

A DOOR UNTO EVERLASTING LIFE

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READER - I have always thought that good books (being silent teachers of goodness) are the best part of a man's furniture in his house, and the choicest goods of a commonwealth. Yet, many are so far from reading, that they revile them, and employ their wicked wits in jeering whatsoever tends to make them wise to salvation. The profaneness and corruption of this present age is too visible. Many who bear the Name of Christ are enemies of the cross of Christ, and of the power of Christianity. They are even sunk below beasts in enormous sensuality, and whoever doth not approve of, yes, and practice such detestable wickedness, such beastly and satanical sins as they do; whoever is not metamorphosed into a devil incarnate, is reproached by them as a devilish hypocrite.

With such this plain piece will find no cordial respect, no practical entertainment; it will be as an unsavory breath in their nostrils. Yet if thou art serious and solicitous for savory and wholesome truths; if to have the kingdom of Christ set up in thy heart and life be that thou dost breathe after; if thou be really sick of sin and sick of love for Him who is altogether lovely; if thou be one of Zion's mourners, one whose heart is shaken with devils, scruples, and fears concerning the condition of thy soul; if thou be one of Zion's citizens, one whose conversation is in heaven,

and wouldest have thy heart and affections more elevated, and set upon the things above, I am confident the ensuing treatises will be grateful and welcome to thee. The very subject matter of them will allure thee to read them, and I question not, but through divine blessing, this little book will be a great blessing unto thee. Let not any despise it because it is destitute of those elaborate and rhetorical flourishes wherewith many pieces are beautified, for the design of it is not to please the fancy, but to profit the soul, and to warm the heart. Sure I am that what profits the soul, and makes a Christian more devout and pious, is to be valued far above what only tickles the fancy of the curious.

Read it therefore, yea, read it seriously. It may be thou may find something that may refresh thy heart and do thy soul good. What human frailties thou discernest in this small piece (which doubtless are not a few), pity them, and so much the more pray for me that God would pardon and amend all the errors both of my heart and life. Good reader, I shall detain thee no longer in the porch, but only beg of thee, that when thou dost begin to read this book, thou wouldst at least send up some short petitions to that God from whom all our fruit is found, that by His blessing upon it (without which thou may read it often over, and yet profit little or nothing by reading it), it may distil as the precious dew upon the tender herb. May it make thy barren soul more fruitful, thy treacherous soul more faithful, thy weak soul more powerful, thy

troubled soul more joyful. It may pour thee out a blessing of light for thy understanding, a blessing of life for thy affections, a blessing of peace for thy conscience, and a blessing of joy and gladness for thy heart and soul; in the attaining whereof I shall think my pains well bestowed, and my labors abundantly recompensed, especially if thou wilt gratify with thy remembrance at the throne of grace, him whose utmost design and ambition is to be serviceable in promoting the eternal interest of souls.

THE FIRST TREATISE

Containing Several Arguments For LEAVING SIN AND LIVING HOLILY

It is a very sad, but yet an apparent truth, that there is no creature in the world so merciless and mischievous to itself as man is. For whereas everything naturally desires, or tends to its own preservation, man unweariedly endeavours his own destruction. He becomes his own murderer and executioner, by loving vice, and hating virtue, by forsaking Christ, to follow the world, by poisoning his soul to please his senses, by leaving the safe and pleasant way of holiness, to walk in the dangerous and destructive way of wickedness. Wicked men turn their backs upon God, and are ruled by sin and Satan at their pleasure. Such profane beasts are many. They glory in their shame. Like Sodom, they carried their sin in their foreheads, oathing it, telling of their cheats, how many they have defrauded, and of their whoredoms, how many they have defiled. Alas, they have not so much as one grain of grace in their hearts, nor the least sign of holiness in their lives. Though, by the ministry of the word, they be called upon to be holy, yet the more they are called unto holiness, the further do they run into all sin and wickedness.

Yea, God's own children make but little progress in holiness. The estate of many is a declining estate. They have lost the savouriness of their spirits, and their delight in communion with God. They are weak in resisting temptations to sin, from the devil, the world, and the flesh. They are often overcome by sensuality, pride, worldliness, envy, etc. Their heart is less watched, their tongue less bridled, and their conversation more vain than formerly. What then more needful, than to have before our eyes such arguments, as are most likely to deter us from sin, to prevail with us to loath and leave all our lusts and transgressions, and to walk humbly and holily before God all our days. May the Lord open our eyes, to see the baseness of sin, and sanctify our hearts, that we may never welcome nor embrace it anymore, but may grow holier every day than the other. So living holily, may we die happily, and after death, reign with God gloriously forever.

In order to realize this, let these following considerations sink into our hearts. We must be holy, because the Lord our God is holy. "Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy" (Lev. 19:2). "It is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy" (1 Pet. 1:16). God's holiness is the great ground and cause of our holiness, and the motive of all obedience. "Let them praise Thy great and terrible Name, for it is holy" (Psalm 99:3). "Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at His holy hill; for the Lord our God is holy" (Psalm 99:9). We are not bound to be essentially

and infinitely holy, as God is holy; yet are we bound to be perfectly holy for our state, as God is holy. Thou callest God Father, and if He be thy Father indeed, thou wilt be like Him in holiness. You will both have the same nature for likeness. Thou readest a Holy Bible, servest an holy God, pretendest to be led by a Holy Spirit. Oh, what shame and trembling then should cover thee, if thou be unholy! Thou pretendest to love God, and why art thou not an imitator of God? Is it not a known saying, likeness makes love? Likeness is the cause of love, and an effect of it. If thou wouldst have God to love thee, thou must labor to be like Him. If thou remain unholy, think with thyself, how can an, infinitely holy God delight in such an unholy wretch, in such an uncomely and loathsome soul, in such a vile abominable sinner? How unfit am I for His love and embracements! If unholy, thou wilt not endure the purity and presence of God, nor will God's purity and presence endure thee.

We must leave sin and live holily, because to sin is very unsuitable work; and very unbecoming to Christians: for (1) Are we not strangers, and therefore to abstain from whatsoever is contrary to holiness? "Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (I Peter 2:11). We are traveling to an higher country, where pure souls breathe in an uninfected air and are partakers of heavenly visions to the full. Oh, do not by living unholily, belie your great and glorious hopes. "Every man that hath this

hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:3). Show yourselves to be the right seed of the woman, by flying from the face of the old serpent, and abhorring his image. Strangers must not be meddlers; oh, meddle not with sin, but put off the old man with his deceitful lusts. Trouble not yourselves with anything that will hinder you in your journey heavenward. You expect a room among the angels, and will you live as slaves in the world? You are in the way to Canaan, why then are you in love with the flesh-pots of Egypt? "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1).

(2) Are not your relative conditions changed? Once ye were Satan's slaves, now God's servants. Once in darkness, now children of the light. Once the devil's factors, now Christ's followers. Are your relative conditions thus changed, and shall not your work be altered? "Ye are all the children of the light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober" (1 Thess. 5:5-6). "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance; but as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation" (1 Pet. 1:14-15). Is not sin the devil's creature? His old sorceress? And will ye have any communion with it? Oh, ye children of the Most High!

(3) What does baptism into the name of Christ stand for? Why were ye baptized? Was it not for the renunciation of all sin, and the mortification of every lust? "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:2-4). So often as thou hearest thy own name, call to mind the covenant betwixt God and thee in baptism. As God promised on His part to be thy God, so thou promised to forsake His enemies, to dedicate thyself to His service, to obediently keep God's holy will and commandments, and to walk in the same all the days of thy life. Surely it is a most wretched forgetfulness, to forget thyself to be a Christian. Live holily, because the wicked lives of Christians are far more sinful than the wicked lives of pagans and heathens: for

(1) The sins of pagans are only against natural light; but the sins of Christians, both against natural and supernatural. And to sin, not only against a natural conscience, but an enlightened conscience, is a great aggravation of sin. Was it not an aggravation of Solomon's sin, that "his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice"? (1 Kings 11:9).

(2) The sins of pagans may have fairer excuses than others; they may plead in another sense than the apostle. How can we call on Him, of whom we have not heard? And how shall we hear without a preacher? (Rom. 10:14). The sun, moon, and stars were but dumb preachers. Had we, O God, heard the joyful sound, we would have received it gladly. We never knew that thy Son was crucified, for had we known it, we would have believed in Him. We would have taken Him for our rightful Sovereign, and obeyed His laws; but what will ye pretend? Can ye say, ye never heard of heaven and hell? Never heard of faith, repentance, and remission of sins preached? Never heard a strict and circumspect course of life pressed upon you? Did ye not know that drunkenness, cursing, etc. were sins? That piety, sobriety, and righteousness was your duty? Why then do ye the one, and leave the other undone? Surely, if heathens shall be damned, wicked Christians cannot think to be saved.

(3) The sins of heathens bring not so much dishonour to God and Christ, as our sins do. We pretend greater holiness than they, and shall our holiness better than theirs, as if the death and resurrection of Christ was not able to make us live more holily, than the foundation of civility and morality among them? What scandal and reproach this brings to Christ. "The Name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you" (Rom. 2:24). What! Hath the gospel no more efficacy than a pagan's ethics, or a Turkish Koran? Devout Salvian brings in the pagans

insultingly over the Christians, whose lives were not agreeable to their knowledge. Both Christ and His law are scandalized by us: behold, this is the common report of pagans concerning us. Where is this catholic law which they believe? Where are those precepts of piety and chastity which they learn? They read the gospel, and yet are unclean; they hear the apostles, and frequent sermons, and yet are drunkards. They follow Christ, and yet are thieves. They lead a wicked life, and yet boast that they have a righteous law. It is altogether false (say the heathens) that they learn good things, and retain the rules of an holy law, for if these things which they learn were good, they then would be good themselves. Thus we who would be accounted Christians, do bring our God, our religion, and our profession into contempt, if our lives be not answerable to our knowledge.

I would to God that everyone of us would take this into his consideration, so that, at length, we may be careful to adorn our holy religion with an holy and circumspect life and conversation. The love of God in giving His Son for us, should forcibly overcome us to live holily. "The grace of God, that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:11-12). What moved God to give His Son, but His own grace and love? That pure love, that lodged in His bosom from all eternity. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son" (John

3:16). If like Gideon, He had had threescore and ten sons, it had still been much to part with one of them. Oh, but it was His only Son. Jacob rent his clothes, and went mourning many days, for losing one son of twelve (Gen. 37:34). Even an harlot pitied the fruit of her womb (1 Kings 3:26). But God gave the only Son of His love, and doth not this eternal and astonishing love teach us to deny ungodliness, etc.? I denied not, saith the Lord, My Son a suffering body for thy sake. I denied not His precious blood. The consolations of the Spirit, and the joys of the higher world — I was sore of nothing, but exposed all for thy sake. Oh, deny not thy sins a sacrifice unto Me, but give them up to be condemned and crucified, and to be nailed to the cross of Christ, that they may languish and give up the ghost. I crave nothing of thee that thou can not easily deny. It is not thy estate, thy life, or thy little ones I require. Nothing, but what thou can well spare; nothing, but what is better parted with than kept. Nothing, but what, if it were never required at thy hands, yet were it thy wisdom and happiness to reject: even thy base, vile, scarlet lusts. That sin may die in thee, and thou may live to God.

Oh, what will prevail with us to leave sin, and live holily, if love does not? Shall the consideration of death, or heaven, or hell move us? And shall not the consideration of Christ's wonderful love move us much more? Death is certain, saith one. It may come suddenly, and will come certainly; therefore, I will avoid sin, and serve God. I

care not so much for death, saith another. It is but parting soul and body for a season. Oh, but I fear hell-torments, the worm that never dies, and the fire that never shall be quenched! Therefore I will leave sin, and live holily. I hope, saith a third, for the joys of heaven: that I shall live though I die; and that I shall eat and drink at Christ's table in His celestial kingdom. Therefore I will reject the fawning pleasures of sin, that would beguile me of the pleasures of heaven. Oh, but Christ loved me, saith a fourth, and gave Himself for me, that He might redeem me from all iniquity. And this love of Christ constraineth me, that I dare not, I will not sin. This is the best motive. Holiness will not hinder you, but bring a blessing upon you, in your private and particular callings. Say not, I shall suffer loss, by leaving my worldly concerns to mind religion. Suppose your estate suffered, and your body fared the worse by it; yet, sure I am, the cumberings and carings of worldlings bring them more grief, than religious duties bring loss to you. Say not, "My affairs and employments in the world are so great, and so many, that I cannot spare time." The more and greater thy affairs are, the more need to mind religion, lest thy heart be swallowed up of thy affairs.

Are not the affairs of a kingdom more, and greater, than those of an household? And yet David, had the affairs of a kingdom to look after, made religion his chief care. Say not, "My children must be educated and provided for." What! will you lose salvation, and damn your souls, to

gather an estate, and to provide a portion for them? Provide for them a portion in God's Name: but especially let God be their Portion forever. Give them pious education and an holy example. Is it not more comfortable to see children, in their parent's lifetime, just heirs of their parents' graces, than to see them, when parents are dead, heirs of their parents unjust gains? Oh remember, that providing for your children's bodies, will not answer the damning of your own soul. Your present welfare lies in divorcing sin and living holily. Were there no commandment from heaven to leave sin, yet should you leave it, because it is the ulcer that sits on a creature's heart, and robs him of all true contentment and sound joy. Suppose no torment, no horror did follow sin hereafter; yet it disquiets and torments for the present. Oh the secret gnawings and pulls that envy, and pride, and covetousness give a man's soul. Oh, what a sweet life leads the contented and quiet spirited Christian when God and he are both of a mind! Compare him with the fretful and discontented, who would be always correcting God's providence, and vex themselves daily with crosses to no purpose. Oh, what peace and comfort crowns the heart of the godly! Oh, what outward miseries and inward horror fall upon the wicked!

Besides, sin is the soul's disease, a burning fever; it blinds the mind, hardens the heart, enthrals the will, defiles the conscience, deadens the affection, and hurls the whole man into confusion. It brings more evils, external

and internal, for the present, than either tongue can speak or heart can think. Shall it not be divorced? Holiness is the way to the enjoyment of all visible blessings. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:8). "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). Who hath not seen or heard, how large revenues, riches, and estates, have been wasted by vice and wickedness? There is a secret consuming cancer in the wicked man's estate; a worm in the gourd. Some men's wealth melts away, but how does this come about? Alas, it is banished by impiety. "Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store" (Deut. 28:16-17). Oh but, "All these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field" (Deut. 28:2-3).

Thus the Lord puts a difference between the godly and the wicked, as He did between the Egyptians and the Israelites (Exodus 11:7). Will holiness bring disgrace? No. "By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and the honour, and life" (Prov. 22:4). Will holiness bring poverty and want? No. "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land" (Isa. 1:19). "The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing" (Psalm 34:10). See

Job 22:21-30. God will be the godly mans gold and silver. Many of the godly have fuller treasure, and more riches than ever they enjoyed in their unregenerate condition. Who ever lost by serving God? Sin and the world have made many a beggar, but never did God and Christ, for in their worst and poorest condition, the godly are rich. "As dying, and behold we live: as chastened, and not killed: as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing: as poor, yet making many rich: as having nothing, and yet possessing all things" (2 Cor. 6:9-10), all things in hope and all things in the promise. God s people are possessors of Him that possesseth all. Godliness with contentment is great gain.

Christian, when thou art about to die, gather up thy accounts, and see how much thou hast laid out for God, and how much He hath rewarded thee. Thou must needs confess that God is not behind-hand with thee as thy debtor, should He deny thee heaven. Look on Abraham, Lot, Jacob, Jehoshaphat, Job, David, etc. I grant, a good man may suffer hardships and scarcity, but it is not due to his godliness, but because of some unmortified corruption, idleness, indiscretion, voluptuousness, or the like. He that lives wickedly is self-condemned:

(1) Condemned in his own conscience. What Saint Paul said of the heretic, in Titus 3:11, may be said of every wicked man, he is condemned of himself. "Happy is he

that condemneth not himself in that thing which he allows" (Rom. 14:22). But wicked men condemn themselves in that thing which they allow. Ask even the grossest and most profane wretch in a country, Is it not excellent and desirable to live holily, to beware of open impiety, and resist Satan's temptations, to be pure, and holy, and chaste, and temperate? Yea, without question, will he say, it is very good. And yet he will hate what he hath commended, and do what he hath condemned. He will hate sanctity, and act wickedly. He says, he detests wickedness; but his own wickedness he detests not.

(2) He is condemned by his profession, because his most holy faith is contradicted by an unholy life. Baptism, wherein he gave his name to Christ, engageth him to obey Christ as his Lord; but though he was baptized into the name of Christ, yet he obeyeth Him not. His profession is sacred, but his practice is sinful. The one is pure, the other impure. Now could any but dumb idols, stocks and stones, live without sense and shame of this contradiction? He is condemned in conscience, and condemned by profession. There is no true comfort outside of the ways of holiness. All earthly contentments are dead, bitter and inconstant. No course gives such solid foundation for comfort as an holy course. A worldly course does not, for the worldling is filled and fed from day to day with vexing cares, and tormenting thoughts, and in a time of common calamity and affliction, he is cast down. His

face waxes pale; his mind is amazed and his heart trembles. His cares and fears devour all his joy whereas the godly man is careful for nothing and rejoices in tribulation. He takes a providential and moderate care, but not an unbelieving and excessive thoughtfulness. He walks by faith, not by sense; he trusts in God in the midst of want, and finds faith and trust an universal remedy for trouble. No way is so full of pleasantness as the ways of holiness. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace" (Prov. 3:17). The paths of sin are void of peace, but great peace have they, who keep God's law (Gal. 6:16). What peace, what joy like that of a good conscience, in a time of affliction! When old age creeps up on a man, death approaches, and eternity prevents him. Oh, then a world for a good conscience! The sinner's mirth and merriment is downright madness. "I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?" (Eccles. 2:2). Christianity will not deprive you of your joy, it will only rectify, moderate, and sanctify the same. I grant, some of God's people are of sad, dark, uncomfortable spirits, but yet I affirm that godliness is not the proper cause of their sadness. And suppose it were, were it not better for a man to suffer qualms, and fits of melancholic sadness all his life, than to suffer hell torments even for one hour? I leave the wicked, when sober and settled in their wits, to judge and determine. The mercies of God engage and bind us unto holiness. Every mercy is a silent sermon, preaching to us the doctrine of holiness. Every blessing is a suitor, wooing us to live holily. "That we

being delivered out of the hands of our enemies might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life" (Luke 1:74-75).

God, by His blessings, would allure and invite us unto holiness. Hath not God caused our lot to fall in a pleasant land? Whereas we might have been born in Meshech, or in the tents of Kedar, in a barren land, a land of spiritual drought. Hath He not kept us back from presumptuous, scandalous sins? And, at least from that unrepentable sin against the Holy Ghost? Hath He not kept us safe from deadly dangers? Might not fire have suddenly broken out and laid our houses in ashes? Might not the devil, in the night time, have murdered us and our children in bed? Who was it that bound the devil to his good behaviour, that he did not roar and tear both us and them in pieces? Was it not God? God's outward providential mercies are innumerable. Is it not pure mercy, that thou hast a dwelling house, though but a mean cottage? Thou might have been a vagabond, and run up and down begging thy bread. Is it not pure mercy, that thou hast a spread table, when God might justly have caused thee to have eaten thine own dung? Hast thou an healthful state of body, when others thy betters are crying out from day to day sick, sick? And are not children, which are an heritage from the Lord, multiplied unto thee, and are continued with thee, whilst others are fast burying their dead? Is it not pure mercy, that thou hast sufficient riches, and a soft

bed, when Christ Himself lived in poverty, and had nowhere to lay His weary head? Hast thou not liberty and plenty of ordinances, burning and shining lights, while others have not the gospel preached to them, but live and die in gross darkness?

Therefore when thou art tempted to sin, say as Joseph did, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen. 39:9). Shall I thus requite the Lord for the innumerable mercies bestowed upon me? Hath He surrounded me with blessings and loaded me with His benefits? Hath He crowned me with lovingkindness, and many rich blessings here; and hath He promised to crown me with eternal blessedness hereafter? And shall I be so unkind and disingenuous as to wrong that God, who hath been so kind to me, and is continually doing me good? Shall I not hear Him calling on me to be holy, who hath so often heard me crying to Him for help? Hath He denied nothing to me, and shall I not deny my lusts for His sake? Is He my friend and benefactor, and shall I do service to His enemy? Hath He honoured me, and shall I dishonour Him? Doth He promise me blessedness, and is a wicked life the way to come to it? Have I tasted and seen that the Lord is good, and shall I continue to do what is evil? Do showers of precious mercies distil on mine head, and shall they all miscarry? Shall I displease and dishonor that high and dreadful Majesty, whose free grace is the well-head and fountain of all these mercies? Or shall I not rather express my thankfulness in such a

manner, as may become the mercies of God? Oh, the mercies of God are a mighty motive to prevent sin and promote holiness.

Therefore, dwell much in your thoughts upon the mercies and love-tokens of God. I read of one, that said, he had but one book, and that book had but two leaves, a white leaf, and a red. Yet he could never read over these two leaves, though he lived many years, and read diligently, so much matter was contained in them. For in the red leaf (he said) were laid down all God's fearful judgments poured out upon sinners who were disobedient and would not be reformed; and in who the white leaf were laid down, all the mercies and favours of God vouchsafed to mankind, either in general or particular. This book remains to this day, and happy is the man who is most careful to exercise therein day and night. All a man's spiritual relations call for holiness. Our relation to duties calls for it. What is our praising God without an holy heart, but blessing of an idol? What good will our prayers do, if we lift not up pure hands without wrath and doubting? What are sacraments and ordinances, but abominations to the eye of God, when profaned by the sins of men? Prayers, praises, sacraments, and ordinances, are holy things, and what should swine and dogs do with such? Our relation to the saints calls for holiness. The saints are called an holy nation, and what are we but withered branches in the vine, masks of saints, and hypocritical counterfeits in the church, without holiness?

Are not the saints above closely allied to the Church of God on earth? Are we not akin to the spirits of just men made perfect? Have we not the same father? The same mother? The same Redeemer? The same Sanctifier and Savior? Who is our Head? Is it not the holy child Jesus? The holy, and just, and righteous One, who is white and ruddy (Cant. v. 10)? He is white for sanctity, purity, and innocence; and ruddy in His sufferings, bloody stripes, gallings, woundings, and crucifixion. Now, must we not be conformed to our Head? Must the Head be of gold, and yet the thighs of brass, and feet of clay? The duties we engage in are holy; the Christians we converse with are holy. Christ our Head is holy; and yet will we be unholy? Holiness will make you blessings to the places where you live. Wicked men are the firebrands of a nation, but good men are as props and pillars to it. St. Paul, indeed, was called a "pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition.. .throughout the world" (Acts 24:5), as if he was no less to be avoided than a man coming out of a pest-house, with running plague-sores. But this was only a malicious slander. The turning of the world upside down, seditions, uproars, tumults, wars, and plagues are the fruits of unholiness, the effects of iniquity. Whereas godliness is gainful, and a whole family and nation hath sometimes fared better for a single godly servant's sake. Witness Laban's family, for the sake of upright and plain-hearted Jacob. Witness also the house of Pharaoh, and the land of Egypt, for Joseph's sake. Witness the many souls in the ship, that had all perished, but for Paul's sake.

Witness the Israelites that had been destroyed, while they wandered and wavered in the wilderness, but for Moses sake.

Therefore be ye holy, that ye also may be props and pillars to the nation, and your names may be fragrant, and dear, and precious to others. Holiness is an excellent help to prolong our days. "That thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments, which I command thee.. .that thy days may be prolonged" (Deut. 6:2). Religion teacheth temperance. A sober care of the body, and a religious and virtuous course of life, doth naturally tend to the prolonging of our days, and hath very frequently the blessing of health and long life attending upon it.

Objection: Wicked men sometimes live long, and good men die soon.

Answer: 1. Though wicked men sometimes live a long life, yet theirs is not a promised life. "Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days" (Psalm 55:23). Now every wicked man is a bloody and deceitful man, he is a self-deceiver, and embrues his hands in the blood of his own soul.

2. Though good men sometimes lose life soon, yet firstly, they live in a spiritual, comfortable manner while they live. And secondly, by losing a temporal life, they gain an eternal life; the life which they gain, is infinitely better

than the life which they lose. It is not a hard and difficult thing to live holily, after a man hath obtained a willing mind, and made an entrance into heaven's way. It is not so much want of power to live holily, as want of will that is the cause of so much unholiness. Many pretend they cannot, but the truth is they will not. I would have gathered thee, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not (Matt. 23:37). "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" (John 5:40). "Knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth" (Prov. 14:6). Therefore up and be doing! Use an holy violence, an holy accustomedness. If there be only an hearty willingness, and gracious assistance, what will these not do? What difficulties can hinder a resolved and encouraged Christian? There is honey in the carcass of the lion, for such as will not stumble at the cost. There is glory as well as duty, and yet wilt thou say that duty is hard? Be but persuaded of the reward that attends duty, and thou shalt acknowledge that Christ's yoke is easy. Compare the freedom of God's servants, with the service of Satan. Is not Satan's service a terrible task, an intolerable burden, an iron yoke, in comparison to God's service? Is it not easier to tell the truth, than by telling forgeries to bring upon ourselves shame and fear? Is it not easier to employ our thoughts in the service of God, than to waste our estates in satisfying our lusts? A wicked life will arm death with dread and terror. An holy life is always sure to be concluded with a happy death. St. Augustine used to say, that man cannot die ill, that liveth well; and seldom doth

he die well, who lived ill. I grant, a bad life may sometimes be attended with a good death, where there is the interposition of an unfeigned late repentance.

Oh but, *Serapenitentia raro vera*. He who hath lived wickedly, for the most part, laments ruefully when he comes to die. "Alas! Alas," saith he, "the end is now come, the end of all my mirth and jollity, of all mine honors and prosperity. My wife weeps, my children wail, and all my friends are troubled for me, but alas, not one of them will go with me to the judgment seat, to plead for me. Now all my delicious hours are past and gone; all my joys and pleasures, all my mirth and pastimes, are now finished. Where are all my companions, that were wont to laugh with me, and seemed as if they would never have forsaken me? Now they are all gone, and have left me here alone to answer the reckoning for all. None of them will do so much, as to go with me to judgment, or speak one word on my behalf. Oh, fool that I was, not to think of this day sooner, not to change my life sooner! Oh, unfortunate wretch that I am, now I must change whether I will or no! I must change earth for hell, pleasure for pain, light for darkness, and companions for devils. Now I see the difference betwixt the ends of good and evil. Now I see, it is unprofitable service to serve the devil, the world and the flesh. It is no profit to me now, that I have been beautiful, rich, and prosperous upon earth. It is no profit that I have glittered in gold, and borne a great sway in the world. Now I would give all

my estate, all I ever had in the world, yea, mountains of gold and silver, if I had them, but for one mite of true gospel-grace and holiness. But alas, it is not to be bought, and if it were, I have now no time to buy it! Now death is come, I must away, and yet, alas, I know not whither."

Oh, when death comes, a little grace will be worth all the world! Poor sinner, art not thou tumbling as well as others towards the grave? Every moment of life thou comest near death. Thy strength is but ashes, thy glory but a flower. Thou eatest today of the flesh of fowls and fed beasts, and soon, it may be in two or three months time, thy flesh may be dished out for crawling worms. Oh, it is but one spurn with God's foot, one touch with God's finger, and thou art gone, and whither, oh whither! Thinkest thou art then going without holiness? Catch therefore fleeing time, and make the best of it. Bid farewell to self, and welcome holiness. Abandon vanity, and embrace true piety. So live every day, that thou may not be afraid of the day of death. Thou mayest be wise, and rich, and formal, and yet damned at last, if not holy. For all the wicked shall be turned into hell. And God will wound the hairy scalp of every one that goeth on in His trespasses (Psalm 68:21). Many that are clothed with infamy, and poverty, shall be saved; but none that die in unholiness, can escape hell and damnation. What but everlasting death, is the issue and consequence of a sinful and vicious course of life? "The end of these things is death... The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:21-23), even

eternal death. A death that comprehends in it all those fearful and astonishing miseries, wherewith the wrath of God will afflict and pursue sinners, in another world. "But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doth evil" (Rom. 2:8-9).

So that, no matter how quietly a wicked man may pass out of this world, yet unspeakable and intolerable misery will most certainly overtake him at last. Sin is the highway to hell. Those who persevere in sin while they live, cannot escape hell when they die. Such may read their doom, "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured Out without mixture into the cup of His indignation" (Rev. 14:10). It is mixed with all stinging ingredients, but unmixed with any relief or temperature of mercy! No tortures so great as fire, and no fire worse than that of brimstone. Yet, the impenitent sinner shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. How did the poor scalded Sodomites run, howling and yelling, and lamenting their pains, when God rained hell out of heaven upon them? How then will poor damned creatures howl and lament their pains, in that lake of fire and brimstone! What can be more horrible than that place, where both soul and body must be crowded into a fiery dungeon, with torments that can neither be avoided nor endured! There the sun, much less

the face of God, never shines! There the eyes shall distil like fountains, and the teeth clatter like armed men, and the mind muse on nothing but sad despair, and that forever! Oh, the bitterness, the multitude, the everlastingness of their pains! Oh, eternity, eternity! Who can comprehend it? After the expiration of millions of years, eternity will not be one minute less. Oh, when eternity is added to extremity, then hell is hell indeed! If dissolute sinners of our age were allowed to have a sight of hell, what a fear and astonishment would it strike into their hearts! How would they weep, yea, bleed for their sins? How constantly would they pray for pardon? How would they rectify their crooked and cursed steps, that they might never come to such a place? How would they loathe and leave sin, which only can endanger them thither?

There is a story of one, that gave a young gallant a curious ring, with a death's head on it, upon this condition, that for a certain time, he should spend one hour every day in looking and thinking upon it. He took the ring in wantonness, but performing the condition with diligence wrought a wonder upon him - so a desperate ruffian became a conscionable Christian. Did a Christian spend but one half hour fixedly every day, in meditating seriously on hell, the sad yet certain consequence of a sinful life, I doubt not, but by God's grace, he would find a blessed alteration, both in his heart and life. Bishop Babington, in his comforting notes upon the book of Exodus, tells us

of an unconcerned woman, who, spending her time in sin, desired her wicked associate, to bestow on her a new gown. When he hesitated, she instantly answered, "Do I desperately cast away both body and soul forever to content thee, and dost thou deny me so so small a request? Henceforward, I am resolved to look to myself better, and to avoid both thee and this wicked life." If she did turn from her wickedness, the denial was made a blessing unto her.

We also read of a covetous father, who raking up riches sinfully, suddenly called for his eldest son and for a chafing-dish of coals, and required his son to put his finger in and burn it off. At first, he thought his father had jested, but in the end, perceiving his settled resolution, he prayed to be excused, for he would not do it. Thereupon the father answered, "Shall I, to make thee a great man in the world, so heap up riches by all unlawful means, that I am sure to burn for it, both body and soul, eternally in hell, and wilt not thou endure the loss of one finger for me? Now I will alter my course, and consider in time that which hereafter cannot be redressed."

Oh, it is good to meditate often on the wages of sin! I know, such thoughts, and meditations are held as being too melancholy, but it is the way to prevent sin, and consequently destruction. Now is the time to think of these things. The torments of hell are without measure, and the continuance in these torments is without end. The

damned shall be punished in hell, so long as there is a God in heaven; and yet, wilt thou, O Christian, for the pleasure of an hour, incur these everlasting pains? Wilt thou rather lose thy soul, than leave thy sins? Is sin more sweet, than the wrath of God would be bitter? I think the very thought of the end of issue of a wicked life (that the end of these things is death, that tribulation and anguish, far greater than we can imagine, shall be to every soul of man that doth evil), should be more than enough to dishearten any man from a wicked life and to bring him to a better course. Remember, oh man, if thou who bearest the name of Christ, live wickedly, thy hell will be far hotter than the hell of superstitious Pagans! If Turks and Tartars shall be damned, wicked and debauched Christians shall be doubly damned. And believe it, the brick-kilns of Egypt, and Babel's fiery furnace, are but shadows and pictures of pain, if compared with the fiery Tophet. Resolve, therefore henceforward so to live and conduct thyself, that thou may be of the number of those, who shall be accounted worthy to escape all these things, and to stand before the Son of man. Holiness is the only way to happiness. Grace is the only way to glory. No holiness, no heaven. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). Holiness is the highway to that high and holy place. "And an highway shall be there, and it shall be called the way of holiness" (Isaiah 35:8). "The pure in heart shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). Heaven is the inheritance of saints (Col. 1:12). No unclean thing can enter into God's kingdom. They who live in those sins which

are the works of the devil, and mock those that are sanctified, shall have no place with God and His glorious angels. Heaven was never prepared for the workers of iniquity. "To sit on My right hand, and on My left... it shall be given unto them for whom it is prepared of My Father" (Matt. 20:23). Who are the blessed royal guests? Men who are gracious and holy. Heaven is no common inn. "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom" (Matt. 25:34). Ye that fed Me and clothed Me, ye that visited the fatherless, which is pure religion (James 1:27). A wicked man hath not so much as half a promise of heaven in the whole Bible. The poor man hath a promise (James 2:5), but the wicked man hath none. Oh, thou enemy of gospel holiness, show thy warrant. Why dost thou look for heaven? Thou hast received no promise from God; and if thou hast no promise, thou canst expect no performance.

It may be, at present, thou dost taste some comfort from thy self-flattery; oh, but in the end thou shalt reap the sorrow of thy woeful self-deceit. God is sometimes better than His Word, but never contradicts His Word, which He must do, if the unholy, unhumiliated sinner come to heaven. Heaven begins in holiness, and our expectation of future glory, obligeth us to present sanctity. "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things,

be diligent, that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (2 Peter 3:13-14). What will move us to holiness, if glory does not? Shall the devil, by showing the fading glory of this world, prevail with thousands to serve him? And shall not Jesus, by showing us the everlasting glory of the world to come, prevail with us to serve Him? Are we called to this glory, and shall we not walk worthy of Him who hath called us to it? (1 Thess. 2:12). Surely the enjoyment of God Himself hereafter, in all His perfections, sufficiency, blessedness, and goodness to us, according to our capacity, should make us study holiness, for how can an impure and filthy soul enjoy God? Alas, there is no suitableness, no fitness in such a soul. The more holy we are, the more we are like the glorified saints. Holiness will be our perfection and delight in Heaven, and shall it not be our desire and study here on earth? Will we rather part with eternal life, than with our lust? Is our sin to be reckoned or compared with heavenly glory? Oh, let us choose an holy life, if we would be happy both in life and death. Let us become the servants of God, and have our fruit unto holiness, if we ever expect that the end shall be everlasting life. God calls us from sin to holiness, which is most reasonable (1 Thess. 4:7). God calls us to follow Him in the way of holiness to eternal glory. The devil calls us to follow him in the way of sin to eternal torments. Now whether it be right that we obey God or the devil, judge ye. "Follow peace with all men and holiness" (Heb. 12:14). Though lions be in the way, and discouragements be multiplied,

though Satan interpose, and corruptions stop our course, we are yet to follow holiness. Who calls us? Is it not He, whose presence and breath is consuming? He who can command us into nothing, and shall not His call be complied with? Must the eternal God become a humble condescending suppliant to man? Majesty and mercy kneel and entreat us to be holy, and yet we live in sin still! What are we called from? Is it not from sin and destruction to purity and salvation? Is it not from Satan to God, from embracing of sensual pleasures, to the pursuing of spirituality? And who can withstand such reasonable entreaties? Our profession of Christianity obligeth us to holiness. Christianity is a matter of free acceptance; it is our own voluntary choice. When we take upon us the Name of Christ, we bind ourselves to leave sin, and live holily. "Let every one that nameth the Name of Christ, depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. 2:19).

Our Christian profession obligeth us to a Christian conversation. What! Will we plow with an ox and an ass together? I mean, will we have the face of a Christian, and yet the life of a heathen! Oh, let us not be almost Christians, lest we be at last almost saved, that is, altogether damned. Oh, let this truth be like the water of jealousy, like fire in our bones, like the archangel's trumpet to awaken us. Thou that possessest Christ art bound to follow Christ, both in inward and outward holiness. Thou hast taken upon thee to be holy in part, and this obligeth

thee to be holy in all. As he that believes one fundamental article is bound to believe all fundamental points, so he that obeyeth God in one practical duty, is bound to obey all. As for example, suppose thou being a professor of Christianity, comest to the Lord 's house upon His blessed day. Now I tell thee thou art the greatest self-condemned man in the world, if thou do not also cast by all profaneness, and make religion thy chief business, both at home and abroad. For upon the same ground thou comest to Christ, upon that same ground thou shouldst pray with thy family, educate thy children christianly, live strictly, and do all that is required. "He that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill; Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law" (James 2:11). Thou that out of conscience, and from the command of God doest one thing, ought likewise to do all. The same law, the same God, and the same authority that binds thee to one, binds thee to another. If thou endeavor not to obey God in all, thou obeyest Him sincerely or not at all. A Christian that endeavors not to be strict, exact, circumspect, and holy in practice shall never by me be called a Christian. Your virtue and piety will profit your posterity after you. It will help to keep wrath from your children, and to procure a blessing upon them. This is that which God cannot forget, neither will He forget His goodness sake. "Shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My commandments" (Ex. 20:6). "Oh that there were such an heart in them that they would fear Me, and keep

all My commandments always, that it might be well with them, and their children for ever" (Deut. 5:29); 1 Kings 6:34). "The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him" (Prov. 20:7).

According as we demean ourselves towards God (saith an ancient writer) we entail a lasting blessing, or a great curse upon our children. As wicked parents entail God's anger and curse upon their posterity, so God reserves mercy for the posterity of the godly. He will be good, even to thousands of their seed, who diligently serve Him. Lo, here is the fruit of your prayers and tears, of your hearing God's Word, and leading your lives according to the sacred rules thereof. This sealeth up the Lord's favor not only to yourselves, but to your children after you. I beseech you, Christians, think seriously of all this, and as you would ever wish well to your own souls, as to their dear pledges, that are as your own heart, be afraid to offend God. And be constantly careful to lead your lives according to the rules of His most Holy Word. If God hath irresistibly and effectually called thee, amongst those few, very few called ones, whom He hath chosen for Himself, let this engage thee to be holy yet more and more. Did not the Spirit of grace knock at thy door with infinite holy motions, before thou condescended to open? Thou refused to obey, until He called, not a third time, as to Samuel, but many an hundred times. As Lot was loath to depart out of Sodom, till the angels laid hold upon his hand, and brought him forth; so thou was loath

to leave thy sins, and sinful companions, till the hand of the Lord laid hold upon thine heart. God's arbitrary and free grace called thee and left others. Oh, how should this make thee to admire God's love, and to strive for God's holiness! When God took thee, He left others; he passed by thousands and ten thousands in the world, and left them in their impenitency and carnal security under the bondage and vassalage of Satan. Consider, how few there are that shall be saved, in comparison of the multitude that shall be eternally destroyed. Consider that God should call thee with an holy calling, and bring thee in to be one of that little flock, that is under the care of the good Shepherd Jesus Christ. If thou should be chosen and singled out from the rest, when they are left in a state of sin to perish eternally, what astonishing distinguishing mercy is this! How should this engage thee to be eminently holy. Was thou called in thy younger years? Oh, be holy in all manner of conversation for a requital of God's love that suffered thee not to stab thy soul to old age.

It is a greater mercy to be called at the first, or third, than at the eleventh hour; to be called in thine infancy and early days, than in the afternoon, and evening, and twilight of thine age. Being early called, thou never made such sad shipwrecks, never involved thyself in such gross wickedness as others have done. Thou hast had long trial of the sweetness of holiness, therefore follow after it still. Was thou called of later times? Labor to

make requital for the many hours, days, and years, thou lost before thou was acquainted with God. Surely holiness becomes thee forever. Oh, be holy, ye old disciples, for your time to gather grace in will not be long. Oh, be holy, ye young converts, for ye want liveliness, strength, and vigour in the way and work of the Lord. Your experiences are but short; some tastings you have had, oh, but desire more, for the more holiness you have, the more sweetness you shall find. The richest wine lies in the lowest cellar. Hath Christ come and laid Him down under thy roof? Oh, be pure and holy that thou vex not His righteous soul. Oh, how should thou please Him, who hath so highly honoured and advanced thee! If a peasant's daughter were married to a prince, would she put on her old rags, or eat her old country diet again? Christ the Prince of Peace hath married thee to Himself, and appointed thee a rich jointure. Wilt not thou forever lay aside the filthy garments of sin, and slight those husks on which thou fed before? It may be that thou art so poor, that of thine own thou hast nowhere to lay thine head, and it is certain thou possessest not one foot of land that is thine own for ever. Yet art thou an heir, a child, dearly beloved, both by God and angels. This honour have all the saints. Once thou wast a great, a filthy sinner; oh, be holy, for Christ hath washed thee in His blood, justified thee by His righteousness, and sanctified thee by His Spirit, even when thou wast filthy to look upon. Moses once married a Blackamoor, David had vile men for his soldiers, and Christ had publicans, harlots, and sinners

for His companions. So God chose thee when thou had little morality, little ingenuity, or natural goodness. Thou art of the number of those few that shall be saved, and so strongly bound to be eminently holy.

THE SECOND TREATISE

Containing DIRECTIONS HOW TO ATTAIN ETERNAL BLESSEDNESS

The desire for happiness is as universal as the human nature. Do you desire to be happy? Where is the man that would return a negative answer to this question? Yet alas, few, very few, either take or know the right way to be happy. But if any desire to be guided through the wilderness of this world to the heavenly Canaan, let him seriously observe and practice the following rules.

Frequently and seriously consider the misery of a natural estate. Sinners are in a most miserable state before conversion: for (1) They are under the power and jurisdiction of Satan and possessed by him (Ephes. 2:2), captivated by him at his pleasure (2 Tim. 2:26).

(2) Sin hath an universal dominion over the whole man (Rom. 6:13). Oh, the brutishness of their minds! Who is a greater benefactor to them than God? And yet none is more forgotten by them. A vain tale and fruitless tale will stick long in their memories, when a powerful precious sermon is presently buried in oblivion. Whereas their thoughts should be heavenly in their worldly employments, they are worldly in their most heavenly employments! Prayer is omitted, every sabbath broken, yea,

every commandment of God trampled under foot. Godliness is an eye-sore to them, preaching they account for foolishness, and strictness they account madness. They reject knowledge, as if ignorance were the mother of devotion, and as if an implicit faith were sufficient to salvation. They prefer the satisfaction of a lust before the glory of God and the salvation of their souls. They sorrow not for sin, but for the overthrowing of their earthly and sinful expectations; they sorrow not for missing the presence of God in the ordinances, but for their worldly gain in the market. They rejoice not in God and godliness, but in filth and folly, or at best in corn, and wine, and oil. Their eyes, which should look on the visible creation, the operations of God's hands, to raise useful observations about His wisdom, goodness, and providence, stand open for covetousness, lust, and adulteries. Their ears, which should suck in profitable speeches, and matter for thankful praise and humble prayers to God, are employed in hearing lies, censurings, and idle communications with pleasure and delight. Their tongues are full of cursing and bitterness, and their feet are swift to work wickedness. So wicked men live in most grievous thralldom, miserably oppressed by these unmerciful tyrants, sin and Satan.

(3) God Himself is the wicked man's enemy. Is not he blessed to whom God is a friend, and he accursed to whom God is an enemy? "God is angry with him every day" (Ps. 7:11-12). Sabbath-day and weekday, rising up

and lying down, God is angry with him, and is it not sad to live under the frowns of the Almighty? What good will a fair house, or large lands do a man that is condemned to die under the frowns of authority? This is the wicked man's case; he is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him. There is not a day, not an hour in all the year, but God is angry with him. As Saul said, "The Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me" (1 Sam. 28:15). So may the wicked man say, "My sins are upon me, and temptations are upon me, and devils are upon me, and God hath forsaken me."

(4) All the creatures are his enemies. All unreasonable and reasonable creatures. All the angels both the good and bad. As good angels do offices of love to God's people, sometimes directing, sometimes protecting, and sometimes delivering them, so they are against the wicked.

(5) The wicked man walks in the way of destruction boldly. The brute creatures may destroy him, as the bears destroyed the children of Belial (2 Kings 2:24), and worms destroyed Herod (Acts 12:23). Dumb creatures may tear him, or dead stones fall upon him. Man may dispatch or kill him; a thief, an angry man, or a provoking passionate word, may cut him off. He is an outlawed wretch. God gives him no protection, but his very prosperity destroys him. The devil may fall on him in the night and smother him, for he is the devil's prisoner. God

may by an immediate stroke dispatch him. Yea, he may lay violent hands on himself; he is a destroyer of his soul, and why does he not destroy his body, as Saul did, and the jailor would have done, but because God hath thrown a chain over him? It is owing only to the untired and boundless patience of God, that he cuts not his own throat, nor stabs himself to the heart.

(6) He is more miserable than a toad. Look upon the foulest toad that creeps abroad in a summer's night. It is a blessed and beautiful creature in comparison to a wicked man. The toad is God's creature, but the wicked man is the devil's creature, as he is sinful and wicked. The toad never sinned, but the wicked man hath sinned many and many a shameless time. The toad makes the earth less noxious and destructive to its fellow creatures, but the wicked man defileth the earth, and maketh it more troublesome to the righteous. When the toad dies, there is an utter end of it, but when the wicked man dies, there is an end of his jovial hour, but his miserable eternity then begins.

(7) All his duties are unacceptable. He hath, it may be, heard hundreds of sermons, lived multitudes of sabbaths, prayed and wept, and wept and prayed. Oh, but all these are idle services, unprofitable pains, because his nature is poisoned, and his conscience polluted. Notwithstanding all his prayers and tears, all his sabbaths, ordinances and duties, he is in danger of falling into the midst of the

sea of God's wrath; his obedience is but disobedience. His duties have no grace of faith for their principle, no single aim at God's glory as their end. How can such duties, so destitute of all goodness, come up with acceptance on God's altar?

(8) The endless work of the damned is his daily employment. He reproaches, blasphemes, and dishonors God. Though when he is pleased and humoured, it is not easily known what his nature is, yet when provoked, he not only spits rancour in the face of man, but with hellish execrations and oaths he flies in the very face of God. His heart is as full of God-hatred as a cockatrice's egg is full of poison. He never honored God a quarter of an hour all his life.

(9) He is daily treasuring and heaping up burning coals on his own head, and putting scorpions into the hands of conscience to sting himself everlastingly. Lastly, every day he puts his damnation more and more out of doubt. No question in the world harder to resolve, than whether this person shall be saved. He runs deeper and deeper in arrears daily. Yesterday he sinned with reluctance, today he sins with delight, and tomorrow he may be sealed up as deplorable and desperate. This is the miserable condition of man unrenewed, and in the state of nature. Think seriously of it. Bitterly bewail thy natural, sinful, and miserable estate. "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself" (Jer. 31:18). If thou stood convicted as some

notorious cheat and deceiver, or if thy body were filled with some unheard of loathsome disease, procured by thine own wickedness, thou wouldst blush and be ashamed; thou wouldst take on and mourn. And wilt thou not be ashamed and mourn for the abominations thy heart has heaped up? Is not thy heart a very hell for darkness, disorder, and vanity? Yet wilt not thou lament the rottenness of thine heart. Oh, the blind, dark, filthy corners of the heart. Oh, sigh and mourn for thine indirect aims and carnal affections, for the vain cogitations, unsound purposes, and gross dissimulation of thine heart! A flood of tears and sighs by millions are too few to bewail the same. Obey the call of God's Word. All within the visible church have an external call. By the preaching of the gospel, God graciously invites and intreats sinners to come to Him. This, though it be not always an effectual call, yet is a real and sincere call. It is a voice from heaven. When the word of reconciliation is preached, it is Christ Himself who calls. The voice is truly and really His: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). "He came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that are nigh" (Eph. 2:17), i.e. to you Gentiles, as well as to the Jews.

