they become bitter at the bottom. They leave a disgust behind them; a remorse and gnawing in the conscience, which often make men curse the day they ever tasted them.

1. They ever satisfy without loathing or disgust. All other pleasures are surfeiting, so that at length the heart turns upon them, and persons have so much of them, that for the present they can have no more. And therefore the pleasures of the world without intermission, would be painful. But there is no wearying in the pleasures of religion, let them be continued without interruption, there is no less pleasure in them, than was in the first tasting. They never grow stale, never sapless. Other pleasures are such when tasted; but these when drunk in the most plentiful measure, are longest in continuance.

3. They are most ready and near at hand. When the pleasures of sin are to be brought in from other objects, the drunkards and unclean persons from their companions in wickedness, the covetous man's from his wealth, the proud and ambitious man's from the esteem of others; the pleasures of religion rise from reflections

within a man's own soul. *A good man shall be satisfied from himself.* They arise from his God and his grace, which are not from him, which he enjoys as much when alone, as in company.

4. They are the strongest and most engaging pleasures. For they continue under the greatest hardships of the world, and even in the face of death. Where are the pleasures of the way of sin, when one is deprived of his wealth, health, and much more when lying on a deathbed, in view of eternity. They fall away then, they cannot abide the shock. But the pleasures of religion, spoiling of goods cannot remove, "For the saints know in themselves, that they have in heaven a better and an enduring substance." A prison cannot do it. "Paul and Silas sung there." Shameful treatment cannot, "For they rejoice in being counted worthy to suffer shame for Jesus' sake." And in the face of death these pleasures put a new song in their mouth. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Finally, These pleasures are lasting. Others are but vanishing shadows, or like a dream that passeth away. "The pleasures of sin are but for a season." What indeed are the pleasures of sin but as "the crackling of thorns under a pot, and the end of that mirth is sadness." But the pleasures of religion endure. "I will see you again, saith Jesus to his people, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." They begin in time and they are carried on through eternity, while there remains with others nothing but the bitter dregs of theirs.

5. Consider that religion helps a person to draw the greatest pleasure from created things which they can afford. No man enjoys the pleasure which created things afford, in that measure that the truly religious man does. "Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth." Thus in the way of religion, a man stands fairest for having pleasure in the comforts of life. For,

1. It makes a man enjoy what is allowed him from them, without fretting for the want of what is denied him. Religion teaches us "in whatsoever state we are, therewith to be content." How often do men's corruptions raising upon wants in the creature, embitter all that might be had from it; and the evil that is about it, squeezes out the sap of the good that is in it. But the renewed soul would find itself pleased.

2. It seasons and sweetens the pleasure of created things, while the saints reckon they have them with God's good-will and favour. This puts an additional sweetness in lawful enjoyments to them,

while others have the pain of thinking of God's anger coming along with, and annexed to the forbidden fruit.

3. Religion helps a man to take pleasure in those things which to a carnal man can yield none. Therefore, says Paul, "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." Moses preferred the afflictions of the people of God, to the pleasures of Pharaoh's court. So that the soul by means of religion, gathers figs of thorns, which can serve only to annoy the ungracious world.

4. Religion extends the fund of the man's pleasure over the whole world. It teaches a man to rejoice in the works of the Lord, and to notice the divine wisdom, power and goodness, which appear in the whole visible world. "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure in them." It is observable, that the pleasure which men who go on in the way of sin have from the creature, arises chiefly from artificial things invented by luxury, which betrays their loss of that innocent pleasure, arising from the works of God as he made them.

5. It gives a man a right of property in created things, so that he cannot but enjoy them with the greater pleasure, having a sense of his property in them.—*All things*, says Paul to believers, *are yours*. One can take more pleasure in a cottage of his own, than in a palace that is not his. It is a pleasure to be able to say of any good thing, it is my own. And that a gracious person may say of all things. Hence that paradox, "As having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

*Use.* Believe then that the way of religion is the most pleasant way. You have all ground to receive this testimony concerning it. And if it were received, it would engage you to say, *As for me, I will serve the Lord*. Alas! how sad is it, that people would in effect court their own destruction in the rugged ways of sin, and flee from their happiness in the pleasant ways of religion. Indeed we are in a valley of tears, but we might gain our salvation, with as little trouble to ourselves, as we take in compassing our own ruin. We come now,

In the second place, to speak of the peacefulness of the ways of religion. Peace is what every one desires. Even the end of war is peace. All seek it but few fall on the right way to it. The way of religion is the way of peace. Rom. iii. 17. Here I shall,

I. Inquire what peace is to be enjoyed in the way of religion.

II. I shall evince this to be the most peaceful way. I am then,

I. To inquire what peace is to be enjoyed in the way of religion.

There is a sevenfold peace to be found in religion.