Now how did He preach to them? To the Jews He preached immediately, and in His own person, but to the Gentiles mediately by the apostles and ministers of the

gospel. An immediate, miraculous, extraordinary voice we are no longer to expect. When Christ doth send His called ministers with an offer of peace and reconciliation to us, it is all one, as if He Himself did come in His own person. Therefore we ought to give as lively an attention, as strong a belief, as reverent an obedience, as we would give if Christ Himself spake. As Christ said to persecuting Saul: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" So to the disobedient hearer: "Sinner, Sinner, why disobeyest thou Me? I am Jesus whom thou disobeyest." Doth Christ call? Rise up and go, let Him not call in vain. Doth Christ knock? Rise up and open, let Him not stand without (Rev. 3:20). They who obey not when called to grace, shall tremble when called unto judgment. Beg of God to call you internally and effectually. By nature ye are deaf, and cannot hear; blind, and cannot see; dead, and cannot answer. Therefore, beg of God to open the ear and heart to hear His call, inwardly to enlighten your eyes to see Christ, and to incline your will to obey His voice. A deaf man could not hear the dreadful thunderings, nor a blind man see the dreadful lightnings, at the delivering of the law upon Mount Sinai. Such is thy condition, till the Lord give thee an internal call. Thou hearest the sound of words, and understandest the sense of the law literally, but alas, hearest not spiritually. Hast instruction not been sealed on thine heart? Therefore beg God for a gracious and spiritual ear. Highly esteem and faithfully use all gospel ordinances and institutions, for in them you are nigh to God, and God nigh to you. "Draw nigh to God,

and He will draw nigh to you" (James 4:8). "In all places where I record My Name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee" (Exod. 20:24). God's Urim and Thummim is with His holy ones. But he who slights God's ordinances, robs himself of God's presence. Cain is said to be driven out from the presence of the Lord, because he was driven out from a family where holy and religious duties were solemnly performed (Gen. 4:16).

In ordinances live above ordinances. Do not live without them, but above them. Use them, but idolize them not. Make them not saviors, but advance Christ upon the head of all ordinances. Rest not in them, but in Christ for mercy and salvation. It is a damning, and yet common sin among professors to make a Christ of their duties, to put a fleshly confidence in their sacred institutions. Some undervalue and others overvalue ordinances. As the Barbarians termed Paul a murderer, and by and by a god, so some decry ordinances, as poor and low dispensations, childish things, silver and golden idols, empty forms. Others extol them as intercessors, and trust in them as saviors. Oh, but to trust in them, shows gross ignorance of Christ's righteousness, of the necessity of regeneration, and of the nature of ordinances! Retain and maintain an heavenly acquaintance and communion with God in ordinances. Let your soul and mind through ordinances be carried into heaven, whilst your body is on earth.

St. Bernard, upon entering the church, at the door, used to say, "Stay here all my worldly thoughts, and all vanity, that I may entertain heavenly meditations." Learn to walk with God in these galleries. For this end, observe both God's presence in ordinances, and God's absence and withdrawals. His presence is sweet and powerful, but His absence bitter and uncomfortable. The ordinances of God may abide when the God of the ordinances is removed. The glory went (Ezek. 10). The prophet discerned it, but the rest were blinded. Oh, it is the greatest affliction in the world to lack God in ordinances! "They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the Lord; but they shall not find Him; He hath withdrawn Himself from them" (Hosea 5:6). Therefore we say as David, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple" (Ps. 27:4). Observe God's drawing near to you in ordinances, and walk with jealousy and fear before God, lest you provoke Him to withdraw from you. God's approach and society is dear and precious, but may be lost. Oh Christian! Remember whether once thou had not more commerce and converse with God in ordinances than now. Is thy fellowship as great now as it was sometimes before? Oh, long to enjoy the same degrees of sweet intercourse with God, the same sweet breathings and whisperings of God's Spirit, in His ordinances! Daily study and search the Scriptures (John 5:39). Be not

strangers to your Bibles, but make the Word of God familiar to you. Was not this the very end and use for which it was written (Rom. 15:4)? The Scriptures, saith St. Gregory, is nothing else but an epistle of almighty God to His creature, and shall he not read it? We are so affected by the writings of our friends, that if a letter come in when we are about to sit down, we will not taste anything till we have read it. And shall we be negligent to read the epistle of the great God? Oh, the transcendent excellency of Holy Scripture! Had I the tongues of angels, I could not sufficiently set out the excellency of it. It is meat to the hungry, water to the thirsty, medicine to the diseased, milk to the weak, a lamp to them that wander, and wine to comfort the sorrowful soul. It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. Oh, but the Word is a "lamp to our feet, and a light unto our paths." It is our pole-star to direct us and to show us how to steer our course. Here we are made acquainted with the mysteries of the Kingdom, and come to understand all the counsel of God. Here we are taught the fear of the Lord, and how our souls may be brought into a state of amity and friendship with God. Are we spiritually poor? The Word of God will enrich us. Are we defiled? It will beautify and purge us. Are we distempered? It will cure us. Are we cast down? It is a most sovereign cordial to revive a drooping and desponding spirit. In a word, it is the Book of God, and a blessing is pronounced to him that reads it, so as to understand and keep the things contained in it. Oh then, let us read the Scripture frequently, constantly,

daily, as the noble Bereans did (Acts 17:11). Yea, we must read them all the days of our life (Deut. 17:19).

But alas, few read the Scriptures constantly, and many read them not at all. They are no Bible Christians. God hath taken pains to write, but they will not take pains to read. Oh, what glorious hours, morning and evening, do many omit to spend in perusing the sacred pages of God's Word! I shall here transcribe the complaint of a godly and learned divine upon this occasion. Look (saith he) to the ordinary sort of people. They do not read scarce one chapter of the Bible in a week, or I may say in a year. They are so ignorant, that they can hardly find the book whence the preacher takes his text, or how to distinguish between Apocrypha and canonical Scripture. How many are there of good sort and fashion that have read much and many great volumes, which yet cannot say, at four-score years old, that in all their life they have read through the Bible, a Book that is not the biggest, but is of all the best.

What can men pretend for this monstrous negligence? Canst thou not read? Blame thy friends and parents for the time when thou wast a child. Since that time, blame thine own folly. Anyone may learn to read that hath wit to learn anything. But thou hast no money to buy books. What! Hast thou money to spend in a tavern, to play away at cards and dice, to buy lace, and needless superfluities and apparel, and hast not thou money to buy a

Bible or any other good book! For shame say not so. But I have not time to read. For anything else time enough: to do nothing, to lie in bed all the morning, to sit two or three hours at dinner or supper, to go to such a friend, and there spend half a day, to do any charge that comes in extraordinarily. Away with those excuses! It is certain there is no calling, be they ever so much employed, but of twenty-four hours, they may, if they will, spare two at the least for religious employments. Yea, more, if they be wise and thrifty of their time. But learning is an hard matter, and it is not for plain folks to understand the Bible. No? Is it not? Then God is to blame, that hath written a Word for the instruction of all, which none but scholars should understand. But know, this is nothing but an excuse for thy slothfulness. Learning is hard, because thou art unwilling to learn. The Spirit of God hath testified otherwise, that knowledge is plain and easy to him that will understand. Only try taking pains in the study of religion, as thou dost in many needless employments, and experience shall tell thee, that saving wisdom is to be found of all that do seek it. Highly prize and diligently attend upon a gospel ministry, for the hearing of the Word is the ordinary means to convert souls unto God. It is often accompanied with God's special blessing for the opening of men's hearts. "And a certain woman named Lydia, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul" (Acts 16:14). "Yea, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17). To be present at

God's public worship and service is our indispensable duty.

The pleasures of God's house, and the profit of hearing God's Word, do both invite us (Ps. 72:1; Isa. 2:3). I grant, our coming to church will avail us little, if we come for fashion's sake, as they did, of whom the prophet speaks (Isa. 29:13). Yet the saying of Cyrillus is very observable. Some (saith he) come to church to see fashions, others to meet their friends, yet that is better than not to come at all. In the meantime the net is cast out, and they, which intended nothing less, are drawn in to Christ. And Christ catchest them, not to destroy them, but that, being dead, He may bring them to life eternal. But alas, some do not love to come to the house of God. They condemn the church, the ministers, and the ordinances of Jesus Christ. When they should come to the house of God to worship, there is something always in the way. Oh, but let us consider the invalidity of all such things as are usually alleged to sinners. The usual excuses are these:

1. Objection: Some pretend to live above ordinances; ordinances are lower dispensations only for the weak, but not for those who have attained the highest form in the school of Christ.

Answer: (1) The highest hath not attained perfection, unless it be in purpose, desire, or sincerity. "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not"

(Eccles. 7:20). Why this is added (that doeth good) unless to denote in every good action some flaw or fault that is found. All ought to worship (2 Chron. 20:4; Judges 20:26; Joel 1:11,13-14; 2:14).

(2) Duties do not wholly cease in heaven; how much less do they end here on earth! Duty will indeed cease in heaven (a) as to the defects of it: no worm-eaten holes in its body there. Here we have but moonlight, but there our moon will be turned into a sun. Here we are belepered with spots, but there perfect without spot or wrinkle (Heb. 12:27). (b) Duty will cease in heaven, as to the encouragement of promises and guidance of written precepts. What need of these in heaven? Now the promises feed our faith, but at death, our faith dies with us (1 Cor. 13:8,13). Now the Word is our rule, but when the world is consumed, Bibles will be burnt up, and the letter of Scripture will perish. (c) Duties will cease in heaven, as to that distance wherein they now suppose us to stand. Now we stand at a distance, but then not so (Rev. 4:4; Dan. 7:13). Then will God lay aside all astonishing of majesty and greatness, and converse with us as our Father and Benefactor. Then to love Him and praise Him will be our great employment. Then we shall be intent upon that noble work of lauding God (Ps. 84:4). Our service is not ended with our lives. "They are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple" (Rev. 7:14-15). Shall we serve God in His heavenly temple and shall we not serve Him in His temple on

earth? Shall we be ever with Him, when we come to enjoy our happiness before the throne of glory and shall we not be frequent and often with Him at the throne of grace? The throne of grace is the very porch of heaven, but which we pass to the throne of glory!

(3) In hell, duties do wholly cease, so that they who lay aside ordinances, are more like devils than men! Though the damned cry in hell, yet their cries are no prayers. Though they weep, yet their tears are not penitential. Though they should tear their flesh, yet their tearing the flesh is not the rending of the heart. What are their sighs but loud yells and their prayers but open blasphemies? Duty ever supposeth a reward by promise, if not by merit, but the damned have no promise, and therefore their moans return unpitied. Nay, how can they perform duty, who are forever in misery? Here in this life, bodily diseases distract from prayer or service. Who can methodize duties, when grievously afflicted with the stone or toothache? And if stone or toothache on earth unfit for duty, what will the pains of hell do?

2. Objection: The minister keeps me from coming to public ordinances, for he is a sorry preacher. He preacheth nothing but the terrors of the law, and the thunderings of God's wrath, which I do not love to hear.

Answer: (1) Why judgest thou him to be a sorry preacher? Is it because he is plain and easy to be under-

stood? I grant, vain hearts dislike a minister for plainness, but usually the more plain, the more profitable. Judge him not unlearned because his sermons are plain. Are not the richest mines found under mountainous barren ground? If you cannot spy learning in plain sermons, it is because you look upon them with unlearned, beflemed eyes. Sometimes a courtier hath more glitter and gold about his apparel than the king himself.

(2) Doth he preach wrath? Why art thou loath to hear it? If thou hast escaped wrath, hearing of it will rather comfort than terrify thee. Thine unwillingness to hear wrath preached is a sign that either thou art within the reach of God's wrath, or not assured of deliverance from it. Vinegar poured on a sound skin will not smart. It is a sign of sore eyes, when they will not abide the light; and it is a sign of an unsound heart, a heart asleep in sin, when men will not abide to hear of God's wrath. If thou be thus asleep, thou hast the greater need of such thunder to awaken thee.

3. Objection: The way to God's house is a long, foul, and tedious way.

Answer: The primitive Christians were not of thy temper. They would travel all weathers and ways to hear the Word of God. Oh thou ancient spirit of zeal, whither art thou fled - where art thou buried? What is a mile or two? Is not the ark just at men's doors? And yet so tender and delicate are some that they will scarce step over their

own threshold to worship God on a rainy day. Is this intolerable contempt?

4. Objection: I want clothes to come in.

Answer: To say, I cannot come to the house of God, because I have not clothes good enough to come in, argues height and pride of spirit. What! Do ye come to church to show your clothes, rather than to gain grace? Do clothes commend any unto God? Will God enquire at the great day in what clothes ye came? When God is putting the question, Why did you spend your sabbaths at home? Why was Mine house neglected? Will ye be able to plead in that day that ye wanted clothes to come in? And if not, why should that excuse satisfy your conscience now, which you dare not plead at God's bar then? He that considers that his soul is more naked in God's eye than his body is in the eye of man, will go to God's house, though in very mean and poor apparel, to get his soul clad with holiness.

5. Objection: I do not misspend the Lord's day, but worship God aright, though I do not come to public ordinances. I read excellent books at home, and will not this serve the purpose?

Answer: (1) I scarce believe thee, that thou wilt spend a whole day in religious exercises at home, say what thou will. For if thou pass some part of it in religious duties, yet thou wilt not employ it in the most spiritual of these

religious duties. Dost thou examine thine heart on the Lord's day? Dost thou revise the works of the week past, and judge thyself for what is amiss? Dost thou pray long and often? And though thou didst all this, yet conscience will not be satisfied, unless thou play the preacher to it.

(2) The public preaching of the Word, as it expresses the precepts of God or the profit of man is of more soul concernment than any private reading of it at home. "As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2:2) and sermon milk: this is the best food for spiritual growth, and shall we not desire and seek after it?

(3) He that will not serve God in public is displeasing to God in his private services. It is a saying of Gregory, God often rejects his prayers in the day of trouble, who despises God's precepts in the day of peace. God abominates his prayers in private, who despises to hear God's precepts in public. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination."

(4) God hath blessed, honoured, and crowned public before private duties. "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob" (Ps. 87:2). The gates of Zion was the place of God's worship, for the temple was built upon or near the hill of Zion. Now God was worshipped in the dwellings of Jacob, in their families, as well as in the temple. Why then does David say, "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion, more than all the

dwellings of Jacob," but to show us that God prefers public worship before private?

6. Objection: My calling hinders me that I cannot go to hear occasional sermons on weekdays. I go on Sabbath days, and hope that is enough.

Answer: It is not enough, if by any means you can redeem vacant time. For

(1) Many can spare time for pastimes, (or rather wastetimes) such as idle tattle, gossipings, visiting friends, and sitting by the fireside. Why not spare time to visit God in His ordinances? Few are so hard tasked, either for multitude of children, or much family business, but could lay by a few hours, in three or four weeks time. Christian, lay those little parcels of time, those fragments and odd hours together, which thou wastes woefully, and they will soon make a day. Yea, beguile thy body of sleep, rather than thy soul of the Word of God.

(2) This hath always been the pretense of slothful and carnal hearts, that they lacked the time (1 Sam. 14:19). Saul forbids the priests to ask the counsel of the Lord, as if he had no leisure, because he heard the noise of the Philistines host increasing. Oh, but prayer might have done better than arms, as the command was in Numbers 27:21. When men have a call to leave their family and to go and worship God, and yet they cavil with it, this proceeds from worldliness, and a lack of seeing the great

necessity to provide for the soul, as to provide for the outward man.

(3) The time is well spent in our calling, but better always in God's service. "He that giveth her in marriage doth well, but he that giveth her not in marriage doth better" (1 Cor. 7:38). Here is a good and a better. So he that spends time in his calling, doth well; but he that spends time in the service of God, doth better. The soul is in its nature more glorious and excellent than the body. Its affairs more weighty than the affairs of the body. Its good more desirable than the good of the body. He therefore that can feast his body, but starve his soul; that can desire and watch for a good harvest, a good market, a good bargain, but neglects sermons and seasons of grace, is body-wise, but soul-foolish. Oh, that men would but lay their consciences under the serious thoughts of these three things: (1) Of the shortness of time. What is it but a span, an inch, a dream, a shadow, a vapour that appeareth for a short time (James 4:14)? (2) Of the price of time. When once the door of death is locked upon us, a thousand words cannot purchase us one minute of time. Yea, if we would give ten thousand drops of blood for one inch of time, it would be refused. (3) Of their accountableness for time, that for the spending of every minute, God will bring them into judgment. Did men but seriously consider this, they would need no persuasions to take every hour, as a rich season, to serve God. The devil watches

all advantages to do our souls harm, and shall we not apprehend all opportunities to do our souls good? And when death comes, which sound will be the sweetest: so many sermons lost and neglected, or so many sermons heard and regarded? As sure as night follows day, the hour of death will come. Yea, every minute drives us towards it. The time is coming when gospel despisers shall sigh for the hours they have trifled away, and would pay drops of blood for a little space of time, but it will be refused.

I have read a sad story of a gentleman, who, on his death-bed, imagined he saw certain messengers that came to carry him away to hell. Whereupon he fell into great shrieks, and ended his miserable life with these words, "Give me respite till tomorrow - oh, give me respite till tomorrow!" And how many have your own ears heard complain upon their uneasy deathbeds, of the precious time they have lost, and cry out in vain that their days may be prolonged. Now, if the sick and dying are so sensible of the want of time, what about the damned? Oh, how much (saith Thomas Aquinas) would he that now lies frying in hell rejoice, if he might have but the least moment of time, wherein he might get God's favor. Let me therefore intreat you, as you value the health and happiness of your immortal souls. Make much of time, especially in that weighty matter of salvation, and keep close to God's house and ordinances. Be careful to practise every sermon you hear, for practise is the life of all.

What improvement is there if we understand our duty, and practise it not? Nay, if we hear the Word of God, but are not bettered by it, we are in a worse case than before. "That servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes" (Luke 12:47). The Apostle James not only commands us to be swift to hear, but to practice what we hear. "Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own souls" (James 1:22). How vain a thing it is to be hearers of the Word of God only and not doers, he teacheth by a similitude (verses 23-24), and then telleth what a blessed thing it is for a man to be a doer as well as an hearer. "This man shall be blessed in his deed" (verse 25). What greater folly and madness, than for men to content themselves with a bare hearing of the Word preached? Can any be so ignorant as to think that bare hearing is enough? Doth not our Savior say, "Blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it"? So keep it, not only as to remember it and talk of it, but to perform and practise it. What care has God for the ear without the hand? Audience without obedience is far worse than pagan ignorance. Hearing is indeed necessary, but not sufficient. Doing must be joined with hearing. He that would be saved by the Son of God, must be a doer of the Word of God. As ministers cannot be saved by preaching, hearers cannot be saved by hearing. A minister must be a burning lamp, as well as the voice of a cryer. So must hearers be not only attentive

but retentive, not only reverential but obediential hearers. "Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of this Book" (Rev. 22:7). "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (verse 14).

Therefore be ye deceived no longer, but know that such, and such only, as do the will of God, shall be blessed for evermore. Take warning when God gives warning. God warns you by sounding the trumpet of His Word (Joel 2:1). How often have ministers shown you the godly in Abraham's bosom! How often have they shown you the place of torment, and bid you look down into the bottom of the lion's den, and to beware that it never be your lot to come into it? All God's faithful ministers throughout the kingdom are crying out at the same sins, preaching the same Christ, the same gospel, the same salvation, and warning men to flee from the wrath to come. All their sermons, prayers, and studies are driving on the same design. And will ye neglect God's command, and condemn God's threatenings? Will ye slight and disregard the tender heart and compassions of your crucified Lord, yearning over your dying souls? How canst thou escape, O sinner, if thou neglect so great salvation? Will not heathen Nineveh condemn thy hard-heartedness? "The men of Nineveh shall arise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and behold, a greater than Jonas is here" (Matt. 12:41). Shall it be an harder thing to bring a

single person, as thou art, to repentance, than a whole city? Nineveh was heathen, and thou art a Christian. Nineveh was only warned of temporal overthrow, but thou, of both a temporal and eternal. Jonah, but one single prophet, was sent to them; a whole cloud of witnesses are sent to thee. They were warned but once; thou many and many a time. They repented, thou repentest not. Oh, believe God's threatenings, that thou may never see and feel them: and tremble at His Word, that thou may have rest in the day of trouble (Hebrews 3:16). Shall the beasts of the forest be afraid of the lions roaring? Shall the city shake at the sound of the warrior's trumpet? Shall the heavens be black, and the rocks rend, and the mountains quake and smoke at the voice of God's rebuke? And shall not man, poor guilty man, tremble at the voice of the Almighty? Doth God knock at thy door by the ministry of His Word? Do not stop thine ears like the adder. Doth He knock by the sweet inspirations of His Holy Spirit? Dost thou hear a voice behind thee, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it"? Obey God's voice, and resolve presently, lest, death knocking suddenly at thy door, it be too late.

It is said of Charles IV, King of France, that being affected at one time with a sense of his many sins, he fetched a deep sigh, and said, "Now, by the help of God, I will so carry myself all my life long, that I never offend God anymore." As soon as he had uttered these words, he presently fell down and died. Oh, resolve speedily not to go in your own strength, but to take the strength of

Christ, and the strength of the Spirit with you. Get godly contrition for your special provoking sins. God delights to bind up the broken heart, and to exalt the abased sinner. God can just as soon deliver His Son to a second crucifixion, as not have compassion on a melting, broken, bleeding Christian. Only see that thy abasement be followed with amendment of life, and thy brokenness of heart with the breaking off of thy sins by righteousness. This is to take warning when God gives it, and will prove an effectual means to prevent the curse, and to procure a blessing of God.

"Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart" (Jer. 4:4). This spiritual circumcision, made without hands, is often called for in Scripture as a thing of absolute necessity. The want of it is both disgraceful and dangerous. Was it not a reproach to a Jew, to delay the circumcision of his child eight whole days? How disgraceful then must it be for a Christian, to be well onward to threescore or fourscore years of age, and yet a child of the curse, uncircumcised in heart after so many years. A child uncircumcised was capable of salvation, but there is no redemption for him that dies uncircumcised in heart. Papists bury children that die before baptism in unhallowed places; Jews bury children that die before circumcision before the door of their synagogues, and not with the rest. Oh, but he that dies before his heart is circumcised and sanctified by the Spirit, shall be buried in hell. Be ye therefore spiritually circumcised

in your hearts. "We are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil.-3:3). "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. 2:28-29).

"Agree with your adversary quickly" (Matt. 5:25). Labour to obtain reconciliation with God. A state of enmity is a dangerous state. The unreconciled sinner is as stubble and chaff before the consuming flames of God's wrath. Therefore get into a state of friendship and fellowship with God, and for this end, break off every other fellowship. "Fellowship with the world, for it is enmity against God" (James 4:4). "Fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness" (Eph. 5:11) Fellowship with the devil, "for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial?" (2 Cor. 6:14-15). Earnestly and insatiably desire and long for Jesus Christ; for there is no dealing with a sin-revenging Majesty, but only in and by Jesus Christ. It is not all your tears, (though you could pour out whole rivers of them) that can pacify God's wrath. Christ only can do this. He is the only Mediator. In Him only is the Father well pleased. Art thou a lost soul? And wilt thou not long for that Shepherd, that came to seek and to save that

which is lost? Art thou a bonds slave to the devil? It is only the Son that can make thee free, that can release thee from thy dangerous bondage and captivity. Art thou dangerously sick and wounded? Hath sin smitten thy soul with a dangerous disease? No physician, but Christ only can heal thee. Art thou miserably poor? Hast thou nowhere to lay the head of thy soul, when unhoused and scared out of the body? Christ will make thee rich. "As having nothing, yet possessing all things" (2 Cor. 6:10). All collectively in Christ. And all of more worth than the world's all.

Art thou disconsolate? Christ will comfort thee (Isa. 30:10). He is the tree that sweetened the bitter waters (Exod. 15:25). Without Him, all joy is but the shadow of joy, the laughter of a fool. Without Him, nothing is to be found on the table, but the bread of sorrow and the wine of astonishment. Art thou condemned by the law of God to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire? Art thou sentenced to lie in hell forever? This is unspeakable torment. What torment would it be for a poor woman to lie a thousand years in the anguish and pangs of childbirth? What then will it be for the wretched sinner, to lie in extreme torment to all eternity? Oh, but Christ is willing and able to pardon thee. He overcame sin, death, and the law, and will justify and absolve thee, if earnestly thou seek after Him. In short, God's Book is full of curses against thee who are Christless, and His sharp arrows are ready to let fly at thee. Oh, but Christ is the blessing of blessings, in

whom all the nations of the earth are blessed! He is skillful, powerful, and willing to leave thee happy and blessed, though He find thee miserable and accursed. How canst thou then but desire Him? Oh, take seriously and deeply to heart the misery of His absence. Conclude thyself undone if thou live and die without Him. Set a high valuation upon Him. Fall a-crying, and putting forth strong desires after Him, as that woman, who said, I have born nine children with great pain, I think as other women, and yet I would with all my heart, bare them all over again, and pass through the same intolerable pangs every day, as long as I live, to be assured of my part in Jesus Christ.

And when at another time one said to her (when she complained that she had no hold on Christ), "Doth not your heart desire and long after Christ?", she answered, "I have an husband and children, and many other comforts, and yet I would give them all, and all the good I shall ever see in this world, or in the world to come, to have my poor thirsty soul refreshed with the precious blood of Jesus Christ." Now, will you come behind this woman in longing for Christ? Nay, will you come behind Esau, who sought carefully with tears (Heb. 12:17)? Resign and give thyself to the Lord. "Yield yourselves unto the Lord" (2 Chron. 30:8). "One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord" (Isa. 44:5), i.e. give up himself unto Christ. Christian, it will

prove unspeakable gain, thus to subscribe thy name to Christ, and unspeakable folly and madness to refuse to do it. What! Resign thyself to the Lord, when all He does is for thy welfare and advancement! Canst thou find a better master than God? Canst thou do sweeter and more profitable service than serve God? Are the devil's workmen better paid than God's servants? Doth God entice and tempt thee, to destroy thee, as the world and the devil do? Hath anyone but God a property in thee? Thou art not Satan's, nor man's, nor thine own. Alas! Thou canst not deliver thy health from the power of a malignant disease, thy body from the state of death, nor thy soul from going down to the pit. Thou art a debtor to the flesh, but art not thou a debtor to God? Who made thee a living soul? Who redeemed thee when fallen by sin? Was it not the Lord? Is it not then robbery and sacrilege to steal thyself and service from God? Shall a poor thief be hanged for stealing cattle or money from men, to which men have but a derived, secondary and improper title? What then shall be the lot of those, who defraud and rob God of His property themselves? Yea, what a sad reckoning will there be, when Christ at His coming shall require His own with usury (Luke 19:23), and shall say, "Where are your improvements of My talents? Did you live to Me, or to your sinful flesh, and to worldly, vain, and carnal self? Where are these forty years and upwards I lent you? What! Was all wasted in your calling, and consumed in vanity? Where is the profit of your many Sabbaths and the grace you got by ordinances? Where are the souls of

your children I committed to your trust? Are they all lost?" Oh, sad, and doleful reckoning, when sinners must answer for baptism, for sermons, mercies, and affliction, which they perverted to a wrong use! Therefore, yield yourselves, and all that you have unto the Lord, and that

(1) with prudence and upon deliberation (Heb. 11:26; Josh. 24:15). Affectionate devotions and pangs in some fickle professors soon die, but let judgment and sanctified reason ballast thy soul against revoltings. Weigh the grounds of thy profession, whether they be solid and stable. Own Christ upon sound and clear convictions, that thy acknowledgment may be constant.

(2) Yield your all to the Lord, with whole consent and will, without constraint and force. "Thy people shall be a willing people in the day of Thy power" (Ps. 110:3). God doth sweetly compel, but it is by removing unwillingness.

(3) Yield to God with constant resolution to live to Him (Ps. 63:4). Let there be no hypocritical reserves, no cursed limitations. I will serve God in public, but I will take liberty in secret, for if I pray in my closet, it shall only be till my affrighted soul become quieted, and till my sickness of distress be removed. Alas! These are cursed limitations. Therefore yield all thy interests, all thy faculties, all thy talents, and worldly accomplishments to God's service, and that forever, come comfort or come crosses, come life or come death. You must get

into Christ, be united to Him, and engrafted in Him, not only by the external bond of profession, but also by the internal bond of a true and lively faith. Oh, rest not till thou be in union with Christ! As it is said of Judas, "It had been better for him if he had never been born": so it has been better for thee never to have had being in the world, than not to be in Christ.

They that are in Christ have cause to rejoice; they can lack nothing being in Him. As St. Ambrose observes, we have all things in Christ, and Christ is all things in us. If we are sick, He is a Physician; if we fear death, He is life; if in darkness, He is light; if in want, He is abundance; if hungry, He is food; if thirsty, He is drink; if miserable, He is mercy; if covetous of heaven, He is the way to it. Christ is all in all, and without Him all things are nothing at all. Look in all the boxes where a Christian's comfort is, they are all empty without Christ. Without Christ, the most stately palace is an hell; but with Christ, the most stinking dungeon is a palace. Without Christ, there can be no refreshment in pains, no strength in weakness, no comfort in death or judgment. Without Christ, thou art dead, having no life, and dark, having no light. Without Christ thou art dead spiritually, and must die eternally. Canst thou endure to die forever? Hagar could not abide to see her child die, though it must have paid that debt after some few years, but they who die Christlessly, die endlessly! Christ is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end; without Him, no beginning of felicity, no

end of misery. A Christless estate is an hopeless and helpless estate. "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5:12). Therefore hasten to Christ, and get possessed of Him by faith. Take Him at the Father's hand. It will be the best bargain you ever made. Christ comes not to destroy your bodies, but to save your souls. He comes not to slay your firstborn, but to bring salvation to you and your posterity. He comes not to molest your houses, but to dislodge your lusts, and not to make you beggars, but to bestow upon you the riches of His grace. Admit Him, therefore, not into your houses only, but also into your hearts, according to that word of the apostle, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith" (Ephesians 3:17). Receive Him on such terms as God offers Him, and as He offers Himself unto you. Let Him be your Sovereign as well as your Savior. Take Him willingly into your arms, by relying on Him alone for salvation, and approving of His service as choice and excellent. Resolve to obey Him in all duties and ordinances, and that with delight and thankfulness, and to persevere in His service all the days of your life. This purpose, and this do, for it is the very heart of faith, and sincere obedience.

Let proud Diotrophes say, it is good for me to have the pre-eminence; let covetous Judas say, it is good for me to bear the bag. Let Demas say, it is good for me to embrace this present world. But let thy soul say, it is good

for me to embrace this glorious person, Jesus Christ. Forsake forever all the parts of an unregenerate life. Let not the remembrance of that pleasure you once had in foolish jesting, in breaking the Sabbath, and in wicked company entice or draw you to desire your return thither. Let the remembrance of this be bitter to you. Labor to be a glory to the gospel, and let every action be suitable and con-natural to your renewed condition. Say as Paul, "When I was a child, I spake as a child.. .But now I put away childish things."

So when I was in my natural estate, my speeches, thoughts, and actions were carnal, but now I put away carnal things. Evil works and evil words are now unnatural, reproachful, and debasing your new estate. Others glory in such words and works, but be thou ashamed of them, and say, the Minister I hear reproves them, the Bible I read disallows them, the godly I converse with disavow them, Christ whom I believe in abhors them, and the conscience I bear about me condemns them. Shall not I be ashamed of them, and forsake them forever? Shake yourselves from the dust and vanities of youth, and close with God while He is at hand. It is good to bear the yoke in youth, to kill weeds soon, to tame the horse whilst a colt, and to bow the twig whilst it is young. Do not delay any longer. Do not say, it is still too soon to repent and turn unto the Lord. If thou art old, it is well if it be not too late, not for God to accept of repentance, but for thee to repent to acceptance. If thou art young, Oh remember,

the Lord loves the first ripe grapes (Hos. 9:10; Micah 7:1). Oh be holy speedily, for

(1) God commands and calls for it, and surely God's command should be more forcible than an hundred motives drawn from utility. "Remember thy Creator" (Eccles. 12:1), i.e. exercise thy mind, will, and affections about God, depend on His power, be confident in His mercy, be obedient to His will, and delight in His service. Yea, remembering Him now "in the days of thy youth," i.e. to serve Him presently, now or never, now if ever. To delay is odious and dangerous. Old age is approaching; the evil day is coming, therefore remember Him now. And if we remember God in our youth and good days, God will befriend us in our old-age and evil days.

(2) No time so choice, precious and advantageous as youth. Now nature is in her flower, the body active, the memory quick, the mind apprehensive, the affections more spiritfult and strong. This is thy golden season, and who deserves thy golden season more than God? Is not thy prime, God's peculiar time? Is it not reasonable, that God have the flower rather than the chaff, the wine rather than the dregs, the summer rather than the winter, the gold rather than the dross, the marrow rather than the bone of your time, and youth rather than old age? Can you find any in the world, that may better challenge the cream of your time? What! Will you grind and wear away the beauty and strength of your whole man in the

world? Shall the devil deflower you? Is godliness in season only towards death? Is religion only for the aged? What! Will ye turn to God, when scarce able to turn over in your beds? Oh, dangerous conceit!

(3) You owe not one hour to sin, or the world, much less your prime age. "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh" (Rom. 8:12). Thy soul is the Lord's. Therefore look that thou lose it not. Thy mind, memory, health, wealth, etc. are the Lord's. Waste them not; thy all is God's. Defraud Him not; the devil's hands never fashioned thy wonderful body. Thy soul is none of his breath. Thou art wholly God's creature; therefore serve Him.

(4) The work of holiness is more easy for you than for others. It is far more easy to keep the devil out, than to cast him out after long possession. It is easier to resist sin when it is but a stranger, than when it is become a part of ourselves. When, by custom, vice is become natural and sin hath soaked itself into our substance, repentance will cost more pains after long commission. If ever you would be true masters of yourselves, check sin before it grow into an habit. Your judgments are now more clear, and your consciences more tender, than they will be hereafter, if ye go on in sin. If ye serve the devil all the days of your youth, you will find it hard, if not impossible, to serve God in old age. Besides, few, very few are called

at the eleventh hour of the day. This is a common observation, and experience proves the truth of it. God indeed sometimes, by a miraculous mercy, calls in and converts an aged sinner. Yet, it is but seldom that God pours new wine into their old bottles. When youth and manhood have been blackened with sin, it is rare to find their grey hairs glittering with grace. Not one of an hundred live to old age in sin, and then die as saints.

(5) The ways of youth will have an influence into old age, to make it either comfortable or miserable. You are now laying up reflections for old age. Will it not be uncomfortable, when old, to reflect on youth's sins? "Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth" (Job 13:26). Will it not be sad, to have your bones full of youth's sins, when almost empty of marrow? To have old bones and young sins meeting together? Oh, ye young persons, will not those sins which are the pleasure of your youth, be the burden of old age? Will it not be sad, to have your old age drenched in grief, for your obstinate wickedness in your youth and to have your souls full of terrors, when your face is full of wrinkles? Will you not then weep and lament for the time past of your life?

(6) This is a work that especially becomes your age. Ye that are young, desire to render yourselves lovely to all. Now this will render you lovely to God, and of precious esteem and reputation among the saints. "Who also were

in Christ before me" (Rom. 16:7). It is a greater honour to say he is an old disciple of Christ, than to say he is of an ancient stock and family. Nothing dignifies and beautifies us so much as that which transforms us into the divine likeness. "But let it be the hidden man of the heart, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (1 Pet. 3:4). To be strong like Samson, or beautiful like Absalom, is nothing to what it is to be like God in holiness.

(7) It is incident to man to be cut off while young. Death and youth often meet. "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall" (Isa. 40:30). What young person can show a protection from that grim sergeant death? Death no more regards green plants than grey heads. Thy body (oh, young man) is but a vessel of clay, and may be soon broken. Thy hourglass may be well nigh run out, when thou thinks it is but newly turned. More die before ten, than after threescore. Death may be upon thee, before thou art aware of it. Therefore, reckon not on tomorrow. Thou who art certainly alive this day, may be surely dead before another. Oh, be serious now, turn thy face heavenwards quickly, seek after God speedily, do not presume that you can exercise such a repentance as will please God at any time. Repent presently, put on grace and holiness presently, that if thou die soon, thou may be early crowned with consummate happiness. Be not thou only presently, but universally holy. Holy at all times, and in all things.

"Holy in all manner of conversation" (1 Pet. 1:15).

Not in some single act only, but in the whole course of your lives, act holiness, not only occasionally, but customarily. Let it be your constant trade and beaten path, your chief business and main design. As the wicked man's heart is evil continually, so our thoughts should be constantly holy. There is not one moment, wherein we are exempted from holy living. Therefore to be holy only by seasons, is not enough. We must not disregard today that which we had an esteem for yesterday. We must not be zealous one day and formal another day. We must not have respect to the duties of the first table and neglect the second. We must not pray to God, and in the meantime not pay our dues to man. We must have an equal eye to all God's commandments. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all Thy commandments" (Ps. 119:6). A respect to the commandments of the first table, without a respect to the second, is but hypocrisy, and a respect unto the commandments of the second table, without a respect to the first, is but heathenish morality. Though we fail in every duty, yet we must make conscience of every duty. If we be so ingenious as to do our best, God will be so gracious as to overlook our worst. All within us, and all without us should be holy. Our meditations holy, our desires holy, yea, we should be holy in the affairs of our ordinary callings. Not only a saint's reading, and praying, and meditating, are holy, but

his eating, and drinking, and recreations are holy, because the end even in these is holy. Whatever our actions are, whether between God and us, or between others and us, or between us and ourselves, whether they be actions of piety, or of sobriety, or of righteousness, they must all have holiness written upon them. Labor to maintain and keep up a constant watchfulness in all things, according to the apostle's exhortation (2 Tim. 4:5).

Watch (1) over your hearts. For "the heart is deceitful above all things" (Jer. 17:9). It is deceitful in all things, even in the best things we do. In prayer it is ready to trust in idle and wandering fancies, and therefore even in duty Solomon's advice is seasonable. "Keep thy heart with all diligence" (Prov. 4:23). Oh the disorder, incoherence, and lightness of our thoughts; all the viciousness of our lives proceeds from thence. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication, thefts, falsewitness, blasphemies" (Matt. 15:19). As the viper (saith Isidore) is killed by the young ones in her belly, so are we betrayed and killed by our own thoughts, nourished in our bosoms, which consume and poison the soul. Therefore keep thy heart diligently. When thou find thy thoughts sinful, check thy unsteady mind, and let the meditations of thy heart be bent upon gracious objects. Let not evil thoughts enter, or if they enter, let them not abide in thy heart. Dislodge them and let not good thoughts depart and vanish, but cherish and entertain them.

(2) Watch over your tongue. We read of David's setting a watch at the door of his lips. Let your tongue be ruled and governed. "The tongue is an unruly member" (James 3:6), unless the law of God, and the power of grace possess the heart. Pambus, one without learning, came to a certain man, to be taught a Psalm. When he had heard the first verse of the 39th Psalm, ("I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue"), he would not suffer the next verse to be read, saying, this verse is enough if I could practise it. And when his teacher blamed him, because he did not see him until six months later, he answered that he had not yet learned the verse. One that knew him many years after this, asked him whether he had yet learned the verse. "I am forty years old," saith he, "and have not yet learned to fulfill it." Now the harder it is to rule the tongue, the more watchful we should be over it. Let your words be few, and well-pondered. Never be silent, when occasion is offered to glorify God, and to edify the souls of others. Get thy heart filled with good matter, and let thy tongue give utterance and vent to thy heart in due season, but beware of idle words, much more of corrupt communication. An heart well ballasted and established by grace will refrain from unsavory, and especially profane, and infectious discourse.

(3) Watch over your actions and see that the whole of your outward carriage and behavior be such as becomes

the gospel. "Unless the Lord keep the house, the watchman watcheth but in vain"; therefore call upon God, to watch with you and over you, to be present with you and to assist you in your watch. When you pray for God's assistance, endeavour, and God will help your endeavours. See whom you make your companions.

(1) Shake off the society of the wicked, lest ye be defiled by them, and follow them through their transgressions to their destruction. Evil company is exceeding dangerous. They infect others and infuse their own evil qualities into others. They are a strong temptation unto evil, and in an insensible manner draw others to sin. There are no such sure factors for the devil as wicked company, who will strive to rub their vices upon as many as they can infect. They are the devil's snares, the very pest and bane of all godliness. Did not Joseph, living in Pharaoh's court, begin to swear by the life of Pharaoh? And Gregory the Great speaks of Gordiana, his own aunt, who was drawn off from the love of God and the strictness of an holy life, after the death of her two sisters, Tharsylla and Emiliana. She was drawn off by her companions. Oh, how many have been undone by carnal company! How many in hell are now cursing their companions on earth. Therefore avoid (as much as possible) the company of the wicked. And though you cannot wholly avoid their company till you go out of this world, yet you may and ought to avoid their sins. Hearken unto Solomon, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not (Prov. 1:10), "Walk not thou

in the way with them, refrain thy foot from their path" (verse 15), "Do not walk in the counsel of the ungodly" (Psalm 1:1). Though thou canst not wholly separate thyself from the works of darkness, "yet have no fellowship with the works of darkness" (Eph. 5:11). But on the contrary, when they entice thee to evil, persuade them to that which is good. By this course, seek their conversion, whilst thou conversest with them.

(2) Keep company with those that fear God. All David's delight was in such (Psalm 16:3). "I am a companion of all them that fear Thee, and of them that keep Thy precepts" (Psalm 119:63). Good company is a great happiness, a little image of heaven, where one doth love another, and all at peace with their own consciences. Good company will by their holy lives allure you to holiness. By their good counsel and instruction they will be a great help to you in the business of religion. I never came to such a one, but I went away more learned and holy. As iron sharpeneth iron (saith Solomon) so doth the countenance of a man his friend. While Christ talked with His disciples, their hearts grew hot within them (Luke 24:32). When Paul met Silas, he burned in spirit (Acts 18:5). Saul being among the prophets, changed his spirit, and became a prophet (1 Sam. 10:10-12). So the advantage of good company is very great; therefore, seek out such as truly fear God, and associate with them. Faithfully repel and resist all Satan's temptations. Satan, like Absalom, would draw and steal away the hearts of

God's loyal subjects, but submit readily to God, and repel resolutely the usurper Satan. All that get to heaven, grapple and skirmish with Satan here on earth. Many a bloody battle hath been fought in former generations, yea, ever since there was a devil in hell, and a saint on earth. How many armies of victorious saints have quite routed the devil and beaten him off the field? How many gallant worthies and noble spirited champions for Christ have put to flight the devil with all his black regiments and legions of infernal fiends? And yet the devil with his trained bands doth rally again; so that, while you are on earth, this hellish spirit will fight and molest you. What Solomon speaks of death may be applied here (Eccles. 8:8). There is no discharge in that war. There is no soul, young or old, that is a soldier and bears arms, either for God, or for the devil. Everyone is either God's ensign bearer, or Satan's engineer. Oh, "resist the devil, and he will flee" (James 4:7). "Give no place to the devil" (Eph. 4:27). Stand your ground and Satan will give ground. Keep combatting and you shall certainly conquer at last. It may be, when you look upon the devil, and see his resolution and hatred, and power and policy, ye begin to question the success. Faint not, neither be discouraged. Quit yourselves like men, like faithful soldiers of Jesus Christ, and you shall see Satan fall like lightning, gasping and sprawling at your feet. Remember ye must fight or fall, fight or die.

There are temptations on all hands: temptations on the

right and left hand, temptations before and behind you. Yet, remember also, you have Christ for your General, the gospel for your ensign, the weapons of your warfare are spiritual, and mighty through God. Your cause is God's glory, and the prize your own salvation. Your armour is complete, armour of proof; God's watchword is, "Keep My commandments." Your enemies have been foiled a thousand times by your forefathers, therefore do not play the coward. Do not betray the cause of God and your own souls into Satan's hands, "but be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). "Be followers of Christ" (Eph. 5:1). Though ye cannot follow Him as Asahel did Abner, close at the heels, yet follow Him, though it be but as Peter followed Christ, afar off to the high priest's hall. Christ came into the world, not only to purchase grace and glory for us, but also to give us an example that we might follow His steps, and walk according to His blessed and blameless copy. "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you" (John 13:15).

He that saith, he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked (John 2:6). The way to be like Christ hereafter in happiness, is to be like Him here in holiness. In vain do you look for eternal life in Christ, if in this life ye be not like Christ. In vain do you promise yourselves to partake with Him in glory above, if you be not followers of Him in the holiness and purity of His life below. Oh, therefore be followers of Him as dear

children. Observe your Pattern. Let the life of Christ be ever before your eyes, as the copy is before the eyes of the scholar (Heb. 12:2) particularly. Learn of Christ to condemn the world. Christ condemned the world and worldly greatness, both at His birth and in the course of His life. First at His birth. As in His incarnation, He was crowded in the womb nine months, and changed the bosom of His Father for the womb of a mean virgin, so at His birth He was swaddled and laid in a cold and common stable. He had no palace, no sumptuous room, but a stable. He had no chamber of presence, but a manger; no tapestry, but straw; no throne, but a cratch; and no attendance, but beasts. In the course of His life, He had no sceptre, but a reed. He had no place to lay His aching head on, or to keep His weary wounded head in (Matt. 8:20). He had no annual rents, and no constant possessions. He was no landed man, had no tenements of His own, no certain place of residence, neither house nor household furniture.

Now, what was the meaning of all this? Was He in a dream, thus to slight what thousands dote upon? No, no, it was to teach us by His own example to condemn the world, the world's glory, greatness and riches. Covetousness is the great sin of this age. Most men and women are troubled with a dry drunkenness, but Christ was not. Was He not poor (2 Cor. 8:9)? Cared He for heaps of gold and silver? No. He commanded the young man "to sell that he had, and give to the poor" (Matt. 19:21). He had

no inordinate desire to get, or to keep riches. Oh, this is the root of all evil, and the ruin of all good (1 Tim. 6:9-10). Covetousness (said a great scholastical divine) deserveth the hatred of all for six reasons.

(1) It is a sin against nature, making the soul terrene, which should be celestial.

(2) For the many curses against it in the Word, such as, "Woe to them, that join house to house..."

(3) For the many evils it subjects us to.

(4) It makes man a fool. "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee."

(5) It causes strifes.