1. Peace with God. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." There is a breach betwixt God and sinners, made by Adam's sin, and enlarged every day by new transgressions. The sinner bears a real enmity against God.—"The carnal mind is enmity against God." And God bears a legal enmity against the sinner. His word condemns him, says, *there is no peace to him*, but a cloud of wrath hangs over his head. "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." This is his case while in the state of sin, but as soon as he comes into the way of religion, the breach is made up, the cloud evanisheth, heaven smiles on him. He is counted the friend of God. *Ye are my friends*, said Jesus to his disciples. The communication betwixt heaven and him is opened, and he has access to God as a friend, while others as enemies are banished from his presence. Job xxxiii. 23—26.

2. Peace of conscience. *Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience.* Conscience is the best friend, or worst enemy, a person hath in all the world. An evil conscience pierceth much more severely than the sharpest arrow. "A wounded spirit who can bear?" It is a gnawing worm, nay, it tears the soul as a lion doth its prey. The guilt laid on it in the way of sin envenoms the arrow, and makes conscience gall the man. This is the serpent which bites him, who breaks over the hedge of God's laws. But in the way of religion conscience is pacified. The blood of Christ applied by faith draws out the sting. The conscience speaks peace to a regular walker with God. "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them." This rejoices the soul in midst of troubles, and feasts him in famine. And this inward peace is a sweet sauce to the bitterest dish which providence sets before a Christian; while an evil conscience, even in much outward prosperity, goes along with sinners, and is a dead fly in their best ointment.

3. Peace of heart by the soul's rest in God. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." Adam left all his children with a conscience full of guilt, a heart full of wants, even wants that cannot be numbered. They go to created things for the supply of these wants, but in doing so, they go through dry places, seeking rest and finding none. In the way of religion, a person comes to God in Christ, there the soul is at peace and rests in its centre. Here the soul is brought into the ark as the dove, sits down by the fountain of living waters, and is put in possession of the matchless treasure. Thus the believing heart enters into peace and rest, as having all its desire, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. What a disturbed heart had Hannah, but when she had poured out

her soul before the Lord and obtained the hope of a gracious answer, *she did eat and her countenance was no more sad.*

4. Peace of mind. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee." In the world there is a variety of events, no man knows what shall be. In the way of sin a person is kept fluctuating in that respect, tossed hither and thither, like a ship without a helm, left to the conduct of the wind and seas. Our Lord forbids this, and says, "Seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind." Be ye not like meteors in the air, tossed hither and thither, sometimes hoping, sometimes fearing, buoyed up with the one, cast down with the other, and so in continual agitation. When a person is not in the way of religion, there is no help against this; but in that way there is peace of mind, to be enjoyed upon solid grounds, and it is the native effect of peace and holiness. "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever." Behold the sure ground. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, thy God reigneth!" And hence ariseth the triumph of the saints, in times of trouble and in doubtful events, Psal. xlv. 1—4.

5. Peace with the creatures of God. "For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field; and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee." While man is at enmity with God, the whole creation stands in array against him. When he goes out of God's way, God's creatures lie in wait to attack him on the least signal given. Upon this, frogs enter Pharaoh's chambers, and worms devour Herod. He may say as Cain, every one that findeth me will slay me. But in the way of religion, he shall have them all his confederates, as all the servants run to serve him, whom their master delights to honour. Angels are their attendants and from the highest to the lowest creature, he may comfortably look on them, as knowing that all is his, because he is Christ's.

6. Peace, even prosperity, as the scripture useth that word. "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings." Religion is the true way to prosper, to get good success; for while a blasting curse attends the way of sin, a rich blessing is found in the way of religion. It is the way to promote the prosperity of the soul, even as the soul of Gaius prospered. Loose living ruins a man's spiritual state. Living lusts prey like vermin on the soul, deface the beauty and eat out the life of the better part. The soul is the man and while it is going back, though

the bodily health and wealth abound, he prospers no more than the rickety child, whose head grows big, but the body decays.

True religion also is the way to prosper in every other respect. "The godly man shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that bringeth forth his fruit in season; his leaf shall not wither. And whatsoever he doth shall prosper." Outward prosperity indeed is not so annexed either to the way of sin, or of religion, as to determine in which of them a person is. But there is a promise for it in the way of religion, which shall be accomplished as far as it shall serve to God's glory and their good. "Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left riches and honour." But there is no such promise respecting the way of sin. Besides where prosperity comes in the way of religion, there is a blessing in it by virtue of the promise, and it shall prove to the person's real good. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." But in the way of sin prosperity is attended with a curse, that hath dismal effects for their destruction. *The prosperity of fools shall destroy them.* It was the saying even of a heathen, No body is happy till after death. And we know the end crowns the work. How often do we see it verified in this life, "He that walketh uprightly walketh surely: but he that perverteth his ways shall be known?" How often does the stone sinfully moved roll down on them that moved it. "And when a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." So that the way of holiness will always get the preference sooner or later. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together; and the end of the wicked shall be cut off."