(6) It brings man into snares which drown in perdition. As in the body, when the spleen swells, all other parts decay, so as this desire to be rich grows, all graces decay. (See Isa. 58:17; Prov. 25:27; Col. 3:5.) Therefore learn of Christ not to be covetous. Learn of Christ to be diligent. Christ was never idle. He was always employed, yea, always well employed and always doing good. "Wist ye not (saith He) that I must be about My Father's business?" (Acts 10:38). He went about doing good. Alas, idleness is a vain, unprofitable and prodigal expense of your precious time. The idle man is the devil's cushion, and his own burden. When we are most lazy, the

devil is most busy. Sloth is the cause of sin, and idleness the fruitful mother of wickedness. Our Savior couples them together in Matthew 25:26: "Thou wicked and slothful servant." Idleness often leads to theft, uncleanness, drunkenness, etc. "This was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters" (Ezek. 16:49). Idleness breeds obstructions, and other bodily diseases. It brings poverty (Prov. 6:10). It brings shame (verse 6). The heavens are always in motion. Adam wrought in paradise; his work was to dress the garden. The very ant teaches us diligence. "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest." Go thou and do likewise (Prov. 6:6-8). The winter will come; the day of the Lord's wrath will come. Therefore be not idle, but provide for the time to come, and be diligent, that you may be found of Him in peace in that day (2 Pet. 3:14).

Work out your own salvation; a work, which if you dispatch not before you die, ye are undone forever. Therefore ply it hard before the night come, wherein ye cannot work. Be doing good to the souls and bodies of others, lest with the idle and negligent servant, ye be condemned to eternal torments (Matt. 25:30). Learn of Christ to be thankful to God for favors received. Praise was much of Christ's employment. "Father, I thank Thee, that Thou A Door Opening Into Everlasting Life hast heard Me"

(John 6:41). "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth" (Matt. 6:25).

Unthankfulness is a Gentile sin (Rom. 1:21). Augustine called it the devil's sponge, wherewith he wipes out all the favors of the Almighty, and yet it is a sin too common at this day. But, Christian, hast thou received of the Lord's hand discriminating mercy? Wast thou once an infamous leper, and art thou now washed and made clean? Why dost thou not return to give God thanks? Wast thou worthy of such a mercy? No, verily. Doth not thy unthankfulness for the mercy show thee ignorant of the worth of the mercy? Oh, remember thy own baseness and unworthiness, and be not so unjust as to deny and defraud God of His due and deserved praise. If all the world were a ball of gold in the hand of a man, awakened and terrified in conscience, He would bestow it all for one ephod of thy Omer, for a little of thy grace. Thou art born child to a king, a rightful heir to glory; thou hast found that precious pearl which few, very few find. Therefore break forth into thankfulness and say, "I was once lost, but now am I found. I was once dead, but now restored to life once mortally wounded, but now mercifully healed; once darkness, but now light in the Lord; once altogether sinful, but now sanctified in part. I was once deformed, but now beautified; once an enemy, but now a friend; once hated, but now beloved; once cursed, but now blessed; once miserable, but now have found mercy! Bless the Lord for all this, O my soul. Yea, let

everything that hath breath, bless the name of the Lord. Oh, that the children yet unborn, would blow the trumpet of my Redeemer's praise! How did Satan long to have ruined me in the days of my darkness and to have triumphed in my downfall and destruction. Oh, what a doleful song would I have uttered in hell, if I had been damned! But thanks be to God, who gave me not as a prey to his teeth. Oh that God would with the point of a diamond, imprint the memory of this His rich mercy upon my mind, as the engravings of a signet."

Oh, remember that thankfulness is a standing duty. Let the example of Christ guard you against backsliding and apostasy. Did Christ repent of His long and tedious journey from heaven to earth? Was He in haste to be gone from earth to heaven again before His time? Oh no, He did not decline from His enterprise, but went forward with the work of man's salvation till all was finished. Why then will ye offer to turn back, in heart, into Egypt? Why do ye say, Would God I had died in the wilderness? What though you find your way hedged up with thorns - what though ye meet with temptations and troubles in your way to heaven. Yet, let not these discourage or drive you back. Remember Lot's wife. The resolute traveler knows that the way is dirty, yet goes on. So do ye, till ye have finished your course. Ye have vowed to maintain the fight, therefore turn not back in the day of battle. If any man draw back, God can have no pleasure in him.

Let the example of Christ guard you against carnal confidence. "He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him" (Psalm 22:8). He, i.e. Christ, trusted in the Lord, and wilt thou trust in an arm of flesh? Because thou art strong of body, wilt thou trust or hope for long life? Or because thou art now rich, wilt thou trust or hope thou wilt never be poor? Oh, do not depend upon the greatness of thy strength, or the largeness of thy estate. Learn the holy art of depending upon God, and committing thyself to Him alone. Learn of Christ to hate sin and wickedness. "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness" (Ps. 45:7).

Christ was holy, and without sin in His birth and conception. Though He assumed the nature of man, it was without the sin of man. Christ was holy in the whole course of His life and actions. Yea, He hates sin in others; He hates sin in the wicked, and will (as a just Judge) punish it to all eternity. He hates sin in the elect, as He suffered the pains of hell to abolish their sin. So He will have no communion with them, till they be sanctified. Oh, learn of Christ to hate and abominate all that is evil. Every unruly lust, ungracious speech, and sinful action (Col. 3:8-10). "I hate vain thoughts" (Ps. 119:113); there is nothing so hateful as sin. Anselm used to say, that if he should see the shame of sin on the one hand, and the pains of hell on the other, and must of necessity choose one, he would rather be thrust into hell without sin, than go into heaven with sin. He that hates not sin, stands under the

hatred of God. "The wicked, and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth" (Ps. 11:5). Blessed, forever blessed are they, whom God loves, but cursed, inconceivably and incomprehensibly cursed are all they whom God's soul hates. And He doth hate those that love sin!

Learn of Christ to be humble. "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. 11:29; Phil. 2:6-8). Christ was humble, and will ye be proud? He abased Himself, and will ye exalt yourselves? He sought not the praise of men, and will ye be vainglorious? "Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind: let each esteem others better than themselves" (Phil. 2:3). Oh, never inordinately desire or seek the praise of man. Though you may, and must desire a good name, with a direct intention to God's glory, be little in your own eyes. Be content to be nothing in the account of others. Be content with that praise which cometh from God alone. The contrary is blamed. "They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 5:44; 12:43). Be not proud of those things which are but base and mean, such as riches, beauty, etc. Prosper hath a remarkable saying to this purpose: Thou boastest of thy wealth, honor, strength, beauty, etc. but consider what thou art by sin, and what thou shalt be in the grave, and thy plumes will fall; for every proud man forgets himself. Be not proud of those things which are praiseworthy, as grace and good duties, but be like a good tree, where the more full of fruits the branches are, the lower they bend

themselves.

Oh, beware of pride in grace, trusting to its strength, or relying on its worth. Must the mud-wall be proud, because the sun shines upon it? If ye be thus proud, ye will be delivered up into the devil's hands by some desperate fall, and then your confidence will be cut off. Peter's example may scare you. His confidence was high. "Though all men should be offended because of Thee, yet will I not be offended." Oh, but he was soon dismounted, when he denied Christ with oaths. Your grace will wither and dwindle, if you pride yourselves in it. Remember, pride is both a sin, and a sad sign of a distempered soul. A conceit that is hardly cured. It is the canker of our comforts, and the poison of our duties. Yea, it nurses all sin. If a man be proud, it is to be feared he lacketh that which in his conceit, he is master of. Thou canst not endure spiritual pride in others, and can God endure it in thee? Where doth God lay up the richest wines of the choicest mercies? Is it not in the lowest cellars of humble hearts? Remember, pride is the mark of the devil's slaves, but humility the mark of Christ's followers.

It is storied of a certain man, that when the devil came to him and said, What hast thou, O man, that I have not? Hast thou fasted? I never did eat the least bit, nor drink the least drop. Hast thou watched? I never slept a wink since I was made. I am no drunkard, no adulterer any more than thou. Oh but, (said the man) I have an humble

heart - I am a man of unclean lips, and repent in dust and ashes. Herein, (says the devil) thou exceedest me, for I am a proud spirit. Therefore, avoid pride as you would avoid Satan. Say with the apostle, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20), I pray, yet not I, but the Spirit prayeth in me. I do duties, yet not I, but Christ helps me to do them. Learn of Christ to be heavenly-minded. In this sense, (though not only in this as Grotius would have it) Christ saith of Himself, that He was in heaven whilst He was upon earth. So He tells the Jews, "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven" (John 3:13). So He was properly, according to His Godhead, which still kept residence in heaven. And so He was according to His manhood, having His affections and conversation there. This much His continual discourse showed, which ascended from earthly things up to heavenly.

Oh, be like Christ in this! Let your chief negotiation, and business be in heaven (Phil. 3:20). Set your affections on things above (Col. 3:2). Be much in the study and contemplation of heavenly things. Let your heart be fixed on the heavenly Jerusalem. Do not lavish out your thoughts by wholesale upon the world. It is far more sweet and pleasant to have the thoughts upon heaven. Therefore be always stirring up your affections and serious thoughts, to converse with God. "Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (Heb. 13:14), i.e. our thoughts,

desires, groans, and endeavors are after heaven. Yea, not only think of heaven, but speak of it unto others. Let worldly men be talking of the world, but inure thy tongue to the language of Canaan. Be often speaking of heaven and of thy Father's house, as Christ was. Learn of Christ not to offend others. Christ was very careful of offending His very enemies (Matt. 7:27). Woe to them that scandalizes one of these little ones. Give no just scandal to any, but labor to win others to the love and practise of an holy life. What a scandal was given, when Judas, one of Christ's own family, betrayed Him, "Woe unto the world because of offences, for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh" (Matt. 18:7). Some will be scandalized at good men, but that is a passive, not an active scandal.

Oh, make not Christ and religion, as Jacob's sons made him, to stink in the nostrils of others (Phil. 4:8). "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:18). Oh, draw not others to sin, nor confirm them in sin. Be no occasion of stumbling, much less of falling to any other. Abuse not your Christian liberty indiscreetly, neither do what is unlawful, nor what is lawful in an undue manner. Be not only free from those things which offend others, but from the very suspicion and appearance of them. The world will take offence, but if you have either wit or grace, give none. Learn of Christ justice and equity, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having

salvation" (Zech. 9:9). "Called the King of righteousness" (Heb. 7:2). Be just and righteous in all your dealings. Do to others, as you would be done unto by others (Matt. 7:12). You would not have others circumvent you; do not ye circumvent them. You would not have others wrong you; do not wrong them (Jer. 22:3). You would have others make good their promises to you; do ye make good your promises to them. Do all things equally and justly, else God will be offended. It is a great reproach to religion, when those that profess it, are unjust and unrighteous in their dealings. On the other hand, it is a blessed thing to follow after righteousness. "Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times" (Ps. 106:3). What you get by injustice, will make you conscience-sick. Then with Judas, ye will cast away the thirty pieces of silver, but what you get justly, will do you good. "Better is a little with righteousness, than great revenues without right" (Prov. 16:8.)

Therefore deal righteously, at all times and in all places, as if all the world stood by and had a window to see into your heart. Learn of Christ to lay sin to heart. Indeed Christ repented not, neither had He any sin of His own to repent of; yet He underwent more sorrow of spirit than all penitents in the world. Did He sorrow, and sigh, and bleed for your sin? And yet you will not grieve for it, nor repent of it! Alas, impenitence is the nourisher of all evil, and the canker-worm of all good. No sin makes men and

women more like the devil than this, for the devil is confirmed in all wickedness. This is the sin against the second covenant, a constant abuse of God's mercy. Whilst thy mind is unchanged, thou continuest in that sin thou committed many years ago. Whilst thou continuest in sin unrepented of, no remission or pardon of sin can be given thee. Nay, is not sin impenitently persevered in, a sign of reprobation? "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath, against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Rom. 2:5). Never were greater arguments pressed to repentance, than now under the gospel. Therefore break off thy sins by repentance, and resolve upon a course of holiness. It is not only impenitency to be resolved to walk on in the ways of sin, but also to be unresolved to be holy.

Imitate Christ in love to the saints. There was nothing in which Christ was more eminent than His love. No rancour of spirit, no boiling up of envy, but all love. And this exemplary love is proposed for your imitation. "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us" (Eph. 5:2). "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13:34). Is this not the highest motive to love others, that our Lord in love to us, exposed His name to reproach, His body to the rage of death on the bloody cross, and His soul to inconceivable distress and agonies under the burning hands of His

Father's wrath? Yea, He did leave this as His farewell, with His departing charge (John 15:17). "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). If therefore you would not forfeit your discipleship, nor incur the guilt of unfaithfulness, for not executing the last will and testament of your dearest Lord, "See that ye love one another." You that are believers have cause to love one another. Are ye not all descended from the same Father, born of the same immortal seed, actuated by the same Spirit, anointed to the same glory? Do ye not profess the same faith, in all essentials, not in all circumstantialia? "Therefore be ye filled with love one to another."

Imitate Christ in pity and compassion. Christ was all pity, full of compassion to the souls of men. Wilt thou show no pity to the souls of others? Seest thou souls about thee, driven to hell by droves, and yet pitiest them not? Where is thy charity? Are not thy tender mercies cruel? Shall not he be judged his brother's murderer, who abhors to be his brother's keeper? None are such rueful objects, as those which are hastening their own ruin. Their souls are hospitals of all diseases, dens of devils, and heirs of hell, and yet most houses and assemblies are full of them. They are insensible of their misery. In a dream of fond hope they fancy themselves in the porch of Paradise, when they are actually standing on the brink of the bottomless pit. Oh, pity them and pray for them. You will pity a sick beast and have ye no compassion for a poor

deluded wretch, that is sick of a deadly lethargy? You pity a raving Bedlam, that hath bitten holes in his arm, or stuck his breast full of pins. Why not pity a sinner, whose soul and body are full of the arrows of the wrath of God, and whose conscience is full of the stings of sin, though he feels them not?

Imitate Christ in meekness and gentleness. "Learn of Me," saith Christ, "for I am meek." "Tell ye the daughter of Zion, behold thy King cometh unto thee, meek" (Matt. 21:5). And St. Paul beseecheth the Corinthians, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ (2 Cor. 10:2). In this respect also he is compared to the Lamb (Isa. 53:7). Was this Christ's disposition to bear and forbear? And will ye quarrel one with another? Shall husband and wife snarl and abuse one another? Shall one and the same house be divided against itself? Shall parents be against children, and children against parents? Shall masters be harsh to their servants, and servants fly in the face of their masters? Where is your gospel meekness? O avoid this testy and pettish temper, and study to be quiet, to be gentle, affable, loving, and courteous unto all. Learn of Christ to forgive your enemies. Did not Christ, when upon the cross, breathe forth His soul in prayer for His enemies? "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Hath He not by His precept, in His sermon on the mount taught us to do so likewise (Matt. 5:44)? And thus we are taught, to pray by our church in her lit-

any, that it would please God to forgive our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers, and to turn our hearts. And the apostle pressed the same duty upon us, from the example of Christ, "Forebearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye" (Col. 3:13). We are of spiteful, revengeful spirits, and cannot pass by the least wrong. We think it a disgrace to do so, but Solomon says in Proverbs 19:11, "It is the glory of a man to pass over a transgression" It is not a disgrace, nor a base thing to forgive injuries, as we imagine, but a princely thing. To be able to hurt, yet not to hurt, is noble. The apostle wil- leth us to lift up holy hands to god, without wrath. But if our hearts be wrathful and vengeful, our prayers are in no case acceptable to God. With what countenance, says one, can we look up to heaven and say "Lord, forgive us our tresspasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us" and yet revenge with all extremity the least offences offered to ourselves? It is vain, says Tertullian, to come to the God of peace without peace, or to pray for the remission of sins, without forgiving others. We must not come to make atonement with God at His altar before we have made an atonement with our brother in our hearts. "Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matt. 5:24) "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any" (Mark 11:25)

Learn of Christ not to recompense evil with evil. Do not

slander when slandered. Do not revile and rail, when reviled and railed upon."When he was reviled, He reviled not again; when he suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously" (1 Pet.2:23) A slanderer is worse than a thief. The one is publicly odious, and robs us of our goods, but the other robs us of a better treasure, our good names. Wrong done to the estate is sooner repaired, than a wrong done to a good name. To invent false tales is a bad trade, and to believe them is blame-worthy folly. Who would choose to be so dealt with? It is the character of a citizen of Zion, "he that backbiteth not with his tongue, not taketh up a reproach against his neighbour" (Ps. 15:3) You must not take up, nor receive a reproach from others, much less coin and make a reproach yourselves. If there were less temerity, and more charity in the world, there would be fewer surmisings, and greater desires to have all about us innocent. Many then would not turn peddlers, to go from door to door with slanderers. What is this but to take the devil's office out of his hands? Christian, why dost thou smite thy neighbour's name? Is not this a sin against the fifth, sixth, eighth, and ninth commandments? Is it not this that separateth chief friends? Was it not this that made Saul to persecute David, and made Mephibosheth lose his hands? Is it not this that made Ahasuerus cause the builders to cease, and made poor Joseph to be cast into prison? He that spreads a report that is suspicious is a slanderer, though he had it from another. Know ye not

that report is an old liar? Therefore, be not tattling busybodies, but even when there is cause to speak of another's folly, let it be with grief.

Imitate Christ in His obedience to His earthly parents. Jesus Christ was subject to His mother, and to His supposed father Joseph. "He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them" (Luke 2:51). He to whom angels were subject, was subject unto His parents, and (as it is most probable) He wrought in their mean trade, for the Jews said, "Is not this the carpenter?" (Mark 6:3). Not only the carpenter's son, but the carpenter. And Justin Martyr says He was employed in making of yokes and ploughs. The great God, becoming man, was subject to His parents. What greatness then may there be in children that should exempt them from obedience to their parents, since Jesus Christ, the Prince of glory, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, became subject and obedient to a poor man, His putative father, and to His mother, a mean virgin? Surely he is an unnatural beast and no child, that giveth not this obedience both to father and mother. Excellent is that saying of Austin, take away the beam from the sun and it will not shine; take away the springs from the river and it will dry up; take away the boughs from the tree and it will wither; so take away from children obedience to their parents, and they are no more children, but bastards and companions of those whom Christ calls the children of the devil.

Disobedient children, who reject the precepts and admonitions of their parents, take the high road to the gallows, where a man is made a spectacle to God, angels, and men. Such children, or rather monsters in nature, are to look for no other but God's horrible judgment against them. "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it" (Prov. 30:17). And that all children might fear to disobey their parents, God expressly decreed, that disobedient children should be rooted out (Deut. 21:18, etc.). Disobedience to parents entails God's judgments on children. It is a transgression that deserveth to be punished with death, both temporal and eternal.

Imitate Christ in His piety. Christ was much in prayer, and will ye altogether neglect prayer, or pray very rarely? Prayer is the ordinary exercise of every child of God. It was said of proselyted Paul, "Behold he prayeth" (Acts 9:11). And the charge runs, "In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Phil. 4:6). It is a question, whether Cornelius alms, or the incense of his praises were the richer and more durable memorial (Acts 10:4). Prayer is an especial part of adoration, and an acknowledgment of God's supremacy and sovereignty over His servants. It is a part of natural worship. The heathen mariners "called every one on his God" (Jonah 1:5). Prayer is the chiefest way of intercourse, society, and communion that we do

or can enjoy with God on earth. It is the way to prosperity, peace, and happiness. "Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee" (Job 22:21). Our prayers are letters of request, written within with supplications, but on the backside with abundant answers (Ps. 126:5-6). The prayerful heart is the gracious heavenly heart. And Chrysostom calls prayer a whip to torment the devil; therefore live not in the neglect of prayer. Why do ye not pray? Are ye so rich, that ye need no supplies of grace; or so careless, that ye desire them not? Oh, learn of Christ to be frequent, and fervent, and reverent in prayer!

(a) To be frequent. Christ prayed early and late, night and day. "In the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed" (Mark 1:35). Yes, "He continued all night in prayer to God" (Luke 6:12). Did Christ spend nights in prayer, and will not ye spend hours in prayer? Why do ye pray by fits, and not constantly? Why are ye so seldom with God, pouring out your hearts to Him? Are ye afraid of coming to God too often? Ye may come too seldom, but ye can never come too often to God. Is there not occasion for prayer to God early and late? Are there not sins early and late to be pardoned, mercies early and late to be procured, mischiefs early and late to be averted, duties early and late to be performed, afflictions early and late to be borne, and temptations early and late to be broken? Now, whence comes your health and strength? Is it

not from heaven? And how comes it from heaven, but by prayer? Oh, remember the old morning and evening sacrifice. Though the type, right, and ceremony be abolished, yet the morality, substance, and equity still remain. Daily oblations of prayer and praises are our unquestionable duty (Ps. 141:2). O above all things, be much in seeking God! Ye have the very key of heaven, if ye have the gift and grace of praying.

(b) Learn of Christ to be fervent. Christ's prayers were earnest and fervent pains. "And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly" (Luke 22:44). Did Christ pray fervently, and will you pray slightly, coldly, drowsily, as if ye were asleep, or as if ye cared not much whether ye prayed or not? Hereby ye expose yourselves to the eminent danger of losing your prayers. Cold prayers speak a denial. They are but carcasses of duty, carnal and sinful services which the Lord detests, and will never accept. The greatest liveliness well becomes us, when speaking in the ears of the living God. Luther was so ardent in prayer, that (as Melancthon wrote) they who stood under his window where he stood praying, might see his tears falling and dropping down. Bishop Latimer, in his prayers, used constantly to beg that God of His mercy would restore His gospel to England once again. Once again, he often reiterated, and with such ardency as if he had seen God before him and spoken to Him face to face. I care not how long or how short thy prayers be (said Johan

Picus, Earl of Mirand, to his nephew) but let them be ardent, and rather interrupted and broken between with sighs, than drawn out with a continual number of words. O let not your prayers be slight and perfunctory, but have the strength of the heart and soul in them. The more earnest ye are in prayer, the more ye resemble Christ "who in the days of His flesh, he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears" (Heb. 5:7).

(c) Learn to be reverent in prayer. Our Saviour Christ was God, equal and one in substance with God His Father. Nevertheless He was man also, and accustomed in all humility to kneel down and pray (Luke 22:41). Yea, He cast Himself flat upon the ground before Him (Matt. 26:39). We owe to God a twofold devotion, internal and external. The one to be done, the other not to be left undone. Servants will show respect and reverence before their masters; even pagans have kneeled to their idols, and shall not Christians do so to the true God? "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker" (Ps. 95:6). The Mahommadans in the East Indies use many words when they pray, which set forth the omnipotency, eternity, and other attributes of God. With many words of humiliation they confess with various submissive gestures their own unworthiness, and cast themselves low upon their faces many times in their prayers. They then acknowledge that they are burdens to the earth, and poison to the air, and therefore dare not so much as look up to heaven. May not their humble and

submissive gestures in prayer condemn the irreverence of many Christians? What gesture doth better become us, when we come into God's presence to receive grace from the Giver of all grace, than the gesture of humble suppliants, meekly kneeling upon our knees? "God indeed is a spirit, and to be worshipped in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). But though He is to be worshipped in spirit principally, yet not in spirit only. Therefore learn of St. Paul "to bow your knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 3:14).

Learn of Christ sincerity and plainheartedness towards God and man.

(a) First learn sincerity towards God. Christ was no dissembler, nor lover of dissemblers. He never loved nor countenanced any sinners. Of all sorts of people, He most abhorred dissemblers or hypocrites. He denounced many woes against them (Matt. 23). And charged His disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. Oh, do not seem outwardly which ye are not inwardly. Some are gross hypocrites, and know themselves to be such; others have common graces, and judge them saving, and so deceive their own souls. Oh, do not content yourselves with the blade of external profession, nor with the fruits of common grace with the name of a religious person, while thy heart hath nothing in it except filthy or foolish, venomous or vain lust and desires. Do not content thyself with shows of goodness and a form

of godliness, but labor to get the life and power of religion into thy heart. It will be no real profit or advantage to thee to be called a saint, or to be accounted the child of God by man, if thou be but a whited tomb, a carnal rotten dissembling Christian in the sight and esteem of God.

(b) Towards man Christ was no deceiver; no craft, no guile was found in His mouth (1 Pet. 2:22). I know some call fraud, wit, and violence by the name justice; but God calls them by their own names. O do not go beyond or defraud any, but let all thy speeches and dealings discover thee to be the seed of plainhearted Jacob. Satan is the grand deceiver. How much sinful policy and deceit is in any one, is a measure of how much seed of the old serpent is in him. The craftier ought not to wrong the simpler, no more than the stronger ought to wrong the weaker. Learn of Christ temperance and sobriety. Christ was indeed accused of being a drunkard (Matt. 11:19), but it was falsely. Oh be not filled with strong drink, "wherein is excess; but be ye filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). Do not, by riot and intemperance, turn the man out of doors, and take in the beast. Do not put off the man, and put on the swine. "Take heed, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares" (Luke 21:34). Drunkenness is a bewitching sin. Augustine brings in a drunkard saying, It is a mother sin and makes way for other sins.

A certain young man devoted to a pious life and much retired, was once tempted by the devil to one of these three sins, to be drunk, to lie with his neighbour's wife, or to kill his neighbor. The temptation so far prevailed, that he chose the first, viz, to be once drunk. But when the devil had drawn him to that, he committed the other two. It is a reproachful sin. Nature itself abhors it. The Lacedemonians were wont to show to their children drunken men, to behold and look upon, that through the foulness of that vice, they might enflame them more to the study of sobriety. It is a sin hard to be cured. Bernard calls it a gross devil, which no preaching can cast out. And finally, it is a soul damning sin (1 Cor. 6:10). As the violence of winds and waves (said one) sink a ship, so gluttony and drunkenness sink our souls and bodies into the depth of hell. Oh therefore, do not let in that gross devil, lest ye be not let into the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:21). Thou must die shortly, and may die suddenly, therefore drink every draught as if it were thy last draught.

Imitate Christ in patience. Christ's patience in sufferings was most exemplary. "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a Lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth" (Is. 53:7). "So do ye possess your souls in patience" (Luke 21:19). "Let patience have her perfect work" (James 1:4). Be companions in the patience of Christ. Exercise this grace in all

changes of condition, for it is the panoply or whole armor of the man of God whereby he foils his enemies. When the winds of affliction, poverty, sickness, persecution, etc. blow upon you, let patience keep the soul in a calm and contented frame. Let it keep thy soul as it did Job, when he lost his blessings (Job 1:21), as it did Eli, when he was threatened with the ruin of his house and family (1 Sam. 3:18), as it did David in a time of sickness (Ps. 39:9), and as it did Paul, in a time of want (Phil. 4:11-12). Doth God correct you? Lie silently under God's correcting hand. Do men injure, revile, affront, or oppress you? Bear all Christianly and patiently, still remembering that no matter how many or great your miseries are, they are fewer and less than your iniquities deserve. Oh, guard against murmuring (Phil. 2:14). Murmuring is a charging God with folly. "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly" (Job 1:22), i.e. he murmured not. Murmuring was the old wilderness sin (Ps. 104:25). There is no creature so murmuring as the devil. It is a taxing of the providence, wisdom and goodness of God, as if the Judge of the whole world would do us wrong. It is to exalt our own wills above God's. It is to deny God's sovereignty, and to rebel against His government. But remember! Christ murmured not. Therefore, follow Christ patiently, with the cross upon your shoulders.

1. Objection: I am poor and in great want, whereas others have more than heart could wish.

Answer: Are others flourishing in wealth, and thou poor? Be not troubled, God will have it so. Learn to be content. Contented poverty is true riches. Make sure of the unsearchable riches of Christ. He is poor (saith St. Gregory) whose soul is void of grace, not he whose coffers are empty of money.

2. Objection: God hath afflicted me in my choicest earthly comforts. I have lost a child, a dear child, a sweet child, and that in the morning and infancy of its days. How can I but take to heart the death of my child?

Answer: I grant that the death of a child is a cross in a man's dearest desires, and choicest objects of affection. Children are our divided selves, inches, pieces of our bodies. "They are our beloved fruit" (Hosea 9:16). Yet,

(a) What knows thou, but thy child might have lived a child of affliction and sorrow to thee? If therefore, God hath early translated it, taken it from thy knee, and laid it in His own bosom, this is a rich preventing mercy.

(b) Thy child may have been truly gracious, God's child as well as thine. Yet, thou might have overloved it, and this would have brought a consumptive waste upon thy love to God and His ordinances.

(c) Thy child is not lost, but gone before thee to the Father's house. Christ's parents feared they had lost Him, too. They sought Him in the way three days, and at last

found Him sitting in the temple. So thou thinks thy child is lost, thou now mourns and seeks it with tears, and hereafter thou shalt see thy child triumphant in heaven.

3. Objection: Woe is me, for I am broken with a more grievous breach, with a fatal blow, a blow not at the branches, but at the root. I have lost a dear bosom relation, one that truly feared God, and was solicitous for my eternal welfare. O my loss, how great it is!

Answer: It is true thy loss is great, and it is thy duty to be sensible of it, and affected with it. But why art thou excessively dejected and sorrowful? Why dost thou give way to impatience?

(a) Hast thou not many mercies left? Shall thy sorrow for a single comfort lost be greater than thy joy and thankfulness for many mercies left? Are not thy mercies equal, if not superior, in number to thy crosses? Hath not God given thee the sun to give thee light by day, and the moon and stars to give thee light by night? Hath He not given thee air to breathe in, fire to warm thee, clothes to cover thee, food to nourish thee, and ministers to instruct thee? Is not thy barn, thy field, and thy house full of blessings? Are not thy blessings undeserved, whereas thy crosses are deserved? Did not many of the blessings surpass thy prayers, and exceed thy hopes? Surely thou hast more cause for thankfulness than for mourning.

(b) Does not God suffer in His service by the excessive

sorrow? Dost not thou practise a kind of murder on thine own body, by wasting and weakening it? And art not thou hereby unfitted for prayer? Instead of praying, thou complains, and instead of believing, thou murmurs. Is there not too much of the flesh in thy immoderate sorrow? O remember! Satan loves to fish in muddied waters.

(c) Thy diseased relation is far happier gone than alive. "I praised the dead which are already dead, more than the living which are yet alive" (Eccl. 4:2). Were it in thy power to fetch him back, it would be great cruelty to do so, for now he is fully and forever freed from sin. A child of God is so tenderly sensible of sin that he will run into any place to avoid it. How much more will he run into heaven, to gain perpetual freedom from sin. As the souls of the wicked are dispatched immediately to hell upon their last breath, so the souls of the godly are carried immediately home to heaven by a glorious train and troop of angels. As his body is delivered from all aches, so his conscience is delivered from all fears, and his soul from all sin. Thy godly relation is now gone to better friends than he left behind him, and gone to a better company, a better place, and a better estate. All is better.

(d) God's design in all this, is to try thy strength how thou canst bear the cross; therefore let not a discouraged sinking heart be found in thee to God's dishonor. If thou faint in the day of adversity, the wise man will tell thee that

thy strength is but small.

(e) Thy relation had finished his work and employment which was given him to do. Wouldst thou have God to have deferred His reward, by stretching out his life a little longer? I think thou should rather rejoice that he hath received his reward so soon.

(I) God will over-supply the deepest defects of all our dearest and most useful earthly relations. Therefore say with the prophet, "After two days He will revive us, the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight" (Hosea 6:2). God may suffer thee to languish awhile under the distressful want of dear relations, yet remember God's all-sufficiency is big enough to stop the gap. God will be more to you than ten thousand relations. Therefore resolve to submit patiently, and to bear quietly God's hand. God will extract joy out of your present sorrow, and make you gain by what you have lost.

4. Objection: I am broken with breach upon breach. Clouds return after the rain, one trouble overtakes another, and one distress comes on the heels of another. For a while a temptation buffets me, staggers and troubles me. That is no sooner gone, but a corruption begins to rebel, and I have much to do to hold it in. At the back of this comes an outward cross, so that my burden is exceeding heavy.

Answer: Crosses, manifold crosses, are the lot of God's

people (Ps. 34:19). Follow Christ patiently with the cross upon thy shoulder, for it shall shortly be taken off. Here thou travels in a wilderness - ere long thou shalt come to Canaan. Here thou sails on a troubled sea - ere long thou shalt arrive at the new Jerusalem which is above. Within those blessed walls and doors, all is peace and comfort, without the least disturbance or noise. No noise is there except songs of praise, and shouts of saints and angels. There thy eyes shall not be dimmed, nor thy face blubbered with tears. When death is closing thine eyes, thy soul may rejoice and say, "Farewell, all my corruptions and temptations, all my fears and sorrows, all my jealousies, dejections, and afflictions; farewell, farewell for evermore. Oh heaven! What an happy place art thou!" Oh church triumphant, how glorious art thou! Oh blessed soul, that hast a mansion provided there, a Father dwelling there, a Savior and Redeemer there!

5. Objection: Was there ever sorrow like unto my sorrow? Surely my case is unique; I am more afflicted than the rest of God's people are.

Answer: (a) How knowest thou what afflictions God laid upon the siants that are already dead, or what afflictions He doth lay upon the saints now alive, or what afflictions He shall lay upon those that are yet unborn? Canst thou see through all the world, what all the people of God now suffer?

(b) Hast not thou stronger corruptions than most of thy

fellow saints? And if thy diseases be stronger, no wonder God applies more powerful and griping medicines.

(c) Doth the Lord punish thee above what sin deserves? If He does, witness against Him; but if He punish thee less than thine iniquities deserve (Ezra 9:13), complain not. "Why should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins" (Lam. 3:39).

(d) If God provide a heavier crown of glory for those whose sufferings are greater, why should thou quarrel? And yet thus it is. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17). Christ first suffered, and then entered into His glory (Luke 24:26). Art thou too good to tread in thy Master's steps? Oh, consider seriously, that a man may go from the cross to Paradise. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him."

Imitate Christ in His religious care of His family, His disciples. He instructed them (Mark 4:34). He prayed with them, and taught them to pray (Luke 11:1; Matt. 6:9, etc.). Do what you can to save the souls under your charge by your good counsels, good prayers, and good examples. Do not the souls of your children and servants cry after you for this care and compassion? Oh where are the yearnings of your heart? Where is the love you pretend to bear them? What! love them, and yet not instruct

them in the way to heaven? Do you love them, and yet are careless of their souls? Do you love them, and yet murder their souls? Do you love them, and yet do no more for them than for your very beasts? Oh cruel, bloody parents! You are cruel to the better part of your children, their immortal souls. Are ye not entrusted with their souls? And yet will ye only take care of their bodies? Will ye feed, and clothe, and house the body, and suffer the soul to starve, to go naked and destitute, and so perish forever! As if the cabinet were of more worth than the jewel, or the body of more worth than the soul? You will feed your whelps, serve your swine, and what harm has a poor soul done that it is neglected and starved? What account will you be able to give to God in the great day, if their souls die and perish through your negligence? Oh therefore endeavor to promote grace and godliness in your children, and to check vicious inclinations before they grow heady and refractory. Teach them the will and law of God. Doth not the Scripture give an unlimited, extensive, and frequent charge so to do (Prov. 22:6; Ps. 34:11; Deut. 6:7; 11:19; Eph. 6:4)? Was it not Abraham's praise (Gen. 18:19), Joshua's practise (Jos. 24:15), and Eunice's commendation (2 Tim. 1:5)? If through your carelessness your children remain ignorant, will not Satan prey upon them, rock them asleep in security while they live, and lead them blindfolded to hell when they die? "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge..." (Hosea 4:6-7,9). Ignorance is the highway

to hell. Ignorance (says the papist) is the mother of devotion. Oh but, (says the prophet) it is the mother of destruction. If your children believe not and repent not, they must needs perish. But how can they either repent or believe without knowledge? There is no grace or duty without it. Ye that teach not your children, think seriously of these three sentences. If you teach not your children, the children yet unborn may curse you another day, for conveying atheism and irreligion to them through the loins of your untaught children. If you teach them not, your children now alive are likely to prove scourges, vexations, and thorns to you hereafter. If you teach them not, it is probable they may die everlastingly, like beasts without instruction. Oh dreadful! Will you not then labor to enlighten their minds, and teach them the knowledge of God? You teach them skill in a secular calling, why not acquaint them with their general calling? You employ them in some work, some trade, of which they are capable, why not in the work of their souls? You tell them of beggars and bug-bears to scare them, why talk ye not of hell and endless torments to them? Talk of that bottomless pit, where God throws naughty children and of those scorching ovens of divine wrath into which He will thrust unruly children, and then stop the mouth thereof, so that they must lie there and never come Out. To acquaint them with this wrath is the way to prevent their feeling of it. Oh, instruct them in what ye have learned from the ministry of the Word. Communicate to them in common familiar discourse that knowledge you have

drunk in with the ear. Compel them to come with you to public ordinances. Be often calling upon them to read the Holy Scriptures, and other good books. Exact of them an account of what they have read and heard. This will render them attentive to the Word, and will rivet the truths they read and hear in their memories. Check sinful speeches and actions in them, and reward, with some signs of favor, their good expressions and actions. Catechize them at home, and bring them to be catechized at church.

Abraham's grown servants (Gen. 14:14) were not only trained, prepared and mustered for military exploits, but instructed and catechized. How much more may children, in their infant age, be catechized? It were to be wished, that none might have license to marry before they have learned their catechisms, as the practise is in the famous Helvetian churches. Represent impiety to them under the most vile and odious names, and cast a beauty upon godliness in their sight. Pray with them and for them every day, morning and evening. How can you begin or end the day better? How can you expect the blessing of God on you or yours without prayer? Alas, prayerless families are Christless and graceless families! They are dens of devils, nests of wickedness, and corners of hell, instead of little churches. Praying families are under God's special protection.

In 1584, near the city of Bern, in Switzerland, there was

a certain hill, that in an earthquake, was violently carried over and beyond other hills, and covered a whole village, wherein were ninety families. Only one-half house was excepted, wherein the master of the family, with his wife and children, were earnestly calling upon God, as is attested by Polanus, who lived near these parts. Therefore neglect not family duty. Finally, walk before your children as giving an example of the fear of the Lord to them. In vain are all your good instructions, if your ordinary discourse be vain, or your example vicious. One wicked action will hinder twenty wholesome admonitions. Children are sooner corrupted with one evil action, than counselled with many exhortations. Deeds are sooner imitated than words obeyed. Do yourselves therefore that which you tell them they must do for God, or they can never be saved. And as ever you would have them to walk with God, walk before them in a good example. What do you know, but by an holy and heavenly conversion and everlasting salvation, you may win them to God, and keep their souls out of hell. The soul I say, is the best thing they have, and it may be kept from hell, which, of all places, is the worst. The eye as well as the ear is a learning sense. Therefore set a pious and blameless example daily in their view. Do nothing, but what ye may be able to say, "Look on me, and do likewise" (Judges 7:17). Thus imitate Christ in all things imitable. Imitate Him in His moral and religious actions. Write after this blessed copy. Walk in Christ's steps, and you shall partake of His glory. Follow Him in holiness here, and

you shall certainly dwell with Him in heaven hereafter, forever and ever. Labor to get assurance of God's love, and of your own good estate before God, that you are in a gracious estate, and do undoubtedly belong to God. Content not yourselves with this in general, "that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to die for sinners"; but endeavour to be assured of this in particular, "that He hath loved you, and given His Son for you"; that you have a special interest in His love and favour. For this end, consider,

(1) That this assurance is attainable, that it is so evident; (a) from the undeniable testimony and authority of the Scripture. "There are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood" (1 John 5:8). Where by water, understand the sanctifying of the soul from the spots and stains of sin, and by blood is meant the pardoning the guilt of sin. The former is more represented in baptism, and the latter in the Lord's Supper. And by Spirit is meant the helping of the soul, to conclude its election and sanctification from the efficacy of water and blood in the soul (John 14:17). "The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8:16); "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2 Cor. 13:5); "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise for whose sake hath God sealed us." (Eph. 1:13). Not for His, but for our own. And what is the sealing, but God's giving us sanctifying and

purifying grace - His stamping His own image upon us, which witnesseth and assureth us of our sonship?

(b) It is evident from example. The godly have formerly enjoyed it. So did Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:3). Hezekiah's heart was supported with the consideration of his upright heart and holy life. So Paul says, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience..." (2 Cor. 1:12). How could they have rejoiced, if they could not be assured of their having true grace, and an interest in the promises? Had not the Apostle this assurance, when he said, "Christ loved me" (Gal. 2:20); and "I know whom I have believed" (2 Tim. 1:12); and Job, "I know that my Redeemer liveth" (Job 19:25)?

(2) This assurance is profitable. For (a) assurance enkindles a holy love and affection to God, and gives a wonderful delight in Him, Think with thyself, how would a Turkish bondslave rejoice, and serve, and love his Redeemer! How would a condemned prisoner rejoice, and serve, and love the restorer of his life! And will not a self-condemned and law-condemned sinner love the Saviour of his soul? Oh an assurance of the love of Christ to thee, would consume thy adulterous love to the world. The harlot's confidence in her husband's love makes her more impudent and lewd. But the Son's confidence in His Father's love gives Him a tender disposition and makes Him fearful of offending Him. So an assurance of God's love would make thee fearful of offending Him. It

would carry thy soul above all the world; yea, above all carnal rejoicings, and teach thee to rejoice in God (Ps. 103:1).

(b) Assurance will be a support to thee in thy sinking days and an establishment to thee in tottering and shaking times (1 Sam. 30:6). When his outward comforts were gone, and stones were ready to come about his ears, David encouraged himself in the Lord his God. Oh the pawns and pledges of God's eternal love will raise and ravish thy soul in the greatest outward turnings and confusions. When others fall away, thou shalt be able to ride out the storm. The hypocrite's confidence is a blaze, a flash, a mudwall, soon blown down. Oh but the saint's assurance is the soul's pillar and anchor of faith. As hope is the anchor of the soul, so assurance is the anchor of faith.

(c) Assurance is a quencher of temptations. It is a target and buckler to the soul. Hereby Satan's accusations are silenced, and his assaults repelled. The devil's partners often charge the godly with this, that they are hypocritical dissemblers; but he that is assured of his own integrity, values not this charge. Job was charged with hypocrisy, but neither the devil, nor Job's friends, could persuade Job out of his sincerity. The devil will be ashamed to tell thee of thy unreconciled and reprobate condition when thou art persuaded of thine own uprightness and sincerity. All the calumnies and false, forged charges of

Satan and his instruments will be of no effect.

(d) Assurance will give thee rest, quietness, and contentment of mind. Thou wilt be able to say, as Habakkuk 3:17-18, and as David, "My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever" (Ps. 73:26). Although thou lackest an house to lay thy head in, thou mayest lay thy head in Christ's bosom. Or it may be thou art a widow, but is not Christ married to thee? It may be thou art an orphan, but behold God is thy Father. Thy earthly parents are dead, but thy heavenly Father lives forever. How canst thou be an orphan, so long as God is thy Father? how canst thou be poor, so long as Christ is thy Saviour? As a martyr once said, "Brown bread and cold water, with the gospel, is good cheer, so rags and poverty, with Christ, is great riches."

(e) Assurance will glorify God. Can the dead, stupified, or swooning man give glory, and call on his psaltery and harp, to awake to praise God? Will not the questioning, doubting, staggering soul, be a straitened soul, when the heart of the assured shall be enlarged with the praises of God? Can that man that lives in vaults of darkness praise the light? What joy, what spiritual peace and comfort can the soul enjoy whilst perplexing and tormenting doubts do haunt and follow it?

(f) Assurance is a guard against the fear of death. How can he that knows not what will become of his soul at death not cry out, Alas! Alas, I am afraid of dying! I see

I cannot live longer, and yet I dare not die. Others can stare a thousand deaths and devils in the face, but the want of assurance is a mighty hinderance to a quiet, submissive, and ready departure. Oh, the very name and thought of death to the natural man will be black and terrible. Oh vain man! When wilt thou be wise for thy soul and wise for the time to come? What wilt thou catch hold on, to stay thy sinking, gasping, drowning soul? Death is a stout and sturdy enemy, a king of terrors; it will divorce thee and thy wife, thee and thy company, thee and thy comforts. It will pluck thee out of thy house, and house thee in the grave. How canst thou not tremble, for the fear of the approaching evil day, so long as thou knowest not what thy condition is, and what will become of thee at death? Oh, but here a shield against death: if thou art sanctified, death will fawn upon thee. Death is then thy friend, and will in a friendly manner open the door to heaven. Therefore get assurance of thy sanctification and salvation. Prepare daily for Christ's coming, lest He startle you with a sudden call to come away. "And at midnight there was a cry made, behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him" (Matt. 25:6). If a king came into a cottage, and found everyone undressed, the floor unswept, etc., might he not say, "Surely they looked for nobody today." So if we be not ready for death, Christ may charge us that we looked not for His coming. Therefore prepare, and make all the honest haste you can to heaven. Though you are not to draw death upon your own heads, or to hasten it with your own hands, though

ye are not to wish for an over-hasty and violent death, yet must ye by living more holily, hasten to heaven.

Question: Is not the day of death determined? How then can we remove the ancient landmark, or hasten our change? Answer: (1) The end of life is not more appointed, than any other action or providence. If God be the absolute ordainer and disposer of all things, then the least matters come under His unchangeable purpose, as well as the greatest and most momentous matters of state. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground, without your Father, but the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matt. 10:29-30).

(2) I can go to London by a straight or more crooked line, and so make my journey shorter or longer, though the way I go was from all eternity determined by the Lord. So I may hasten or delay my arrival at heaven. God hath coupled the way and end together. If I will make large and progressive motions in godliness in a little space, I shall be the sooner translated to glory, for the sooner ripe, sooner gathered. In a word, God hath sets the limits of life, He hath dated the very hour of our death, which neither we, nor all the powers of nature, can alter. Yet the holier we live, the speedier is our pace to heaven. Live in a constant expectation of a removal to heaven. Here ye are heirs under age, and will ye not long for your inheritance? Here ye are soldiers. The devil will not let you

rest quietly one day, and will ye not long for the accomplishment of your warfare? Here you are strangers and foreigners. The wicked are natives here, and so are not nobles and worthies of the other world, "but ye are strangers and pilgrims, and declare plainly that they seek a country" (Heb. 11:13-14). You do not speak the language of this world so easily as others. Your discourse is not so unsavory, putrid, and corrupt as the discourse of others. Ye are citizens of heaven, and will ye not long to be at home? Ye are doves of the valleys, who have your nests on high and will ye not with David, wish for the wings of a dove, to fly away and be at rest? What should fish do on dry ground? Or why should a child in a storm stay outside? There is no such entertainment in this unkind world as to make you fondly dote on it. Do you not go through this dry desert with burdens upon your back?

(1) Do you not travel with the burden of affliction? "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all" (Ps. 34:19).

(2) Do you not journey with the burden of corruption, which others feel not, and which makes you go mourning all the day? "Innumerable evils have compassed me about..." (Ps. 90:12).