Lastly, Eternal peace. What crowns the peacefulness of the way of religion is, that the end of that way is peace, while the end of the other is destruction. The godly man dies in peace, though he die in the field of battle. This made Balaam wish "to die the death of the righteous. They enter into peace; they rest in their beds." They shall rise again in peace. "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake, and sing, ye that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." They shall enjoy the most profound peace for ever in another world, a peace that cannot be interrupted. "For the gates of the city shall not be shut at all by day, and there shall be no night there." Now in the way of religion, this peace is attained. We are naturally strangers to peace. Wicked men have none, and they grasp at it without a covenant right. But a soul

coming in the way of religion, is on the highway of peace ; nay, one no sooner takes the first step in that way, but he enters into peace. " Being justified by faith, ye have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." However terrible the storms have been, faith apprehending the blood of Christ produceth peace according to its measure.

This peace is also maintained by religion. " Great peace have they that love thy law ; and nothing shall offend them." Nothing can marr the peace of a saint but sin. " Peace, said Jesus, I leave with you, my peace I give unto you : not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." The world may rob the Christian of his external peace, but his supernatural, internal and eternal peace they cannot reach ; these may be enjoyed even in the midst of war and trouble. " These things, saith Jesus, I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation ; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." The holy steadfast walk with God will have its effect. *For the work of righteousness shall be peace.* And no sin having access to them in heaven, their state there will be without the least disturbance. We now proceed,

II. To evince this to be the most peaceful way. What was said on the pleasantness of this way does manifest this. I shall only add a few things. In the way of sin men may have some stolen sherds of peace, but no entire, no solid peace can be found in it. It is too divine a thing to be found any where, but in the way of faith and holiness. May it not be said to sinners as Jehu said to the king's messenger, *What hast thou to do with peace ?*

1. What peace can one have in the way of sin, while God that made him is angry with him. *God is angry with the wicked every day.* All the peace which earth can afford, while heaven is frowning, is but a pleasant dream, a short lived fancy, a fabric beautiful without a foundation, that will fall to the ground with a hideous noise ere long.

But O what peace in the favour of the God of peace ! This peace is confined to the way of religion. There the God of peace is their God, and from a throne of grace breathes peace and good-will towards the creature.

2. What peace to a man that is a stranger to the Mediator of peace. " But those mine enemies, saith he, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me." Against them, you see heaven is farther incensed by their slighting the Prince of Peace. But the way of religion, the Mediator himself is *our peace*. And the emanations of the divine perfections, all meet

to carry on the peace of the saints, and he who out of Christ is a consuming fire, is through him a reconciled Father.

What peace to a person, who is without the covenant of peace? What hath such an one to do with it, that remains in a state of war against God? But they that are in the way of religion are taken up into the chariot of the covenant, and are making away to eternal peace.

Lastly, What peace can there be so long as stinging guilt remains in the conscience, unsatisfied desires in the heart, while anxieties and fears for which, in the way in which men are, there is no cure, remain in the breast; and divers lusts are reigning and raging within? To those in this state there can be no peace. But O the profound peace, where the conscience is purged, the heart come to its rest, the mind satisfied, and the reign of sin broken.

*Use 1.* Of information. This teaches us,

1. That religion is the true way to make a person happy, as leading them to the greatest pleasure and peace. Would you be happy, then be religious. This is the surest, the most compendious way, nay, the only way to happiness. To this the poor have as ready access as the rich, and we need not go far for it; "For the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is the word of faith which we preach, That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Come hither, then, and thy soul shall find a satisfying rest.

2. Religion is the best cement of society. It is that which makes all relations comfortable by the pleasure and peace which it brings along with it. Were there more religion amongst us in the world, there would not be so many jarrings, it would bring in a blessed harmony, Isa. xi. 6. It is the low degree of practical religion among men, that occasions so many contentions, breaches, and discords, in states, churches, and families.

Religion is the best choice in the world for young or old. "It is the one thing needful, the better part, that shall not be taken from us." The world is a valley of tears and trouble. We are born weeping, and choose what way we will, we will meet with crosses and disasters. Every one needs something to allay his sorrows and seeks it also. Some go to one thing for it and some to another, most go the wrong way. But religion is the best allay that is to be found, and there is nothing in all the world that will correct the bad air that blows in it, in the way that religion will do. Its pleasure and peace will stand those shocks, before which all others will vanish.

4. The opinion of the unpleasantness and trouble of religion is a

most groundless prejudice. This mistake makes many stand back from it. This makes it especially look strange and frightful to young persons, whose years call for what is pleasant and gay. But O consider that in calling you to a religious life, we call you not to bid adieu to all pleasure and peace, but only to change your pleasure and peace, a meaner one for a higher and more noble one ; a less for a greater, an unsound one for a sound one, a short-lived for a lasting, even an everlasting one.

Therefore deceive not yourselves with pleasant dreams, shadows and airy baubles, while that which is solid, powerful and lasting is before you.

5. Pleasantness is a very desirable thing. It is one of the great motives to bring people to the way of religion, and it is an attendant of the good old way. It is what all men naturally do desire, but what few attain in a right manner. When pleasantness is drawn from the way of sin, it is a most ensnaring hook. But happy are they that have most of it in the ways of God.

6. Peace is a very desirable thing also, and worthy to be followed. It is another of the motives that bring persons to the way of religion. It is the beauty of society and ought to be followed in the several subjects of it. *Follow peace with all men*, says the apostle. —This calls for peace in our families, and in our neighbourhoods; peace in the state, and peace in the church. It is a pleasant and a profitable thing. Psalm cxxxiii. It is really a wonder that the duty of seeking the peace of the church, should have so little weight with the consciences of men, but that all things tending that way should be so suspicious, when Christ and his apostles so often urge it. Our Lord is the Prince of Peace, the church the society of peace, religion the way of peace; the godly are the meek the quiet in the land. And nothing pleases enemies better than to see the church broken in pieces. The farther from peace the farther from the power of godliness, 1 Cor. iii. 3, 4.

Must we then be for peace at any rate? No. Gold may be bought too dear and so may peace. Behold the boundaries. "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." We must give any thing for peace except truth and holiness. "Buy the truth and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction and understanding." But is not truth betrayed by maintaining peace with such as differ from us in some particular point of truth and holiness? Many think so indeed to the breaking of the peace of this church; but the apostle thinks and determines otherwise, Rom. xiv. 22. Philip. iii. 16. But these men who being

touched in the tender point of their own interest, sacrifice the peace of the church to it, and for their own defence break over the hedge, and carry a foul conscience with them. They might learn a useful lesson from the ermin, a beast that has a very precious fur, which it will by no means defile. The hunters therefore lay mud and clay across the way, and then hound the dogs at it. It runs from them, till it come to that mud, but then rather than stain its fur by cross-it, it will turn back among the dogs and die.

*Use 2.* Of exhortation. Be exhorted then all of you to the study of religion. Leave the way of sin and folly and cleave to the way of wisdom and religion. Lay aside your prejudices against it, and come taste and see the pleasure and peace of true religion.

1. You that have entered on the way of religion, come press forward in it, and you shall taste that pleasure and peace that are in it. Cease not to make advances in the way, till you find it so in your own experience. And if you thus press on, you shall say I have found pleasure and peace indeed.

2. You that are strangers in heart to religion, embrace it now. Let the beauty of its ways draw you towards it. Satan has long kept you in the dark about it, told you there is no pleasure nor peace in it. But O believe the testimony of God and those that have tried it, who tell you that of all ways it is the most pleasant and the most peaceful. All you then that are lovers of a pleasant life turn in hither and take this way. Come you that would have pleasure, here is the most pleasant way in the world. Would you spend your days pleasantly make religion the great business of them. Are you anxious to be delivered from a life of grief, heaviness, and sorrow; to have the scales turned, and delight, joy, and satisfaction to come in their room; here is the way. All you also that would have a peaceful life, come in hither. Are there any whose peace is broken by outward trouble, that can get no more peace in the world than a lily among thorns? Any whose peace is broken by inward troubles, going mourning without the sun, broken with God's terrors, harrassed with Satan's temptations, stung with a guilty conscience? Here is a sovereign balm for you, for all your outward sores, and an effectual cure for all your inward pains. Religion will ease you. Faith and holiness will put you all right.

But before I come to the motives, I must remove the impediments, by answering some plausible objections.

Objection 1. Does not common observation tell us that they who keep themselves entirely loose from religion, have a far more pleasant life, than the strict followers of religion? Answer. There is one grand prejudice against this, which may justly call us to exa-

mine the matter more narrowly, namely, that at this rate, the life that is nearest that of a beast is the most pleasant life. But this is a principle of which human reason cannot but be ashamed. Therefore, I say, the common observation thus determining is too superficial to be depended upon. It determines by sensible appearances, and noise. But do you not observe that the shallow brooks make greater noise than the deep waters, and it is not your most exquisite pleasures, but the smaller ones that are discovered by laughter; so the pleasures of religion are above that airy gaiety that appears in such men. To make a right judgment here, you must compare the solid joys of religion, with the airy joys of fools. You must perceive and compare, the peace of mind that accompanies the pleasures of the one, with those twinges of conscience that accompany the other, and you will soon see that you have been out in your reckoning.