(3) Are you not stopped with the burden of other men's sin, which, alas, they cry not under? Ye are fretted and grieved with their unholy lives, as Lot with the wicked conversation of the Sodomites. You find fightings

within, and sufferings without. You fear, lest ye fall away from your own steadfastness, and so fall short of heaven. Ye sorrow, because ye love God no more. And will ye not be looking and longing for heaven, where your love to God shall be perfect? "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Savior Jesus Christ" (Tit. 2:13). A believer may indeed desire God to defer death, when he finds that his watch is down, and his assurance decayed. Yet he will endeavor to have this uncomfortable condition helped, and one special help is to act with love. Poor Christian! If this be thy case, retire every day for an hour, or half an hour, open thy Bible, or some good book, and see the exceeding great love of Christ to thee, that at the flame of His love, thy love to Him may be kindled. "And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ" (2 Thess. 3:5); "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jude 21). Love to Christ will keep you looking for His coming. It will allay, if not wholly expel tormenting fears, and will raise your desire to be gone. Alas! Your old bondage remains in part; your love is imperfect, and the soul often drowsy and listless. This is the reason that thou hast less importunity of desire. Oh, but a lively love would amend all this. Oh breathe after the heavenly kingdom, the celestial crown! As God hath called you from sin to grace, so look and long, till He call you from grace to glory. As God hath called you from a secure flesh-pleasing life to a self-

denying, mortifying life, so look and long, till He call you from misery to endless joy and felicity.

THE THIRD TREATISE

Containing THE CHARACTERS OF A TRUE BELIEVER

It was the usual saying of Ignatius the martyr, that good and wicked men are like true and counterfeit money. The one seems to be good and is not; the other both seems to be and is good. Some Christians are only gilt; others are pure gold. Some are only seemingly religious; others really are religious. Some are pious only in show and appearance; others, with the king's daughter, are all glorious within. Some deceive themselves, and delude the eyes of others with glittering shows of holiness. Others are true Nathanaels, Israelites indeed in whom there is no guile. The former are often admired of men, while abhorred by God; the latter are owned and honored of God, while many times condemned of men.

Yet the best of God's children do not pass one day without many offenses. Though they commit many sins without their knowledge, still throughout their whole life they find much matter for repentance, and have much cause to lie low at God's feet in tears and sorrow. There is a wide difference between them and others, however, as will easily appear by considering the following representation, in which are laid down some few characteristics whereby we may discern the true believer better than old

Eli discerned Hannah. And happy are they who, viewing themselves in this looking-glass, see the image of Christ lively and truly drawn and stamped by the Spirit of God upon their souls.

A true believer judges God's ways as being the easiest, God's people as the happiest, God's rewards the highest, God's comforts the sweetest, God's promises the surest, and the love of God greater gain than to have all the world. He that gets the world, drinks brine that makes him thirstier. He has the wolf of covetousness and the greedy worm of earthliness, so that he is never satisfied. But he that hath the love of God is content. He is better content with his shilling than the worldling with his palace, better content with his plough than the worldling with his greatest plenty. He can be as cheerful with twenty pounds as some with two thousand pounds, yea, even more, for his soul finds joy in God, and the joy of riches is nothing to the joy of the Holy Ghost.

A true believer enjoys duties as well as privileges. He would not only enjoy the blessings God hath promised, but his heart is bent to the duties God hath commanded. He loves not only the privileges of God's children, but their work also. He loves not only the advantages of religion. Many do the easy duties of religion, and yet leave the difficult duties undone. They will hear, pray, read, come to the Lord's Supper, but as for the severer duties of mortifying their corruptions, combatting and fighting

against temptations, they do not know or practice them. There is too much of the Jewish spirit to be found in Christians. They will pray, but not fervently; walk, but not swiftly; strive, but not wrestle and combat. They will make an offer for heaven, but do not offer violence to heaven. They will do some duties, but not all. Whereas the true believer makes his answer as large as God's call.

A true believer sets God before him, possesses his heart with the apprehension of God's presence, and so studies to walk with God, as being in His eye and seeing Him that is invisible. His desire and endeavor is to think, speak, and act, at all times, and in all duties and places, as under the eye and in the presence of God. He knows that although men can make no thorough lights to look clearly into his heart, yet it lies embowelled and dissected unto His all-seeing eye, to whom all things, even the most dark, hidden, and undiscernible, are both naked, opened, and transparent. He is as good a saint in his retired chamber (if not better) than in society. An hypocrite looks as an angel of light, till he come into the dark (Ezek. 8:12). He looks and speaks and deports himself as a saint in public, but his closet-sins and curtain-sins do condemn him. If we could dig through the wall, we should find the believer crying and bemoaning himself, as if his heart would burst. Oh, how many offers he makes to get into God's bosom. He is no stranger to familiar converse and communion with God, and he hates secret sins as hell.

Wicked men do not consider God as the beholder of all their thoughts, words, and actions. "God is not in all their thoughts." They are described by this, "that they have not set God before them" (Ps. 86:14). Many of them have nothing before their eyes but the world and worldly business, but the believer always considers himself as being under the eye of God. He supposes the Lord always seeing him. "I have set the Lord always before me" (Ps. 16:8). He thinks often of God, and his heart is sweetly overawed by the serious thoughts of God's presence with him and of His eye upon him. He abstains from doing what is evil, because he believes God sees what he does (Gen. 39:9). He is serious in all his addresses unto God, because he sees Him who is invisible. He believes that all he speaks is spoken to that God, who searches the heart and tries the reins. When he goes into the house of God, he keeps his feet. He does not only keep the outward man, avoiding all light, indecent, unseemly carriage, but he also keeps the inward man. He keeps the affection clean from all sensual lusts, wanton and wicked inclinations and from all thoughts of worldly concerns. He believes that God's eye sees him, that God standeth in the congregation, and is sensible. He feels he is now in the presence-chamber of the great King of the world, whose throne of glory is in heaven above, but whose throne of grace is in His temple here below. "Surely (saith he) the Lord is in this place: , how dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God! This is the gate of heaven" (Gen. 28:16-17)! "How amiable are

Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts; my soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house; they will be still praising Thee" (Ps. 84:1-2,4).

And I would be most happy if I could behave myself in Thy house with that reverence and carefulness that the divine Majesty deserves. Yea, when he performs those duties he owes to man, he does it as in the sight and presence of God. He desires to approve himself to God, and to act as before God, not only when praying to God, but when trading with man. "Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord" (Ps. 25:15). And when at any time he forgets himself to be in his Father's presence and corruption gets the best of grace, he is afterwards sore troubled and mourns in secret before the Lord, though the world knows it not.

A true believer is always walking, always in motion; and his spiritual motions are not from outward impulse, but inward life. He prays, hears, reads, and meditates out of an inclination of soul to the work. He is charmed by the melody and music of gospel promises and the love of God, rather than scared into obedience by the sound of thundering threatenings, or the clamors of a scolding conscience.

A true believer gives God that worship, and man that righteousness, which God calls for. He not only observes God's sabbaths, family prayer, and hearing the Word, but

his actions are devoid of fraud, cozenage, and over-reaching. His words are devoid of all guile, falsehood, and lying. He is no oppressor, but believes that he that oppresses the poor is a constant ordinary liar. He is no griping usurer, but believes that the griping, covetous usurer shall as assuredly be damned as the blasphemer, atheist, and idolater. Some are honest, but not strict towards God. Others are seemingly strict towards God, but dishonest and unjust in their civil dealings with men. But the true believer is for doing justice and equity, as well as worship. "He keeps a conscience void of offense towards man, as well as towards God" (Acts 24:16). He is not only a religious man, but a righteous man.

A true believer is deeply and dearly enamored of Jesus Christ. He advances Him highest in his thoughts as the only jewel and joy of his heart, without whom he accounts all he hath worth nothing at all. All his knowledge is brutishness, all his wealth is rotten and stinking dungs, all his hope is presumption, and all his happiness is misery without Jesus Christ; He prefers and prizes Christ far above the riches, pleasures, and the glory of the whole earth. Many esteem Him not; they value a good farm, a fair house, etc., more than Jesus Christ. With the Gadarenes, they esteem their swine above the Saviour of the world. But to the true believer, Christ is better than all and infinitely more than all. He chooseth Christ rather than all, or any other thing whatsoever. He would rather possess Christ than all things else. He prefers the poorest

condition with Christ above the highest condition without Christ. He says, as that noble and pious Marquis of Vico, Galeacius Caraciolus, when a Jesuit offered him a large sum of money to forsake his religion and turn Papist: "Let their money perish with them, who esteem all the gold in the world worth one day's society with Jesus Christ and His Holy Spirit." He can take joyfully the spoiling of his goods, rather than to be deprived of Jesus Christ. He so remembers, so esteems, and so longs after Christ that he remembers, prizes, and desires nothing in comparison to Christ, be it otherwise never so dear or precious.

A true believer receives Jesus Christ as an all-sufficient Savior and Redeemer, and rests upon Him alone for salvation. He receives the whole Christ, Christ in all His offices, both as his Saviour to save him, and also as his Lord to rule over him and to guide him. Many boast they are believers who never received Christ to dwell in their hearts by faith. They regard iniquity in their hearts. Oh, but Christ will not dwell in a heart where sin is entertained with delight. There is no communion between light and darkness. Any one-allowed lust and the Lord Jesus can never lodge together in the same soul. Therefore the true believer resolves to part with all sin, to spare none. He puts his raging lusts out of doors, thrusts out his formerly pleasant sins by repentance, and receives Christ as a complete Saviour, who saves not only from hell, that place of darkness, dread, and terror, but also

from sin, the great enemy both of God and man. Christ saves not only from the guilt, but from the power and prevalency of sin.

The true believer renounces his own prayers and tears, his own duties and performances, his own care and resolutions regarding justification and salvation. He casts himself into Christ's blessed bosom with all the spiritual strength he can, saying secretly to himself, "Come life, come death, come heaven, come hell, come what can come, here will I stick forever. If I perish, they shall pluck me out of the hands, and rend me from between the arms of this glorious and mighty Redeemer."

A true believer delights in Christ. He delights in the person of Christ; in His incomparable beauty, "who is fairer than the children of men," clothed with all spiritual excellencies, the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His Person (Cant. 2:3). He delights in the offices of Christ. Christ is become his Prophet, effectually to enlighten the eyes of his soul, and to instruct him in heavenly and divine mysteries. Christ is become his Priest, to purge away his sins, to reconcile him to God, and to make continual intercession for him. Christ is become his King, to rule in his heart by His grace, and to subdue all his enemies, both inward and outward. He delights in the ordinances, to see the King in His beauty in His sanctuary. He delights in His answers of prayer, and in all the disclosures of His love and power. His heart

is warmed with heavenly joy, when in his private meditations he recounts with himself what great things Christ hath done, and will do for his soul. He is warmed with heavenly joy when he thinks how mightily Christ wrought in him by His Spirit to make him alive, when once dead in trespasses and sins. He delights when he thinks what happiness he has in his favor for the present, and what happiness He will one day bring him unto, when He shall make him like Himself, most glorious in his body, most righteous in his soul, most blissful in all, and that forever. In a word, he so delights in Christ that he looks and longs for more of Christ every day.

A true believer has a real spiritual life, distinct from that of carnal men, and can perform many actions which ungodly men, while such, cannot perform. He can live sometimes as comfortably upon a promise, as in possession of the mercy promised. He can muse on death without dread. He can love his enemies and hate to take revenge on them. He can deny the most pleasant lust and scorn to be captivated by it. He can defy and beat the devil, that strong man armed. He can be humble in his highest advancement and cheerful in his lowest poverty. He cannot bear injuries done to God, and yet can with patience abide wrongs offered to himself. He is meek as a lamb in his own cause and yet zealous and full of lion-like fury for God. He can live in the world and follow his calling diligently, and yet his heart is weaned from the world and his conversation is in heaven.

A true believer labors to propagate, increase, and spread the life of grace wherever he comes. As the wicked labour to poison all that come nigh them, and to make them seven times more the children of the devil than themselves, so the believer labours to get others to Christ, and to help them along heaven's way. As the wicked seek the damnation of others, so the believer seeks the salvation of others. As the wicked watch over others for evil, so the believer watches over others for good. As the wicked make proselytes for hell, so the believer makes proselytes for heaven. As the wicked are factors for the devil, and agents for the prince of darkness, so the true believer is a factor for Christ the prince of peace. He does his utmost to make others the children of God, to turn them from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of heaven. Though it be not in his power to give them a new nature, yet he will do what in him lies that they may be renewed. Though he cannot save them as the principal agent, yet, he will endeavour to save them as a subordinate instrument. If he see any in a natural unregenerate estate, without God and Christ in the world, his soul bleeds over such, and his heart's desire is that they may be converted. If he meets with any that are ignorant, he hath compassion on such, as it is said of Christ, and instructs them in the mysteries of the gospel. If any be overtaken with sin, he reproves them with all meekness. He is not censorious, rigid, and harsh, but covers and reproves their infirmities with a spirit of love. If he see any going on in a soul-destroying way, he knows they are undone forever

if they continue in their sinful course. Therefore he endeavours their salvation and does what he can to pluck them out of the fire.

The true believer frames his conversation as becometh the gospel of Christ, so that others beholding it may glorify God, and be drawn to the love and practice of true piety. In his life he holds forth the Word of life, and by his good example endeavours to do good to others, as he hath opportunity. He labours to deliver them from those sins into which they have fallen already, and from that destruction into which they are falling, by good instructions and admonitions. He informs them of the dangerous and damnable nature of sin, shows them the difference between good and evil, and between the service of Christ and the service of Satan. He acquaints them with that unavoidable destruction both of soul and body which is the consequence of sin, strives to draw them to those duties that have drawn him and may draw them to God. In a word, he is not lacking in the use of any good means to help others unto grace and to further their everlasting state.

A true believer bemoans them that are spiritually dead, those that are like Sennacherib's host, dead corpses without spiritual life. "Were my house," saith the believer, "the sepulchre of my dear relations, how bitterly would I weep at the sight thereof. If when I arise the next morning, I found but one in my family suddenly struck dead

without giving so much as a departing groan, how would it affect me? And if I would mourn for one naturally dead, shall I not much more mourn for those families in which scarce one is spiritually alive? And yet such is the case of many families today."

A true believer grows in strength and experience, in grace and in the knowledge of God. He grows in love, patience, and humility. He grows in victory over his corruptions and in desires and endeavours after holiness. He does not stay at a standstill, but grows from one degree and measure of grace to another, "until he come to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). He is like the morning sun, "that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4:18). He grows in grace until he attains the height in eternal glory. And though, when fallen into a fit of sickness, he may seem to be weaker and lower in grace than ever, and to have lost all his spiritual strength and beauty, yet he will recover his lost vigour and do his first works. Though for a while he may seem to be at a standstill, yet he will be progressive in godliness. He will grow deeper at the root, if not taller in branches and fuller in fruits, as an apple grows in mellowness and sweetness when it does not grow in bulk and greatness. It is the great desire and ambition of his soul to be growing higher in grace more every day. He can neither rest nor be quiet, till (like Saul) he grow taller than worldly, moral, hypocritical

men, taller by both head and shoulders, in virtue and piety.

A true believer is truly thankful to God for His mercies. He vows, and pays unto the Lord his vows. A wicked man's vows are soon made, and soon forgotten. But a good man looks upon himself as bound by the laws of reason, religion, and righteousness to pay the rent and right of thankfulness to God. He is ashamed to be less thankful in the enjoyment of mercies than prayerful in his wants. He is ashamed to be less forward in acknowledging the mercies he receives than in begging for mercies. He labours to be more thankful for a little mercy, than discontent for a great affliction. He looks on his affliction by parts, views all its ingredients, and finds some mercy to assuage his pain or countervail his loss. Though there be not complete deliverance, yet he blesses God for any dawnings of deliverance. Though his burden be heavy, he blesses God that he is enabled to bear it, and that God doth not leave him without some hope of a blessed issue. Though sore afflicted, he blesses God he is not damned. Though he lies in the furnace of affliction, yet he blesses God that he is not in hell. The furnace of affliction is hot, but hell-fire is ten thousand times hotter. And as he is thankful to God for all his other blessings, so especially for calling him by His grace into a state of salvation. "Oh, how shall I be thankful to God," saith the believer, "for calling me when I fled from him? He called me, though He needed me not. He called, and called

again till I was made to obey His call." He is transported and ravished when he considers this. His heart runs, yea, even boils over with praise. Haman was transported with the happiness conferred upon him by Queen Esther, in calling him to the banquet she had prepared for the king (Esther 5:12). So the believer is transported with the happiness God hath conferred upon him, in calling him to partake of the glory prepared for the saints.

A true believer accounts his life to be in God's favour. He saith with the Psalmist, "In Thy favour is life." His life is not so much in what he hath received from God, as in what he is in God's favour. Hypocrites desires are only for the enjoyment of mercies, and if they enjoy what they desire they are contented, though they have no presence of God in them at all. If they enjoy health, strength, peace, and plenty, then the enjoyment of God's favour they regard not. But the true believer is not contented with the most precious mercies without the favour of God with them. If he have health from God, but lacks a warm heart to God, if he have peace among men, and not peace with God, it does not satisfy him. His cry is, as in Psalm 4:6-7, "Lord, lift thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us..." The light of God's countenance is more to him than the plentiful affluence of corn, and wine, and oil. If he have abundance of creature-comforts, but see not the light of God's countenance with them, they cannot cheer his soul. But if he have God's countenance, he can be cheerful without them. "Although the fig tree

shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls. Yet, I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Hab. 3:17-18).

A true believer looks upon religion, not as a burden which he must be forced to endure, but as a privilege which it is his happiness to enjoy. There is nothing in the world which he more passionately desires than that he could live exactly and precisely according to the excellent precepts of religion. The holy ordinances and exercises of religion (which unto an ungodly man are tedious, dry, unsavoury things), to a good man are very pleasant and satisfactory. He is not forced to his duty, but does willingly delight in it and in that law that prescribes it. "I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23 12) He knows the Word doth maintain a more noble life than that which is maintained by bodily food and is more necessary and sweet than any creature-comforts. He knows it will sweeten all other smart and cold entertainments, and therefore he prizes it more than his daily bread. He prefers a day spent in the courts and service of God before a thousand employed in balls or plays, or any other of the toys and trifles of human life.

A true believer is adorned with a meek and quiet spirit.

He sits down with a becalmed spirit amidst crosses of all sorts. "He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him; he putteth his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope" (Lam. 3:28-29). His boisterous passions are soon laid aside. Excessive heats either rise not or are easily cooled. He commits himself to God's supreme sovereignty, to will or to nill at God's pleasure. "If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me again, and shew me both it, and His habitation: but if He thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here I am, let Him do to me as seemeth good unto Him" (2 Sam. 15:25-26). "Let God lift me up," saith he, "or cast me down; let Him tread me to death, or write my name in the dust, if He will. I refer myself to His wisdom." Just as he can endure patiently what the hand of God more immediately lays upon him, so he can suffer wrongfully at the hands of men. He can do well, and suffer for it when he has done it. He can cleave to Christ, notwithstanding all the hard usage, all the evil entreatings and cruelties of the world. As Christ suffered for him, so he is resolved to suffer with Christ, to take his lot as it falls, to follow Christ through rivers and flames, to mortify, deny, and renounce self, and to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.

The true believer is known in the day of adversity by three characters. First, he is content under every affliction; let it be fashioned for nature, measure, time, continuance, as God will. He welcomes the cross and embraces

it. If God suffers the spiteful tongues of graceless persons to slay his good name with slander, if the Lord break him with breach upon breach, and his children and friends die one after another, he sits down and says as old Eli in I Samuel 3:18, "It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good." He will sooner die than blame God. Yea, if his affliction be lined with pain, and overlaid with shame, "yet he endureth the cross, and despiseth the shame" (Heb. 12:2). Secondly, he rejoicingly thanks God for afflictions, as in Job 1:21, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the Name of the Lord." Thirdly, he reveals as little of his sufferings by his expressions, or his actions, as he can. He would gladly swallow down God's medicines, without making any noise. Indeed in some cases it is lawful to reveal one's grief, as when it glorifies God's justice for some scandalous sin or when a poor Christian stands in great need of counsel and advice. Oh, but there are some who tell almost everyone they meet of their weary nights and sore pains. All their discourse, from first to last, is most commonly spent in the history of their sufferings, which is not to be approved of. If this be by way of complaint, then it is rank impatience. If it be out of a secret desire to show how patient and calm their spirits lie under it, is it not horrible pride? And so food becomes Poison, and that which should humble them puffs them up.

A true believer is more angry with himself for his corruptions that still remain in him, than with his enemies

for the injuries offered by them to him. He is more angry for a little offence, wherein God's glory is touched and defiled, than for a greater offence, wherein only his own credit is impaired and his profit damaged. And he will chide a child more smartly for wounding the Name of God with an oath, than for aspersing his own name with infamous lies.

A true believer is most severe against his own sins. He cannot endure sin in any, but least of all in himself. The hypocrite is eagle-eyed in discovering, and very severe in censuring the faults of others, but very unwilling to see, and very backward to censure the same or greater faults in himself. When he looks upon the sins of others, he sets down an hundred for fifty, but when he looks upon his own, he sets down fifty for an hundred. But the true believer hates sin most in himself, and therefore would rather use the mirror of the Word to see his own sins than the large spectacles of censoriousness to see the faults of others. None can say so much against him, but he is ready to say much more. A censorious spirit he knows to be a proud spirit, a spirit very injurious to the interest of religion. We may be zealous to quench other men's lusts, while lust burns in our own bosoms. The true believer knows he is more in danger of being hurt by his own, than by other men's sin. Therefore he keeps court rather within his own jurisdiction, than the jurisdiction of another. He contends with himself as well as with others to be holy and is ready to extenuate the failings of

others, while he magnifies his own.

A true believer is a sin-hater. His love of God causes in him a just hatred of sin. God, who is the principal sovereign good, is the object of his life, and sin, which is the deadliest evil, is the object of his hatred. He measures the happiness of his condition more by his freedom from sin, than by his freedom from affliction. Affliction is indeed a bitter portion, but he chooseth it before the sweet and pleasing delights of sin. Affliction is welcome to him for godliness sake. Oh, but he so hates sin, that he thinks that sin and he can never get too far apart. He thinks he can never get far enough away from the devil, who is the arch-forger and supreme promoter of sin in the world.

A true believer is a sin-forsaker; he abstains from it not only publicly before the eyes of man, but also privately before the eyes of God. He avoids it not only in adversity when the sea rages and is troublesome, but also in prosperity when all is calm and quiet. He flees not only from some, but as far as possible, from all iniquity. Sin is not his ordinary and customary practice. He knows that grace and glory are inconsistent with a wicked life. He knows that a bare profession of faith, without a reformation of life, is not enough to salvation. He knows that to call Christ Lord in prayer, and yet to crucify Him by sin after prayer, is gross hypocrisy. He knows that to complain of sin in the church, and yet to continue with sin at home, is but to mock God. He knows there is no

dying as an heir of God, should he live as a rebel against God. There is no dying as a child of God, if he lives as a stranger. There is no dying as a friend, if he lives as an enemy, and therefore he abandons all known sins. He abandons them upon right grounds and motives. A wicked man may forbear his profane lewd courses, but he is moved to it, not by love to God, nor hatred of sin, but by fear of hell. The fear of hell which is only an inferior motive, he makes his principal motive.

I grant, however, the wrath and vengeance of God may be a cause for a godly man to forsake sin. God bears not His sword in vain, no more than the magistrate. The threatenings of the Scripture are as thorns in his side to drive him forward, and as iron yokes upon his neck to make him stoop to God's commandments, but yet these are not his principal motives. His principal motives are drawn, not from hell, but from sin. He forsakes sin, first, because of that unthankfulness that is in sin. He considers that God is his Sovereign, and so sin is an act of rebellion. He considers that God is his Father, and so sin is an act of the great unkindness and baseness (Gen. 39:9). "Surely," saith he, "this is a bad requital to God, who gave me life, breath, being, and the gospel, yea, even the grace of the gospel. God gave me the covenant of His peace and hath promised to give me happiness at His return."

A true believer counts ingratitude to God a great offense.

Secondly, he forsakes sin because sin bears an everlasting opposition to God's holy law and commandments. Suppose hell had never been threatened, yet there would have been a dislike and disapproval of sin, because of its contrariety to, and enmity against the purity and spirituality of God's law (Rom. 7:12). Thirdly, believers forsake sin because of their hatred to sin, and love to God and His grace. Wicked men forsake sin, but hate it not. They part with it unwillingly, as mariners in a storm throw away their precious Indian goods, their gold, silk, and jewels to save their lives. As Pharaoh sent away the Israelites out of Egypt with jewels and earrings, lest Moses God should waste him,.so many leave their sins, and yet love their sins. It may be their sins leave them, and not that they leave their sins. As the devils came out of the possessed unwillingly, and with constraint, so the wicked forsake sin.

The true believer forsakes sin willingly. Once sin and his soul were congealed, oh, but the love of God hath so melted his soul, that the union is broken, and sin voluntarily sent away.

A true believer not only strives against actual iniquity, but is sensible of, and humbled for his birth-sin, his cradle-sin, his conception-sin, his radical, original, natural sin. He knows he hath an hereditary, evil disease that sticks to him. He knows that his heart is like Noah's ark wherein the unclean beasts were, like Peter's sheet,

wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and like Ezekiel's wall, where he saw portrayed every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel. He knows that even if he could live on earth without spot or blemish of visible sin, yet this original sin would give hell and the devil an undeniable right to him. Therefore, he is deeply humbled by it, and looks up daily to heaven for help against it, begging the blood of Christ to wash away the guilt and the Spirit of Christ to destroy the power of it.

A true believer hath his heart broken off from his formerly beloved sin, which was as it were commander and lord-general of the wicked bands. He is so far from delighting in it that he bends the strength of his soul against it. As when lustful Ammon had polluted and humbled Tamar, "He hated her more than ever he loved her." So the believer, having been truly and deeply humbled for his darling sin, hates it more than ever he loved it. He remembers how many bloody stripes, how many smarting strokes, and bleeding wounds this sin gave his senseless conscience. He now dreads the flames in which he was so often scorched and burned. He fears to handle that serpent that so stung his bosom. He sets himself against it and cannot endure to be near it. He trembles at the approach of it. "This sin," saith he, "is the curse parent that brought forth and brought up innumerable other sins, and shall it not be destroyed? This sin was the power, and

strength, and head of other sins, and shall I not fight against it? This sin was Satan's castle of defense. Shall it not be battered down, and not one stone left upon another?"

A true believer is a man of heavenly prudence and of singular and excellent wisdom, which he demonstrates in four things. First, he shows wisdom in providing an ark for his safety and security before the storm comes (Prov. 22:3; 27:2). He sees the danger he is in of losing his soul and heaven, and therefore hides himself in that rock of refuge, Jesus Christ. He gets God reconciled in Christ for his ark, whereas the secure, lazy sinner is insensible of the greatest dangers, and therefore careless and fearless. The simple fears not the wounds of conscience, fears not the fire of God's wrath, but is like unto children, who play in the midst of thunder and lightning. A holy fear and wisdom would make him inquisitive to avoid the wrath of God. Secondly, the believer is wise in taking the opportunity for soul-work (Eph. 5:15-16). He knows that time past is irrecoverable, and time to come uncertain. He knows that heaven and an immortal soul may both be lost in an hour. He knows that thousands are trudging to their everlasting home every day. He knows that there shall be no sermons in heaven, for all are full of grace there. He knows there shall be no sermons in hell, for all are past grace there. Therefore, thankfully and carefully he lays hold on the present opportunity for bringing honour to God, doing good to others, and settling the peace

of his own conscience. Thirdly, when two commands at the same time cannot be observed, he shows wisdom in that he prefers and obeys the greater before the lesser (Hosea 6:6). This is not violating the lesser law, but preferring the greater before it. He prefers morals before ceremonials, substantials before circumstantial, and spirituals before temporals. To abide in our calling is one command, and to pray morning and evening is another. Now it is wisdom to take time for the worship of God, whatever our worldly employment be. Fourthly, it is high wisdom to do in spiritual matters what God enables us to do, when we are not enabled to do what we would. Power is seldom or never so large as renewed will. However, a true believer will combat, if he cannot conquer; he will resist Satan, if he cannot defeat and overcome Satan. He will pray constantly, if he cannot pray fervently. And if he cannot confess sin with that brokenness of heart he doth desire, yet he will confess it to gain a broken heart.

A true believer is a man of courage and resolution. He is not dismayed at the threats of men, and does not fear what man can do unto him (Ps. 3:6). Others fly when none pursueth, but he is as bold as a lion. He is valiant for the truth. He contends earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints; he is not ashamed to own Christ, but stands up boldly in the cause and interest of God and souls. When the wicked let fly at God and religion, he, with a holy warmth, will vindicate them to the faces of

the wicked, against all their false charges and blasphemous lies. As he hath faith in his heart, so he confesses it with his tongue, as he hath call and opportunity. He confesses Christ not only in times of encouragement, but in contradiction when he is denied by many. Though men forbid him, nay, threaten him, he will profess the Name of Christ, and go forth bearing his reproach. Yea, he will not only suffer reproach, but loss also for the sake of Christ. He will part with estate, riches, wealth, houses, lands, and whatever he hath in this world. "Thou knowest, Oh Lord (said one of the martyrs, in Queen Mary's time, in his last prayer) that if we would but seem to please men in things contrary to the Word, we might enjoy the commodities of life as others do; but seeing the world will not suffer me to enjoy them, except I sin against Thy holy laws, behold, I have here left all the pleasures of this life, for the hope and sake of eternal life, purchased by Christ's blood, and promised to all them that fight on His side." Thus the true believer suffers the loss of his goods and worldly enjoyments. He tramples them underfoot, as dross and dung, when they come in competition with Christ. Yea, he courageously follows his captain Christ through mud and blood, and freely parts with his life when called thereunto for Christ's sake. "If every hair of my head were a man (said John Ardley) it should suffer death in the faith I now stand in." A noble gentleman, during the persecution of the church of Christ, in the Valto line, being threatened with death unless he would abjure his faith, answered, "God forbid,

that to save this natural life I should deny my Lord Jesus Christ, who with His precious blood upon the cross, redeemed me at so dear a rate, and having so long freely and publicly professed Him, should now hazard the loss of eternal life, to which I was elected before the foundation of the world, I say, God forbid." Whereupon they murdered him. "Let fire, cross, breaking of bones, (saith Ignatius the martyr in an epistle to Onesimus) quartering my members, crushing my body, or all the torments men and devils can invent befall me, so that I may but enjoy my Lord Jesus." And in another epistle, he writes, "Oh that I were with the wild beasts, that are prepared for me; I would allure them to make a quick dispatch of me, and if they would not, I would provoke them." "If my father was weeping on his knees before me (said Hierom) my mother leaning on my neck behind, my brethren, sisters, children and kinsfolks howling on every side, to retain me in a sinful life, I would fling my mother to the ground, run over my father, despise all my kindred, and tread them under my feet that I might run to Christ."

Oh, the numberless millions that have suffered as martyrs, and died for the faith! Some were rich, others poor; some learned, others unlearned; some old, and others young. They died with torments of all sorts: some slow, some speedy, some usual, some unusual, some hewed in pieces, some burnt in the fire, some cast to lions, some drowned in the waters, some stoned, some beheaded, and some roasted before the fire. Yet they endured all with

unspeakable courage and constancy, singing psalms, even in the midst of the flames. The true believer is full of spiritual courage because he knows he hath God to stand up for him, and to stand by him in all his sufferings. Therefore, he rejoices in his sufferings, and like the cricket sings in the very fire.

A true believer is faithful unto God in the worst of times. When the evil of sin aboundeth, he does not run with others to the same excess of riot. He does what he can to hinder wickedness, and mourns for the wickedness he cannot hinder. He strives against the stream. He walks differently than others do. He is far from complying with the wickedness of the times, either out of fear of man's hatred or to gain man's favour. The more others abound in sin and wickedness, the more conscientious and diligent he is to abound in grace and holiness. The more bold he sees others are in sin, the greater distance he keeps from anything that is sinful. He improves the sin of others to the advantage of his own soul, for the more God is dishonoured by others, the more honour He receives from him. The further others draw from God, the nearer he draws to God. When others serve various lusts and pleasures, he says as Joshua, in Joshua 24:15, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." When he meets with scorn and reproach in his Master's service, he says as David, "And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight: and of the (servants of God) of them shall I be had in honour" (2 Sam. 6:22). When

enticed by evil company, he says, as in Psalm 119:115, "Depart from me, ye evil doers; for I will keep the commandments of my God."

Thus also, when tribulation and persecution ariseth, the true believer is not offended. Though men cast him into prison, yet doth he not cast off God. Though the winds and waves of manifold troubles blow and beat upon him, yet as a rock, he remains immoveable. When Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, was urged by the proconsul to blaspheme and revile Christ, he answered, "Fourscore and six years have I served Christ, neither hath He ever offended me at any time; how then can I revile my King that hath thus preserved me?" And when the proconsul, upon his refusal, threatened him with wild beasts, fire, and other torments, he said, "You threaten me with fire that shall last but an hour, and is quickly quenched, but you are ignorant of everlasting fire at the day of judgment, and of those endless torments which are reserved for the wicked. But why do you delay? Appoint me to what death you please." Thus the true believer serves the Lord constantly, even unto death. He cleaves to the Lord with full purpose of heart, in all times and conditions of life.

In danger for God's cause, the true believer says, as the three children did to the King of Babylon in Daniel 3:17-18, "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us

out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy god, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." He is not a fugitive soldier, but faithfully fights the Lord's battles, and retains his integrity. In things indifferent, he is a willow and not an oak; he will do what lies in his power to comply with them. But in matters of evident duty he is an oak, not a willow, as Luther expresses it. He will not be driven out of the Lord's pasture, nor stir an inch from God's plough, as it is said of Athanasius, He is no mushroom that soon dies, no meteor that soon falls, no halting temporary. He cannot play fast and loose. He may be moved by frowns and flatteries, but he cannot be removed, for he is built upon a rock.

A true believer hath warm affections to God; God hath the prevailing love of his soul. The desire of the believer's soul is to Him, and to the remembrance of His Name (Isa. 26:8; Ps. 42:1-2). All things in the world are nothing to him without God. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and mine heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever" (Ps. 73:25-26). He looks more at God than at all that is God's. Not Thine, but Thee, saith the believer. Saints and angels are nothing to him without God. All the riches, pleasures, and honours this world can afford are nothing but dross and dung to him without God. "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my

Lord" (Phil. 3:8). And indeed, where should a Christian's heart be, but where his happiness is; and it is God, and God only, that is man's happiness.

A true believer is called from darkness into God's marvellous light (1 Pet. 2:9). Once his understanding was darkened (Eph. 4:18). He was not only in the dark, but was darkness (Eph. 5:8), and in danger of dropping into hell, that place of outer darkness where there is nothing but darkness, thick darkness, and that forever. Oh, but now he is light in the Lord. His eyes are anointed with sovereign eyesalve, and he who was formerly blind now sees. God hath clearly revealed to him the ugliness of sin, the beauty of holiness, and the way to heaven. "God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). Though his light be but in part, yet blessed be God, at least it is in part. Though in part he still remains dark, yet he is in part enlightened. He sees as much difference between his present and past life, as between day and night. His darkest day is brighter and lighter than the carnal man's clearest night. His condition even in desertion is comfortable and light, if compared with his former natural condition.

A true believer is the world's non-conformist. He lives in the world, but is not conformed to the world. The men of the world live breaking the sabbath, but he does not.

They neglect closet and family prayer, but he does not. They are for any company, but he is not. They mind nothing but earthly things (Phil. 3:19) - earthly profits, pleasures, honours, but his heart is in heaven. Their souls are bowed downwards to the earth, but his soul is lifted up to God. His thoughts are most seriously intent upon and taken up with heavenly things, which are the chief things. "That which the soul (saith Justin Martyr) is in the body, that is the believer in the world; for as the soul is in, but not of the body, so the believer is in, but not of the world." The life the world lives is a sinful, worldly, miserable life, but the life he lives is a holy, happy, and heavenly life. He lives not by worldly laws, not by worldly comforts, not by worldly privileges. His affections are not only taken off from things unholy and unlawful, but also his love, desire, care, and delight about lawful things is moderated. His heart doth not run after these things in such an inordinate way as sometimes it did. Neither is he wholly taken up in seeking and following after them. There is much of heaven in his thoughts, much of heaven in his language, and much of heaven in his life and conversation.

A true believer is a person devoted, and set apart for God. As vessels and sacrifices were set apart under the law, and taken from common as well as unclean uses, so the believer is separated from the world, from its ways, its works, its courses. He is no longer his own to serve himself. He inquireth not in every thing what is his own will,

but what is God's pleasure. Hence the godly are called a peculiar people (1 Pet. 2:9), made God's all ever and forever. He is given to the Lord wholly. He is no more at the command of Satan, or self, or the world, but at God's command. When tempted to sin, he answers with Joseph, "How shall I do this wickedness, and sin against God?" God hath a stronger claim to my soul and body than I myself have. If I comply with the temptation and sin, I become a robber of God, a sacrreligious person, therefore tempt me not to rob the Lord.

A true believer fearingly and reverently uses God's ordinances, and all belonging to God, and about Him. He is possessed with an holy awe, reverence, and fear of God. He is so far from belching out oaths in passion or profaneness, that he never thinks or speaks of God's Name unless it is with reverent and religious thoughts. He highly prizes every religious duty. Yes, whatever hath the stamp, image, or print of God upon it, is had by him in reverent esteem. And his reverence in ordinances is seen in his doing all out of spiritual and holy intentions, as the heathens, Jehu, and the Pharisees did all for selfish ends.

A true believer is a high prizer and strict observer of the sabbath day. He cannot prefer gold before God, the world before godliness, earth before heaven, time before eternity, body before soul, shadows before substance, onions before manna, pottage before birthright, darkness before light, or death before life. No more can he prefer a play

day, or a trading day, before the sabbath day; he counts them hogs and swine that despise holy things. As it is the sure mark of an ungodly man to be a sabbath-breaker, so it is the sure mark of a child of God to sanctify the sabbath. Ungodly men are usually careless of their thoughts and words and ways on the sabbath. They can walk in the streets or in the fields at their pleasure. They can lie upon their beds, and at their doors. They can eat and drink even to excess. Yes, they do worse than all this upon the best days, and in the best hours of the day. And though formal hypocrites may on that day abstain from their ordinary sins and labours, yet they make not the sabbath a delight. Their thoughts are upon their earthly pleasures and profits.

The godly man is careful to celebrate the sabbath to God's glory. With Ignatius, he calls it the queen of days. With the primitive Christians, he saith, "I am a Christian; how then can I choose and love the Lord's day?" The godly eunuch is described by his observing of God's sabbath (Isa. 56:3). And the prophet setteth it as a special mark upon the children of God. "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour Him; not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy

father, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" (Isa. 58:13-14). That special moment God hath set upon the fourth commandment, "Remember that thou keep holy the sabbath day," is deeply rooted in his heart. He is so much affected with it, that he makes a conscious effort to keep the sabbath day. He rises as soon (if not sooner) from his bed on that day, as on other days, and having dressed his body, endeavours by reading, praying, and meditating to dress his soul also. He carefully addresses himself to the hearing of the Word preached, to public prayers, to receiving the sacrament at the times appointed. He is much in private meditation, which was the exercise of St. John the apostle at the time he was banished into the isle of Patmos for the Word of God. "I was in the spirit on the Lord's day" (Rev. 1:10), i.e., in sweet and heavenly meditation.

The godly man loves to have his mind employed at all times, but especially on the Lord's day, in feeling meditation upon spiritual affairs, upon the examination of his former life, the state of the other world, the slights and subtleties of Satan, the work of man's redemption, the work of regeneration, the excellency of an holy life, the hour of death, the tribunal of judgment, etc. The sabbath is a jubilee to his heart, and the joy of his thoughts. It is the desire, longing, and endeavour of his soul to spend it holily and religiously in such holy exercises and employments as are fitting the feast day of the soul and the Lord's holy day. And when, at any time, he is drawn

away to the profaning or careless keeping of it, his soul is cast down within him. He is greatly grieved and troubled before God, and prays earnestly to God for more zeal and care and conscience for the time to come. And since he desires and strives to keep the sabbath holy, God accepts of his desires and endeavours. Abraham's determining to offer his son was accepted of God, as if he had actually offered him up (Heb. 11:17). So the imperfect keeping of the sabbath (if sincere) is in God's computation a complete keeping of it under the covenant of grace.

A true believer is willing to know and see the worst of himself. A carnal man who lives in sin (though possibly he may pray for knowledge in some things, and would be a knowing man, yet he) hath no mind to know himself, to know his own vileness and wickedness. He loves not to see the worst of himself. He as little loves to see his sin as to have it seen but the believer never thinks he sees his sins enough. No matter how little he sins, he thinks he sins too much; and no matter how much he sees his sins, he thinks he sees them too little.

A true believer is a daily wrestler. He struggles and wrestles with many things: some outward, some inward, some carnal, some spiritual, some of one condition, some of another. By believing prayer he wrestles with God and will not let Him go except He bless him, except He grant him his desire, and refresh his soul (Gen. 32:24; Matt. 15:22). He wrestleth with devils and damned angels

(Eph. 6:12). Nay, rather than lack one to wrestle with, he fights with himself. He keeps under his body, and brings it into subjection (1 Cor. 9). He wrestles against sin, not only against the outward act, but the inward motion of sin. He fights against sin when he finds it first stirring in him, before it be exposed to the view of the world. If, when he hath been helped to pray affectionately, he find any motion to pride begin to stir, he endeavors presently to crucify it, lest it spoil his prayers and turn them into sin.

A true believer is no stranger at the throne of grace. The ungodly are described by this, "that they seek not God" (Ps. 10:4); "Do not call upon the Lord" (Ps. 14:4). They love their ease too well to take the pains to seek God. Their pleasures are more to them than God's presence, but the godly man is often with God upon his knees. Prayer is a sweet diversion to his soul, it is a spiritual feast to him to enjoy God in private, and therefore he says with David in Psalm 73:28, "It is good for me to draw near to God." He comes cheerfully and unbosoms himself to God as a man would do to his friend. He is not dragged into His presence, as into the presence of a judge, but comes freely to Him, as a child to his Father. He preserves a constant acquaintance with God, and keeps a daily course of communion with Him in prayer because he loves Him and His service. He is out of his element, except when he is either praying to God, or

speaking of God, or thinking of God, as it is said of Bradford, that preaching, reading, and praying, was his whole life. It is said of St. James that he had knees as hard as camels knees with continual kneeling. Hilarian was found dead in his oratory with knees bent and eyes and hands lifted up. Bishop Latimer was wont to pray so fervently and oftentimes continued kneeling so long, that for feebleness he was not able to rise without help. Greg Naz reports of his sister Gorgonia that her knees seemed to cleave to the earth, by reason of her often kneeling. And the same Greg reports of his Aunt Priscilla that her elbows were as hard as an horn by her often leaning upon a desk when she prayed. The hypocrite doth not delight himself in the Almighty, and therefore will not always call upon God (Job 27:10). But the true believer delights in God as his only portion and happiness, and therefore continues instant in prayer. He looks on prayer as a part, a great part of every day's work, as his duty in all times and conditions, and finds much ease and refreshment by conversing with God in it. I have read of a gentlewoman, that in her parlour, at meditation and prayer, that she cried out, "Oh, that I might ever enjoy this sweet communion with God!" And one reports of Joachim, that he used to say " Prayer is my meat and drink." Such, therefore, as wholly omit prayer or pray but seldom are not true believers, whatever they may pretend. He that hath obtained favour to find grace prays daily for grace, but he who prays not, never received grace to this day.

A true believer seeks to enjoy God in His ordinances. It is not the empty formality in ordinances which he prizes, but to meet with God (Ps. 63:2). The profane, blind world neither careth for ordinances, nor God in ordinances. The formal hypocritical part of the world rests satisfied with the bare ordinances, but the sincere Christian seeks to find God, and His lively operations upon his heart there. It is Christ in a sermon that the spiritual soul feeds on. Some are taken with rich, magnificent, painted, and pompous words, with that art, learning, and elegancy of style with which sermons are compounded, but yet they neglect Christ. This is like children feeding on ashes. As a morsel of gold will not satisfy an hungry stomach, no notion in a sermon will (unless accompanied with the power and Spirit of Christ) stay the appetite of the soul. Oh, but Christ is savoury meat, such as the gracious soul loves to feed upon. Nothing without this can give contentment. Absalom thought it a small thing that he lived at Jerusalem. Nay, he esteemed his life as nothing, unless he might see the king's face. So the true believer esteems it a small thing to live at Jerusalem, that is, to enjoy all God's ordinances, unless he enjoys the face of Christ with them. His very life without this seems but a burden. When the face of God shines, there is exceeding joy and rejoicing, but when the face of God is hid there is a cry with much mourning and lamentation.

A true believer is a constant peripatetic. He sits not still, but walks. He walks not in by-ways, but in the King's

highway, not in the broad way, but in the strait and narrow way that leadeth unto life. He straitens and hems up his desires. He afflicts his flesh and unrenewed part by refusing and rejecting unruly desires. He rows against wind and stream, against the current of examples in the world. He presses forward in his way, through good report, and evil report, in want, in abundance, in every state and condition. His way pleases him all the more, because there is no elbow room for his lusts in it. He would have nothing allowed which corruption and lust craveth. And if at any time his heart look back to sin, as Lot's wife did to Sodom, he afflicts his spirit with godly sorrow for every step he hath again taken towards the broad way.

A true believer is a public mercy; wicked men are a public judgment. They are as thorns in the bosom of a land. They are the troublers of Israel, the fire-brands of a nation, the evening wolves that suck the blood of the people's joy. But believers are the chariots and horsemen of Israel, the props and pillars of a nation, the very store-houses and granaries of much good to others, the only excellent ones of the earth. The lips of the righteous feedeth many, and disperseth wisdom and knowledge. By his counsel and direction, he is as eyes to the blind. By his example, he is as feet to the lame; by his holy life and gracious deportment, he puts a check to the overspreading wickedness of the place where he lives. And by his earnest and importunate prayers, he staves off God's judgments from it. He is a blessing everywhere, for

wherever he is God is with him, and others are saved for his sake. He is a Lot to save Zoar, and a Joseph for whose sake Potiphar's house is blessed. He is a Moses standing in the gap, that a murmuring and rebellious people be not destroyed. He is an Aaron running with his censer, and standing between the dead and the living, and making atonement for others when wrath is gone out from the Lord against them. His prayers are like a strong wall against the rage of the enemy. In a word, he is good and doth good, and therefore, every one that hath an interest in heaven begs his life. When his work is done, and he is gathered to his fathers, every godly man's eye doth lament him, as one taken away to the great loss of others, though it is to his own unspeakable gain.

A true believer contents not himself with shows of goodness, and a form of godliness, but labors to get the life of religion into his heart. He labours to express the power of it in his life, by departing from all iniquity and walking in all the commandments of the Lord blameless (Luke 1:6). He worships God, not only outwardly but inwardly, not only with zealous expressions but devout affections, not only with a decent, becoming gravity, but with faith and love, in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). Though he serves God with his body and is not altogether careless of the outside of worship, yet his great care is about his heart and the inside of worship. And as he worships God in the spirit, so he walks after the spirit. As he prays fervently, so he lives holily. Others pretend to godliness, but

live wickedly. In their words they profess to know God, but by their works they deny Him (Titus 1:16). Their works and practices give the lie to their words and profession, but the true believer cautiously declines whatever evils are condemned, and conscientiously performs whatever duties are commanded in the Word of God. His daily care is denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world.