Obj. 2. Are not religious persons often found the most sorrowful and dejected ones? Answer. There are great differences as to the natural tempers of some, and grace does not take away but correct these natural dispositions. There are some naturally cheerful that are religious, and some such who are irreligious; there are some religious persons of a more heavy spirit, and so there are of the other sort. Why should religion be blamed, on the account of those who have what is displeasing in their way, not from religion, but from what is common to men. Again, the sorrows of the religious many times flow from their stepping out of the way. And when persons leave the way of pleasantness in less or more, it is no wonder their sorrow be proportionable, falling into the lions' dens and mountains of leopards. Yet it will be found that the religious heart which knows its own bitterness, with which others are unacquainted, hath also those joys with which strangers do not intermeddle. "A wise man feareth and departeth from evil; but the fool rageth and is confident.

Obj. 3. What pleasure can there be in many of the exercises of religion, as repenting, mourning, mortification, watching, and the like? Answer, 1. However little there be, there will always be as much as in many of the ways of sin, as envy, wrath, malice, anxiety, fretting, murmuring, striving against the will of providence, and the like. 2. There is a pleasure at least at the root of these exercises of religion, which springs upward in solid joy. "Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted." Yea, there is a pleasure in them, while they go on and prosper in a person's hand. It is a pleasure to a gracious soul to find the heart loosed from the bands of wickedness, to get victory over a corruption, and to stand its

ground against temptation. Godly sorrow and joy are not inconsistent. Hence the command is, *rejoice with trembling*.

Obj. 4. But is not trouble the ordinary companion of religion? Answer, Choose what way you will; the storm of trouble blows so vehemently in the world, that you can never altogether escape it. But religion brings peace in the midst of trouble. It removes inward troubles of conscience, it brings the heart and mind to rest in God and acquiesce in the disposals of providence, and makes a person inwardly easy, while under outward troubles. "In the world," says Jesus, ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Yea, as the well cultivated field bids fairest for the best crop, so the most afflicted Christians have commonly the greatest incomes of peace and joy, 2 Cor. i. 5. and xii. 10.

Obj. 5. I have tried religion and have not found it so. Answer, Since others have tried it as well as you and find it so, you must conclude it is so, though you have not found it. Look into thyself, and thou wilt find the cause of it there. There are many that try the ways of religion with their old nature unrenewed, how can it but be heavy to them. Some try them in the way and under the influence of the covenant of works, not in the way of believing: no wonder then that they complain, since they mistake the yoke of the law for the sweet yoke of Christ. Some are but entering upon the way of religion, and no wonder they feel it hard going up the hill of Zion, who have not been used to such kind of travelling. Some are so inconsistent in their religious endeavours, that they never take it but by fits and starts, they never inure themselves to the life of faith, and a close walk with God; what wonder then if they continue strangers to the pleasures of religion. Some are so superficial they seldom if ever enter into the spirit of it, in inward spiritual worship and communion with God, and while they still stand by the outskirts of it, and do not dip into religion, it is no wonder they fall short of the pleasure of it.

Take for instance the duty of prayer, in which God's people have found much peace and pleasure. Yet how can it be so to one who goes to it with his taste quite vitiated with the luscious sweets of sin, who makes his address to God, purely as a criminal to his judge and dare not call him Father, who has done with it, ere it be well begun, whose heart is wandering hither and thither in the time of it, or who content themselves with the lip labour of it? These objections removed, consider these motives following.

*Motive 1.* Embrace the way of religion, that pleasant and peaceful way: for whatever can make a way pleasant and peaceful is to be found in it. Consider here,

1. It is the King's highway, not a by-path, Isa. xxxv. 8. It is the way marked out and determined by the King of heaven, for mortals to walk in towards eternal bliss. The Father has appointed it by his eternal decree, Eph. ii. 10. The Son of God in man's nature trod every step, and marked it out by the prints of his feet, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps. The Spirit of the Lord not only points it out to sinners, but guides his people to it and on in it.

2. It is the way, the only way to Immanuel's land. "For with-out holiness no man shall see the Lord." It leads to the new Jerusalem, the heavenly city, the celestial paradise, and has such a close connection with it, that they who are once set fair on the way are said to be come to these already, Heb. x. 22, 23. And were it otherwise ever so unpleasant, this is sufficient to denominate it a pleasant way. It is a pleasant way that ends so pleasantly, especially considering that the opposite way of sin leads to the chambers of death.

3. The pleasant land to which it leads is always within the reach of a traveller's eye, from the first step to the last upon it. "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty; they shall behold the land that is very far off." Faith embracing Christ and all his salvation, fixes its eye on heaven at the very first step. And if the traveller lose sight of it, at any time, he may impute it to himself, the weakness of his eye that cannot see afar off, the mists and fogs that arise from the forbidden ground, to which he often turns aside. The Lord of the land allows the travellers to keep it in their view all along. Like Moses, *they may have respect unto the recompense of reward*. And it is a city set on an hill that cannot of itself be hid from those that are on the way.

4. It is a plain straight way. The great direction in this way is, "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eye-lids look straight before thee. This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." The turning and winding way, where travellers are ready to lose themselves, is the way of the crooked serpent. But blessed are they that keep straight, for they are in the pleasant way to blessedness, Psal. cxix. 1. One lust may be contrary to another, so one error to another, that makes the way of sin a crooked uneven way. But all graces, duties, and truths, centre in God in Christ, and so lead to one and the same point.

5. It is a clean way, there is not a foul step in this way, and the unclean cannot walk in it, Isa. xxxv. 8. There are on every hand mires into which many fall and perish; but they are no part of the

way of religion, but the way of sin. "Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way." As long as the soul keeps this way, it remains sweet and clean, and in a florid beauty, lovely in the eyes of God, and of men whose eyes are opened. It is true the world loaths it, but that is as swine do a clean palace, to which they prefer the dunghill. But it is the godlike, heavenly way.

6. Though there be difficulties in the way, yet, there is sufficient help at hand to carry a man through the most difficult step. "My grace, saith Jesus, is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." God lays no burden upon his people, but what he allows them strength to bear. If he orders them to go through the fire or water, he hath promised to be with them, and to keep them, Isa. xliii. 2. If they be to swim through a sea of blood, he will bear up their head. And as their afflictions abound, so he makes his grace abound too.

7. It is a well frequented way. It is true, not so frequented as the broad way, in which the devil's multitude goes: yet not solitary. There is a cloud of witnesses hath gone before on that way, and it is by the footsteps of that flock we are now called to go. And there is never wanting some generous souls, who trample on things below, and aspire to the things above.

8. There are inns by this way for the refreshing of the traveller, whenever he is disposed to make use of them. Gospel ordinances and duties are these inns designed for their refreshment, that they may go on the more vigorously. "He brought me to the banquetting house, and his banner over me was love." And never were inns by a way more acceptable to a weary traveller, than the word, sacraments and prayer, have been to the saints.

Lastly, There is pleasant company by this way. Even the society of the saints makes it very pleasant. The communication of sorrows and of joys, and communion of prayers are most refreshful. But the society and communion with the Lord of the land allowed to the travellers by the way is the top of the pleasure. It was observed of Cæsar, that he ordered not his soldiers to go, but desired them to come with him on such an expedition. And that is the very voice that sounds in this way. "Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon." They go with him in his chariot of the blessed covenant.

*Motive 2.* Let the pleasure and peace in religion, engage and determine your souls to that way. For consider these are the very things which you are seeking after, and which you cannot but seek, you cannot cease to desire, more than you can cease desiring and

seeking to be happy. Why come you not then to the place where they are pointed out to be? It is observable that the gospel invitations are framed to answer the natural desires of men after pleasure and peace, or happiness. You are like men in a mist going up and down seeking these things, saying, "Who will shew us any good?" The gospel answers, here, here it is. "Ho! every one that thirsteth come ye to the waters. Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And yet they do not find it, but still hold on their old cry in the mist; and the true reason is, they look upon the gospel answer as a mock, an idle tale, and therefore the blame of men's ruin is laid on unbelief, though they will not believe that to be the cause, and that is a part of the disease. "For who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?"

*Motive 3.* Consider the galling disappointments with which you have met, in seeking pleasure and peace otherwise than in the way of religion. Would men consider the cold entertainment with which they have so often met from the world, and in the way of sin; how often in vain they have begged at these doors, and in vain pursued such things, they would turn their backs upon them, they would give over the chase and say with the prodigal, "I perish here with hunger. I will arise and go to my Father."

How often have you found the pleasure and peace got in that way, mean, empty, trifling, sinking far below expectation. "Vanity of vanities, vanity of vanities, all is vanity." These mountains afar off and in expectation, have turned to mole hills when near and in fruition. The deceitful creature and deceitful lusts have promised great things, but performed always meanly; so that were we not bewitched with the love of them, we had come to that long ere now, never to credit them more. But alas! "Ephraim is like a silly dove without heart: they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria." Have not these pleasures and peace been unsatisfying while you had them? They could not fill your heart, more than you could fill your hand with grasping dreams and shadows. You behoved still to have more, they could not perfectly still the cryings of the hungry soul within.

Have they not been short lived? It shall even be as when an hungry man dreameth, and behold he eateth; but he awaketh and his soul is empty. They have died among your hands, and melted like snow before the sun, or gone out like the foam on the water.