A true believer's conscience guards his thoughts and cogitations, as well as his words and actions. Whatever the life of a wicked man seems to be, yet his heart is of little worth. It is filled with voluptuous thoughts: let us eat and drink. Better is a living dog than a dead lion. Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. Filled with malicious, revengeful thoughts, he asks, who will give me of his flesh to eat? I will be revenged. My wrath shall be satisfied upon him. I will watch him for an opportunity to be even with him, so he is filled with covetous thoughts. Soul thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. To-day or tomorrow we will go unto such a city, and there continue a year, and buy, and sell, and get gain. What shall we do to purchase such a field, to raise such a child, to grow rich in the world? These are the mighty employments of wicked men's thoughts, about which they often lose their sleep, and busy themselves day and night. The Lord knows the thoughts of wicked men, that they are

but vanity, yes, gross impiety. Their thoughts run upon these matters for whole weeks, even the whole year. The devil runs away with their minds, even when they are at church, at prayers, in hearing, or any good exercise. They allow sinful thoughts to come in all the day long and cocker them with delight. Their hearts are stews and brothel-houses, shambles of mischief, and dens of wickedness.

Whereas the true believer is careful in watching sinful thoughts. I do indeed grant that the most watchful and mortified saints on earth are not entirely free from evil thoughts, but yet, as Christ whipped the buyers and sellers out of the temple, so he ejects and casts evil thoughts out of his heart with abhorrence. His customary and allowed thoughts are tending to God, to heaven, and the things above, and his heart is still inditing a good matter, wherein the greatest part of his soundest joy and comfort is placed. The course of sanctified thoughts in a child of God may, and is sometimes interrupted, both by the relics of corruption within, and by the temptations of Satan and the world without. Yet he is sensible of the evil of his thoughts, judges himself worthy to be destroyed for it, prays against it, repents of it, and afterwards guards his heart more strongly. He then watcheth over his thoughts more narrowly than ever.

A true believer is thoughtful of death, and his thoughts of death do him good all his life. He considers the fact

that death will cut him off from the inhabitants of the world, and therefore is diligent in doing his duty towards them while he lives with them. He considers death will cut him off from the public assemblies, and therefore is diligent in hearkening to the voice of the Lord while it is today. He considers death will cut him off from the comforts of life, and therefore uses them with moderation and sobriety, turns his superfluities into alms, dies to the world, abridges himself not only of excess, but sometimes of variety. He remembers these creature-comforts may leave him, because they are transitory. But he is sure he must leave them, because he is mortal, and therefore he labours so to use the world as not abusing it.

A true believer hath a well-grounded hope of heaven and glory. The wicked man's hope is groundless. It is built upon a sandy foundation, and therefore is as a spider's web, soon destroyed. When death appears, his hopes vanish. The coming of judgment is the departing of his hope. But the righteous hath hope in his death. His hope is built upon the mercy, and love, and power of God, upon the death and intercession of Jesus Christ, upon the covenant of grace, and the earnest of the spirit. Therefore, when his earthly comforts are leaving him, and he them, he rejoices in the hope of the glory to come. This is his comfort, that he is now going to possess that happiness that he hath long prayed, desired, and looked for.

A true believer is willing to move to heaven to enjoy God

(Phil. 1:23). His desire is not to dwell forever in the inn of this world, but to dwell in those glorious chambers that are above. He enjoys Christ's company on earth, and longs to enjoy it in heaven. He sets no store by the pleasures of the world. He hath a heavenly spark of holy ambition, whereby he overlooks the glistening glory of the world, and breathes after the society of angels and the presence of the Lord. He prefers the holy estate of the other life before the most flourishing estate in this life. His mind and motion lie upward. He calls Christ Hephzibah; his delight is in Him, and his desire to be with Him. He longs to leave the tents of Kedar and to live with Christ in the palace of Zion, to leave Babylon, the city of sin and confusion, and to live with Christ in Jerusalem, that holy and quiet city above. He hath heard glorious things of Christ on earth, and therefore longs to see Him eye to eye in heaven. As he desires Christ to come down into his heart, so he desires to ascend to Christ into heaven. Here his marriage to Christ is but initial. Here he is but contracted or espoused to Christ. For I have espoused you unto one Husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2). Oh, but in heaven the nuptials shall be celebrated with the highest solemnities. Therefore the Spirit and the bride say come (Rev. 22:17). Even so, come Lord Jesus, come quickly (verse 20).

FOURTH TREATISE

Containing A RESOLUTION OF MANY DOUBTS, AND CASES OF CONSCIENCE

It is a rule frequently found true by experience, *Nihil magis certum, quam quod ex dubio certus est*. Nothing is more certain to the soul, than what is confirmed to it after much doubting. Yet, there is a generation of men who live in a fool's paradise of a false persuasion all their lifetime, and never doubt of their good estate. Their faith is false, their joy a delusion, their truce no peace, and their boldness no holy confidence. A confidence never shaken with doubts and jealousies is greatly to be feared. The blindest are ever the boldest. You never heard dead men complain of sickness. Doubts are the qualms of a Christian's spirit, and show a man to be alive. Assurance is the lifeblood of a believer's joy. Oh, but some are presumptuous and have a carnal confidence. They sleep with ease and walk without care. Those sermons which one would think would search the quick and cut them to the heart are dull and powerless (Prov. 16:2).

On the other hand, many whose souls are dear to God are full of doubts concerning their own condition. They are lacking the sense and assurance of their justification and reconciliation to God, through Jesus Christ. Though their condition be good, yet are they exceedingly troubled,

filled with perplexities and fears, affrighted with doubts and discouragements, all because they cannot see that they have an interest in Christ and are in covenant with God. The doubts and scruples of their hearts are numerous and various, according to the various manners of Satan's working to entangle poor Souls. It is impossible for me to speak to them all particularly. I have only spoken to such as seem to me to be the most common and ordinary objections of sad and discouraged souls.

I am greatly afraid, lest what I take to be sincerity be nothing but self-flattery. Many carnal men lie under a strange persuasion and presumption that their state is good; and what if my seeming assurance should prove carnal confidence? Oh this carnal confidence hath murdered thousands, yea, millions of souls! Answer: (1) Art thou an enemy, an irreconcilable enemy to sin? Then doubt not of thy sincerity. Presumption is a friend and favorer of sin, but assurance is its deadly enemy (1 John 3:3). As assurance is a preserver of holiness, so holiness is a producer of assurance (2 Pet. 1:10). Heavenly-mindedness, a religious use of ordinances, sacraments, and fervent prayer are the breeders of this blessed assurance, but a neglect yea, a contempt of those, will quietly stand with presumption (Deut. 29:19). A still conscience and a slothful profession can agree with presumption. He that presumes he hath oil in his lamp, but none in his vessel, he hath the name of a lover of Christ, but the heart of a

crucifier of Christ. He is neglecter of family duty, a despiser of the godly, nay, now and then a drunkard. And yet he is as bold and confident of his salvation as the precisest saint. He is persuaded that godliness is his race, Christ his Saviour, and glory his reward. This indeed is a devilish deceit.

Oh but thou art no pleader for Baal or for any known sin. I appeal to thy conscience, whether, when thou hast been guilty of any particular known sin, that thy confidence in prayer, but also thy assurance of grace is lessened, clouded, and benighted until thou hast particularly repented of the same.

(2) Thy very doubts and scruples may resolve the case. Presumption is seldom or never mingled with doubtings and distrust, but assurance is assaulted with scrupulous thoughts, and temptations, and holy tremblings (Ps. 2:12). Dost thou never feel any attempts, buffetings, and surmisings of Satan? Doth thy conscience never question thy condition? Doth thy own heart hold its peace and keep quietness and silence in thy breast? Art thou never driven to search for evidences and experiences to maintain thy right to Christ? Findest thou no contradiction, disturbance, and interruption of thy peace? Then know that all thy faith and hope of heaven is but a dream, fancy, and shallow. Thy confidence is but accursed calmness of soul. From now on let this make thee doubt because thou never doubted before.

But poor believer, it is otherwise with thee; thou art often haunted with fears, suspicions and jealousies. Thy own dark and unbelieving heart is often belching out mists that darken thy assurance. Yea, all the ordinances and engines of hell are planted against assurance to beat down and batter that curious work of the Spirit. The devil spies thee and overlooks thee with an envious and evil eye. That foul fiend would put out faith, which is the very heart, and assurance, which is the eye of the new man. His opposition argues, that thy faith is not presumption.

(3) Hath God given thee a thankful heart? Presumption is unthankful. I read indeed, the Pharisees praised God: "God, I thank thee" (Luke 18:11). Oh, but these were thankless thanks. His thanks did no more flow from a praiseful heart, than his prayer issued from an humble heart. The praiseless soul is a graceless presumptuous soul, but the gracious heart is a thankful heart. Oh, what inflamed love! What raised thoughts! What a dilated heart hath an assured believer. If God speaks peace, he will offer unto God the calves of the lips (Hosea 14:2). When Hannah's heart rejoiced and her horn was exalted, then was her mouth enlarged (1 Sam. 2:1). Hast thou ever felt an enlarged, rejoicing heart, blessing and delighting in God? Then thy state is good.

(4) Did God humble thy soul before He advanced it to assurance and comfort? Presumption is natural and born in our bones, but assurance is the blessed fruit of the

Spirit, and of faith (Heb. 10:22). Hadst thou this peremptory conceit of thy good estate ever since a child? If thy assurance be a native, it is not heaven-born. Such a beautiful child as assurance was not born of such a mother as is thy natural corruption, and of such a father as Satan. But if it followed Conversion and sound humiliation, it is a true heavenly persuasion.

(5) Art thou little in thine own eyes? Presumption is accompanied with pride, with scorn and contempt of others, but assurance is accompanied with self-debasement. The one is accompanied with loftiness (Luke 18:11), and the other with lowliness (Luke 1:48). If thou be not puffed up with pride, but are humble and lowly in spirit, and if the greater the mercy and higher the favor of God become, the lesser and lower thy heart is, then rest assured that thy heart is upright before God.

My soul is exceedingly oppressed with terrors and affrighting fears. Great is their received mercy, who have a sound and quiet spirit, whatever their other troubles and pressures be. But as for me, terrors have taken hold of me, and those corruptions that still hang upon me make me fear I have no grace. I find pride, passion, etc. still stirring and strong. It is not my afflictions, but corruptions that disquiet my conscience. Answer: Firstly, it is infinitely better to have a complaining conscience than a quiet one. Better hear the doom, and feel the lash of thy conscience, than to bear it like a dead child in thy bosom.

A smarting conscience is better than a snoring conscience. A reprobate conscience, a conscience past feeling, was both the sin and judgment of the heathens (Rom. 1:28). "Who being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness" (Eph. 4:19). Who would not pray to God to send him a terrified conscience in mercy, rather than a stupified conscience in wrath? Look upon the carnal soul. The devil flatters him with joys and hopes, so that he hath not one unquiet thought for sin, from one sabbath to another, whereas sin is a sword in thy bones all the day long! Now, wouldst thou change conditions with the carnal man and give thy grief and pain for his ease and peace? Surely thou wouldst not exchange souls with such a man on any terms for one moment.

Secondly, Christ in His set time will pacify and appease thy conscience (Prov. 29:6). What if the soul of a Christian be all in an uproar? Yet the blood of Christ will make peace, and the Spirit of Christ will create abundance of joy. What if the winds stir and are tempestuous on the face of thy soul? Yet when the winds see Christ walking towards them, they will abate, and there will be a very great calm

Thirdly, do not conclude thou hast no grace, because some peculiar sins still haunt thee and hang upon thee. These only speak thy weakness, but do not evidence thy

being graceless. Many of God's servants have had corruptions hung long upon them, yet they are true converts. How long did passion hang upon the prophet Jonah? He was so selfish, that he rebelled and fled to Tarshish. And yet after God had broken him in hell, how did his selfish passion hang on him again (Jonah 4:1-3,9)?

Fourthly, corruption shall either rage for thy good, or it shall be slain. "A damsel, possessed with the devil, brought much gain" (Acts 16:6). Such a devil is a saint's lust; it makes him rich in faith, rich in humility, rich in self-denial, in faithful prayer, and in good works. Oh, woe is me, saith a fallen saint; wretch that I am, what shall I do? Here is an old corruption that hath again polluted my soul when it was just lately washed. Here is a corruption that will kill all my joy before it leaves me. Yea, it is well if it depart without the blood of my soul. But stay thy complaint, poor Christian. Believe, and thou shalt be strengthened. "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" (Rom. 16:20).

I am so near ruin's brink that I fear I shall unavoidably perish. I am so low that I fear there will never be a lifting up. I am sunk into the mire, fallen into an horrible pit, where I must needs perish, if not soon delivered. Answer: (1) When thou wast once further off from the kingdom of grace, thou perished not. Some years ago thy danger was really greater than now, though now it is more in

thy thoughts than it was then. Surely the further the traveller walks from the seaside, the more hopeful is his escape. Was Christ thy Pilot in former straits, when amidst dangerous rocks and tempests, and shalt thou now shipwreck and perish in the very mouth of haven? No, verily not.

(2) God foresees that this will occasion thy great praises. “The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy” (Job 29:13). When a widow or orphan is delivered from the hand of the oppressor, the greater the danger was, the more thankful they are to the deliverer. They bless him both behind his back and to his face, as one, without whose help they had been beggared and undone. So when a troubled soul is saved out of its sinking despondencies and fears, it says, I for my part had been completely beaten and overthrown by the devil, my strong adversary. I would have been undone and damned forever, except that God helped me. Blessed, forever blessed, be His Name. I will bless Him while I live, who saved my imperilled soul from destruction. “He cares not for the flesh of bulls, nor ten thousand rivers of oil”; praise He desires, and praise I will give Him. My redeemed soul shall sing the praises of the Lord forever.

(3) Remember, God has been no small friend to thy outward man, when in a perishing condition. How then can He neglect the noble soul? Shall dross be gathered, and

gold lost? Will He take up the shell of the body, and gild it with wealth, health, strength, beauty, and lay it in His bosom, and then let the immortal pearl of the soul be spurned at by justice, and trampled under the devil's feet? No, verily not. He that hath been so full of pity to the body, will be much more pitiful to the soul. The nobler the person plunged in misery is, the more he moves compassion.

(4) God is gracious to all mankind promiscuously. Properly, and formally, He hates none. The evil and unthankful receive many mercies from Him, such as the support of their beings, some restraint of : sin, reservation out of hell, prevention of judgments, bestowal of outward command favours, spiritual ordinances, inward motions, glorious gifts, etc If His hardened enemies receive these, what may His troubled elect expect from Him?

There is a kind of tenderness and pity in unreasonable creatures towards their young ones The pelican will spill her blood, and burn her wings and body to save her tender young. The hen will, by her good will, lose her life, before her brood become a prey to the ravenous kite. Birds will chirp, mourn, and flutter over the head of him that demolishes and destroys their nests, and leads their young ones captive. Oh, but God's compassions to His children are infinite : in nature and duration. "The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (James 5:11), or of

many bowels, as in the original. He who mercifully delivered Israel out of Egyptian bondage will work signs and wonders for thy deliverance, rather than suffer thy soul to perish. He who showed Hagar a well nigh at hand when her son was ready to expire, will show a fair well of salvation to thee, whose heart is ready to sink, and faint, and die within thee. He that kept David safe, when persecuted and pursued as a partridge, will keep thy soul safe, though hunted by that mighty hunter the devil.

The Lord abhors and punishes the unmerciful usage of afflicted and perishing persons (Deut. 25:17-19). Thy soul is marching away out of spiritual Egypt, where the devil made thee serve with rigor and sore bondage. Thy soul is weary, faint, and feeble, but will God fall on the weak and weary, and slay them? Oh no, God will never play cursed Amalek. He will not for a world stain his hands in the blood of an humbled, broken, and bleeding soul.

I am unable to believe in Jesus Christ. I find it as impossible to believe, as to fulfill the law. I have often striven against, but cannot vanquish unbelief. Answer: (1) This complaint may perhaps be causeless and therefore sinful. It may be that thou callest nothing faith unless it be assurance, a sense that thy faith is sound, whereas assurance is not the nature, but the effect of faith, and is usually given after some glorious conquest over corruption. This strength or assurance of faith thou may expect, and

pray for. Yet thou must not doubt of the truth of thy faith because this assurance is wanting.

(2) Faith is a receiving of Christ as offered in the gospel. Art thou willing to consent and accept of Christ on gospel terms? If so, there is a sure foundation of faith laid. The seed of faith is sown in thy heart. "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name" (John 1:12). Here, to receive Christ and to believe in His Name are equivalent. He who receives Christ believes on His Name. But to silence all such complaints, let me ask, how came thou to the sight of thine own infirmity? How came thou to distrust thy own power? Was it not by the illumination and conviction of God's Spirit? Once thou prided thyself presumptuously in thy faith, and felt that thou hadst believed in Christ. And yet then there was no sense of thine own vileness, no deep humiliation under the sense of it. Now thou art both sensible and humbled, and yet thou dost labour under too much diffidence and dejection. Oh, the policy of the devil in tempting thee to presume when far off from Christ, and now to despond when near to Him.

I am ignorant of the time of my new birth and cannot tell when, nor by what sermon I received the image of the heavenly. Therefore I question whether I be at all renewed. Answer: (1) Sometimes God's elect children are religiously educated, prayed for, and instructed by their

religious parents, and so are insensibly leavened and seasoned with grace. They are not vassalized to Satan by inward corruption, nor barely moralized by outward conformity to God, but really, changed and rooted in grace. And yet they know not when - The kingdom of God cometh not with observation” (Luke 17:20). The kingdom of grace may be set up in thy heart, and yet thou didst not observe the time of its coming. “So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how” (Mark 4:26-27). (2) Care not so much for the knowledge of the time of conversion as for an evidence of the work of conversion. Is the work really done? Art thou passed from death to life? Hath the Lord drawn a lively resemblance of Himself upon thy soul? Canst thou be abased and ashamed under the sight of thy original depravation? Dost thou despair of help in or from thyself? Dost thou embrace the righteousness of Christ? Then fear not, but proceed to grow, for the seed of true grace is sown in thy heart.

I suspect, and have long suspected, whether my name be written in the book of life, among the living in the new Jerusalem. I fear I am a reprobate, and belong not to the election of grace. Answer: (1) Who told thee that thou dost not belong to the election of grace? Did God ever say so in His Word? Or did the Spirit of God ever witness such a thing to thee? Why dost thou suspect thyself to be

a reprobate? Is it because duties are burdensome to thee, or is it because thy hope is deadened? These are no signs of reprobation. Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is the only sign of reprobation. Some signs may indeed evidence a man not to be regenerate, but what signs can evidence a man not to be elected? Poor soul, I thought the love of God to thee had deserved more charitable thoughts at thy bands if in nothing else but in making thee a reasonable creature, in preserving thee since thou wast conceived in the womb, in casting thy lot within the sound of the glorious gospel, and in sending His ministers to endeavour to heal thee of thy soul wounds.

(2) The list of the names of the elect is only under God's lock and key. He only that counts the stars can tell their names. Many are elected whose election is to man invisible. "And He causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads" (Rev. 13:16). As antichrist's regiment is divided into two ranks, so in Christ's company of saints divided. Some have their Father's Name on their foreheads, open to the observation of all that are willing to see it. Others have it in the hollow of their hands, scarce known to themselves, as in Revelation 14:9-10: "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indig-

nation: and, he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb.” So if any man worship God, having a name secret or open, he shall drink of the waters of life of those rivers of pleasure which are at God’s right hand forevermore.

(3) It is both a foolish and wicked thing for a blind creature to take it upon himself to read God’s book of life and death. The book is clasped, the angels are unlearned in it, and hast thou skill to read it? “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law” (Deut. 29:29). Leave off poring over God’s eternal counsel and decree concerning thee, lest thou be smitten blind for thy curiosity in trying to read what God hath not revealed. This is a temptation aimed at smiting the shield of faith out of thine hand. It is a fiery dart too hot for thee to hold. Therefore cast it out of thy mind and meditation, and instead of poring upon what God hath secretly decreed, consult daily with what God hath revealed. I find that we are directed to the “law and to the testimony of God” (Isa. 18:20). But where are we ever directed to the counsel and decree of God?

“Faith purifies the heart” (Acts 15:9). But alas, the imaginations of my heart are very impure! The frame of my heart is evil “and doth oftentimes send forth at the same

place, sweet water and bitter” (James 3:11). I lack a sanctified frame of heart. My thoughts are so vile, that I cannot think I have any true faith. Answer: (1) There is iniquity enough in thy heart, but dost thou regard iniquity in thy heart? Impure and impertinent thoughts come into thy mind, but dost thou voluntarily open the passage to them? Dost thou ferment and cherish such thoughts? Dost thou delight in sin? Art thou captivated by it against thy will? Art thou not a servant to sin, but constantly wishing and praying for inward and outward cleanness? Then thy state is good.

(2) St. James saith, “Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?” His meaning is not that corrupt communication never flows from the mouth, nor vain thoughts rise out of the mind of a godly man, but that such discourse, and such thoughts proceed not from them with that unbridled liberty they do from others. These are not common and ordinary with them. Even a good man’s tongue may talk too freely, and his mind be too unhappily fruitful in vile, impertinent, and unworthy thoughts.

(3) When St Paul says “that faith purifies the heart,” his meaning is not that he who finds impurity in his heart is altogether destitute of faith. He means that faith besprinkles the soul with Christ’s pure and precious blood, and quickens the heart to study and pursue purity and holiness. It draws grace and virtue from Christ to weaken sin,

and raiseth endeavours in a Christian to cleanse himself from all filthiness, both of the flesh and of the spirit.

Oh, the heart of man is a great depth, who can fathom it? Oh, that guile, and deceit, and delusion that is to be found in the heart! It is deceitful above all things. Many have been beguiled by it. Judas was, yes, so was Peter. I fear my heart is not upright. Answer: (1) Examine what foot-steps and prints of God there are in thy heart. Do not condemn thyself rashly, for it is great injustice so to do. Did the law ever discover to thee thy sins in their own colours: in their number to be numberless, in their nature to be deadly and damnable, in their weight to be heavier than mountains, in their dishonouring and provoking quality to God, and in their defiling and damning power as to thyself? Did ever the law, subserviently to the new covenant, drive thy self-condemned soul to Christ? And did Christ set thee upon obedience, on obeying God from a principle of love and thankfulness? These things argue a blessed change of heart.

(2) Dost thou run to Christ daily for uprightness of heart, for the spirit of truth, to lead and guide thee to all righteousness? Doth thy soul breathe as David in Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a clean heart, O Lord, and renew a right spirit within me"? (3) If thou still say thy heart is deceitful, then know that hypocrites do not confess, but cover their deceit and hypocrisy. They love not to hear

of the deceitfulness of their heart. They are afraid to conclude themselves to be deceived, or “to have their good evil spoken of” (Rom. 14:16). Oh, but thou art glad when thou canst discover any unknown or deceitful hole in thy heart where Satan lurks. This is a great argument of heart - sincerity.

I am a covenant breaker; I have broken the covenant of grace and mercy. What mercy then can I expect? Surely God will avenge the quarrel of His covenant, and utterly reject me, who have so often broken with Him. Answer: (1) Hast thou so often broken covenant with God, and wilt thou break it again? yes, worse than ever by thy unbelief? Is not unbelief a grievous violation of it? Indeed thy breach of covenant is a proper cause of trouble, and thy soul should be greatly humbled for it, but it is no proper cause of unbelief. Alas, unbelief puts the soul far off from God, “and they that are far from God shall perish” (Ps. 73:27)! Whatever thy condition is, beware of shouldering and excluding thyself out of the covenant. Never did anyone gain by rejecting God’s covenant. Is not the remission of thy breaches and backslidings one article printed and promised in the covenant? “Go, and proclaim these words towards the north, and say, return thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause My anger to fall upon you” (Jer. 3:12-14).

Secondly, there is a wide difference between the omis-

sion of covenant duties and the dissolution of the covenant. Every breach does not dissolve the marriage covenant between man and wife, any more than every breach dissolves the covenant between Christ and the soul. Those He loves once, He always loves “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end” (John 13:1). “The foundation of the Lord standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth those that are His” (2 Tim. 2:9). He so knoweth them that He will not finally dissolve His covenant made with them Though they through weakness break covenant with God, “yet God abideth faithful, He cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim. 2:13).

If I were regenerate and born again, I could never love God so coldly, nor forget the mercies of God so suddenly as I do. I should have a better disposition of soul. I should understand spiritual mysteries more clearly, and walk before God more mournfully, more diligently, more humbly and holily, than I do Answer This thy reasoning is sinful. Is this thy thankfulness to God for what thou hast received, to question thy grace because it is not so large as thou wouldest have it? Do you question the truth of thy love, because it is not stronger? Do you question the opening of thy eyes, because thy sight is dim, or question the breaking of thy heart because the measure of thy godly sorrow for sin is so small? Are not thy complaints causeless? Is not thy thankfulness to God for His grace, and thy joy in the Holy Ghost, ceased by this? And is not

thy unthankfulness displeasing unto God, and thy diffidence displeasing to Christ? Yea, by thy madness, thou condemnest many a righteous soul that have a great ground to complain of the weakness of their love to God, and their forgetfulness of the mercy of God, as thou. Yet, they would not for a world say, I have no grace. May not thy causeless condemning of thyself, if overheard, weaken the hands and hearts of others?

My peace I fear is carnal security, because I cannot pray so feelingly, mourn so kindly, hear so attentively as before. Answer: It is weakness to require the same condition and disposition before peace and reconciliation and after it (James 5:13). Before peace there is disquietment, sorrow, and fear. The poor soul is tortured, food neglected, the body disregarded, health, credit, etc. not esteemed, in comparison of God's favour. Yes, sometimes hideous outcries by reason of hot hellish burnings within. Oh, but after peace comes there is a great alteration: tears are dried up, sorrows swallowed up, the terrible storm turned into a sweet calm, and hideous outcries into sweet songs of praise. Christian, observe how thy peace came. Did prayer fetch it in (Matt. 7:9-10)? Did faith forerun it? Did it follow upon legal terrors and spiritual conflicts? And hast thou an heart willing to obey God universally? Then know assuredly, thy peace is a true and solid peace.

I have some joy, but I fear it is but the joy of hypocrites,

a mere delusion. Answer: When was thy joy given? Was it when all within thy heart was anguish and dolor? Did it come when thou wast fled for refuge to the mercy and free grace of God in Jesus Christ? Did it come when thou was begging pardon and forgiveness at God's hand? Did it come when studying renovation and new obedience? And did it leave the heart in a thankful frame? Fear not, it is the joy of the Lord, a sound joy indeed.

Oh, but my joy was so short, so soon gone, that I greatly suspect it. Answer: It came to remove the causes of thy fear, and to prevent despair. It came to show thee that God is pacified, and at peace with thee. It came to give thee the seal and mark of God's Spirit. This work it did, and so it abode with thee, and left a delightful remembrance behind it. Though for a time it may vanish, or rather lie hid as seed under the clod, yet it will spring up again, "for light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart" (Ps. 97:11). Perhaps it will not spring up in this world so as never to vanish more, for alas, a believer, while on earth must wear changeable suits of apparel, and sometimes be clad with the garments of joy and praise, and by and by girded with sackcloth and sorrow. There is no perpetual holy day till the poor Christian comes home to heaven; there shall he have a constant joyfulness of heart.

My sorrow is turned into joy. My joys and comforts are restored, and yet I am at a great loss, not knowing what

my duty is. Answer: (1) Are thy comforts restored? Go to the priest, show thyself to the Lord, and bring thy thank offerings, and pay thy vows. Let thy acknowledgments be greater than ordinary. The favor thou hast received is extraordinary, and God will not be pleased with a slight acknowledgment. What greater privilege than to be moistened with these honeydews of joy? Therefore live thankfully in the midst of all.

Secondly, safely lay up and keep those cordials in a humble head. Oh, a humble heart is the fittest vessel to keep them, that they be not lost. Oh, how humbly should thou walk, who art cheered and carried in the arms of the Almighty, as on the wings of a great eagle! Let God's loving looks and smiles make thee reflect on thy own vileness. To be humble under God's mercies is the way to live long in the enjoyment of it. Spiritual comforts are not so easily obtained as to be idly wasted. Satan will watch to rob thee of thy evidences, and to deprive thee of thy comforts. If therefore, thou wouldest not have them soon removed, watch and be sober. Trust not thyself, but God with the preservation of them. Record in thy memory, all those comfortable words God spake to thy aching heart, "I remembered thy judgments of old, oh Lord, and have comforted myself."

Thirdly, increase and promote thy joys and comforts. Hear, read, and meditate on the Word. Study, apply, and enquire after the promises. Pray to God to keep thy peace

against all molestations, and frequent the table of the Lord. The Lord's Supper is an excellent and approved means to continue and confirm joy and comfort to make the waters of spiritual joy to grow and swell.

Fourthly, let thy comforts fence thee against sin. The time was, when thou felt nothing but disconsolate deadness, when thou wanted that comfort thou now hast apprehended. Do not abase God's love, and rob thyself of those tastes and tokens of God's mercies by thy willful sinning against Him

My obedience and righteousness is so weak and imperfect, that I know not what to call it, obedience or disobedience, righteousness or unrighteousness. Is it possible for such a lame and imperfect obedience to find acceptance with God? Answer: (1) Is it not thy intention in what thou doest to please and glorify God? Is it not the consideration of God's will, and the desire of God's glory, that primarily sway thee? If so, obey God in truth and sincerity, if not in perfection. Now sincerity is the seat of duty; it is a support to the soul in the greatest trials and a succor against the day of death. He that is sincere has a right to all the creatures, the comfort of all the Scriptures, the sanctification of all afflictions, the benefit of all mercies, the power of all ordinances, and the help of all the promises.

(2) Christ's perfect and complete righteousness is thine by imputation. He is thy surety (Rev. 19:18). He fulfilled

His duty, and underwent the penalty of the law. And as thy sin was made Christ's to expose Him to wrath, so is His righteousness made thine, to make thee a child of favour. Though thine inherent righteousness, the righteousness by which thou art sanctified be imperfect, yet thy imputed righteousness, that righteousness by which thou art justified, is perfect. Let all thy imperfections drive thee to Christ, for in His perfect robes thou shalt find acceptance.

I obey God with fear and trembling. Therefore, I fear my obedience proceeds not from love to God, but only from the fact that conscience compels and threatens me if I obey not. Answer: (1) The godly, especially after the first obtaining of grace, are not totally freed from the spirit of bondage. There still remains some fear of God's heavy wrath and displeasure. "My flesh trembleth for fear of Thee; I am afraid of Thy judgments" (Ps. 119:120). Fear of God's wrath, as well as love for His majesty, puts a godly soul to work.

(2) Dost thou not feel love to God sometimes puts life and heat into thy obedience? Art thou not sometimes resolved to obey, when thou hast no actual apprehensions of God's wrath? Yea, dost thou not for the transgressions of others sometimes find a pained heart and wet eyes? If so, surely thy obedience is not only out of convictions of conscience, but the propension of the new nature.

I am lovingly invited by the Lord of Hosts to a feast of

fat things, the most heavenly food ever, to feed upon Christ the true paschal Lamb in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. But alas, wretched creature that I am, I dare not appear at so holy a feast. Shall I be so bold with Obed Edom, as to approach to this sacred ark, and receive the same into my house? If the Bethshemites, in 1 Samuel 6, were so sharply punished for looking into the ark, how may I presume to receive the Lord of the ark Himself? I greatly suspect my propriety and right to that solemn ordinance. What claim can I lay to it? Answer: Every sanctified soul hath a double right, or ground, namely (1) Christ's death, and (2) the covenant of grace.

Therefore, for clearing thy title, I ask (1) Is the covenant law written in thy heart? "This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Jer 31:33).

Question: How can I discover that God's law is written in my heart? Answer: If the law of God be written in thy heart, then there is an inward conformity to the whole law. Thy heart will comply with the law; it will forbid what the law forbids and command what the law commands. If the law of God be written in thy heart, then there is a newness introduced. "Are old things done away and are all things become new?" Is thy mind enlightened? Is thy conscience purged and quickened? Do thy

affections run in a new channel? Which way does delight sway thee? Does it sway thee to obey the will of the flesh, or the will of God? Is softness wrought in thy heart, so that sin is soon felt and easily sorrowed for? This argues that the covenant law is written in thy heart.

Secondly, does the bitterness of sin, and the sweetness of Christ's love affect thy soul? Is this the language of thy heart? Oh, how foul, how cursed, how hateful is sin, that neither the cries of angels, nor the blood of beasts, nor the damnation of all created souls could wash away one sin! Nothing less than the blood of Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of the eternal Father can. Christ on the cross represents sin's horrid nature more lively than hell with all her torments. How dead were we in guilt? We were condemned by the law and devoid of hope when Christ undertook for us. Surely we were dead, stark dead, helplessly and hopelessly dead. Oh, sweet Redeemer, what love is like this of Thine? How enflaming, enlarging, and affecting is Thy love (2 Cor. 5:14)! Now does the bitterness of sin, and the sweetness of Christ's love affect thy soul? Then thou hast a propriety in Christ's death, and a clear right to His table.

(3) Art thou dead to sin, and the world, and alive to Christ? Many say they have an interest in Christ's death, in whose heart sin is still alive, but they are self-deceivers. For this end Christ died on the cross, that sin might die in our hearts. "Who His own self bare our sins in His

own body on the tree, that we being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness” (1 Pet. 2:24). Christ died to destroy our enemies, of which sin is the principal one. Now is thy sin dead in thy heart? Though thy corrupt nature sticks close to thee still, though thou hast thy daily failings and infirmities, yet canst thou say that thy inclinations to sin are dead, and thy delight in sin dead? Art thou daily conflicting against sin, so that the evil thou dost, is what thou wouldest not do? And hast thou resigned thyself freely and wholly to Christ including thy soul, thy body, thy estate, thy friends, and thy health to Christ? Are thy love, thy anger, thy joy, thy sorrow all devoted to Christ’s honour and service? Then thou hast a sufficient right to that solemn ordinance of the Lord’s Supper.

My profit and benefit by coming to the Lord’s table is small. It is scarcely, if at all discernible, and therefore I think it is as good to abstain and remain absent from the table for the future also. Answer: (1) They who are spiritual may use God’s ordinances carnally, and consequently unprofitably. Every gracious person is not always a worthy communicant. Sin is incident to the saints. Christian, didst thou examine thy heart impartially? Didst thou descend into the very bottom of it, to discover what is hid there? Didst thou in order to receive worthily, judge thyself before the Lord? Didst thou pass sentence against and condemn thyself as deserving rather to be tormented with scalding wrath, than relieved with refreshing mercy? Didst thou survey Christ’s sufferings,

and reflect on thy sins that procured them? Didst thou come to the Lord's table with an unfeigned resolution to forsake every known sin, especially those thou art most prone and inclined to, and to prefer God's will before thine own? Didst thou at the Lord's table employ thy thoughts in holy exclamations? Didst thou at that time resist all worldly thoughts, and say to them, Arise and depart, for here shall not be your rest? And after thou wast at the Lord's table, didst thou bless God for the opportunity thou enjoyed? Wast thou thankful for the honour thou receivedst at that time? And didst thou stand upon thy watch, shunning those occasions which formerly had led thee into sin? If these things were neglected, charge thy unprofitableness not upon the ordinance but thyself.

(2) The ordinance may not perhaps profit, till it be revived and quickened afterwards. Perhaps in the hours of temptations, the Spirit of God will revive a sense of what was done and felt upon the heart, or maybe in hearing, as in John 12:16, "These things understood not His disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things unto Him." So when a poor saint is ready to be routed by a temptation, some truth he formerly heard presently starts forth for his rescue. He remembers such a passage fell in such a sermon. Now, says he, I remember it, though then I saw not its usefulness, and therefore I will not do this wickedness

and sin against God. So in a necessitous time, I remember, saith the gracious soul, I took the Lord's Supper at such a time, and so was bound out from sin, and shall I now yield unto it? Thus thou shalt reap the profit of this precious ordinance later, in an hour of temptation, though thy profit for the present seem but small.

(3) Profit may be gathered, though not presently discerned. "And there was also a strife among them which of them should be accounted the greatest" (Luke 22:24). What! Were not these Christ's apostles? And yet you see what bitter fruit suddenly sprouts out. They fall to contention, which is a shameful work of the flesh. Was it not sad, to see the whole society and college of the apostles fall out at such a time? Christian, if thou communicate worthily, expect to feel corruption stir. This stirring argues thy profiting, for it stirs because it feels itself wounded. This stirring and activity of corruption (where it is bewailed and opposed) is a sure sign of its approaching death.

(4) Canst thou grieve that thou hast got no profit by the sacrament? If thou canst but grieve, that grief is profit. As in praying for strength against sin, the soul thinks no strength comes, whereas this is strength that it continues praying, and that sin does not cause it to give up praying. So waiting for profit is profit.

Ah, but I am an unworthy wretch. Alas! What an impure sty, what a cabin of filth I am! How unworthy my home

is for such a guest to come into! Is there any beauty in me to attract His love, any comeliness to ravish Him unto me? None at all: Miriam was not more leprous, nor a leopard more spotty than I am. What am I, that such a visit should be given me? If John the Baptist sanctified men from his mother's womb, but reputed himself unworthy to loose the latchet of Christ's shoes, how shall I, a miserable sinner, dare to receive so high a mystery? Oh, my unworthiness raises fears and doubts, so that I cannot come with confidence, nor pray with assurance! Answer: (1) The covenant of grace and promises of mercy are the proper right of such only as are unworthy. "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations" (Matt. 9:13; Ezek. 36:3 1). Unworthiness in respect of merit is no hindrance, but on the other hand, the sense of this unworthiness is a duty. We come to receive mercy, and he that comes to receive mercy must not be a retainer of merit. Why else is there a fulness in Christ, to correct all defects in us? I never heard of anyone admitted for his worthiness, or rejected for want of it.

(2) Though thou be unworthy yet Christ is worthy, all worthy; He hath worth enough. And the worthiness of Christ is reckoned thine, for all purposes. "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood" (Rev. 5:9). Jesus Christ is worthy to open the

book, to appear in court for thee, so that thy deliverance should be wrought: from the curse and rigor of the law, from the sting and power of death, from the strength and poison of sin, and from the cruelty, chains, and pains of hell.

With this worthiness of Christ, thou mayest stop all mouths. I am guilty, but the Lamb is worthy. I have deserved misery, but He hath deserved glory. And He is mine. His wisdom is mine, His righteousness mine, His redemption mine, His worthiness mine. He was clothed with a curse, that all that believe in Him might be covered with His worthiness. Therefore I will say with the centurion, "I am not worthy, that Thou shouldst enter under my roof, neither think I myself worthy to come unto Thee, only say the word, and my soul shall be healed."

If heaven should open itself to receive thee, wouldest thou stay below with sin and misery, and say thou art unworthy to strive to enter in? Behold here in the sacrament, Paradise is as it were laid open again to thee, and no cherubim stands against thee! Shall this pretence of unworthiness keep thee from the tree of life?

Had I nothing but this common unworthiness I were happy, but my soul is bound and burdened with a multitude, with heaps of sin. "Innumerable evils have compassed me about, mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head: therefore my heart faileth me" (Ps.

40:12). If the Apostle Peter said to Christ, “Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man,” how may I, who am so great a sinner, presume to join myself unto Him? How dare I receive Him, nay, touch Him? Answer: (1) If all who sin were excluded, the feast were at an end, “for there is not a just man upon earth, that doth good and sinneth not.”

(2) The greatness of sin is a motive with God to pardon it. “And the Lord said, I will not again curse the ground anymore for man’s sake; for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite anymore everything living, as I have done” (Gen. 8:21). Now reason would rather argue thus: the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth, therefore God will curse the ground and destroy the world. Oh, but the greatness of sin is a motive with God to pardon it. “For Thy Name’s sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity: for it is great” (Ps. 25:11).

(3) Is thy sin greater than the almighty mercy of God? Is thy sin greater than the all-sufficient satisfaction and all-satisfying death of Christ? Is Christ a Mediator for smaller sins only, and not for the greatest? Is He a Physician to cure those only that are head-sick, and not those also that are heart-sick? Surely thy sins are neither more nor greater than God is able to pardon.

Are thy sins against the law and light of nature? Oh, such are monstrous and grievous sins, and therefore thou art

deservedly whipped with Satan's scourgings. Yet remember, thy sin is not unto death. It is not unpardonable; it is no obstinate rejection of Christ after conviction, nor voluntary apostasy. Jonah's case is thine. "Then I said, I am cast out of Thy sight; yet I will look again toward Thy holy temple" (Jon. 2:4).

Are thy sins against the law of liberty and against the Word and doctrine of God, which freely reproves sin in all, without respect of persons? This is indeed very grievous. I would not extenuate or diminish the same. Yet, is not Christ's satisfaction superabundant, full and all-sufficient? Is not God well pleased with His Son, and with such as believe in Him as Mediator? Are not gospel promises large? Are they not free as well as large? Is not the mercy of God unlimited? Have we not examples of those finding mercy, who sinned against the counsels and reproofs of God's Word?

Are thy sins against Christ? Hast thou undervalued Christ, and neglected the means of salvation? Oh, this sin is greater than the sins of the Sodomites! But yet, art thou humbled and disquieted for this? Is it the grief and burden of thy soul? Art thou almost swallowed up of sorrow? Then know that there is comfort in the very bosom of thy sorrow. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matt. 5:4). If thou be self-condemned, the gospel will acquit thee. If a gospel mourner,

the Spirit of God will comfort thee, for He is the comforter of Zion's mourners, and the exalter of humble souls. If thou still live in those sins for the washing away of which Christ shed His blood, thou sinnest if thou come to the table of the Lord. But if thou art troubled that thou art so vile a sinner, and art ashamed of thy sins, and can take no pleasure in them, but art willing to mingle the tears of godly sorrow with thy Saviour's blood, then thou wilt be a welcome guest at the Lord's table. Every willing penitent is a fit communicant

Ah (saith the doubting Christian), I fear I was never yet humbled enough for sin. Were my heart broken enough, had I felt such heart-breaking and rock-renting tempests in my bosom as some have done, then I might hope to be bound up. Had I been laid low enough, then I might hope to be exalted. But would you have such a hard, flinty-hearted wretch as I, think to find mercy? Alas, I find not a broken heart, but a barren hard heart, a proud stiff neck. Oh, that I were but once weary, and heavy laden enough! Answer: What I speak shall be in no wise to diminish grief and humbleness of heart to sin, but to quiet the troubled soul that thinks it lacks a broken and humbled heart, that groans under the hardness of its heart. Though it be really humbled, yet it cannot have a good thought of itself.

The measure of humiliation is not essential to bringing a

man into the state of grace. Though God calleth everywhere for humiliation and brokenness of heart for sin, yet He hath no where set a measure for it, saying, whosoever is not humbled to this or that degree shall not be saved.

(2) Dost thou not feel the same effects wrought by thee, as are wrought by the most broken-hearted and mourning saints? Some mourn and sorrow much, but hast thou not a resolvedness to please God as well as they? Hast thou not a fearfulness to sin? Hast thou not a sense of thy misery, and a desire of grace? Hast thou not a purpose to change thy course and conversation, and to walk in newness of life as well as they?

Judge of thy brokenness of heart not so much from thy sensitive sorrow and grief for sin, as from thy detestation and hatred of sin, and a well-advised condemning of it, and resolving against it. Sensitive sorrow may be abated many ways. Sometimes God's Spirit withdraws to show us that He is the Giver of it, and to keep us depending upon Him, and asking it from Him. Sometimes it is abated by the encroachment of worldly delights; both hinder this sensitive sorrow, though the latter more than the former. Sometimes it proceeds from want of meditating on Christ and sin, and sometimes from the wasting of the spirits. Yes, God sees not so much sorrow needful to some as to others, nor at one time as another. It is not likely that Mary Magdalene always wept so much, as at

her first conversion. Therefore, judge not of thy contritions and godly sorrow for sin by the degrees of sensible trouble and affliction, much less by thy tears and great lamentations, for some command tears almost for everything.

Judge of thy contrition and godly sorrow by the real effects of it, which are hatred of sin, and a fixed purpose and resolution against sin for the future. Perhaps thou dost not feel in thy heart that stirring grief and violent renting for that horrible filth of thy sinful heart, and those many rebellions of thy former wicked life, which thou heartily desirest. Yet, if thou lookest upon what thou hast done amiss with abhorrence and detestation of the thing, and heartily wishest thou had not done it, if thou censure thyself severely for it, and thereupon resolve not to do the like again, thou art by no means to cast away thy confidence, or to be discomforted, as though thou were not truly converted. Thou mayest rest assured hereupon, that thou hast an heart rightly broken for sin.

(3) Thou mayest have godly sorrow for sin, and not know it. If thou canst say thou lovest God, and wouldest obey Him universally, and that thou dost value and prize Christ and His salvation above all the world, question not thy conversion, question not thy contrition and sorrow for sin, for that is the use of godly sorrow. If thy sorrow flow from hatred of sin, and be followed with such a high-prizing of Christ, with a true love to God, and fear

to offend Him, it is sound and thou art humbled enough.

I am sore troubled about shedding of tears. I seldom can pour forth tears for my sins, and when I do I fear they are unsound. Answer: (1) Seriously consider what abundant cause thou hast to weep, with David to water thy couch with thy tears (Ps. 6:6), and with Peter to weep bitterly (Matt. 26). What, oh man! Canst thou not wring a few drops from thy eyes for thy sins, when a stream of blood issued from the side and heart of Christ and not for any sin of His own, but for thine? Rivers of tears flowed from David's eyes, for the transgressions of others (Ps. 119:136). Wilt thou weep for a broken arm, and not for sin, that gave a deadly stab and wound to thy soul?

(2) It is a comfort and a matter of joy to have the heart so broken or sin as to weep (Ps. 126:5; Rev. 21:4). Only observe two things. (a) Look to the motive of thy tears. What cares God for a little salt water, a few tears? We are to weep not merely because of judgments felt or feared, but because we have wronged God's patience, and been so evil to Him who hath been so good to us. We have been so unkind to a faithful friend, so ungrateful to a constant benefactor. "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in Thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son" (Luke 15:21). Not father, I have spent my portion, and am reduced to great straits, but "I have sinned against Thee." (b) Observe the end and effect of thy tears. Do they leave thee more watchful against sin? Do

they make thy life more fruitful in good works? Do they make thy conscience more tender? If not, what are they but Esau's tears (Gen. 27:34)), Saul's tears (1 Sam. 24:16), or the hypocrite's tears (Mal. 2:13)? Such tears are only the handsel to perpetual weeping.

(3) As sometimes there is great joy in the heart, when scarcely a smile on the countenance, so there may be excessive sorrow in the heart, when scarcely a tear in the eye. This is indeed rare and not ordinary, yet I dare not exclude from heaven some natural, dry, hard tempers. Repenting work is mostly inlaid. It is compunction of heart that best discovers repentance. You never read that the repenting thief wept, no more than the reviling thief, yet, there was compunction of heart.

(4) Though sometimes thou hast not tears to pour forth for thy sins, yet thou hast always the fountain of godly sorrow in thy heart. A rooted desire to mourn for sin, and the Spirit of God helps thee in prayer to intercede with groans that cannot be expressed (Rom. 8:26). Well, at such a time, the Lord hears the voice of those sighs and groans, as well as the voice of weeping at other times.