How often in this pursuit, when you have got the pleasure, have you not lost the peace? When you have climbed for the forbidden fruit and got it, has it not stuck in your throat, that you could not

enjoy it. *For whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him.* This was sadly exemplified in the case of Judas. Has not the gratifying of lusts so disobliged your conscience, that it has broken your peace, and marred the promised feast or the pleasure? O wretched disappointment, where plucking the rose one gets a thorn run into his hand.

How often in this pursuit have you lost both the pleasure and the peace you sought, and in their stead received displeasure and disturbance? "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercies." Many times striking at the rock for water, fire flashing in the face is all that is got; and sucking the breasts of the creature, blood is wrung out instead of milk. Is not this a bad reward which sin and the world give us for our love? Is not our labour ill bestowed upon them? "Behold is it not of the Lord of hosts, that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?"

Oh! sirs, shall not these disappointments in this way prevail to cause you turn to the way of religion? Will you still hold on to cry there for pleasure and peace, where it is told you a thousand times they are not there to give you? Hath God told you they are to be had in the way of religion, and experience told you that you seek them in vain elsewhere, and yet will you not try religion?

*Motive 4.* You shall find both pleasure and peace in the way of religion. Not only are they there, but you shall find them there, according to the measure of your keeping the way of religion. "Hearken, says God, diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." What you have been so long disappointed of in the way of sin, you will find there. The fountain is an open fountain, its flowing stream is never dry. "Whosoever, saith Jesus, drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life."

Come here, and you shall find pleasure, refined, satisfying, strong, lasting pleasure. You are invited to this feast, and God calls not sinners to an empty table. "O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him." The Psalmist speaks his own experience in this matter when he says, "Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's." The way of religion is the same as it was then, the treasures are as full as ever; God's bounty is not dried up more than it was then. "Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear." If there be any change it is to the better, even so far as the gospel dispensation

excels that of the law, in the more plentiful effusion of the Spirit, greater light, and familiarity by the Spirit of adoption.

Here also you will find peace, peace with God, peace internal, eternal, and external, as much as shall be for God's honour and your own good. Behold the blessing poured on the head of the travellers in this way. "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God." The black cloud hangs over the way of sin, and sinners have the dark side of the hill, on which heaven lowers continually. But O happy these that walk in the way of religion. They have the sunny side of the hill. If the clouds of outward trouble drop there, yet while it rains it shines, and that is comfortable.

Now is not Christ's offer as good as that of sin and the world? Our Lord offers you pleasure and peace too, and he will surely give them, he will not disappoint you. And will you not fall in with it? It is but the blasphemy of the wicked heart, to say he is an austere man. It is not consistent with his honour, to suffer his creatures to be losers at his hand, or to bring them into a worse condition than he found them. "God is not ashamed to be called their God for he hath provided for them a city.

*Motive 5.* The pleasure and peace to be found in the way of religion are vastly preferable to all that is to be found in the way of sin, as bread is to husks, or to a stone, or to ashes. This is evident from what was already said, on the third general head. They are truly satisfying, for they are suited to the nature of the soul, which is spiritual and immortal, and can never be satisfied with the pleasures of sense, which are fading. But the pleasures of religion are like the soul itself, spiritual, fit to feed, delight, and perfect the soul, and they endure for ever.

*Motive 6.* The pleasures of religion are inseparably attended with peace. The way of religion is not only sweet but safe. So says the text. One may perhaps find pleasure in the way of sin, but there is no safety in it. The most pleasant cup that can be found in the way of sin is full of deadly poison. "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant; but he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell." There is a sting comes along with that honey, and the smiles are killing. But where one is feasted with the pleasure of religion they may partake without fear in that respect, for there can be no death in the pot. Here pleasure and peace, sweetness and safety are mingled with one another.

*Motive 7.* You shall find eternal pleasure and peace at the end of this way. "Thou wilt shew me the path of life; in thy presence

there is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Hereby you will find them on the other side of the grave, you will carry them along with you to another world, or rather you will go to them there in their perfection. For all of that kind here is but the first fruits, and a pledge of what is to be had in heaven. There the saints shall enjoy the most refined pleasure in a perfection which we cannot now comprehend, and withal the most profound peace, without the least touch of uneasiness while eternity lasts.

Now I have delivered my message unto you, respecting the pleasure and peace of God's way. I have recommended religion unto you, and laboured to remove the prejudice of unpleasantness which Satan and the world lay it under, intending to dress it up in such a frightful figure, as to make you afraid of it. I now would ask you,

1. Do you now believe? John xvi. 31. Do you credit the report of the gospel, respecting the way of religion? Do you believe it to be the true way of pleasure and peace? I am afraid the hearts of some do look on what has been said, but as pulpit flourishes, and idle tales. But what is that, but to disbelieve the word of God, for nothing can be said higher, than what our text itself says on this matter. I tell you, if you be not cured of your unbelief, you will be cured of it, when you come to be in the situation of the rich man, "who when in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments."

2. Are you now resolved to take this way or not? What will you do, will you hold on the broad way with the multitude, and not know the way of peace? Or will you now resolve to turn your back on them and it, and go by the footsteps of the flock? I would say to you as the prophet Gad said unto David, "Now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me." Sirs, your all is lying at stake. Your state for eternity turns upon this point. Take heed what you do. Is there any one among us who will say in their practice still, "It is vain to serve God. For I have loved strangers, and after them will I go." Such persons have no taste for the pleasures of religion, but are resolved to make the best which they can of the pleasure and peace in the way of sin. Then I must tell you, That you are left without excuse, and are not only losers but despisers of the promised land. For I must protest in behalf of him that sent me, that none among us, young nor old shall have it to say, that they knew not that religion was a pleasant life, but that the veil is drawn off her face, that whosoever would, might see her loveliness and attractive beauty.

I must also tell you that in this you sin against displayed love and good-will. God has not been speaking to you from Sinai with

thunder and terror, but from Sion, with the still small voice. You are not driven with whips into the way, nor dragged with chains of iron, but drawn with cords of love, and yet you will not come.

Therefore I say finally, that by this you do judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life. And therefore I declare that if you do not repent you shall never see life, but wrath will be your portion. And it will be dear bought pleasure and peace now, at the rate of everlasting burnings, and roarings under the lashes of revenging justice.

But now if there be any who are resolved to go this way, their question will be, what course shall I take to find the pleasure and peace of religion?

1. Close with Christ the Mediator of peace, in the way of the covenant of peace through his blood. Come up into the chariot in the way of believing. This is the only true foundation of the pleasure and peace of religion.

2. Be still going to Christ in a way of believing for the supplies of the Spirit of holiness, to carry on the renewing of your nature. For the more your nature be renewed and the old nature crucified, the more pleasure and peace you will find in religion.

3. Grow in love to the Lord, by believing God to be your God in Christ, believing what he hath done for you in the great work of redemption, and what he hath prepared for you that love him.

4. Labour to starve your lusts, and to root out the love of the world. "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof," 1 John ii. 15—17. As long as the gust and relish of earthly things is too quick and lively, the gust of religion will be flat and dull. A heart drenched in sensuality, or any excessive love to created things, will be like wet wood, not easily fired from heaven.

5. Strive to be spiritual in every duty, aiming at communion with God in religious exercises, studying to do whatever you do from right principles, in a right manner, and to a right end, for in these consist the life of religion, Song iv. 16. and v. 11.

6. Be a constant close walker with God, making religion your business; this will turn it to be a pleasure unto you; and the more you go on in it without interruption, it will be the more pleasant.

7. Go often to the fountain to wash, and to make much use of an imputed righteousness. "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." This is the way to keep the conscience sweet and pure, to get the peace of God to rule in your hearts.

8. Believe the promises of strength and furniture for duty, and

to go to the duty upon the credit of the promise. "This is to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

Lastly, Be heavenly in your frame and conversation. "For our conversation, says Paul, is in heaven." Keep the other world much in your view. Live in the hope of drinking of the rivers of pleasure. Believe the promises about these things, and let it be your main scope and end to get forward thither. So life will be blessed and death no terror. Or if you would have the directions in one word, Live by faith, and then you will find the pleasure and peace of religion. Amen.

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*Ettrick, Oct. 2, 1729.*

THOSE THAT ARE IN CHRIST ARE DEAD TO THE WORLD.

### SERMON XXV.

COLOSSIANS iii. 3.

*For ye are dead.*

THESE words are a reason of the preceding exhortation, to set our affections on things above, not on things upon the earth. We must not set our hearts on, nor by any means seek the things on earth as our happiness; *for we are dead*, and the dead have laid down all their worldly care in the grave, and have no more to do with this world. Now all that are in Christ are dead, yea buried with him and risen again, chap. ii. 12. and iii. 1. And of these only the text speaks, as for others they are yet alive.

Question. In what sense are believers said to be dead?

There is a natural death consisting in the separation of the soul from the body; of this the apostle speaks not. A moral death consisting in a separation of certain qualities from the soul, which are the principles of action according to their kind, which being removed, the soul acts no more in that way, than a man morally dead moves and acts. There is a twofold moral life competent to man. One in Adam, another in Christ; the former our natural stock, the latter the supernatural one. In these, all men, as branches, live a life agreeable to the nature of the stock to which they are united. In the former all natural men are living, in the latter all believers. Those who are in Christ are cut out of the natural stock, and so