I have some desires of grace, but alas, I fear they are not sparks fallen from heaven, but some false and strange fire! I have often read and heard that a true desire of grace is grace, at least in God's acceptance. It argues a saving and comfortable estate because the promise of blessedness is annexed by Christ to the desire of grace

(Matt. 5:6). Yet I fear my desires of grace are not real, but feigned desires; what comfort then can I take in them? Answer: (1) God fully perceives sincerity in thy desires and a direct tendency towards spirituality, though thou perceivedst it not. Thy happiness consists not in thy knowledge, but in God's knowledge of thy sincerity. As a child may know its dependence on its father, yet it is happy because the father knows his relation unto it.

Art thou not afraid, lest thy desires are carnal and selfish? Is not this the language of thy heart? Alas, I fear it is rather glory than grace, I fear it is rather happiness than holiness I desire. Were there no hell to be dreaded, I fear I should have little stomach to desire holiness for its native beauty and excellency. And dost thou not humble thyself for the selfishness and carnality of thy desires? This is a hopeful sign (Prov. 28:13). This self-suspecting is a great preservative from perdition, whereas self-confidence is a sad prognostic of apostasy.

(3) Dost thou not desire Christ with grace, above all riches and worldly conveniences? The prophet, speaking of earthly souls, says, "They sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes" (Amos 2:6). They sold the favours of God, the joys of heaven, peace of conscience, and communion with the spirit, for worldly trifles. Yea, they sell their Saviour for nought, and so that the devil may be no loser, they throw in their own souls at the bargain. They would rather have a little gold and

silver than Christ and all His unsearchable riches. But to thee, Christ is the only pearl of great price, the principal object of thy desires. Wouldst thou not rather be holy than honourable, a member of Christ than the emperor of the world, or a companion of the saints than a companion of kings? This argues thy desires to be right.

(4) Are thy desires industrious? “The desire of the slothful killeth him, for his hands refuse to labour.” His desires are nourished in sloth; they live not in endeavours. Now, dost thou content thyself with a heartless, cold wish, or dost thou labour painfully, pray fervently, receive the Lord’s Supper frequently and work out thy salvation diligently? This justifies thy desires to be heaven-born. There is no rock (saith one) more sure than this truth of God that the heart that complaineth of the lack of grace desireth above all things the supply of that want, and useth all holy means for the procurement of that supply, and therefore cannot be destitute of saving grace.

(5) Are thy desires of a constant and fixed nature? Does one good wish overtake another (Job 6:6,8; Ps. 27:4)? Are thy desires of grace like waters that never fail, living not dying desires? Then know they spring from an everlasting root and are fed by the overflowing fountain of God’s Spirit.

I fear I have none of the Spirit of God. I have no sensible feeling of His testimony and operations. Answer: Dost thou not cover injustice with a show of humility? Hast

thou not yearnings after Christ and after communion with Christ? Are not these yearnings the workings of God's Spirit? Thou lovest comfort and confirmations for lack of observing what thou hast. Thou observest the sproutings and motions of corruption in thy heart, and art cast down. Observe also the motions of the Spirit, and give God thanks and praise. The smallest discernible workings of the Spirit are not to be prized slightly.

I cannot attain to that measure of grace and holiness I see in other men. I think some carnal men do more resemble me than I do the saints, either those saints now living, or those recorded in Scripture. Oh, what glowing affections, what burning love, what patience, what diligence, and what hope we read of David, Paul, etc! Answer: (1) Compare not thyself with saints, unless it be to quicken thy endeavours. Foment hopes of attaining to what they received. Alas! There was in them, even the best of them, enough to humble them. Oh how defective were their attainments, if compared with the rule? How far were their graces from perfection? Let the consideration of their high attainments draw thee out to embrace Christ's righteousness, but let it not discourage or draw thee to despondency.

(2) Thou hast the same foundation of comfort with the most eminent saints. If thou enjoy not that sensible support and that mighty measure of the Spirit they enjoyed, yet thou hast the same Christ that David, Paul, etc. had:

a full Christ to satisfy all thy indigency and necessity. Christ is as careful of His weakest members as He is of the strong. Tell my disciples and Peter (Peter, who through weakness had denied Christ) that I go before them into Galilee, there shall they see Me (Mark 16:7). There is a promise of strength made to the feeble, “In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them” (Zech. 12:8).

Some have the happiness of a strong memory. Oh those precious divine truths which are stored up in their memory. But alas, I am attended with a miserable frailty in my memory! How little do I remember of the truths I read and hear! How few do I remember of the answers of prayer I have received! Answer: (1) Dost thou remember what thou art able? It is one thing to have the memory healed by ability, another thing to have the memory sanctified by grace. It may be thy memory is not healed by ability, but is it sanctified by grace? Dost thou remember what thou canst, so as to practice it? Indeed, if sloth and sleeping, if careless and inattentive hearing, if worldly thoughts be the cause of thy forgetfulness, thou art justly to be reproved. Sleepy heads need not marvel they remember so little.

Secondly, thou that hast a shallow memory, hast thou an affected heart? “And they said one to another, did not our

hearts burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?” (Luke 24:32). Was it thus with you, while God was speaking to you in the ministry of the Word? Then know that God esteems a Christian more by his heart than by his head. A tender heart is better than a strong memory. What avails a barren, brain knowledge of God? What avails a dry remembrance of heavenly things? A good Christian is made up more of affections than of notion.

Thirdly, go daily to God with thy memory, and say, “Lord, here is my memory, let it be no longer a receptacle of vain and idle things, much less of hellish anger and revenge. Let it recall those divine truths I meet with in Thy Word. Write on it, O Lord, by the finger of Thy blessed Spirit, the great things of Thy law and the great mystery of man’s redemption.”

Though I am not an utter stranger to the duties of religion and righteousness, yet I am afraid lest custom and ordinariness be the spring-head of all my duties. Answer: Art thou not as much, or more disquieted and troubled for thy heedless and careless performance of duty, as for thy omitting the set season of duty? Yea, when thou hast performed duty, with as much care and circumspection as possible, yet, art thou sorry when thou casts an eye of reflection back upon it, and discovers the lameness and imperfection of it? Then it is not wholly and only custom and ordinariness that is the spring-head of thy duties.

Custom and commonness is not discerned, nor daily mourned for, when the duty is already past. Instead thou art often putting the question to thy own heart, oh my soul, why dost thou observe this or that duty? Is it only custom, because others do so, or is it thou thyself that hast wanted to do so? Is it conscience, because God has commanded it? Art thou afraid, oh Christian, lest custom devour all? Art thou afraid, lest custom be the principle and spring-head of thy duties? Surely, it is not custom but conscience that stirs up fears and complaints about custom.

I have always suspected my state, but now some that are truly godly, that are persons of discretion and understanding in spiritual things, suspect it also. Answer: (1) Perhaps it is but the rash and unadvised judgment of one or two private Christians, and not the judgment of the godly. It is sad to be reputed an hypocrite by the whole neighbourhood. Yet they are not infallible judges. God alone, who keeps the keys and shuts and opens the windows of the heart, can tell infallibly what is in the heart. Some are too censorious, and from this or that particular infirmity presently conclude that the heart is rotten. "But who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up, for God is able to make him stand" (Rom. 14:4). Is not thy condemnation by others a just and fitting repayment of thy condemning others?

Secondly, as hypocrites have passed for real saints among men, (witness Judas, Demas, Simon Magus, etc.), so have honest and upright souls been counted dissemblers by those that feared God (witness Job in Job 4:6-7; and Paul, in Acts 9:26).

Thirdly, God acquits those that are upright and sincere; and if God acquit thee, what does man's condemnation mean? "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment" (1 Cor. 4:3). "Behold my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high" (Job 16:19). Not only Job's foes, but his friends, yes, his godly friends witnessed against him, and condemned him. But he accounted it enough that he had God's testimony and approbation. Amidst all their misconstructions he gloried in this, that God owned him and bear witness to his integrity.

Alas, I cannot pray; I am in such an ill temper. I would pray, but I lack expressions, and have no such abilities as others have. Answer: (1) God eyes more the spirit of prayer than the gift of prayer. If thou hast not the gift of prayer, hast thou the spirit of prayer? The spirit of prayer and the spirit of adoption go together. Canst thou sigh and groan before God? A hearty and heavy sigh from a child will move the Father's heart more than all the canting language of a vagrant beggar (Ps. 38:9; Rom. 8:26; Ps. 10:17). Dost thou find an elevation of heart to God? Doth thy soul ascend and approach to God? This is heart-

prayer, and heart-prayer is prevailing prayer. Heart-prayer is heard further than mouth-prayer (Ex. 14:15). Hannah prayed in heart. Only her lips moved, yet, it is called petition (1 Sam. 1:13). Canst thou desire to pray? That very desire is a prayer.

(2) The best saints have sometimes been in such a condition, that they could not pray. Was it not thus with Hezekiah (Is. 38:14), and Asaph (Ps. 77:4; 42:4)? There was no expressing, but a pouring out of the soul. It is not gifts but grace that commends prayer. Having affectionate expressions is more taking with man. Oh, but God is not as man is. It is the inward invisible power of prayer that prevails with God (Hos. 12:3-4). Plain-hearted Jacob had power with God; if thou canst not pray, yet weep as Jacob did. Thou canst say as Jacob did in Genesis 32:26, "Lord, bless me. I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me." Thou canst say as the publican, "God be merciful to me a Sinner" (Luke 18:13).

My prayers are full of defects. Surely God will never accept such weak, wandering, dead, spiritless, imperfect services as my prayers are. Answer: (1) It does not follow that thy prayers are dead and spiritless because they are weak. God will not despise thy prayers even if they be sinful, as long as they are not formal, even though they be short, as long as they are not customary; even though they are not elaborate, as long as they are not perfunctory; even if they lack commendable utterance, as

long as they are in sincerity of heart; even though thy gift be low, as long as the spirit is present.

Secondly, we ought to give all attention to the work of prayer, to the matter of our prayer, to our expressions in prayer, and to our' dispositions and affections in prayer as much as possible. Yet notwithstanding our greatest attention, distractions will arise. Oh, but these distractions that come from objects, and are unwillingly entertained, do not nullify or evacuate our prayers. Indeed such as come from negligence, and are permitted with allowance, threaten to turn prayer into sin. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Ps. 66:18). Wandering in prayer is an iniquity, and if we regard it not, it will spoil our prayers Therefore, we must say as Amnon, "Put now this woman out from me, and bolt the door after her" (2 Sam. 13:17). So, Lord, have these distractions and temptations taken away from me, and bolt the door after them Thirdly, Christ perfumes the prayers of His servants with the incense of His merits. Whatever defect is in thy prayers, yet no defect is in Christ's merits. The angel of the covenant stands with the golden censer at the altar, ready to perfume thy sacrifices. Though thy prayers, as they come from thee, are an unsavory breath in the nostrils of God, yet there is a Mediator to perfume them. They do not go immediately to God, but pass through a Mediator's hand into God's hands (Rev. 8:3-4). While the saints are praying on earth, Christ is interceding in heaven. His intercession puts a value upon their

prayers, clothing them with acceptance, when their prayers are for things agreeable to His will, and accompanied with faith and endeavours to pray better.

What sorrow is like my sorrow! I indeed pray, but have no more liveliness and enlargement in prayer than a dead soul! Never was any heart harder than mine. Oh how shut up, how narrow, how straightened is my soul! My dullness and dead-heartedness is such that I am afraid to pray. Answer: (1) Suppose thou find no comfort at all in prayer, nor in thyself, when thy heart is so locked up. Yet there is still comfort in Christ. Oh Christian! Never ground thy comfort on thy duties, but lay up all thy comfort in Christ, for there it will be safe. Study Christ's office and work, and this will be a rejoicing to thee.

(2) Art thou at rest while thus straightened? Dost thou not desire to give God quickened devotion, warm prayer, and working affections? If so, then know that thy heart is an enlarged heart, enlarged in desires after enlargement.

(3) Do not cease to pray because thou dost apprehend thyself to be dull. The best way to fit ourselves for prayer is to fall presently to prayer. By setting ourselves upon the work, we shall gather fitness, though we were unfit at the first. We have never more need to pray than when we are most indisposed, for then we are often exposed to temptation, apt to be overcome and fit for nothing. Yea, dullness is driven away by prayer and earnest contention.

God's people have often experienced that they entered upon their work with much indisposition and listlessness to prayer. Yet being resolved to perform the duty, despite the present dullness of their spirits, they have, in the progress of the work, been more enlarged and raised in their spirits than at other times. They have been taken up seven degrees nearer unto the third heaven, than at such times, when at the beginning of the exercise they found a fresh and lively edge upon their hearts to pray. And let me add, frequency and preparation for duty will bring enlarged affections.

(4) All dullness doth not hinder the success of prayer, but only that which is allowed, delighted in, or not striven against. Christian, if thou spare no labor to get thy heart upon the wing, and pray as well as thou canst, thy prayer shall be accepted.

I have prayed against corruption, and I have prayed against temptation, and yet I think it is increased since I fell to praying against it. Alas! I see no advantage made by my prayers. With what comfort then can I proceed in the duty? Answer: Thy corruption is not increased in power, but only in activeness. It is not stronger, but only more stirring. And why? Only because Satan hath edged it. He sees that sin will wither away, that prayer will bring a consumption and languishing death upon sin, and therefore he stirs himself. When a Christian sets himself

in good earnest to pray down Satan's dominion and kingdom, then he leaps out. He comes with enraged might, ready to tear the soul out of its faith, and to scare it from prayer. But see that thou pray on, be of good courage, hath not God commanded thee, "Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed, for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (Josh. 1:9)? It is better to anger Satan than to grieve the Spirit of God. If thou continue praying, sin will die by degrees. St. Paul prayed three times before he could get any answer.

I am perplexed, and know not how often to pray. Daniel prayed thrice, and David seven times a day, but this is too often for my calling. Yet praying less will not serve my heart. Answer: Pray every day at least twice, and as often beside as conveniency gives room and liberty "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess 5 17), doth not mean to pray only and to do nothing else all day long, or all night long Such sense of the phrase is very preposterous But the command is to continually keep up a preparedness and disposition of heart for prayer, and to be frequent in this duty. The daily sacrifice under the law was to be offered twice, morning and evening every day (Ex. 29:39-40) Nehemiah prayed daily before God day and night, i e morning and evening (Neh 1 6) So did Paul (1 Thess 3 10), and David (PS 92 1-2) Surely this is the least thou can do In the morning beg the blessings of the day, and in the evening return thanks for them.

God accepts prayers more for their being sprinkled with faith and repentance than because of their number. It is all one with the Lord, to save by many or by few. Gideon's diminished army tells us that "all" is not in the multitude. And the Pharisees' many prayers, and alms and fasts show that all is not in number. I would not ensnare any man's conscience. To resolve to keep thyself to such an exact number of prayers will make thy way grievous. Only see that daily, and as often as thou can, thou be taken up in the exercise of this excellent duty.

I have fallen from my former steadfastness and lost what I formerly gained in spirituals. Once I stood firm in my own thoughts, but now I see that my righteousness is much like Ephraim's righteousness: "for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it passeth away" (Hos. 6:4). Once I could have mourned, and sighed, and wept for sin. Once I could have tasted the power of ordinances, and conversed with God in ordinances, but now I may cry out that my heart is wretchedly removed from that sanctified frame. Answer: (1) It is no new thing for saints to falsely accuse, and uncharitably to censure themselves.

(2) In this thy unsettledness, I see that thy heart is fixed. Answer me only this one question, How dost thou come to sorrow for thy fickleness and inconstancy? Does not this sorrow evidence that it is the full and fixed resolution of thy soul, to lament every discerned sin? If a mournful

frame were not fixed in thy heart, wouldst thou thus mourn for thy unfixedness?

(3) Every kind of wavering is not inconsistent with the truth of grace. Wavering is two-fold: (1) Some are wavering in the choice of the object of their affections. This inconstancy is peculiar to the wicked. They have a divided heart: a heart for God, and a heart for sin. They hang between God and Baal, between God and the world, as Solomon is painted hanging between heaven and hell. (2) Some are wavering in the pursuance of the object of happiness, and so the godly themselves may be leavened with instability. Hence, the apostle writes in 2 Peter 3:17-18, “Beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

(4) The most stable spirit is sometimes unfixed. Cedars and oaks are sometimes shaken with violent blasts of wind. No man is so spiritual as never to be indisposed for the service of God. Was not the Spouse indisposed (Cant. 5:2)? Does not David cry to God for enlargement? “I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart” (Ps. 119:32). This shows at least that he was sensible of inward straightness. Yea, this is a common lot. A Christian may be alive, though not lively. A Christian may be indisposed, yet not stark dead.

(5) Thou dost complain (dejected soul) it was once better with thee than now; if so, be of good comfort, those golden glorious days may return. In the meanwhile, there is a particular promise for thee. "Oh Israel, return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity" (Hos. 14:1). Notice: the Lord thy God even after all this. And "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for Mine anger is turned away from him" (Hos. 14:4). Thy putrid sores and pestilent ulcers shall not fester. God will heal thy backsliding. "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings" (Jer. 3:22). Although backsliders, yet thou art children still. Therefore arise, embrace the Lord's counsel and return.

Alas! My sin abounds beyond mercy. I have sinned against the Holy Ghost and the Scriptures say expressly that this sin shall never be forgiven (Matt. 12:31-32). Answer: (1) Is it so, poor soul? Hast thou indeed sinned this unpardonable sin? Why fearest thou that this is thy wickedness? Does the nature of this sin show thee any such thing? Is not the sin against the Holy Ghost a voluntary, willful, resolved, and malicious hating of God after conviction? "But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation. Because they said, he hath an unclean spirit" (Mark 3:29-30). Is it thus with thee? Why then art thou afraid? Fearlessness and hardness of heart are ordinary signs of this sin. He who is guilty of it hath no trouble, no reflection, no trembling. There is a seal set upon the

mouth of the grave.

Secondly, art thou not so far from despising and blaspheming God that thou dost dearly love Him, and earnestly long after Him? Art thou not so far from hating and persecuting Him in His saints, that thou dost love them, and couldst wish to follow their example? Surely these are not marks of this sin

Could I but be assured of God's love to me, or of my love to Him, my troubled heart would take courage. But alas! I not only lack assurance, but I fear I can never attain assurance. My heart is so filled with guile, and falsehood, and hypocrisy that I cannot be assured there is any grace there. And if I should attain this assurance, I am greatly afraid lest I should abuse it to wantonness. Answer: Be not discouraged, gracious soul, we know (and so doth every holy, humble Christian) that there is an unknown world of wickedness, unbelief, earthly-mindedness, etc., in our base hearts. Yet, first, *A posse ad esse non valet consequentia*. A possibility of being deceived, infers not that thou shall actually be deceived.

Secondly, the heart is naturally false, but by grace it is made sincere. It is made like a dove without gall, and without guile (Ps. 32:2). Though the relics of hypocrisy be in thee, yet it reigns not.

Thirdly, that assurance is attainable, thou wilt find proved in my second treatise.

Fourthly, some abuse their confidence to wantonness. Oh, but that confidence of theirs is not an holy persuasion of God's Spirit, but a false, groundless, and devilish delusion. Thy fear of abusing it shows that thou wilt not abuse it. Shall not the godly strive for assurance, because the ungodly make their presumption the nursing mother to looseness? No truths are so sweet and spiritual that they cannot be turned into wantonness, even that of free and full justification by grace. Manna itself may be abused, and so corrupted with worms. (5) Assurance is maintained by holy fear, how then can it be the parent of pride, security, or looseness (Ps. 25:14)? Oh, it is carefulness that begets assurance, how then can assurance beget carelessness?

I am an ancient professor, an old Mnason; yet I lack assurance. I have some glimmerings of a dark hope, but alas, I am always doubting and questioning God's love, and suspecting my former profession! Answer: Thy condition is to be pitied, for thou dost lack the assurance of thy sanctification, the assurance of thine election, and the assurance of God's love. To lack the assurance of God's love is as sad and uncomfortable case to the godly soul, for God's smiles are precious, His frowns are deadly, and His displeasure very heavy. This being thy case, thou hast cause to be afflicted, yet not to be utterly discouraged. It is the usual lot of the godly. David, a man according to God's own heart, complains of his broken bones.

Consider, first, God intends to teach thee how to comfort others in the same distress, by thy experience. This is the end of the cross. This is the end of thy affliction. “And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation” (2 Cor. 1:6). Alas! We are unsympathetic and want a fellow-feeling of the desertions and miseries of others. But God afflicts His children that they may know how to succour others under affliction. God afflicts thee that thou mayest know how to revive and raise others that hang down the head and are heavy-hearted. By discovering to them thy doubts and fears and those sovereign helps in the ministry of the Word, thou canst help others. How the Lord turned thy troubles to the welfare and peace of thy soul and turned thy dark and sorrowful midnight into a bright and joyful morning! It requires great art and skill in a man to remedy the sore of another if he himself has not experienced the same pain. So now God makes thee sore, that hereafter He may make thee serviceable to others. Therefore sit down satisfied.

Secondly, if thou lack assurance, resolve to esteem it and to cherish it, if God shall give it count it merchandise better than the merchandise of silver and its price far above rubies. Let God’s denial irritate, provoke and increase thy desires after it. Pray and pray again. Be restless and more desirous than ever. Yet avoid murmuring

and impatience. Rest contented with thy present state, yet pray mightily for a more comfortable state. “God loves to hear thy voice” (Cant. 2:14). The harder thou dost pray for this jewel, the tighter wilt thou hold it when once thou hast gotten it (Cant. 3:4).

Thirdly, search thy heart, and see whether some known sin lies there unlamented and unreformed, and so robs thee of the comfortable knowledge of God’s love and favor to thee. “And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption” (Eph. 4:30). Sin grieves God’s Spirit, and what grieves the Spirit of God will be grief of heart to thee. Sin will raise a very hell of horror in thy conscience. As a worm it will gnaw thy inward comforts, as an east wind it will blast thy tender buds, as vapors it will make an earthquake, a heart-quake within thee. If thy persuasions of thy gracious estate stand with any known sin, they are presumption, for a tender conscience feels a burden sometimes of an idle action. An idle word will break the power of confidence in prayer, much more a gross and scandalous sin. Did not David’s adultery take away the joy of God’s salvation?

Fourthly, the lukewarm performance of public or secret duties will waste and kill assurance. “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure” (2 Pet. 1:10). Nothing less than diligence, all diligence, will preserve assurance. Nothing hurts a

Christian so much as a careless and lukewarm performance of duties. "Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken, even that which he seemeth to have" (Luke 8:18). It is as if he had said, as you deal with God so will God deal with you. If you use the means of grace carefully, diligently, and conscientiously, you shall increase your stock, you shall be having, and having, and having, till you come to a glorious estate in all spiritual riches in knowledge, love, humility, heavenly-mindedness, and all manner of graces. But if you do the work of the Lord negligently, you shall wither, and your grace shall suffer loss. Your stock shall be diminished, your hearts little affected and enflamed with the love of God. Stand little in awe of God, and you will have little hope and confidence in God. Yea, this spiritual sloth will strike conscience with quaking and remorse, when awakened (Isaiah 64:6).

Warm and fervent desires are as oil to the lamp of assurance, as fuel to the fire, and when this fuel is withdrawn, no wonder the fire be ready to go out. Oh, how frozen and earthly are thy prayers! How heartless are thy meditations! How cursory and customary is thy reading! How ordinary thy hearing of the Word, and thy singing seldom with understanding. And is not this that wastes and kills thy assurance?

Fifthly, hate the sin that plots thee so much mischief. Detest thy iniquity that interrupts thy comfort, and as a black, thick, dark cloud, hinders God from looking with such comfort upon thy soul. Satan hindered Paul from going to Thessalonica. "Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us" (1 Thess. 2:18). So God would come to you, but that sin hinders Him. Sin is the adulteress that lies between thee and thy husband. Oh, the bitterness of sin, that keeps thee from the sweet feast of assurance. Oh, lie low and humble before God, because of sin. Lie like Lazarus at God's gates with sores, and sighs, and sorrows.

Sixthly, if thou lackest assurance, make much of affiance, and trust God still. It is a piece of purest obedience to trust God when thou dost feel no comfort. It is an ascribing all to God. It puts the greatest abasement on man, and the greatest advancement on God (Rom. 4:20). It is thy duty to pray to God. It is thy duty to obey God, though God should never give thee one moment's comfort in this world. God is not obliged nor indebted to His creatures. "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the Name of the Lord, and stay upon his God" (Isa. 50:10). This is faith indeed. Assurance is the life of sense and feeling; but it is affiance, or staying upon God even in the dark, that is truly the life of faith. If therefore thou canst not fly towards heaven with the wings of assurance, walk thither

on the legs of faith.

I find a woeful abatement in my affections. My sorrow for sin is decayed, and my fervour in prayer decayed. Answer: Every abatement in affections is not a declining in grace. Once thou prayed more but now thou watchest more. Once thy grief for sin was affectionately more, but now thy hatred of sin is more inveterate, thy judgment more settled, and thy will more resolved against it.

I fear I am under Satan's tyrannical power and dominion still. I fear he is my prince and ruler still, and that I am a friend to him, though he is neither a friend to God nor man. Answer: (1) Dost thou yet lie in a condition of sin, fast clasped in and pinioned with thy sins? If thou art a willing sinner, thou art indeed a child of the devil. "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother" (1 John 3:10). Oh, but if thou hast taken an everlasting farewell and eternally shaken hands goodbye with every sin, if there be no composition or compromising betwixt thee and Satan, then it is different with you. If thou dost heartily renounce the devil's dominion, and art willing, Out of consideration of Christ's excellency and sweetness of His government, to deliver up all soul and body to Him, then the power of sin is broken. Canst thou groan, and complain, and grieve, and sorrow for the loathsomeness of thy dungeon? Art thou weary of thy natural condition?

Oh, then no tongue can express, no heart can conceive thy happiness.

(2) Seeing we are born vassals to hell, if thou wouldst know under whose empire and dominion thou art, answer me a few questions. Dost thou find thy blind eyes cured and enlightened? Is Satan unkinged and dethroned and Christ received and crowned? Once thou hadst a good opinion, a strong conceit of thyself, but now it is otherwise; now Jesus Christ the conqueror brings new laws, and is both a Prince and a Saviour unto thee.

(3) Dost thou rejoice when Christ is a conqueror in thy soul, or in the world? Wouldst thou rather fall into an affliction, than into a sin and temptation? Doth thy heart leap within thee when thou hearest that Satan is ejected out of such a man's heart, that strangers are become Israelites, and persecutors are now proselytes? On the other hand, art thou grieved with sinners who are captivated and drawn into the snare of the devil? Then, fear not, Satan is not thy ruler, neither art thou Satan's friend.

I have fallen again and again into sins seemingly repented of, sins which formerly I have pursued with particular grief and sorrow, and prayed, and resolved against. Therefore, I greatly question the truth of my estate. Answer: To relapse into old sins is very sad and sinful. Better to fall into new enticing sins, than into old repented of sins, for in so doing, thou seemest, not only to falsify, but also to recall thy promise made against it. To

repent of thy repentance, and to grieve for thy former sorrow will haunt thee.

But yet, (1) this doth not prove thy state nought, for better and stronger saints than thou have done so. Witness the disciples in Matthew 26:43. Christ commanded them to watch and pray in verse 38. Oh, but they slept when they should have prayed, “And He cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep” (verse 40). He exhorts them again to watch and pray, “Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation” (verse 41), but when He cometh to them the second, yea, the third time, “He findeth them asleep.” Abraham, the father of the faithful, had his own relapse into dissimulation about Sarah (Gen. 12:13; 20:2). And yet before that time, Abraham was in a state of grace and still remained in favor with God. Witness also Job’s friends. “These ten times have ye reproached me” (Job 19:3). Was it not a grievous sin to reproach a godly man, and that under affliction? And yet they reproached him ten times.

The power of grace appears more in maintaining a spiritual warfare against sin, than in preserving from relapsing into sin. Countest thou sin thy worst and most fatal enemy? Wilt thou not enter into a league or combination with it? Wouldst thou rather fight against it, than fall into it? This argues power of grace.

Grace gathers strength even by falling into sin because corruptions are discovered by relapses that lay hid before

in the godly (Luke 22:32). Satan intends to burn up the good metal, but instead he purifies it. He aims to cast away the corn by winnowing, but it so happens that the chaff is winnowed out. "But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him, but his heart was lifted up" (2 Chron 32:25). Hezekiah knew not before the pride that was in his heart.

If this relapsing into sin come not from lack of will to resist sin, but from lack of strength, be of good comfort, God will pardon and pass it by. It is an honour to a man and much more of an honour for Christ to pass by infirmities. "The strong must bear the infirmities of the weak" (Rom. 15:11) - so will Christ. He will not turn His children or spouse out of doors for frailties or infirmities. He will not cut off a member of His, because of some imperfection. Sins of frailty lie not long unpardoned. They do not break thy acceptance with God. Only see that thy sins be infirmities, and not wilful sins.

Observe these few words of advice: (1) Watch and pray against relapses. As a broken leg that is bound up is shattered and shaken with a second fall, so relapses often shatter all our former assurances. A prayerful watch and watchful prayer is a singular means against relapses. (2) Call to mind former iniquities. A fresh remembrance of them will keep thee humble and weary, and will keep thee from the commission of new sins. (3) Believe the pardoning of new sins. Upon every act of sin, exercise

an act of faith for pardon. (4) Discover not so much infirmity of grace, as to sin because it is a sin of infirmity. Shouldest thou easily commit it, because God freely pardons it? (5) Believe not the devil again. He tells thee that Christ is not so ready as thou thinkest to pardon thy infirmities. He says that Christ is a hard master, but do not believe him. (6) Sigh, groan, and pray for heaven; the enjoyment of God's company there will swallow up all sins of infirmity. (7) Scruple not the truth of grace for every sin's sake. Mourn for sins of infirmity, for they are sins, and consequently to be mourned for. Yet rejoice in this, that they are only sins of infirmity.

Were I sure that my sin were but a sin of infirmity, I could better believe its pardon, but how shall I know this? Answer: In a large sense, all the sins of the godly (though none of the wicked) are sins of infirmity. "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). If Christ's blessedness hinders not His feeling of all our miseries, then neither doth His holiness hinder His feeling of our sins. But yet, some sins are infirmities, rather than others (Rom. 6:19).

I shall omit many marks and only lay down four or five, for the comfort and satisfaction of the doubting Christian. (1) He that sins out of infirmity, is usually diligent in gathering and treasuring up strength against sin. The

sense of his own weakness provokes him to more earnest working. He bewails the weakness of his memory, the hardness of his heart, and his slowness to believe. Hence comes unwearied waiting on God for more strength.

(2) Thou doth sin out of infirmity art surprised and seized on against thy will and consent. “The good that I would, I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do” (Rom. 7:19). Thou art travelling to heaven. Oh, but unexpectedly this sin treads on thy heel, and casts thee down. This is not thy way; this is not thy element. It is thy joy to be kept from sin, and thy trouble to fall into it.

(3) He that sins out of infirmity is so low in his own eyes and apprehension that he will take a reproof for sin in good part. He that hath an infirmity in his feet will not boast of his swiftness. He that hath an infirmity in his tongue will not be forward to speak; he will be swift to hear, but slow to speak. So he that sins out of infirmity will receive a right reproof with thankfulness. “Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil” (Psalm 141:5).

(4) Is thy sin and temptation such as is common to man? (I allude to 1 Corinthians 10:13.) Are others of God’s people usually ensnared by it? Doth experience show that it is incident, and ordinary, and familiar to the saints?

(5) If thou canst acknowledge that thy sin is thy own conception and birth and art timorous lest it be worse than a

mere infirmity, this shows it is but an infirmity. Wicked men attribute their sins to Satan (Gen. 3:13), and these seeming good works to themselves, as Jehu. "And he said, Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord" (2 Kings 10:16). Observe, my zeal. On the other hand, the godly attribute their good works to God (1 Cor. 15:10). And they attribute their sins to themselves, though they are from Satan (cf. 1 Chron. 21:1,8). Thou thinkest it is more than of infirmity, this shows it to be but a sin of infirmity. Wicked men take gross sins for infirmities, and the godly take infirmities for gross sins.

I cannot perceive those marks and signs of grace in me I look for, and therefore fear my state is not good. All I do is only done in hypocrisy and falsehood. Answer: (1) It may be at present a time of sore temptation with thee, and therefore thou art not fit to judge of thy estate. Times of temptation are not fit times for a Christian to give a right judgment of his estate. His soul is in the dark then, and a dark soul distrusts all. I advise thee, poor Christian, not to look at thy face in muddied or troubled waters.

(2) Judge not thy state by perfect signs. True grace must not be judged by the marks of strong grace. Some marks discover grace in promotion, others in sincerity. Some marks discover the essence of grace, others the degree of grace. Thou mayest have the essence of grace, while lacking the feeling of grace in a strong, powerful, and sovereign degree.

(3) If thou canst perceive a single sign of grace, conclude the rest are present in thy soul, though they be dormant and latent, and thou perceiveth them not. Sometimes a child of God discovers in his heart a holy fear and awe of offending God, sometimes spiritual poverty, sometimes repentance, sometimes love, sometimes nothing but holy desires and sighings after Christ. If thou canst perceive this, fear not, for it is the mark of a holy soul, a badge of eternity.

I am grievously tempted of the devil from day to day. Were I a child of God, surely He would not suffer Satan thus to vex, trouble, and tempt me continually. Answer: (1) Temptations are the lot of all God's children. Wicked men are tightly linked to Satan, and lulled asleep by him. They go on pleasantly with full sail to destruction, and therefore Satan disquiets them not. But those that seriously purpose to serve God are encountered and molested by Satan. As a lion runs and roars after that prey which is out of his clutches, so doth that roaring lion, the devil, molest those, who by the power of God's grace and Spirit, are passed out of His kingdom. He spites them, because they are not of his family. Therefore it is not a good inference which thou dost make, that God is not thy Father nor thou His child, simply because He suffers thee to be tempted. None have more cause to doubt of God's fatherly love than they who are wholly freed from Satan's temptations.

(2) Thou shalt be strengthened until thou prevail (1 John 2:12-14). 1 Christ bruised the serpent's head for thee. He out-plotted his policy crushed and dashed his power for thy sake. The devil's kingdom has never had such a stroke since the world stood, as it had by the death of Christ upon the cross. Fear not, faint not, poor soul; God, even thy God, is a mighty Man of war. Christ is the Captain of thy salvation.

(3) The more the devil tempts thee, the more doth God pity thee. "For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted" (Heb. 2:18). Suppose a mother hath two children, the one in the cradle, the other abroad in winds and storms, frost and hail, and snow. Is she not most concerned about the child that is abroad? How often doth she go to the door, and look out at the window for her child? Her heart turns, her soul yearns, and she is often heard to say, "Alas, alas, for my poor child." Thy brother, poor doubting Christian, lies safe and warm in Abraham's bosom in heaven. Thou art the child exposed to the storm. Oh, but the heart of thy Saviour calls for thee, and He even wisheth thee by His side in His heavenly kingdom. "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am" (John 17:24).

(4) Temptations shall enlarge thy comfort at last. "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath

appointed unto me” (Luke 22:28-29). Temptation teacheth spiritual wisdom and dependence upon God. It makes a Christian an expert in the spiritual warfare. It increaseth, and trieth, and exerciseth faith. It humbles and abases the soul, so that many a saint can bless God for some temptations, as singular mercies. Time shall be when thou shalt say, “Thanks be to God that I was tempted.”

The more grievously and incessantly thou art tempted, the more earnestly thou must pray. Oh, pray for patient continuance in welldoing, that Satan’s importunity foil thee not. Pray for a spirit of discerning, that thou may not be ignorant of the depths and fetches of Satan. Thy simplicity and ignorance of Satan’s wiles will arm his assaults with more power. Pray that he may not circumvent, nor beguile thee with deceits and falsehoods. Pray for might to resist his temptations; he cannot make thee sin without thy consent. Indeed he can wind himself in, and by degrees draw thee to consent. Therefore call in God to thy assistance; bespeak Him in prayer, that thou may be able to stand, through His strengthening thee.

(6) Manfully resist Satan. Doth he come and say, Thou a Christian! Who believes it? When wast thou converted? Answer him, I was asleep this morning when the sun rose, yet now I know it is up, for I see the light. So when the day-star dawned in my heart, I was not aware, but now I feel the light of conversion in my mind, and the

heat of it in my life. Doth Satan say, Who told thee thou wast elected? Answer, I read my election in my faith and effectual calling. I went not to heaven for it, but heaven is come down into my soul. Election is no ground of my faith, but my faith is the effect and evidence of my election.

Doth Satan say, How knowest thou that thy evidences for heaven are not counterfeit? That thy repentance is real? And thy faith unfeigned? Answer, Suppose I have been hitherto hypocritical, yet I am resolved sincerely to repent and believe, as if I never had repented and believed. Though those acts of faith and repentance I exerted many years since are worn out and do not give the same comfort as before, yet I hope God will bring them to my remembrance when the temptation is cooler. Job was called an hypocrite by thee. Doth Job serve God for nought? Thou cursed spirit! I will turn from thy temptations; I will obtain another new copy of my old evidences. This I am sure of, if thou didst know me to be a saint, thou wouldst never tell me. Or if I were an hypocrite, thou wouldst not tell me, lest I should escape thy snare. Thou never tellest saints that they are saints. Thou never tellest hypocrites that they are hypocrites. Thou falsely persuadest hypocrites that they are saints, and thou wouldst try to persuade me that I am a hypocrite. Suppose me not for the present a saint, yet God is omnipotently able, and mercifully willing, and graciously covenanting and promising to work grace in my heart.

(7) Study to know the advantages the devil hath over you. An unknown enemy is not easily vanquished. Question: How shall I get this knowledge, since Satan is a subtle enemy and will be sure to hide his designs from me? Answer: Blessed be God, the tempter is not altogether undiscoverable. "We are not ignorant of his devices," saith the apostle (2 Cor. 2:11). Therefore, (1) Learn the compliances, leanings, and tendencies of thine own deceitful heart. "Walk about Zion, and go round about her. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces" (Ps. 48:12-13). So Satan walks and considers round about the heart to know where the attack may be made most successfully. Therefore it is good Christian policy to consider where thou art weakest, that there fortifications may be made. Study and search out thy beloved sin, and treasure up the most sovereign helps and considerations against it (Luke 3:12-14).

(2) Take counsel at God's oracle; diligently search and read the Holy Scriptures. This holy book I would commend, as a perfect magazine and armoury (Rev. 2:24). The doctrine in the Holy Scriptures will be an ark to keep thee from being swallowed up in these soul-devouring depths of Satan. The history of the Scripture will show how it hath fared with Christ's champions in their combats with Satan. No temptation, but there is a remedy against it. No lust, but in some part or other it is noted and deciphered.

(3) If thou would defeat the counsel of this hellish Ahithophel, procure an Hushai for thy friend, i.e. entreat God to detect, and to confound Satan's designs at the best time. God knows all the windings of Satan, though he is like a serpent on a rock. God's eye overlooks hell, and the damned, and sees them sweltering in the scorching flames. He watches all the devil's motions, therefore intreat him to discover and confound him.

Satan's power and host render him very formidable. I fear I shall one day fall by the hand of this hellish Saul. Alas! I am but one, whereas Satan is a legion. Therefore he may oppress me with a number. I am weak as water; Satan is as strong as a lion, and therefore he may crush me with his power. Answer: (1) Satan is in God's hand, and therefore cannot shake or toss the saints with temptations, except as God gives him leave. He can do nothing, but as thy heavenly Father permits him. If he might do what he would, oh what cruel usage might thou expect from him! This cursed fiend would destroy thy soul; he would damn the blessed angels, yea, pull the Almighty God out of heaven. But let this relieve thy troubled soul, that all that befalls thee is of God's allowance. He will not suffer thee to be tempted above what thou art able, but will with the temptation make a way to escape.

(2) Though Satan be a legion, yet they that be with thee are more than they that be against thee. The holy angels are with thee. "The angels of the Lord encampeth round

about those that fear Him” (Ps. 34:7). And are not the blessed angels strong enough for all the powers of darkness? With thee is the blessed God, whose strength is infinite, and whose Name is Almighty. Therefore fear not. Think not thou, believing soul, though thou saw devils about thee, as many as the prophet’s servant saw Syrians about Dothan (2 Ki. 6:15), think not that therefore thou shalt be swallowed up. If the Lord opens thine eyes, thou mayest likewise see “the mountains full of horses, and chariots of fire round about the Lord’s Elishas” (verses 16-17). Therefore be not dismayed, thou saint and servant of the living God. Thou that dost fear God, be not afraid of the evil.

(3) Though Satan be strong, yet is he a conquered enemy. Christ hath overcome him and spoiled him of his strength and power to hurt (Col. 2:15; Eph. 4:8). And therefore, though he tempt thee, yet he cannot overcome thee. He may, by his temptations, hold thy soul in exercise, but be of good cheer, he cannot hinder thy salvation. He may bruise thy heel, but cannot break thy head. The wounds he gives thee may be painful, but not mortal. Though sometimes he foils thee, yet thou art, and shalt be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

(4) Thy Lord and Head Jesus Christ is able to strengthen thee against, and save thee from thine enemy Satan. He is able to furnish thee Out of His infinite strength, in a

time of trial, with proportionable strength against the assaults of the devil. As thy adversary renews his force against thee, so thy Lord can and will renew thy strength against thy adversary. See what Joab said to his brother Abishai as recorded in 2 Samuel 10:11. "If the children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then I will come and help thee." How much more mayest thou be confident that thy Elder Brother, the Captain of thy salvation, will help thee against thy spiritual enemies that are too strong for thee. Therefore do not think so disgracefully and contemptuously of thy Lord's power, as to be afraid of the devil.

(5) God hath promised help and strength to enable the tempted soul to stand against the powers of darkness. "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). "He giveth power to the faint: and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength" (Isaiah 40:29,31). In the original it is, They shall change their strength, as soldiers put upon hard service are by their general's order relieved by others. So in a time of sore temptation, Christ Jesus thy Captain will send forth His Spirit with a fresh supply of strength and comfort to thy heart. "Fear thou not, for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isa. 41:10).

(6) Thou art sure of victory, whilst thou doth resist and keep up the fight. “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). Though he comes ramping and roaring and seeking to devour thee, yet if thou seriously and constantly resist, Satan shall not prevail. Thy victory over him is not only possible, but certain. Look into heaven, and behold the glorified saints there. Were they not once weak and foolish men and women as we now are, tossed and tempted by the devil? Oh, but they grappled, wrestled, and skirmished with Satan till death came and put an end to their warfare. And now behold, they are rejoicing and shouting for the victory they have obtained over Satan. If thou wilt but resist Satan a while longer, God’s promise assures thee that thou shalt prevail also.

(7) Satan’s power is serviceable and subservient to God’s glory and thy good. No matter how his temptations may disquiet thee for a time, yet God can and will order them to thy good; they shall but drive thee nearer to God for the present, and at last end in thy everlasting salvation.

Now I feel myself freed from the temptation; the temptation is hushed and gone. Yet still I am at a loss, not knowing what to do. Answer: Hast thou fallen by the temptation, or hast thou not? If thou hast not fallen by the temptation, then (1) search whether the temptation be conquered or only removed. Sometimes Satan draws back, not because he is overcome, but only to give a fuller blow. Didst thou use God’s weapons, the Word,

prayer, and faith to resist him, and is he fled? Hath thy affliction, under Satan's molestations, produced the peaceable fruits of righteousness? Hath it wrought in thee more humility of heart, more self-denial, more hatred of sin? Canst thou out of dislike of sin, avoid temptations to sin? Are evil thoughts burdens to thee, heavy to be borne? Then the temptation is dashed and broken.

(2) Bless God that hath given thee so great a deliverance. Had not His grace stepped in between thee and Satan's blows, he would have cut asunder the sinews of thy hope, maimed thy comforts, and made pitiful work with thy soul. Oh, though there be more of the love and mercy of God tasted after a recovery from sin, yet there is more peace and comfort in the soul when kept from sin. God's pardoning our sin commends His love to us. Oh, but God's preserving us from sin, saves us much repenting pain and sorrow. Therefore bless God for thy deliverance.

(3) Beware of growing secure. Live in the daily expectation of after-assaults. Preach not to thy soul freedom from temptation, for when the poor Christian falls asleep, Satan comes, lets fly his temptations, fires his passions, and sets all on wheels. As David smote the Amalekites, when they were secure (1 Sam. 30:6-7), Satan smites thy soul when asleep in security. Mariners will not set to sea (were there never such a calm) without anchor and tack-

lings. Usually a saint's fall is after some great calm following temptation. As sure as the devil is a tempter, he will come again. Neither shame nor cowardice hinders his return; he will come in, either at a new breach with new temptations, or else with the same temptations he did before. He is not sure but hopes thou might lose grace, zeal, watchfulness, etc. or that God will permit him now to cast thee down. Therefore he will renew the onset, and if he cannot conquer thee, yet he will disturb thy comfort. Beware of growing secure.

But if the temptation hath prevailed, and thou hast fallen by it, and sin hath wounded thy soul, then seek out and apply the remedy. I mean, repent and do thy first works. Art thou fallen? Rise, by all means rise again. Despair not of pardon. Though the whole weight and shower of despair falls on the damned, yet some degrees and drops of it may fall on those that are truly godly. Say as the apostle, "We are troubled on every side, but yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed" (2 Cor. 4:8-9). Though thou be perplexed with doubts, yet yield not to despair. To sin is not death, but not to repent of sin is. A great sin repented of will not trouble thee so much as a smaller sin unrepented of. Oh, let repentance follow thy sin, and pardon will follow thy repentance.

I cannot hear of wars and rumors of wars without my spirit being troubled. I am afraid lest enemies come in

like a flood. What is an object of fear, if war be not? Fear is to hear the thunder of cannons from the mountains, and the neighing of the strong ones, to see the banners displaying, the pikes pushing, the swords glittering, the bullets flying, and the houses all on a flame about the ears of the inhabitants, to see in the streets and highways, wives and virgins ravished on the one hand, and friends and children wallowing in their blood, on the other. To look upwards and behold nothing but fire, and smoke, and confusion, to look downwards and behold hundreds of skulls, legs, and arms. When I think of these things, fear taketh hold of me, and I am so troubled that I cannot speak. Answer: First, war and bloodshed may be feared with a natural fear. Natural fear is an harmless passion. Why should not natural fear be as lawful as natural sorrow, which even lodged for a little while in our Saviour's pure and sinless soul? "He began to be sorrowful and very heavy; then saith He unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matt. 26:37-38). "He groaned in the Spirit, and was troubled" (John 11:33). Grace does not abolish the affections, but only rectifies them.

Secondly, a natural stupidity or fool-hardiness is corruption, rather than gracious affection. Some can be troubled or afraid at nothing; this comes from carelessness, and sluggish temper and constitution. Such senseless souls are like benumbed consciences, quiet, not good (Isa. 47:8).

Thirdly, there is a carnal or degenerate fear which is to be condemned, and that is when worldly fear is obstructive and prejudicial to the actings of divine and holy fear. Our affections are always wrong when they hinder grace. Therefore beware of and rebuke the usual effects of carnal fear. Be not discomposed and distracted in mind. Let not fear knock the mind off its hinges. Be not tossed, and removed this or that way; beware of violent concussions by the winds of evil tidings (2 Thess. 2:2). Maintain an holy quietness and sweet calmness, without turbulency. Tremble more at God's silence, or at the loss of God's kindness than at the darts and direful thunder of war. Fear more the displeasure of God against thy soul than the rage of men against thy body. Tremble not so much for famine upon man and beast, lest the word of God, the food of the soul, be removed. Tremble not so much at the drawn sword, as at God's withdrawing His presence from thee. God's smiles are sweeter than peace; and God's frowns and rebukes, yea, His very silence and absence, are worse than the fury of war. "My flesh trembleth for fear of Thee, and I am afraid of Thy judgments" (Ps. 119:120). "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him, which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Mt. 10:28). Fear more for the cause of Christ than your own wealth or life. It were better we all sank in the sea than that the blessed interest of Christ should suffer. Oh, fear lest Christ should be defamed or reproached. Fear the sins of

war more than the miseries of war. Oh the rapines of soldiers! The hellish cursing and swearing! The beastly uncleanness, and notorious luxury! The oppression and stealth that usually abound at such a time! Oh the woeful fruits of war! Do not fear the dangers, so much as the debaucheries and outrageous wickedness of war.

Fourthly, though the people of God may hear of wars and commotions, yet there is no cause for them to be terrified and troubled. When greater alterations than war come, they must not be terrified. If the heavenly spheres clashed, if the earth groaned and staggered, if an universal deluge should flood the world, if all were turned into an hurry and confusion, into an heap and dung-hill, yet they should not. fear (Ps. 3:6). Nay, at the day of judgment, when the earth shall quake, and the sea be turned into blood, when they shall hear the devils roaring, and see the heavens on fire, the sun and moon clad in sackcloth, and the stars hung in black, men and women amazed, and all the tribes of the earth wailing and wringing their hands, yet then must they be so far from terror, that they must rejoice. “When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh” (Luke 21:28). When, therefore, the sword of the Lord is unsheathing, be not troubled but consider, first, that if wars be actually begun, God can soon still and hush them again. Or if wars be not actually begun, God can prevent them (Amos 7:4-6).

Secondly, God will be a safety and a refuge to you in time of trouble. “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed” etc. (Psalm 46:1-2).

Thirdly, to be slavishly afraid of hell, is unbecoming a Christian, and a great sin. How much more is it a sin to be slavishly afraid of frail man? “Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and forgettest the Lord thy Maker” (Isa. 5 1:12-13).

Fourthly, God much prizes a quiet, meek, and unterrified spirit (I Pet. 3:4). A sedate temper God loves, for such a temper resembles heaven, where there are no clouds, no winds or tempests, no fear of enemies, persecution, sword, famine, pestilence, disease, pains, death. No fogs of ignorance, nor error of judgment, no imperfection, impurity, inability, or averseness in the will, nor affections perverted with disorder, and no fear treads in the courts of God above.

Fifthly, the promise encourageth to believe, not to fear. “Whoso hearkeneth unto Me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil” (Prov. 1:33). Indeed, it is said of the wicked that “their houses are safe from fear” (Job 21:9). Yet what they have is not an internal, divine peace, but stupidity and a seared conscience. It is a dream, afancy, and lasts but for a moment. “There were they in great fear, where no fear was” (Psalm 53:5).

Sixthly, God's power is on the side of His people. He is their Captain and Champion; why then should they dread the proudest man or potentest army upon earth? "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31). Poor Christian, hast thou not read on the one side how the Lord hath armed locusts, lice, and worms against the bloodiest potentates? Hast thou not read on the other side how chariots of fire, and thousands of angels are ready for the defense of the saints? Hast thou not read how the sea recoiled, that the Lord's Israel might pass through or how hungry, savage lions were muzzled when Daniel was cast in among them? Is it not recorded how devouring flames were tied up when the three children were thrown into them and that the stars fought from heaven against Sisera? How the crows fed the prophet of the Lord, when in danger of his life? Hast thou not read how the belly of a dreadful, devouring fish was sanctuary to Jonah, when cast into the sea? Now remember, this God is thy God for ever and ever; therefore fear not. But get a real, free, cordial submission of thy will to the will of God.

Draw nigh to the Lord of hosts in prayer, that He would so fortify thee with His favour, as to out-face all adversaries whatsoever. And above all things, get assurance of God's love. Let it be thy great work to confirm thy peace with God, for till this be done, it is impossible that thy soul should not be afraid at every alarm. "If thy peace be made with God, the Lord will enlighten thy darkness,

strengthen thy weakness, and save thee in all thy straits” (Job 22:2 1). Therefore say as David, “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though wars should rise against me, in this will I be confident. For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion” etc. (Ps. 27:1-5).

God hath left me and cast me off in anger, and will not show me mercy any more. There was a time when I knew Christ sweet and comfortable. These were happy days, but alas, now Christ is gone, and I fear He will never come again! Answer: (1) This desertion or withdrawal is a testimony of divine love, just as afflictions are (Heb. 12:6). Thou doth count it cruelty, but it is love. God foresaw what havoc spiritual pride might make in thy soul, or what sloth and security might creep into thy heart. Thy soul would suffer, should He always feed thee with honey out of the rock. Such strong comforts, high raptures, and heavenly joys would overset thee, and therefore, in love to thy soul, the Lord hath withdrawn for a season. Thou doth still lie under the banner of Christ’s love, and art still grasped fast in the arms of His mercy, though thou feel Him not.

Secondly, though thy soul hath lost comfort, yet thy grace has gained, for now thou art much in exercising grace, repentance, humility, love, patience, etc. Though

thy soul be disquieted, thy graces are quickened. Now thou doth follow God with humiliations, lamentations, and supplications. Though thou canst not sing a song of deliverance, yet thou canst mourn and pour out a prayerful complaint before God.

Thirdly, remember that before this joy was present, and may instantly and unexpectedly return. Thou sayest, oh the day of my espousals! Then my crown did flourish, but now, alas, now it is fallen from my head. But let thy soul solace itself by remembering ancient love and thy former savour of His sweet ointments. Thou that bewails thyself, shake off these irksome cries. "It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found Him whom my soul loveth, I held Him and would not let Him go" (Cant. 3:4). See here the spouse in as woeful a case as ever befell a saint and yet some glimpses of joy satisfy her heart.

Fourthly, though thou be cast down, yet thou shalt never be cast off, nor prove to be a cast-away. Thou mayest fear hell but thou never shalt feel hell. The sun may be overcast with clouds and mist, but not blotted out of the firmament (2 Cor. 4:8-9). Though thou wade through a sea of sorrows, yet, in despite of all the powers of earth and hell, thou shalt happily escape at last. Though thou be struck into the place of dragons, yet shalt thou be brought out of that horrible pit, and set upon a rock. "In a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the

Lord thy Redeemer” (Isa. 54:8).

I am greatly afraid of death. I can never think of death without being afraid of dying comfortlessly. Answer: (1) Even a righteous soul may remove out of the body with very little comfort. “There is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked” (Eccles. 9:2). Some of God’s people have a sweet and comfortable passage into glory, through the broad gate of assurance. Others are so weak in faith that they find a very strait and difficult entrance into heaven. They die poor, doubting, and cloudy, though truly gracious souls.

Secondly, ordinarily a holy life is concluded with a comfortable death. What else extracted that prayer from Balaam? “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my latter end be like his” (Num. 23:10). Did not the martyrs walk barefoot on hot burning coals? Did they not clap their hands in the fire for joy? What creature is so tormenting and afflictive to sense, as fire? Oh but by the power of grace, they were enabled to do that, which by the power of nature they could never have done. The delight of their souls found in Christ assuaged their bodily, sensitive pains. As their sufferings were very great, so God gave them stronger comforts in the apprehensions of His favour and presence, which topped them all.

Thirdly, however, if thou be afraid of dying uncomfortably, yet die in faith. “All these died in faith” (Heb. 11:13). It were to be wished that all God’s children could depart,

as old Simeon wished to depart, with Jesus in their arms (Luke 2:29-30). As a drowning man catcheth hold on something and is found dead with it in his hands, so throw out the arms of thy faith, and when about to shut thine eyes, cling to the Lord Jesus at thy last breath. Labour to die in faith of thy own reconciliation to God through Jesus Christ. Leave the world with these words of Job: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself and not another" (Job 19:25-27).

Forthly The godly will judge of thee according to the tenor of thy life, rather than according to the circumstance of thy death. If thy light hath shined before men in the constant practice of a godly life, they will not conclude thy salvation impossible, simply because thy death hath been without comfort.

Fifthly, the uncomfortable death of a child of God may glorify God and edify the saints as much as some parts of his religious life. Oh, think they, if such an admirable pattern of holiness and humility had his heart heavy, and his head wrapped in discomfort when he died, oh what manner of conversation is then required to die in peace! As Samson slew more at his death than in his life (Judg. 16:30) so thy death may edify more than thy life hath done.

Sixthly, God will pass his sentence, rather after the good works of thy life, than thy corruptions and frailties at thy death. As the ungodly shall not be acquitted for a death-bed charity, so the godly shall not be condemned for a death-bed infirmity. Sin and sickness shall bear the whole blame. Angels stand round about the godly man's sick-bed, to carry his soul into glory.

Seventhly, a probable way may be taken to die in comfort: (1) by making constant and diligent preparation in life for dying, and (2) by maintaining a gracious disposition at death. Observe these two rules, and they will put a blessed and desired end to thy days. Die armed against the terrors of death, for death cannot hurt thee. As a drone bee, it hath lost its sting. Christ encountered and conquered death. Thy death is not total, but only external. It is the death of the body. Thy death is not penal, but profitable. It is a putting off of all thy defects, deformities, and infirmities. Thy death is not perpetual, but only a sleeping in the grave till the resurrection. Here thy victory over death is inchoate, and then it shall be consummate. Therefore fear it not. What is it to thee, but the conclusion of thy sorrows, the death of thy sins, and thy entrance into heaven? Die willing to see this world no more. Is thy portion, thy heart, here or in heaven? Even if thou leave riches and relations, thy gain will be an hundredfold. Hang not on this world's breasts, but remember what is laid up in heaven for thee. Die patiently under thy sufferings and pains. Did not sin deserve

plagues and pains? Did not Christ endure death patiently? Wilt not thou sign thy name beneath His and follow His example? Die with gracious exhortations and speeches on thy lips. Leave savoury instructions to thy children and savoury advice to thy friends and neighbours behind thee. Tell them how gracious the Lord hath been to thee. Finally, die commending that jewel, thy soul, into Christ's hand. Lay thy head on Jesus' breast and say, "A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me, I shall lie to all eternity betwixt His breasts" (Cant. 1:13).

THE FIFTH TREATISE

Containing THE HAPPINESS AND PRIVILEGES OF THE TRUE BELIEVER

The fact that blessedness is attainable is a matter of comfort and encouragement to the miserable. But what blessedness is, or wherein it lies, hath been much controverted among philosophers. Infinite are the disputes and discourses which are extant upon this subject. Varro, a great wise man among the Romans, reports that in the books of the philosophers of his time there were to be found a hundred-and-eighty-eight different opinions about the chiefest blessedness. Some reposed it in one thing, some in another. Indeed, we know not distinctly on earth, nor can we know comprehensively in heaven, what it is. Else it would cease to be blessedness. It is an ocean for depth and an heaven for heighth. Its top is unreachable; its bottom is unfathomable.

Yet this much is evident from Scripture, that all believers are truly blessed. They have a partial and imperfect blessedness in this life, and full and perfect blessedness in heaven. God hath called them from a sinful to an holy, and from a miserable to a blessed and happy life. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection" (Rev. 20:6). It is not the great ones, but the godly ones, that are pronounced blessed and happy everywhere

in the holy Scriptures. Though things sublunary cannot, yet true piety will make a man truly happy. The least child of God is more happy than the mightiest monarch in the world. His privileges are many and his happiness greater than all the tongues or books of the world can specify. Oh how great shall his happiness be when he departs out of this life in the fruition of those joys which are prepared for him in the kingdom of heaven! Yes, even in this life, he is a child of God, a brother of Christ, a partaker of the divine nature, and an heir of the kingdom of heaven. Believers do not at present serve God for nought. What folly are they guilty of? Who thinks that question cannot be answered? What profit is there, if we serve God? The service of God is not like the works of darkness which are unfruitful and unprofitable. God will not deny His people any outward blessings that will not hinder their eternal blessedness. God will give them those inward blessings, which afford much more real comfort than all the present possessions of the wicked. Their happiness will more evidently appear by a particular review of some of those glorious privileges belonging to them. Carnal men have no right to these special blessings.

A true believer hath the highest and noblest relations of any man in the world. He is son of a King's Son. Though he be poor and of small reputation in the world, "yet God is not ashamed to be called his God" (Heb. 11:16). Christ calls him His friend (John 15:15) Christ calls him His

brother (Heb. 2:11). Christ calls him His mother (Matt. 12:50). He is indeed Christ's mother, for Christ is formed in him. "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you." The new birth conceives Christ in the saints. H lies in the womb of the heart. The heart of a saint is the temple of God, and the womb of Christ.

A true believer hath God for his portion. As believers are God's portion, "for the Lord's portion is His people" (Deut. 32:9), God is theirs, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in Him" (Ps. 16:5; Lam. 3:24). The Lord who is the chiefest and most comprehensive good is theirs. What larger happiness can be promised, and bestowed by God? What larger happiness can be desired and possessed by man than God Himself? "Happy is the people, whose God is the Lord" (Ps. 144).

When God had no greater thing to swear by, saith the apostle, He swore by Himself. So when God had no greater thing to give His people, He gave them Himself. He scatters and sheds abroad some common influences upon all creatures, but to the saints He gives not only that which is His, but He gives them Himself. And oh what a rich blessing is God! Beauty, blessedness, grace, goodness, glory, highness, holiness, life, liberty, love, mercy, majesty, purity, peace, perfections, righteousness, sweetness, everlasting glorious and inconceivable blessings

come with Him to the believing souls. God is all~sufficient, and in having God they have all. In the creature there is nothing but vanity. All the happiness of the creature cannot make man happy. There is an insufficiency in the creature to give that contentment men look for. The creature is an empty well, but there is all-sufficiency, all happiness in God.

And therefore whatever tends to make the saints truly happy, they shall have it. Let the worldling boast and say, I have gold and silver, houses and lands, riches and friends, such a manor and such a lordship is mine. Yet the godly man can say more: God is mine. And if God be thine, surely thou hast enough to make thee happy. If God be thine, all that is contained in the covenant, and all the comforts in the Bible are thine. If God be thine, all that is in Christ is thine. His graces are thine; His merit is thine. His intercession is thine; His Spirit is thine. All God's attributes are thine; His mercy is thine to pardon all thy offences. His goodness is thine to supply all thy wants and necessities; His wisdom is thine to direct and counsel thee in all doubtful and difficult cases. His power is thine to secure thee from dangers, and to preserve thee to salvation. His love is thine to bestow on thee both grace and glory. His justice is thine to fulfill all His promises to thee. "God is all things to thee," saith Augustine. "Art thou hungry? He is bread. Art thou thirsty? He is water. Art thou in darkness? He is light. Art thou naked? He is a robe of eternity. Art thou a

widow? He is thy husband. Art thou an orphan? He is thy father.” And he writes in another place: “Whatsoever my God bestows upon me, let Him deprive me of it, so as to leave only Himself. Let Him take away His gift, as long as He gives me the Giver.” And indeed when all is gone, if a covenant interest in God be left, this is enough to support the heart (Hab. 3:17-18).

Oh, the happiness of believers is far above that of wicked men! Wicked men may have Ishmael’s blessings, and Esau’s portion; they may have the world to be theirs. But believers have God to be theirs, and in Him they have all things: life, food, home, protection, and comfort in all distresses. Are they in adversity? He will be their Comforter, and make them prosperous. Are they in weakness? He will be the light of their eyes, and the strength of their hearts forever (Ps. 73:26). Are they in sickness? He will be their Physician and companion. “The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing, Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness” (Ps. 41:3). Are they in want? His all-sufficiency shall supply them (Phil. 4:19). Are they in trials? He shall be their reliever. Are they in griefs? He shall give heart-ease to them. Are they in old age? He shall be refreshment of their languishments. In death He shall be a crown of life and salvation to them. And what is a crown of gold compared to this crown of glory? An imperial crown with glistening stones is not worth the taking up; it is attended with such piercing cares and sorrows. What are riches or worldly good

things in comparison to the chief Good? We cannot keep riches when we have them. Oh, but God, when once bestowed, we cannot lose (Ps. 48). Health, riches, yes life itself is ours but for a time. Oh but God is ours forever, and is not this unspeakable happiness?

A true believer hath a place of refuge to fly upon all occasions. God is known to be the godly man's refuge (Deut. 33:27; Ps. 46:1; 48:3). He is preserved under the wings of the Almighty in the day of evil. He finds God, in and through Christ, a refuge both in life and death.

(1) The true believer finds God as a fortress in life. Not only against cruel men, but also against conscience, the law, and the wrath of God. In the hour of conversion when his soul is full of frights and terrors, he hides in the clefts of this Rock and is safe. In great providential straits, when distresses compass him about, he finds God prompt and ready to help him (Gen. 28:15). In strong temptations and impetuous assaults, he flees to God by faith and is secure. Strong temptations make hypocritical professors to fly off. These are as the roes and hinds of the field and are soon frightened away. Yea, strong temptations may weaken grace in the best, but yet they only bruise the believer's heel. His head is helmeted by the power of the spirit of Christ. Therefore they are said to be preserved in Jesus Christ (Jude 1). That is, they are preserved in union to Christ, or by Christ's power.

(2) The true believer finds God as a refuge in the hour of

death. When his senses are stupified, his sight fails him, his speech is low and faltering, his strength faints, medicine proves useless, and friends weep about him; when the world looks pale, and all worldly comforts are insipid, when his eye-strings crack, and the waves of death are ready to go over his soul, then God is his refuge (Ps. 23:4). Though I walk side by side with death, though my bones be cast into the grave, Thou art with me to look after my dust and the rotten relics of mortality. Though my life depart, Thou art with me to comfort me with Thy love that endureth forever. Though I be mounted on the pale horse of death, yet it will carry me to glory. The funeral of my body shall not be the funeral of my soul; it shall be the funeral of my miseries and mine iniquities, but my soul and my happiness thou wilt take care of. Therefore I will not fear, “for the mountains shall depart, the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee; neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee” (Isa. 54:10). Usually a deathbed is a den of lions, when Satan tempts and troubles, ramps and roars. Oh but God muzzles and chains him up. Every hour of his life the poor Christian does enough to damn himself forever. Oh but, both in life and in his death, the arms of mercy twine about him and keep him close and safe.

A true believer hath God for the avenger of those wrongs that are done him by others, when he cannot, and through God’s prohibition may not, avenge himself (Luke 18:7-

8; Rev. 18:20). God will be severe in revenging the wrongs done to His own people. Men will not abide the wronging of their very dogs and beasts, and will God abide the wrongs and affronts done to His chosen servants? God takes the wrongs done to them, as done to Himself (Zech. 2:8). God will play David. When once he saw what indignities were done to his ambassadors, their beards cut and their garments cropped, he was very harsh in revenging the same (2 Sam. 12:31). So if anyone harm the names of God's saints, or robs them of their right, God will be blunt in revenging such wrongs (Ps. 10:13-14; 1 Sam. 15:2-3). "Thus saith the Lord, even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: For I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children. And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the Lord am thy Savior and thy Redeemer, and the mighty One of Jacob" (Isa. 49:25-26).

A true believer is privileged with the light of God's countenance. God may shine upon the counsels of the wicked with the light of His providence, but the light of His countenance is the peculiar privilege and portion of believers. And when the light of God's well-pleased face shines upon their souls, it makes their crosses easier, and their comforts sweeter. It turns frowns into smiles, and

lashes into embracing. It drives away their uncomfortable darkness and, beaming on their graces, makes them to grow as the tender herb or plant after the rain.

There is true love in the heart of God to every true believer. The love of God is carried primarily to Himself, but secondarily to them. He loved them before the foundation of the world by a love of benevolence, and doth and will love them forever with a love of complacency and delight. His love to them is free without compulsion, firm without concussion, and eternal without cessation, diminution, or interruption. It is sincere without dissimulation, ardent without extinction, and effectual in operation. His love to them appears in many ways. (1) He commends them highly (Cant 4:1-8). (2) He values them dearly and esteems them precious. "Since thou wast precious in My sight, thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee" (Isa. 43:3). (3) He visits them frequently (Rev. 3:20). (4) He reveals His secrets and counsels to them daily (Ps. 25:14). Oh, stupendous, admirable love! The effects of His love are more sweet and frequent to true believers than to others. A general love He hath to all creatures, but He has a special favour toward them. Yea, He doth manifest, testify, and seal His love to them. (John 14:21). "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:5). Though they are not to expect extraordinary visions and voices from heaven, yet God by His Spirit enlightens them to see the reality of their graces and the sincerity of

their hearts. “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it” (Rev. 2:17). These are sweet privileges; the white stone is a precious jewel, and a new name is better than costly ointment.

A true believer is closely and indissolubly united and joined to Jesus Christ. There is a near communion between Christ and the believing soul, even such a bond as between husband and wife. “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Eph. 5:31-32). There is a spiritual marriage between Christ and believers (Hosea 2:19-20; 2 Cor. 11:2; Isa. 62:4-5). And this marriage between Christ and the soul is a transcendent privilege, and speaketh much to the honour of the believer. For a beggar or mean personage to be married to a prince is a great honour. What is it then for poor sinful dust and ashes to be thus united unto Jesus Christ! What a wonder to be married to the eternal Son of God, the heir of all things, the prince of the kings of the earth! God united to man is more than if the Son should court a dunghill, or an angels should marry a vile worm. Oh, what friendship! What fellowship between Christ and the believing soul! Oh, what sweet communion the believer enjoys with God through Christ, by the Spirit while he lives! And at death the soul lies down in the arms of

Christ her husband. How can a soul choose to be anything but happy, when in conjunction with the ever blessed God! If a man be possessed of God, he may as well choose whether a great fire shall warm him when he stands near it, or whether the sun shall shine into his chamber when the windows are open, as whether he will be happy when Christ Jesus the Son of God dwells in his heart and soul. Such a man has no choice but to be blessed.

A true believer is Christ's by possession. The wicked are His in the same way as the beasts of the forest are His. The wicked are Christ's indeed, but they are Christ's enemies! They are Christ's dishonourers and His scorn and hatred too. They are the very excrements of the body visible, whose damnation is just, sure, sudden, and terrible. Oh, but the saints are His, not only by a right of creation, but also by right of redemption, of covenant, of conquest, and possession. He hath removed blindness, pride and vanity out of their minds, and brought in sound and saving knowledge, clear and convincing wisdom, and thereby taken possession of their minds. He hath removed stubbornness, unwillingness and rebellion out of their hearts. He hath removed inordinacy and unruliness out of their affections, and brought in purity and order. And to ensure their affections are His, Christ saith, "This is My rest forever; here will I dwell" (Ps. 132:14). This mind, this heart, these affections are Mine; yea, all is Mine. Depart sin, depart Satan, depart world, depart

flesh, depart self; this soul is Mine forever.

Since the true believer's soul belongs to Christ, He bestows upon it sanctifying grace, and purifies it by His Spirit. As the house of the Lord was filled with His glory (1 Kings 8:11), so are the hearts of believers with His grace. By grace they are beautified and qualified as a blessed mansion for God Himself. They have grace to adorn, to renew, to ennoble, and to enliven them. Is not this a rich privilege? Grace is better than the best earthly blessing. It is better than pleasures, honours, or riches. Grace makes men equal to angels, and the lack of it casts men down to devils. That which causes a man to stand before princes is noble birth, honour, valor, abundant wealth, etc. But they that have grace shall stand boldly before the judgment seat of God. Grace is the queen of mercies. Other things are transient, but grace is permanent. Other things are for the body, but grace is for the soul. Wholesome food is good for an hungry stomach, a fair fire is good for a cold day, a full purse is good in an hour of need, but grace is good for a dying soul. It is good all the days of a man's life, but best in the end, when the stated hour of death is fully come. God gives liberally to believers, not only houses of stone, and houses of clay, but an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. As He gives them things that cannot be kept, riches, and honors, so He gives them things that cannot be lost, grace and glory. If God hath given thee grace, He hath not reserved a greater mercy for His dearest favourites. Grace

puts as much difference between man and man, as reason puts between a man and beast. By it is a saint that excels a sinner, as much as man by reason out-strips an ape, which is man's prerogative royal. Yea, such is the sweetness of grace, that it sharpens the desire of those who have tasted of it. The more they are furnished with grace, the more earnestly do their souls desire grace.

Christ taketh great delight in the company and fellowship of believers. Though their company be disdained and rejected in the world, yet it is longed for by Christ. His heart is much set upon it. (1) He desires their company on earth, to enjoy communion with them in His ordinances. Thus they may be warmed, comforted, strengthened, and quickened by Him. "Oh My dove, that art in the clefts of the rock in the secret places of the stairs, let Me see thy countenance, let Me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely" (Cant. 2:14). It is as if He had said, Come, and let Me have thy company, thy prayers, thy tears, thy faith, thy repentance, thy obedience. Let not the sense of thy deformity or unworthiness discourage thee from coming to Me. Come to Me even though thou think that thy face is not worthy to be seen by Me, in whose sight the very heavens are not pure, and before whom the very angels do not appear except with their faces covered. Come even though thou think thy voice not fit to be heard by Me, to whom the angels are continually singing Hallelujah. Yea, though thy company be scorned and rejected by the world, yet

whatever thou seem to thyself or to others, know that thou art dear and precious with Me. Thy company is longed for, and delighted in by Me. To Me thy voice is sweet, thy face is lovely, and thy fellowship delightful. Oh how should this warm our hearts, and as a magnet draw our affections to Jesus Christ.

(2) He desires their company in heaven, too. “Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me” (John 17:24). See how Christ’s heart is set upon getting them up to heaven. “Come with me from Lebanon, My spouse, with Me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon” (Cant. 4:8). (1) He invites them to come from Lebanon, a very fruitful place. It is as if He had said, Though thy outward condition in the world be prosperous and flourishing, most delightful and desirable, yet leave it and come to Me. (2) From Amana (otherwise Abana), Shenir, and Hermon, i.e. from all parts and quarters of the world, north, east, south, and west. It is as if He had said, No place on earth is fit for your residence and commemoration, therefore come to Me. (3) Come from the lions’ dens, and from the mountains of the leopards, i.e. from the miseries, inconveniences, and dangers of this life. It is as if He had said, This world is a den and mountain of leopards and lions; here ye are amidst wicked men, who are of a most savage, cruel, and revengeful nature. Here ye are persecuted by the censure

of their tongues, if not by the blows of their hands. Therefore come, oh come away, for if ye are once with Me, ye shall be freed from being among wicked men forever. Thus Christ, out of His dear and excessive love to believers, calls and invites them to leave the world, and to come to Him into heaven. Christ hath begun a good work in them, and longs to see the consummation of it. He knows their coming to heaven will be their perfection, and therefore He longs for their company. What, though they be poor and despised in and by the world, yet He that is higher than the highest in the world, loves and desires their company. Indeed, riches and honours are the world's idols; oh, but Christ is no respecter of persons! There is no difference in God's account between a king and a beggar, between a madam and a milkmaid, if both be alike in grace. He repudiates none and divorces none because they are poor. If a man be wise, and rich, and noble, but without grace, Christ disdains him while he lives, and in the end of his days he dies a fool. He lies down naked, and in eternal dishonour. But if a man be poor and yet gracious, Christ delights in him while he lives, and calls him up to Him to glory when he dies.

Question: Why does Christ suffer believers to live so long, if He so ardently desires their company?

Answer: (1) He suffers them to live so long for the conversion and salvation of others, so that by their humble

and holy lives, they may be preachers of repentance and holiness to others. God wants the world to know that He is not without lovers; He is not without disciples and followers, no more than the devil. I see, saith God, you love examples; lo, here is an example, here is a holy life that deserves your observance and imitation. The godly live to keep the wicked a while undamned. Once Lot leaves, the Sodomites cannot long escape. Once Noah is housed on the ark, the world is quickly drowned with a deluge of water.

(2) Jesus allows believers to live so long to train and prepare them for heaven. There is a room furnished for them. "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world" (Mt. 25:34). Oh but they need fitness to enter into it, "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col. 1:12). Vessels must be scoured and brightened, else they are not fit for use. So we must be scoured from our filthiness by the Word and rod, else we are unfit for that place into which no unclean thing can enter. We must learn here in the school of the cross, before we go to the heavenly palace for our crown. There must be a lower church militant to empty itself into the higher church triumphant. We must be subjects for a time, before we can be kings forevermore. And judge, I pray you, is a man fit to be a companion for kings and nobles, to wear scarlet, and tread on nought but embroideries, to lie on a bed of

down, in pure linen, clean and white, when he is over-spread with a scabby leprosy, and full of crawling vermin? Heaven is a royal palace, in it is a bed of rest and joy. Angels and glorified saints are peers there. Now the poor saint here is sometimes overtaken with sin; the leprosy of sin remains, and his mind and breast is full of the vermin of vile, worldly thoughts. Is that man, in such a case, fit for heaven? Must he not stay awhile, till he be doctored and cleansed, and so made meet for glory?

A true believer hath Christ for his possession. Christ I say in whom all fulness dwells, and who is Lord of all. He is His by the Father's donation and by mystical union (Rom. 8:32). Whence it follows, that whatsoever is in Christ is the believer's. He is their Peace-maker. He hath appeased the wrath of His Father, and satisfied both law and justice for them. He is their surety, hath paid their debt, and so prevented their being cast into the eternal prison of darkness. He is their covering. He covers all the sins they have committed against the law of God, and renders their souls amiable in the sight of the Lord. Are they sick? Christ is their Physician, and their medicine too. Are they afflicted in conscience, under the sense of God's anger and their own sins? Christ is the propitiation for their sins, and by His blood will perfectly cure and cleanse them from all their wounds. Are they ignorant? He is their Wisdom to enlighten and teach them, to expel their darkness and blindness, their unbelief and doubt-

ings. Are they weak? He is their strength, and will manifest His power in their weakness. "He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax."

Doth the power or malice of Satan dismay the true believer? Christ is the Captain of their salvation to defend them, and to give them the victory over all their enemies, outward and inward. Are they poor? Christ is their riches. Are they weary? Christ is their rest. Are they in trouble? Christ is their peace. Are they strangers? Christ is both their way, and the end of their journey. He is virtually everything to them in every condition and hath given them a participation of His own benefits, and a denomination by His own titles. Is Christ the Son of God? So is the believer: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1)! Is Christ beloved of the Father? So is the believer: "I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hands of her enemies" (Jer. 12:7). Is Christ heir of all things? So is the believer: "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17). Is Christ God's fellow? The believer is His: "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows" (Ps. 45:7). Is Christ the light of the world? So are they (Phil. 2:15; Mt. 5:14). In a word, all Christ did and suffered was for them.

(1) What was Christ's incarnation for, but the regeneration and salvation of His elect? "Surely His salvation is nigh them that fear Him, that glory may dwell in our land" (Ps. 85:9). The glory mentioned here is Christ the Lord of glory. Christ took our flesh that we might take His Spirit. He became the Son of man, so that we might become the children of God. He took our human nature, so that we might partake of His divine nature. He was born for us, so that He might be born in us. It was for us, and for our salvation, that the Word became flesh, God became man, the virgin became a mother, majesty was abased, ubiquity comprehended, and glory divested. The Happiness and Privileges of the True Believer 181

(2) What was Christ's circumcision for, but the sanctification and salvation of His people? "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ (Col. 2:11). He was the vine pruned with the sharp knife of circumcision, when He was not nine days old so that drops of blood more precious than the richest balm might be shed for them. He became Jesus by offering the first-fruits of His blood. He felt the knife, but it was done so that our sores might be lanced. He felt the pain, and we find the cure. It was to circumcise the foreskin of our hearts, that He was circumcised.

(3) Why did Christ die but for believers' mortification and salvation (Rom. 14:9; 8:17)? We would have died in

sin, had not He died for sin. Oh, but His death is our ransom whereby He plucked the sting out of death, spoiled the conqueror, and disarmed and wounded the enemy.

(4) Why did Christ rise again, but for their salvation (Rom. 6:9; Ps. 118:19-21; Rom. 7:6)? His body came out of the pit of darkness, that thy soul, oh believer, might escape the pit of hell. He arose so that if thy flesh be eaten with worms, and these worms turned to dust, and that dust be blown up and down the earth, yet thou shalt return “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us against unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pet. 1:3).

(5) Why did Christ ascend and go in triumph into heaven? Why did the chariots of the clouds receive Him, and angels meet Him? Why did heaven open to Him, and His Father enthrone Him? It was for the salvation of true believers (Ps. 68:4; John 14:2). Thy soul, oh believer, came from heaven, and thy head lives there. Thy city, and mansion, and inheritance is there. Christ is ascended above the earth, yes, far above the visible heavens, so that thy knees might bow to Him, and thou at last might come to enjoy incorruptible and undefiled glory with Him. He is thy Messiah and forerunner, as John the Baptist was His. He lifted up His body from the earth, that He might lift, up thy heart to heaven. He transported His body, so that thy desires might be transported to seek

those things that are above, where He is at the right hand of the Father (Col. 3:1-6).

Why did Christ dismiss the Spirit after His ascension, but that it might dwell in believers (Ps. 68:18), and deliver them from death? “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:2). He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Gal. 6:8). The Spirit came in the sound of a mighty rushing wind, and in the light of fiery tongues to give them knowledge by the hearing of the Word, to direct the tongues of preachers, to open the ears of hearers, and to mollify their hearts. The Spirit came to be a divine fire to burn up the chaff in the faithful, to stir up their zeal, to enlighten their darkness, to beat down all Satan’s strongholds, to chase away the clouds and mists of error, to cool the heat of their consciences, to fill up the sails of their affections, and to bring their souls at last into the fair haven of everlasting rest. Hence, the church and people of God keep those days holy: Christmas Day for Christ’s birth; New Year’s Day for Christ’s circumcision; Lent for His forty days’ fast; Good Friday for His death; Easter for His resurrection; Holy Thursday for His ascension; and Whit Sunday (Pentecost) for the sending down of the Spirit.

A true believer hath the Spirit of Christ for his own. He hath an experimental knowledge of the enlightening,

comforting, confirming, and quickening operations of God's Spirit. He hath a Spirit of wisdom and understanding (Isa. 11:2). He hath a Spirit of grace; "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and supplications" (Zech. 12:10). All the graces of the Spirit act, dwell, and flourish in Him. He finds the Spirit of God inflaming his frozen heart with love to God and zeal for God. He finds the Spirit of God purging away his dross, and purifying him from his filth and corruption. He finds the Spirit of God governing his heart and leading him in the way of holiness, till he come to enjoy eternal happiness. Wicked men are destitute of the Spirit. They will not be governed by the Spirit of God. They are profane Esaus, unholy souls. Their disputings and despisings, their resistings and rebellings against the Spirit, show them to be destitute of the Spirit.

Oh but the godly man's actions are over-guided with the Holy Spirit, though in some the Spirit works more visibly, apparently, and effectually than others. The godly man keeps close to God in ordinances and the Spirit sanctifies and makes the ordinances of God effectual for his consolation and salvation. The godly man prays, and the Spirit of God quickens and breathes life into him. He hears, and the Spirit of God helps his faith, gives him attention, and makes the Word he hears a fire to consume his lusts and corruption. The godly man receives the Supper of the Lord, and the Spirit of God quickens his

graces, feeds his faith, renews his repentance, enlivens his love, and makes him grow in grace. Yea, the Spirit of God governs, overrules, commands, and disposes all in the gracious soul.

To be under the command of God's Spirit is of the sweetest freedom and liberty. It is a great misery to be Satan's servant, to be acted and ruled by that evil spirit. But the gracious soul is acted and ruled by the Spirit of God. It obeys His command out of love and faith, as in Isaiah 26:13: "Oh Lord our God, other lords besides Thee have had dominion over us; but by Thee only will we make mention of Thy Name." The Spirit of God is Master and Lord of his heart, and therefore will repair the decays of the heart. He will recover lost degrees, and maintain present degrees of grace. The Spirit of God will not suffer Satan to tyrannize over the soul, out of which He hath cast him. Satan shall not cause Him to vanish, but Satan shall be vanquished by Him (John 12:28). He will cast out the usurper Satan; He will cast out the bondwoman sin, and bring the soul out of the house of bondage. He will disappoint Satan, restore the soul, and maintain His own right there.

The Spirit of God is the inhabitant in the believing heart. He dwells there. A truly gracious heart is the mansion of the Holy Spirit. Hence, believers are called the house of God (1 Tim. 3:15). As a carnalist's heart is the devil's heaven, so a saint's soul is God's dwelling house, "Know

ye not, that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16). Alas! In what a case are those poor souls, who have not the Spirit of Christ dwelling in them (Rom. 8:9). They do not belong to Christ and have no interest in the fruits of His redemption. Oh, but the Spirit dwells in believers (John 14:17). He hath taken up His abode and lodging in their hearts, and will never depart thence. He doth not sojourn there for a while, but dwelleth as a man in his house or castle. They have His continued presence and influence, by which they are supported in all their ways. Is not this a rich privilege to have the Spirit of God dwelling with us?

God's Spirit is to believers a Spirit of adoption. "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba Father" (Rom. 8:15). He evidences their adoption, shows them that they are heirs apparent of the kingdom of heaven, and enables them to perform adoption duties. He helps them to a dutiful and child-like obedience, fear, and reverence of their heavenly Father, and teaches them to cry "Abba Father" (Gal. 4:6).

God's Spirit is to them a Spirit of supplication and intercession (Rom. 8:26). Christ is their Intercessor outside of them; the Spirit is their Intercessor within them. Christ is their Intercessor at the Father's right hand in heaven; the Spirit is their Intercessor on earth. Christ is their Advocate for reconciliation to God, and expiration of sin; the

Spirit is their Advocate by way of interpellation, inciting and instructing them how to pray and what to pray for.

When the godly man prays, the Spirit of God helps him to desire of God what he lacks. The Spirit gives him answerable affections in prayer, and many times the very expressions. The Spirit often suggests arguments, lifts up his soul, and pleads in him, when he himself discerneth it not. The Spirit enables him to pray believably, and to pray feelingly and affectionately. It is not pattering a prayer, as the papists do, that is well-pleasing to God. It is not the straining the voice to an affected tone, neither is it speaking neat, trimmed expressions. Prayer is not a work of invention, nor of elocution, but of affection. It is the fervent prayer, that is the prevailing prayer.

Do not misunderstand me. I do not say that believers are always alike fervent and affectionate in prayer. Sometimes their devotion takes wing, and the soul is indisposed for the work. Sometimes they are like Pharaoh's chariot, the wheels are off, and they drive heavily. Oh, but at other times, they are like Elijah's fiery chariot, so that they could even burn themselves away in those divine flames, and could wish, like Peter, that the mount were their dwelling place, crying out, It is good for us to be here! The Spirit sometimes fills the sails of the soul with gusts and gentle breathings, and then the ship rides at full sea, all-amain. Whereas at other times, it is left standing on the earth. When the north wind and south

wind awake, and blow upon the gardens of their hearts, then the spices of their graces flow out (Cant. 4:6).

The Spirit of God is to believers a Spirit of liberty. He helps them to perform the duties of religion with alacrity and readiness (2 Cor 3:17). There is more cheerfulness and obeying God's commands. "I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart" (Ps. 119:32). When the Spirit of God enlarges the heart, then we do not do what we will, but what we ought. Then the heart is so sweetly and strongly inclined to what God requires, that it can deny God nothing. The Spirit of God is to believers a Spirit of light. He directs and shows them which is the best way for them to walk in. He discovers those enemies and dangers that lie in ambush to surprise them and keeps them from erring and straying in the broad and dangerous ways of sin. He leads them forward in the narrow and safe way of life, and never leaves them finally, but conducts them safely to heaven, that home they earnestly desire and long for.

The Spirit of God is to true believers a Spirit of testimony (Rom. 8:16). The Spirit, by its sanctifying virtue, doth brighten and enlighten the eyes of their understanding and enable them to discover the signs of saving grace in themselves. He makes their graces visible, and helps them to infer a comfortable conclusion concerning their own estate, namely that Christ is theirs, and that they are Christ's, namely that they are God's servants, and that

God is their salvation (1 John 5:11). And is there not abundance of pleasure in the testimony of God's Spirit and the evidence of grace? Oh, what is more pleasant and delightful than to be helped by the Spirit of God: to see that we are beloved of God, to see those letters drawn in our hearts which tell us that our names are written in the book of life, to see the first fruits of heaven in our own souls, to see that we are sincere in religion, and have not deceived ourselves?

Question: How shall I discern the delusion of Satan from the testimony of the Spirit?

Answer: Satan's delusion follows upon security and spiritual laziness, but the Spirit's testimony comes when the godly are mourning for sin, and seeking after reconciliation to God. The Spirit's testimony comes when the godly are praying to Him earnestly in secret, or waiting upon Him in His public ordinances. "In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks" (Dan. 10:2). Daniel was mourning three full weeks until, in verse 11, "the man spake to him and said, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the word that I speak unto thee: and stand upright, for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling."

Finally, the Spirit of God is to believers a Spirit of comfort (John 14:16). Yet this comfort is not perpetual and permanent; their glimpses suddenly come, and are suddenly vanished. Sometimes David is singing (Ps. 27:6),

and sometimes dancing (Ps. 30:11). But look on him again, and you shall find him sighing (Ps. 31:10), yes, roaring (Ps. 32:3). Look on him. He had his youth renewed like the eagles (Ps. 103:5), but look back on him and he is an owl of the desert and a pelican of the wilderness (Ps. 102:6).

The Spirit hath his special seasons of comforting the godly. Sometimes he comforts speedily after conversion (Eph. 1:13). He often comforts when the godly are afflicted for conscience-sake and religion's sake (John 16:20). Sometimes, after some signal act of humble self-denial there is none so fit for lifting up as the lowly soul. And often the Spirit comforts before the saint's decease and departure out of the world. Then God usually testifieth their sincerity, and fills them with joy in believing. Did not Paul's heart just dance within him when he saw a crown of righteousness just setting on his head? "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8).

A true believer hath the holy angels, those excellent creatures, as his keepers. They are to keep him from evil, to keep him in evil, and at last to deliver him out of evil. The holy angels are enemies to the wicked, and as faithful servants, will not attend and guard those who are enemies to their Master. But to believers the holy angels are

a daily guard. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb. 1:14). They always attend upon them wherever they go, and whatever they do. When believers are about their proper work in the wilderness of this world, the angels keep them. God's people are surrounded by wicked men. Satan, their mortal enemy, watcheth for all opportunities to hurt them. He never sleepeth night nor day, "but continually goeth about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). And if they had not those good watchmen to watch over them when they sleep, they should soon be swallowed up. Oh but the holy angels are always awake to protect and guard them (Ps. 34:7; 91:11).

Oh what great good do the saints receive by the ministration of angels! I may say to them with the prophet in 2 Kings 6:16, "Fear not, for they that be with us, are more than they that be with them." All praise be to that merciful God, that taketh such care for His poor people, and appointeth such a guard to watch over them night and day, that their enemies suddenly devour them not. They are called God's host (Gen. 32:1-2; Luke 2:13). God employs them as soldiers to guard His saints. They are a numerous guard. "And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw; and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha" (2 Kings 6:17). These chariots are many. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels; the

Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place” (Ps. 68:17).

The angels are a strong guard. One of them (saith an eminent writer) is stronger than all the world. They can stop the mouths of lions, break iron chains, open prison doors and hence are called mighty angels (2 Thess. 1:7). Neither men nor devils can stand before them. Though the devils be mighty in power, and have been often too hard for the saints, yet are they not able to stand before the holy angels of God. They are a wise and foreseeing guard; they are said to be full of eyes before and behind, as if they were all eyes. Therefore they cannot be circumvented by the subtlety of our enemies. And they are a swift guard, having wings to fly to our help (Dan. 9:21,23). As the devils are swift to do us mischief, so are the holy angels swift to defend and do us good. And as they guard the saints in their lifetime, so at their death they convey their souls through the territories of the prince of darkness (i.e. the air) and carry them safe to heaven. So they did to Lazarus (Luke 16:22). The chariots and horses of fire that parted the two worthies and carried one of them to his everlasting home, were the blessed angels of God (2 Kings 2:11-12). Oh what honour hath God conferred on believers, in sending such glorious creatures to watch and keep them night and day! Oh wonderful condescension, that such noble creatures disdain not to do service to them that are far beneath themselves, to them that have the scent of earth and hell

about them. These holy ones, I say, despise them not, but minister to them while they live, and convey them home to their Father's house when they die!

A true believer is raised above the common condition of the children of men, to the great blessing and privilege of spiritual sonship. The Almighty God is his Father. All men have God for their Father in respect of creation, but good men only have God for their Father in respect of adoption (John 1:12). This is a special privilege, a great and excellent prerogative. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1). David judged it high preferment to be son-in-law to the king (1 Sam. 18:23). Observe, David did not say that it was high preferment to be king himself, but a son; not the king's own or only begotten son, but to be his son-in-law; and that not to a pious king, but to wicked Saul; and that not in some vast kingdom, but the small kingdom of Judah. What honour and preferment then is it to be an adopted son to the King of saints, yea, to be a king as all God's adopted sons are (Rev. 1:5). This is a principle of joy and comfort, and may encourage the godly in all their doubts and difficulties. If God be thy Father, why art thou so drooping and disconsolate, desponding and discomposed? May I not say to thee, as Jonadab to Amnon: "Why art thou, being the king's son, so lean from day to day?" (2 Sam. 13:4). Lift up thy head, look God in the face, and in the language of faith call Him, Abba Father.

A true believer is installed in an everlasting inheritance. He is heir of a kingdom. He hath riches of graces here, and shall have riches of glory hereafter. Oh rich privilege! What are rich sinners, but well fed swine? For so the Scripture calls them (Amos 4:1; Ps. 22:12). They are rich in purse, but bare in grace. They have fat and full fed bodies, but their souls have lean, pale, and withered faces. Oh but the saints have true riches, inward riches. Outward riches are but cyphers, till the figure of grace be added. Wicked men must forsake their estates. Their estates will but go with them to the hole's mouth, but the saints' treasure passes through the gates of death. They carry their treasure, and their treasure carries them. The wicked man hath but one child heir, but all God's children are heirs, "heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ" (Rom. 8:17). They are heirs to that good land, those glorious manners and mansions that are above. Here to give away a cottage, with an acre or two, is great liberality. Oh, but they have a kingdom that cannot be shaken, with all its appendants: a throne, a crown, etc. This they have by a right of inheritance. Hence they are called "heirs of salvation" (Heb. 1:14), "heirs of a kingdom" (James 2:5), and their estate is called, "the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col. 1:12). This is promised and granted to them because they are sons. This inheritance is a glorious inheritance; the glory of Solomon's kingdom, when the queen of Sheba observed and admired it, was nothing compared to it. This is a large inheritance. Luther, in comparison, called all the Turkish

empire but a crust that God casts to a dog. This whole world would make up but a small inheritance, but the saints are heirs of all things. They are heirs of heaven and earth too, heirs of God, and what more is there? This is an eternal inheritance, “to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away” (1 Pet. 1:4). All things here are perishing and fading in themselves, and are liable to spoil and devastation from others, but this inheritance endureth forever.

The saints can never be deprived of their title to their inheritance. Though their lives be changeable, and their days on earth must have an end, yet their inheritance endures forever, and their tenure is most firm and sure. Their right is indefeasible, and they cannot lose it. Though God may chastise them, yet will He not disinherit them (Ps. 89:32-34). Let this therefore draw up thy heart, oh believer, from earth to heaven. What though the sons of Keturah go away with their gifts as worldly men with their large possessions, Isaac and all they who with Isaac are born of the free-woman, shall inherit all things. So what if thou art poor! Thy heavenly Father hath provided a glorious estate reserved for thee and thou shalt shortly possess it. If thou art shelterless here, yet in thy Father’s house there are many mansions.

Oh, draw off thine eyes from things below, look upward, and see what mansions are prepared for thee and rejoice. Suppose thou art to be heir of a thousand pounds a year,

after the death of an old consumptive man, which all the physicians tell thee cannot live four days. Wouldest thou not secretly rejoice? Thy body, oh believer, is the old man; it is decaying every day, and will soon be dead. Oh, but thy estate in heaven is millions, even all the fulness of God. Thy soul is the heir apparent; thy body will not live long to keep the heir from possession, and the Lord will be Executor to see that all be done after the will of Jesus Christ. Should not thy heart then be filled with joy? Should thou not account every hour ten hours till thou be out of thy body? Should thou not welcome everything that brings thee notice of death? Welcome, oh my friends, that are come to close my eyes. Welcome, oh death, thou messenger of bills, and harbinger of glory. Thou blessed Pilot that art come to steer me over the troublesome and stormy sea of the whole world to my native country, my glorious inheritance, the land of promise. There my prayers shall be turned into praises, and my sorrow into joy. There I shall have perfect communion with God, perfect conformity to God, and perfect enjoyment of God. There God and my soul shall never, never, never part. "Come Lord Jesus, come quickly; and make me as a young roe, or hart upon the mountains of spices."

A true believer is clothed with a right to the promises, which wicked reprobates are not. Though ungodly men may scramble and pull the promises unto them, though

they may falsely apply them to themselves, yet the promises are the children's bread and therefore belong not unto dogs. God hath promised nothing to such, but threatened against them all the plagues written in His Book, which shall surely overtake them. "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made" (Gal. 3:16). He saith not, and to seeds, as of many, but as of one, and to thy seed which is Christ. These words are an answer to the Jews, bragging of the promise made to Abraham. For the promise was not made to seeds, i.e. to carnal men and faithful together, but only to believers, Abraham's spiritual seed, who follow the steps of his faith. They have a right to that comprehensive and chief promise, "I will be thy God."

Yea, believers have a right to numerous other promises, which are as so many rivulets and streams, flowing from that fountain-promise, "even the promises of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:8). Art thou burdened with the power of sin? God hath promised relief, "Sin shall not have dominion over you" (Rom. 6:14). Doth the guilt of sin trouble thee? See Isaiah 43:25, "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Doth the law threaten thee with death for sin? Remember the promise, "There is therefore no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit" (Rom. 8:1). Doth the fear of being separated from communion with Christ trouble

thee? See Revelation 3:20. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." Art thou despised? Cast thy eye upon Micah 7:8-9: "Rejoice not against me, oh mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me..." Hast thou backslidden? There is a promise: "Though he fall he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand." Dost thou suffer affliction? Remember Romans 8:17, "If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." Art thou forsaken of friends? Meditate upon Hebrews 13:5-6: "The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." Art thou tempted? Call to mind 1 Corinthians 10:13: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

Art thou assaulted with troubles? God hath promised, "These things 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" (John 16:33; Ps. 50:1,5). Doth the inevitable hand of the Lord strike thee that thou must die? There is a comfortable promise, "And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die" (John 11:26). Oh how refreshing is that promise, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy

laden, and I will give you rest” (Mt. 11:28)! As if He had said, whosoever groans under the unsupportable weight of sin, and sends forth prayers mixed with tears for ease, let Him “come unto Me, and I will give him rest.” Though his labour be grievous, and his burden heavy, I will ease him. I who am the great Physician of heaven and earth, both can and will do it. In a word, the promises tend in a sweet manner to remove all the objections, doubts, and discouragements of gracious souls. And therefore they are compared unto the land of promise, which flowed with milk and honey, and to a rich mine, abounding with precious treasure, in which the further we dig the more precious gold we will find.

A true believer hath obtained mercy, “who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief” (1 Tim. 1:13). When covered with guilt, mercy pardoned him. Pardon of sin is a most comfortable and necessary mercy. A man may get to heaven without honour. A man may get to heaven without the smiles of the world, but not without pardon. This is a rich mercy. A man may be miserable though rich, but he must needs be blessed if pardoned, and pardon of sin is theirs who believe (Is. 40:1-2; Mt. 20:28). They are penitent sinners, and therefore pardoned sinners. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). This is God’s promise, and can His promise be disannulled or broken?

Can the truth of God be turned into a lie? Is it possible for God to violate his faith? Will His faithfulness give Him leave to plague His own people for sin in hell? No, no. His justice is fully satisfied, it looks on Christ bleeding and dying for them, and therefore He will not exact a double payment, but upon their repentance will show them mercy.

Peter is as notable an example of sin, repentance, and mercy, after conversion, as any New Testament saint.

(1) His sin was very great. One well expresseth it thus, Peter the first of the apostles, in the most public place (the high-priest's hall), before the profanest of persons (the high-priest's servants), at the weakest of motives (such as the summons of the high-priest's maid), did the worst of actions, namely, deny his master, once, and not touched therewith, twice, and not troubled thereat, thrice, and there he stopped. (1) He was forewarned; Christ gave him a caveat. (2) It was against his own free promise and flat protestation. (3) He did it thrice: once may be imputed to inconstancy, twice to infirmity, but thrice is incapable of any charitable comment. And it was a denial embossed with an oath, and a curse, and as some say, a curse of Christ Himself, that he might make them believe that he knew not Christ.

(2) Peter is an example of repentance. He excused not his sin, though he might have said, "Lord, it was a sin of infirmity, done against my purpose and resolution," or "I

had a forcible motive and was afraid of losing my life,” or “It was only with my mouth, not with my heart.” The lameness of his lie, “I know not the man,” might be helped by lending it the charitable assistance of an equivocation, i.e. I know no such mere man as you mean, for my master is God and man. But instead of excusing his sin, he repents of it. “He goes out and weeps bitterly.”

(3) Peter is a notable example of mercy received. For upon his repentance he had an expression of comfort dispatched to him. “Go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you” (Mark 16:7). Not a word to Peter of his denial! God pardons His people often, and yet upbraids them not with their former sins. He forgives their sins freely and forever, so that they shall never be laid to their charge. He not only forgives, but also forgets (Heb. 8:12). Their pardon shall never be revoked, or rendered ineffectual. Others cannot revoke it, and God Himself will never do it. They are freed not only from the guilt of sin, but also from the punishment of sin. It is but a mockery which papists make about pardon, as if God did pardon the sin but not the punishment. God indeed sometimes grievously afflicts those whose sins He hath pardoned, but those afflictions are not judicial punishments, but Fatherly chastisements.

Yea, God hath not only promised to forgive sin, but all the sins of believers. If God should pass by millions, and

set down but an hundred, nay, come so low as to charge but ten, nay, forgive all save only one, that one would sink the soul down to the lowest hell. But believers have the forgiveness of all through the blood of Jesus (Eph. 1:7). Oh the great happiness then of believers, who have through that redemption that is in Christ obtained the forgiveness of all their sins (Rom. 4:7,8)! What a comfort it is to a poor man, that he is out of debt. Sins are debts, and once pardoned, “who can lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that shall condemn?” Let thy soul therefore, O believer, with David say, Bless the Lord, and all that is within thee praise His holy Name: who forgiveth all thine iniquities, and healeth all thy diseases, who hath freed thee from all thy sins, and that forever (Psalm 103:1-3).

A true believer hath assured peace first with God (Rom. 5:1). Wicked men have no peace with God. God is all holiness, righteousness, and goodness. Unholiness, unrighteousness, and wickedness, can have no union with these, no more than light and darkness can consist together. The wicked in Scripture are called enemies of God, fighters against God, haters of God. How can they then be at peace with Him? But believers have accepted the terms of peace offered in the gospel. As Christ hath reconciled God unto them, so He hath reconciled them unto God. The war is concluded (Isa. 40:1). Now they stand in a state of real peace and friendship. All the enmity that was between God and them is forever removed,

and God is at peace and fully reconciled to them in Jesus Christ.

Secondly, true believers have peace with their own hearts, even that peace of God which passeth all understanding. As the wicked have no peace with God, so they have none with themselves. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Isa. 57). And in the foregoing verse, "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." The wicked man's conscience is an evil conscience. It is either sleepy and seared with an hot iron, letting him alone in sin, letting him sleep quietly under the most awakening ministry upon the very brink of the bottomless pit, just falling into the gulf of eternity, or else it is a terrifying and tormenting conscience. Unspeakable horror sometimes arises from the terrible accusations of wicked men's own consciences.

There is no way of bearing in this world the pain and torment of an accusing conscience. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of an enraged conscience. It was an enraged conscience that forced Judas to hang himself. When Satan first tempts wicked men to sin, he turns the lessening end of his telescope unto their eye, representing their greatest crimes as small and inconsiderable. But when he hath raised the mass of their sins to a vast bulk, fit to terrify them, he then turns the multiplying end to their affrighted conscience, representing their sins in as

foul and fearful a manner as possibly he can, never ceasing till he hath overwhelmed them in the depth of despair. This is his chief pastime, to see them so distracted and confounded. Oh miserable wretches! Made by sin at last such mortal enemies to themselves, they are raging in despair to cast themselves body and soul into eternal flames! There can be no peace to the wicked who are not at peace with God. Oh, but to believers God hath spoken peace. “Great peace have they, which love thy law” (Ps. 85:8; 119:165). This peace of conscience is a continual feast. As horror of conscience is the greatest trouble, so peace of conscience is the greatest joy. That man (saith one) can never lack music, that speaks in consort and is harmonious with himself.

Objection: The godly man’s conscience is often disquieted, witness David (Ps. 38:2-3), Job (Job 13:26), and Hezekiah (Is. 38:14). The best of God’s servants find many fears, and doubts, and perplexities arising in their minds.

Answer: God’s children may be, and sometimes are without this inward peace, yet they are never without the promise of it (Ps. 29:11). They are never without the grounds of it. There is a real work of grace in their hearts, an implantation into Christ, and a hearty subjection to Christ. And though Satan tempts furiously, and his temptations be complied with, though when sinful disposi-

tions are indulged and nourished and their peace is interrupted and beclouded, though they walk sadly for a time, yet light is sown for the righteous. As their holiness increaseth, so doth their peace. Though they have not always a lively sense and apprehension of God's love and favour to them, yet, for the most part, their hearts have a secret peace in serving God. They experience meltings and enlargements in duty, which revive the soul and bear it up from sinking. There is always some comfort and relying upon God in the worst condition. Yea, their very conflicts are for their greater triumph. Their tempest will be followed with a more quiet calm. Their trouble is the way to peace, and will be sure to end in peace (Ps. 37:37).

Thirdly, true believers have peace with the creatures. All the creatures are enemies to fallen man, but being reconciled, all things become Him (Hos. 2:18; Job 5:23). Though wicked men are seldom hurt by the beasts of the field, yet they are never at peace with them. But the godly are at peace with God, and therefore all creatures are at peace and in league with them. Those savage beasts that are hurtful to others shall be helpful to them. The ravens that pull out the eyes of those that are disobedient to their parents (Prov. 30:17) carried food to Elijah (1 Kings 17:6). The lions that devoured Daniel's accusers did not touch him (Dan. 6). The serpents stung the rebellious Israelites in the wilderness, yet the viper upon Paul's hand did not hurt him (Acts 28:5). The dogs that ate the flesh of Jezebel licked Lazarus' sores. *Tranquillus Deus*

tranguillat omnia. “If God be for us, who can be against us?” This is the ordinary privilege of every true believer, to have peace external, internal, and eternal. And is it not a transcendant privilege? To be at peace with the creatures is a great mercy, and it is a greater mercy to be at peace with conscience, but to be at peace with God is by far the greatest mercy.

Every true believer is gloriously provided for. God doth not only provide for them things needful for this present life (Mt. 6:32). He hath also provided for them in that other life: a glorious kingdom (Luke 12:32), an eternal mansion (John 14:2), an eternal portion and refreshment (Luke 22:29-30), and “an inheritance that fadeth not away” (1 Pet. 1:4). Yea, even here their souls are fed and refreshed with spiritual dainties, like heavenly manna of which “whosoever eats shall never die” (John 6:50; 5:24). They have meat to eat that the world knows not of. They have “that peace which passeth all understanding.” They have special and peculiar food, the chiefest food in all the world (John 6:55). What meat is to the body, that Christ is to the soul. Doth meat renew strength and preserve life? Jesus Christ renews the inward strength and preserves the souls of the saints. Doth meat fit a man for work and business? Christ fits for soul-work (Phil. 4:13). Is meat sweet to the taste? The crucified flesh of Christ by which divine justice was satisfied, is sweet to the taste of God’s people, sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. The most sweet and precious thing in the world is not to

be compared with it. All those delights and sweetnesses which are in the creatures are but dark shadows and resemblances of that sweetness and delightfulness which is in Christ (Cant. 2:3).

Oh what unspeakable sweetness gracious souls taste in that communion which they have with Christ in His ordinances! There He gives them such tastes of His goodness as carnal men have no sense of. Such tastes as embitter all things below comparatively. Such tastes leave on their souls such a relish of divine goodness, as shall never be worn off. It is the observation of an ingenious writer, that the soul hath its palate as well as the body. Hence the apostle exhorts, "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:2). The original word signifies to try by tasting. They that are risen with Christ taste, and relish the sweetness of heavenly things, godliness, and religious duties. It is the want of such a taste that makes religious duties so burdensome to carnal hearts, as it was with those in Malachi 1:13. Alas! They could relish no sweetness in ordinances. Oh but a gracious soul tastes a peculiar sweetness in them.

A true believer hath free access to God. He may go with boldness to the throne of grace (Eph. 3:12). The word rendered "access" hath an allusion to the courts of princes, where petitioners are admitted unto access to their prince. How hard is it to have access to an earthly king? To speak with such is a favour not easily obtained.

Oh but God, though He is endued with infinite majesty and glory, yet He is always prepared every hour and moment to admit believers into His presence.

Wicked men have no familiar access to God, no converse or acquaintance with God. Though they may come outwardly to God with their lips, yet they cannot come near to God. Why? They are in their natural estate; they are not in Christ. They come not to God through Christ and therefore cannot see the King's face. As Absalom was not to see King David's face because the king was displeased with him, so wicked men cannot see God's face, because His indignation against them is not quenched. Their sins have divided God and them (Isa. 59:2) and so closed up all access unto God. Christ hath opened them a door for access unto God. He keeps it always open by His continued intercession, which otherwise would be closed daily and hourly by their renewed provocations (1 John 2:1).

They that are in Christ may boldly approach before God. They may come securely into His presence, "for through Him we both have an access, by one Spirit, unto the Father" (Eph. 2:18). Here "both" means both Jews and Gentiles that believe. In all their troubles they may run with confidence to their heavenly Father, and pour out their complaints and grievances into His hand. Oh glorious and comfortable privilege! Is it a great privilege to have an affectionate wife, or sympathizing friend, to

whom we may pour forth our hearts? What a privilege is it then for God's children, when their spirits are oppressed, to have a gracious God to run to by prayer in secret! He is able to do exceeding abundantly for them, above what they can ask or think (Eph. 3:20). If to be admitted into the presence chamber of princes is accounted a great honour, what a privilege is it to be admitted into the holy of holies, to converse and commune with God from day to day? Oh prize and improve this privilege, ye servants of the most high God. Be not strangers to the throne of grace, but have recourse to it continually. Daily renew and increase your fellowship and communion with God, till ye at last be presented perfect in Christ Jesus.

A true believer hath not only access but acceptance. God takes in good part the least good from him. If he but feed an hungry belly, God regards it (Mt. 25:35,40). If only one penitential tear drops from his eye, God sees it (Isa. 38:5). If there be but a good intention, God takes notice of it (1 Kings 8:18). If there be but a sigh for sin, a hearty desire after Christ, God spies it (Ps. 38:9). Where there are the least desires or breathings in the soul after Christ, they shall not be contemned, but commended and cherished. God will not break the bruised reed, though never so weak; neither will He quench the smoking flax, but will rather increase it into a flame.

The most perfect performances of God's children are but

imperfect. If God would examine their self-examinations, would He not find them short and partial, and unskillfully managed? Have not their devotions some spice of corruption, and often some mixture of hypocrisy in them? They do not always, as Jacob, wrestle with God when alone. They are all too frequently dead in secret. How unskillful are they in handling that weapon of prayer? How little ardency is in their prayers, attention, and faith in their hearing? How many are their miscarriages in duties? Oh, but there is a comfortable promise: "And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts: and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord" (Ex. 28:38). Aaron was a type of Christ.

God takes those duties lovingly which believers themselves blush to own. "And she said to her father, Let it not displease my lord that I cannot rise up before thee; for the custom of women is upon me" (Gen. 31:35). So when our times of weakness are upon us and we rise not with that fervency we desire, God will spare us. He accepts less at one time than another. I know, saith the Lord, the soul for the present is weak and distempered. It breathes so short, prays so faintly. It is an hour of darkness; he cannot see well to find the way to My throne of grace. He would do better, therefore I will not despise. I will look upon him through Christ, with a merciful eye,

“for if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not” (2 Cor. 8:12). The infirmities that accompany the performances of God’s children do not spoil their acceptance, but their sincerity covers their infirmities.

A true believer’s services are not only graciously accepted, but shall be gloriously rewarded (Heb. 11:6; Mat. 6:4,6; 10:41). “He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet’s reward: and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man’s reward.” This is a reward not of debt, but of favor; not of merit, but of grace. Our services do not deserve it; it is wholly of mercy in respect of us or our deserving. Yet it is justice in respect of God’s promises and Christ’s merit. Christ hath merited, and God hath promised a free yet glorious recompense to His servants, after all their labors and travels in His service. He hath annexed an unspeakable reward to obedience (Ps. 19:11). As there is no master so mild as the Lord, no laws so holy, no service so easy, so there is no reward as vast as His. As far as heaven is above the earth, and glory is above gold, and life is better than death, so far are God’s rewards beyond man’s. “Thou hast magnified Thy Word above Thy Name” (Ps. 138:2). What Word? Not only Christ the eternal Word, but the Word of promise. His goodness was great in giving the promise, and His truth is great in performing it punctually, and giving superlative mercy to His people.

“Thou hast magnified Thy Word above all Thy Name,” i.e. beyond all that is famed or believed of Thee among men or saints. “Oh how great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee!” (Ps. 31:19). The mercies believers have received here, if thrown together on a heap, would amount to a great mass and number. And yet they are but an inconsiderable allotment, not the ten thousandth part of what avails them in the other world. There is no greater resemblance between their present and future estate, than between a taste and a feast, between a grain and the harvest, between a grape and the whole vintage. Every gracious soul should solace itself with a general survey of those profound treasures which are laid up for them in heaven.

A true believer is privileged with joy in the Holy Ghost. It is a joy that ravisheth the heart and is a foretaste of heaven, a joy that is better felt than expressed. “In whom though now ye see Him not, yet believing ye rejoice, with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Pet. 1:8). Some censure religion, as if it were perpetually attended with mopish pensiveness, and every precious soul were a demoniac possessed with a melancholy devil. Oh, but the practice of religion is full of joy and sweetness (Prov. 3:17). It brings a sedate serenity, a composed quietness, a calm tranquility into the mind, conscience and affections. The godly have God’s Spirit, and spiritual joy is one fruit of God’s Spirit (Gal. 5:22). They are Christ’s

subjects, and joy is one great privilege of Christ's spiritual kingdom (Rom. 14:17). They have an interest in God, and therefore rejoice in Him as their own portion. They are often drawing near to God in His ordinances, and God doth not love to send them away sad. Though they have not an actual possession of glory, yet they have a well-grounded hope of it, and therefore rejoice (Rom. 5:2).

I grant, God often brings His children by way of a weeping cross. They are the mourners in Zion. "Her eyes are like the fish-pools of Heshbon" (Cant. 7:4). The cheeks of the godly are often all afloat, and their eyes as it were glazed over with tears. Oh but in the midst of their greatest sorrows, their tears are mixed with some hopes. In their heaviness there is a mixture of joy. Their right to joy still remains, and though they meet with many rubs in the way to heaven, though the feeling of joy may be suspended for a season, yet are they not always sad, but sometimes taste how gracious and sweet God in Christ is. God will come at last to them. "Ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you" (John 16:22). Yes, they have the highest feeling of joy, who have tasted the bitterness of sorrow (Isa. 57:18). Unutterable groans make way for unspeakable joys. Was not David the greatest mourner in Israel, and yet the sweetest singer in Zion?

This joy is a transcendent privilege. The saint's joy is far purer and better than the sinner's joy. They serve a poor goddess, who are devoted to sensual pleasures as their choicest felicity. Sensual pleasures are as a mermaid with a beautiful face, but deformed in the nether parts. They come with an enticing sweetness, but depart with shame and sorrow. Oh, but joy in purity of heart and holiness of life is always good and commendable. The other is but vain and vanishing; this is abiding. The other is from the world; this is from God. The other is maintained with shadows and earthly things; this with substances and eternal things. The end of the other is perplexity of conscience, but the end of this is peace of conscience.

A true believer is happy in times of sore trouble. Indeed God sometimes hides the faithful in the graves, before such times come (Isa. 57:2). They have Job's wish, "Oh that Thou wouldst hide me in the grave, that Thou wouldst keep me secret, until Thy wrath be past" (Job 14:13). Thus the Lord housed Josiah in the grave (2 Kings 23) before He poured out all His fierce wrath, to the removing of Judah and Jerusalem out of His sight. Thus He housed St. Augustine, the bishop of the city of Hippo in Africa, before it was taken and sacked by the Goths and Vandals. Thus He housed Luther, before that bloody war began in Germany, wherein all the Protestants were almost wholly wasted. But if the saints live to see such times of troubles, yet are they happy, first, because such troubles are medicinal to their souls.

Alas! They are apt to surfeit on the creature, and creature surfeits are very dangerous. Oh, but sharp afflictions are corrective medicine to cure this distemper. Alas! Impurity of affection is soon contracted, but when the water of affliction is on their back, love is in God's heart towards them. Affliction and affection, frowns and favor, are not inconsistent. Jacob's flitting and sorrowing life from Genesis 28 to 46, David's tossing and troubles in both books of Samuel, and Job's trials and griefs do all confirm this truth.

Believers have the presence, society, and company of God with them in trouble (Ps. 96:15; Isa. 43:2). In times of sore and sad troubles, God will protect and defend them. When the church was captive in Babylon, described in Jeremiah 4:23-26, all the ten tribes were dispersed into all quarters of the heathen and Assyrian empire. The temple was destroyed, and walls of the city razed, and a people of a strange language, fierce countenance and bloody spirit got the rule. Yet lo, the protection of the Almighty (Ez. 6:8; 12:16; 11:16; Jer. 36:26)! In the time of Antichristianism, the devil walked without a chain and suffered no control, for God loosed him. He seduceth by error and persecutes by sword, and yet they who appear for God in sinful days, God will hide them in desolating days (Rev. 3:10; 12:6). He will preserve them either from all hurtful troubles, or He will preserve them in them. What a glorious preservation was that of Daniel "when cast into the den of lions" (Dan. 6)! Were

not the lions both many and hungry? And yet they swallowed him not up, but suffered him to lie there all night. He lost not his sense to fear, though this would have been death to many a timorous man. He was so preserved by a heavenly instrument, an angel, that he lost not a limb, nor had not so much as a finger broken or bruised. Whereas his accusers, when cast into the den, were presently crushed and devoured, before they came to the bottom of the den. Was not Noah gloriously saved in the waves? And how gloriously and frequently did the Lord preserve and deliver Luther?

Three great miracles are observed in Luther. (1) To stand against the Pope was a great miracle. (2) To prevail against the Pope was a greater miracle. (3) To die in his bed in peace, and in his own country, where he was born, seems the greatest of all, especially having had so many enemies as he had. Besides, his escapes from manifold danger were little less than miraculous. As when a certain Jew was sent to destroy him by poison, God preserved him. For Luther had been warned and the face of the Jew was sent to him by picture, whereby he knew him and avoided the danger. At another time, as he was sitting in a certain place upon his stool, there was a great stone in the vault over his head where he sat. It was held miraculously while he was sitting, but as soon as he was up it immediately fell upon the place where he sat. It would have crushed him all to pieces if it had fallen upon him.

No less strange and glorious was the deliverance of St. Ambrose, when Valentini had with an army of soldiers beset the temple, where Ambrose was praying. Valentini commanded him to come out, but Ambrose refused, saying that he would not forsake the sheep-fold of Jesus Christ to let the wolves enter, but that he was ready to die where he was. The brave speech so daunted Valentii, that he retired without doing him any hurt. At another time, a wizard claimed to send his familiar spirit to kill Ambrose, but the spirit returned, and told him that Ambrose was so fenced about that he could not hurt him. At another time, one coming with a drawn sword to his bedside to kill him, found his hand so suddenly withered that he could not stir it, till upon his hearty repentance, Ambrose prayed over him. Then it was restored as the other.

Thus the Lord preserved His saints in the midst of all dangers and troubles, even as the apple of His own eye (Ps. 41:2). Their enemies may rage and plot against them, but God will hide them in the hollow of His hand, and they shall be safe. The devil must ask God leave, before he can touch a saint, when at the same time, he hath command over the ungodly (Job 1:12). But he never asked leave to irritate the Sabeen bands to destroy, but drove them on to spoil.

(5) If the faithful be hurried down the stream, and die in the common calamity, if their bodies be thrown into the fire, and consumed to ashes, yet their souls are in safety,

as safe as Noah was in the ark. Calamities are waters, great waters; they many times come tumbling and rolling one upon and after another. Oh, but they cannot come near the souls of the saints to destroy them. Their souls and their faith (which is the life and seal of the soul) are in a blessed security. Though outward life go, yet spiritual life continues, and life eternal succeeds life temporal. The shell is broken, but the jewel is safely locked under custody. A believer may say in the day of trouble, "Show me what can slay my soul or blot out my name out of heaven. Show me what can rob me of my Redeemer's love, and I will fear, but death cannot do it, 'for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.' God hath built heaven for my soul to dwell in, when turned out of the house of the body. And therefore the shorter my life, the sooner I am at home." It is not in the power of any trouble whatever to leave a soul miserable if it is truly sanctified.

God bears with the many infirmities of believers. How easily are the best misled out of the right way? Drawn and enticed away by their own lusts; driven away by the temptations of Satan, and follies of the world, they pass not one day without many offenses. Yes, and in those things wherein they think they do well, they find upon examination, that there is much amiss, that they deserve to be rejected and cast out of God's presence. Yet so great is God's pity and bounty towards them in Jesus Christ, that He deals most favorably and fatherly with them. He pities their weaknesses, and so pities them as to heal

them (Is. 57:18). He pities them as to spare them. "I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him" (Mal. 3:17). By sparing them, we must understand God's passing by their infirmities. God indeed sees their failings, as well as the failings of others (Heb. 4:12). Yea, God doth disallow their failings, and is displeased with them (2 Sam. 11:27). Yea, His law condemneth them as worthy of punishment (Gal. 3:10). Yet such is God's indulgence and compassion towards His sinning children, that upon their unfeigned sorrow and afflicting their souls in secret, they may be assured that their heavenly Father will spare them, "as a father spareth his own son that serveth him," and that with so much more kindness and love, as the heavens are higher than the earth, and God greater than man, so God forgives His children. It was the saying of that pious Prelate Bishop Babington: "Albeit some one or other infirmities may justly disable me for such a place in church or commonwealth. Yet from a place with the elect, either here or forever, it shall not hinder me. Ten thousand blemishes shall not hinder me, if I am grieved with them and fight against them, as the Lord enableth me. I take hold of my spotless Saviour, as my help and safety against them all."

God hears the poor imperfect prayers of the true believer (Ps. 66:19-20). The prayers of the saints are ships of venture. Oh but they return richly laden. They are swift posts, and bring back glad tidings to their souls. Their prayers are mingled with faith, and prayers mingled with

faith do certainly mount up to heaven (Mt. 21:22). The Jews were of the opinion that the smoke of the incense, as it ascended from the altar, would not decline by any wind or blast but ascend directly towards heaven. I am sure the prayers of believers ascend directly to God by Jesus Christ (Is. 56:7; Rev. 8:4). God heareth not sinners. Let hard-hearted sinners pray never so much, all their prayers are lost; God regards them not. But God will certainly hear the prayers of those, whose hearts are upright before Him (Prov. 15:8). They may be assured of speedy answers to their requests, which are made according to the will of God (John 16:23; 1 John 5:14-15; Ps. 34:15).

This is the common privilege of all the saints by Jesus Christ: their prayers are heard, and they have welcome audience at the throne of grace continually. God hath not said to the seed of Jacob, “seek ye Me in vain.” He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious fruit (this precious fruit, the prayer of faith) shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him. His showery seed time shall be blessed with a fruitful and plentiful harvest. God will so hear his prayers as to supply his wants, and give him what he prays for. Oh wonderful condescension and unspeakable mercy to have the ear of the great Jehovah! What greater worldly privilege than to have the ear of those who are greatest in the world? What a privilege then is it to have the ear of God, to have audience in the court of heaven? And this is the

saint's privilege by Jesus Christ. As soon as the poor believer calls, God is ready to answer, "Here I am. Be it unto thee, even as thou wilt." God indeed sometimes delays to answer the prayers of believers, but then He supports them in the exercise of grace, and the performance of their duties till the answer comes. He enables them to find out some answer, some encouragement in His very refusal. "But He answered and said, it is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to the dogs. And she said, truth Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table" (Mt. 15:26-27). Here was encouragement in discouragement. God's dealings toward His people seem sometimes to cross His promises. Oh but when He gives them no visible answer, He gives them invisible strength, to persevere till answered. Thus the woman of Canaan persevered prayingly when she was rebuked and answered roughly.

A true believer is privileged with affliction for righteousness' sake (Phil. 1:29). God many times honors His saints with those arms and ensigns of praise. This you will say is a strange privilege. Oh but to a gracious soul, it is an high glory to suffer for the gospel's sake, as the apostles departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name (Acts 5:41). These, whether they be tongue persecutions, the flouts and reproaches of wicked men as in times of peace or hand persecutions as in times of war, are glorious badges and a matter of glorying (Gal.

6:14,17). These make the saints famous and honorable. Is it not honour and happiness to do the will of God? And can it be disgrace or misery to suffer His will? "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake, Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you (Mt. 5:10-12).

"All things work together for good to them that love God," and believe in His Son Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:28). The most bitter afflictions shall make them better. The sharpest rue shall be an herb of grace. They shall thank their fever, bless their poverty, and praise their oppressor; they shall find it to have been a good fever, a good poverty, a good oppression, very beneficial and advantageous unto them. For their heavenly Father correcteth them for their profit, that they may be partakers of His holiness (Heb. 12:10). God makes use of afflictions as medicine to prevent or cure soul diseases, and to purge out corrupt temperaments from His children (Ps. 119:71). When they are engulfed in troubles, and overwhelmed with afflictions, no evil toucheth them, for God intendeth them good. The very worst of providences shall according to God's purpose and promise infallibly effect their internal and eternal advantage. Yea, their very sins shall be turned to a mercy to the glory of God, and

the salvation of their souls. Peccatum, says Augustine, Tristitiam peperit tristitia peccatum content. God's wisdom draws good for them out of their very sins. His overruling hand, guided with a wicked counsel, works mercy for them out of misery. The wicked, because God prospers them in sin and gives them some temporal mercies, harden themselves in their sinful course, like the idolatrous Jews (Jer. 44:17).

But it is otherwise with the godly. They do not harden themselves in sin, but mourn bitterly for sin, and watch against it more earnestly. As God made Adam's apostasy to be a door for a Redeemer to come in, and as Joseph's brethren sold him, so that Jacob and his sons might not sell themselves for food, so God turneth the poison of sin into a wholesome potion. Sin makes God's sinning servants more cautious, humble, watchful and zealous for the time to come. Indeed Satan's design in drawing them to sin is like that of the Assyrians, "To take the spoil and the prey, to tread them down as the mire in the streets, it is in his heart to cut them off and destroy them" (Isa, 10:6-7). Oh but by repentance, "they shall return to the Lord, and A true believer shall persevere in grace, even unto the end. His stay themselves upon the Holy One of Israel" (verses 20-21). The devil, saith Cyril! Alex, runs with open mouth upon God's children to devour them, but they manfully resist him. He thinks to weaken their faith, but they by his assaults are made the stronger. He fights against them, but they gain ground upon him, so

that what he intended for their destruction, against his will is for their advantage.

A true believer's afflictions are sweetened. (1) His present distress and affliction shall redound to his account here (2 Sam. 16:2). He that sacrificed His own Son for them, would not deny them any desirable mercy, if His wisdom saw that it would tend to the health and prosperity of their souls. He that redeemed their souls from eternal burnings, takes no delight to pour vinegar into their smarting sores. If God deny them any present mercy, His design is to extract comfort in the end. If they lack children, health, estate, etc., God will fetch their good out thence, though they discern it not.

Believers' present comforts are more than their present afflictions. Say, they have not great possessions, yet they have an inheritance among them that are sanctified. They are poor in the world, but rich in faith. If they have not such an overflowing cup and full table as some have, yet they have a full Christ and receive of His abounding grace. Though they be mean and contemptible on earth, yet their names are written in heaven. And if they want health in their bodies, they have peace in their consciences which is far better.

The joys of heaven will follow the believers' sorrows on earth. These heavenly joys will counter, yes, overbalance all their earthly sorrows (2 Cor. 4:17). Tears and sighs may accompany them to the door of death, but can find

no entrance into heaven. Heaven is brought into their hearts here. They must be praying, repenting, and believing only a little while, and heaven shall open to receive their souls. God will put His hand as it were through the clouds, and say to the believing soul, Come up hither. And oh, how transporting and ravishing will its joys then be! A true believer shall persevere in grace, even unto the end. His natural estate is indeed changeable; his body is strong today and weak tomorrow. His civil estate is changeable; his riches often take wing and fly away. But in his spiritual estate there is more certainty. His continuance in grace is sure. He may ebb and flow, rise and fall, as to degrees of grace. Yet being sanctified by the immortal Spirit of grace, he shall never quite fall away from grace (John 4:14). There is an inseparable connection between grace and glory: grace is the seed of glory, and glory is the harvest of grace. Grace is glory inchoate, and glory is grace inconsummate. Grace is the root of glory; glory is the top-branch of grace. Grace is glory militant; glory is grace triumphant. True grace draws everlasting glory infallibly along with it.

The saints' perseverance is founded, first, upon election. God hath chosen them to eternal life, and their names are written in heaven (Luke 10:20). And what hand can get up to heaven to scratch it out? There it is, and there it shall be forever. It was written by the finger of God, dipped in the blood of Christ, as with the pen of a ready writer, and is fast shut up with the clasps of God's power

and wisdom, and therefore none can expunge it.

(2) The saints' perseverance is founded, secondly, upon the continuance of the Lord's kindness, and the irremoveableness of His covenant. "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee" (Isa. 54:10).

(3) The saints' perseverance is founded, thirdly, upon God's promise, "and I will betroth thee unto Me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies" (Hos. 2:19-20). Now God is true, and whatsoever is promised by Him shall be performed with faithfulness, in spite of all intervement occurrences.

(4) The saints' perseverance is founded, fourthly, upon Christ's prayer in the days of His flesh. Whatsoever Christ prayed for to the Father shall be performed and Christ prayed for the persevering of believers, "And I will pray to the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever" (John 17:11; 14:16).

Fifthly, the saints' perseverance is founded upon the power of God. "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand: My Father, which gave them Me is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand" (John 10:28-29). As corruption could

not withstand the entrance of grace into their hearts, could not bolt the door totally to exclude it, no more shall it be able irresistibly to eject it out of their hearts. If God was able to bring grace into their hearts, though sin and lust resisted to the utmost, how much more is He able to keep grace in possession? Surely He who raised the light of reformation out of Egyptian darkness can keep it from setting in obscurity. He who regenerated them when they were enemies and unbelievers can preserve them now they are regenerated.

In the sixth place, the saints' perservation is founded upon Christ's intercession. "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Rom. 8:35; Heb. 7:25).

Seventhly, believers' perseverance is grounded upon the sealing of the Spirit. They who are sealed in their hearts by the Spirit can never totally nor finally lose their grace, but all true believers are thus sealed (2 Cor. 1:21; Eph. 4:30; 1:13-14). This sealing is unchangeable as to the substance, though not as to the quality of it. Broken and dark it may be, but it can never be quite broken completely off. The new man may languish, but shall not die. Hypocrites may fall fearfully. Their zeal may cool, the leaf of their profession drop off. These gourds may wither, these luminaries may be tumbled from their orbs, and the first may be last, "but the godly man shall be like

a tree planted by the river of waters, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither” (Ps. 1:3).

(1) A true believer is blessed at death because he dies with a heart full of faith, in union to and leaning upon the Lord Christ (Rev. 14:13). (2) A believer’s death is blessed because he dies beloved of his God, and in covenant with Him. It is not the unserviceableness of his body, it is not its ghastly look, nor that worm-eaten putrefaction that follows after its dissolution that can make the godly man loathed or less loved of his Creator. His God loved him when a mere nothing, before ere his face was seen, or his name known. He cannot be less loved of his Redeemer, who shed His blood and lost His life, that death might not enter him upon an estate of everlasting distance. Death to the saints is a great advantage (Phil. 1:21). To the wicked death is loss: the loss not only of their perishing comforts, but of their immortal souls. It is not only a dissolution, but a destruction of all their hopes, all their happiness. How then can they desire the day of death? Do malefactors wish for the verdict and desire the day of execution? It would be the best news they ever heard, if a mighty angel should come from heaven and say, “Christ hath, on second thought, resolved that there shall be no day of judgment, though He hath threatened it in His Word. All the wicked shall be forgiven, or, being once dead, shall never rise again.” Oh, but such a thought is foolish, for at death and judgment the wicked shall be

packed into hell, and cast into the holes that in Tophet are digged for them! Oh but to the godly, death is an advantage; it is a going from the place of their pilgrimage towards their Father's house (2 Cor. 5:8). It is a falling asleep when drowsy (Acts 7). It is a taking of rest when weary (Rev. 14:13), a committing the jewel of the soul to a friend's keeping upon a journey (Mal. 3:17). It is a changing of the dross of corruption for the gold of perfect grace, duskish twilight for midday sun, the company of vile sinners for the company of glorious angels and saints, tabernacles of dust for glorious mansions, brutish delights for divine pleasures, a small pittance of this present transitory world for the full fruition of an all-sufficient and soul-satisfying object, which is God in Christ blessed forever. It is a laying down of one life, to go and take actual possession of a better. It is a departure from all cares and troubles, to all joys and comforts that can never be parted with. It is a passing from an howling wilderness to a joyful paradise.

Oh how gladly may the dying saint lay down his head, and venture into that other region, where his Saviour and Master, his Head and Husband is ready to receive him! Surely He that redeemed thee, oh believer, will not destroy thee. He that is thy Head will not curse a member of His own body. He that is thy Husband will not cast off His own new-married spouse. When Christ went up into heaven, thou ascended with Him; He went up to take possession of heaven on thy behalf (Heb. 6:20; John

44:2). At thy conversion, heaven came down into thee, and at thy dissolution thou shalt go up into heaven. At thy conversion thou receivedst the earnest penny, and at thy dissolution thou shalt receive the whole sum. Now thou art in the borders and suburbs of heaven, serving the Lord Christ, and therefore thou mayest be sure of glory (Col. 3:24). Christ will with power carry thee away at death, as a father saith to his child, "Child, come away with me," and so catcheth him up under his arms. So saith Christ, "Child, come away with Me," and so closes the eyes, lays down the head, and takes up the soul into heaven. The great Physician embalms the souls with spices and odors of glory, while the body is left a prey to worms of rottenness.

A true believer hath inward strength in the hour of death. When he feels the outward man decaying, and his heart is somewhat dejected, God is near him to strengthen him. "God strengthens the godly upon their bed of languishing, and maketh all their bed in their sickness" (Ps. 73:26). Yea, He maketh a bed of inward joy and comfort unto their souls, wherein they may rest and be refreshed, when their bodily pains are most grievous and intolerable. He then speaketh to them words of comfort, or rather as Peter calleth them, "words of eternal life" (John 6:68). He saith to them as He said to the penitent thief, "Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43), or as He said concerning Lazarus' sickness, "This sickness is not unto death" (John 11:4). Yea,

this death is not unto death, but for the glory of God, and also for your glory that by it ye may attain to eternal glory and happiness. He said unto Jacob, when he was going down into Egypt, “Fear not to go down to Egypt, for I will go down with thee, and will surely bring thee up again”; so saith He to His languishing and dying servants, “Fear not to go down into the dark and silent grave, for I will go down with you, and will also surely bring you up again.”

Thus when the dying believers sit down and sigh by them, or turn their backs and withdraw from them, unable to help and comfort them, the Lord compounds a cordial which eases their aching hearts. (1) He strengthens them to suffer all trials and exercises, even the most sharp and tedious pains patiently (C 01. 1:11). (2) He strengthens them to perform spiritual duties in such a dying hour (Phil. 4:13). The poor sickly Christian continues instant in prayer, acts faith, abounds in gracious thoughts, puts up most heart-ravishing prayer, and the soul sings like a bird that is ready to leave the filthy cage of the body where it has been detained long.

(3) God supports the dying believer to resist temptations that gather about the departing soul. The believer has courage and boldness, skill and wisdom, to receive with Christian manfulness the devil’s last charge, and to throw back his darts into his conquered face. He hath formerly beaten him many a time when he strove to slay his faith,

and to quench his zeal, and now scorns to yield to him. He believes that God is his Father, that his sins are pardoned, and that his old Friend will not now forsake him; let the devil stand at his bedside, and suggest what He will. "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day" (2 Tim. 1:12). Oh, how comfortable is the claim that the believing soul in that hour maketh unto God as a reconciled Father, unto Christ, as a Bridegroom and Saviour, and to His blood as his ransom. What a sweet claim the dying soul can make to heaven as Christ's purchase for him, and to the society of the saints and angels, as fellow citizens in eternal glory.

The resurrection of believers shall be to everlasting life. Indeed even the most daring sinner must rise again at the last day (Mt. 22:31-32). But the unsaved sinner's resurrection is by the power of Christ as a Judge, not as a Head. Theirs is a resurrection to everlasting shame and contempt, not to everlasting glory and honor. Their bodies must be partners in punishment as they were in sin. They must then come to a "depart from Me ye cursed" (Mt. 25:41). God will then answer them in their own language of defiance. But the saints shall rise first, with perfect, glorious, and immortal bodies, to lie in the grave no more, but to live in heaven forever. Their bodies that are now earthly shall then become heavenly. Their bodies that are now mortal, corruptible, and subject to passion,

shall then become immortal, incorruptible, and impassionate. Their bodies that are now dull and heavy, yea, perhaps even black and deformed, shall then become quick and lively, yea, shining as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Their dissolved bodies shall partake of a glorious resurrection, and be joyfully joined unto their souls.

Suppose that the most loving couple that ever the sun saw married, were living on the seaside. And suppose the wife were snatched away by a Turkish pirate, cast into prison and abused severely. After many years a friend redeems her, and brings her home clad like a princess to her husband, who wanted nothing else but her company. Oh! What congratulations and feastings there would be! What embracing salutes! What tears of joy! United in soul and body are this loving couple who lived by the seaside of eternity. Death is the pirate which snatched away the body in the night of sickness, and tumbled it into the grave to lie there, while the soul lives in all prosperity in heaven. Oh, but Christ by His power redeems the body of the believer from the grave, and instead of its rags, clothes it with immortality. He changes the grave's stench into perfumes of joy. As the body comes up out of the grave, the soul runs to meet it, saying, "Oh my body thou art welcome here, oh, welcome out of the dust!" and so clasping together, they live forever with the Lord.

Then shall the believer be justified and acquitted, applauded and rewarded openly. Then shall believers be taken up as assessors, to sit with Christ upon His throne, and to judge the world. As God judgeth by authoritative jurisdiction, and Christ by the promulgation and execution of the sentence, so judge believers by applausive approbation. Then shall they be taken up into receptacles of light, and mansions of love, and enter in the joy of their Lord. Then shall they be led into the King's palace, to be married to the Bridegroom of their souls, and to receive everyone of them a crown of glory. Then their fetters shall be turned into chains of gold, and their bread of affliction into a joyful and costly feast. Now they are as sowers sowing in tears, but then shall be harvesters reaping in joy. Now they are as worms and no men, obscured with many clouds, but then shall they have a name as glorious as the sun. Now their dwelling is in a dungeon, then shall they have a glorious place in which to dwell. Now they must associate with men who are as thorns in their sides, but then they shall have communion with God, with Christ, with glorious angels, and glorified saints. Now their knowledge is imperfect. They are ignorant of far more than they realize, but then they shall know the secrets both of heaven and earth. They shall know the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and all the saints that ever lived by name, as Peter, James, and John knew Moses and Elias in the transfiguration of Christ on the mount. Surely the transfiguration was an example of the knowing of heaven. Yea, then shall their memories,

wills, and affections be, after an inexpressible manner, made conformable unto God. Christ will be glorified and made marvelous in His saints (2 Thes. 1:10). That is, He shall glorify them with that glory wherewith He as man is glorified, and they shall rest in His bosom in unspeakable peace and blessedness forever.

A true believer's happiness will never end. The glory of the other world is eternal just as the damnation of hell is eternal (Mark 3:29). The soul being once lost is lost forever. Once locked in the dark prison of hell it is locked up fast forever. No release, ransom, or recompense can then be found. So the happiness of heaven is eternal. When the ten hundred thousand millions of millions of years shall be over, not a minute of eternity shall be spent. Worldlings live but for a few years in their stately dwellings, oh, but the saints shall live forever in the highest heavens, to which, in comparison, the world is but a fly for littleness, and a hole for darkness. If God should put thee to thy choice, and say, "Oh man, thou shalt take thy choice, whether thou wilt be wrapped up into heaven for three minutes, or live on earth a thousand years in all mirth and pleasure," wouldst thou not rather choose to be in heaven but for two minutes of the three, than to be in an Eden of joy a thousand years? "For a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of My God" (Ps. 84:10a). What will it then be to dwell in God's house above forever? Thy estate, oh believer, in the next world will be a sickless,

sorrowless, temptationless, sinless, and timeless estate. Thy bliss and delights there will be an ocean without bounds or bottom. God's delights never had a beginning, and never will have an end. The wicked man's delights are now both at a beginning and ending. Oh, but thy delights, though they had a beginning, yet they shall never have an end. "While we look not at the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18). May the Lord give thee a clear and piercing sight of heaven's glory, and fill thee with all peace and joy in believing.