

**THE ART OF CONTENTMENT.**

## THE ART OF CONTENTMENT.

### NOTE.

'The Art of Contentment' forms the last of the sermons of the 'Saint's Cordials,' published in 1637 and 1658. It had previously been No. 1 of the first edition, 1629. The text of 1637 is followed in our reprint. In Vol. IV. pp 75-111 will be found a specimen of the 'various readings' of the editions of 1637 and 1658 on a comparison with that of 1629. These may suffice. The result of a minute collation shews that the edition of 1637 presents a careful revision and enlargement of the *anonymous*, and, I suspect, *surreptitious* edition of 1629. Instead therefore of encumbering our margins, and distracting the reader with these corrections and improvements of the first edition, it has been deemed better to make the edition of 1637 our text in the remainder, leaving it to those curious in such matters to compare the other two therewith, in the way 'Judgment's Reason' in Vol. IV. is exhibited. *The edition of 1637, let it be understood, represents Sibbes's own version of his sermons, either from fuller 'Notes,' or from a revision of that of 1629.*

\* For the general title-page of the three editions of 'The Saint's Cordials,' see Vol. IV. p. 60. The separate title-page of 'The Art of Contentment' will be found below.\* It may be proper to state, that the text of 'The Art of Contentment' now given is less full than in the first edition, the explanation being that the suppressed passages had been appropriated in other sermons in the interval. G.

### \* THE ART OF CONTENTMENT.

In one Sermon.

Wherein is shewed.

{	That this Art of Contentment is a Mysterie.
	That Gods Children are carried, and know how to behave themselves in variety of Conditions.
	How this hard Lesson is learned.
	What Infirmities are.
	The right use of them.
	That Christianity is a busie trade.
	The way how one is said to doe all things.
	What it is to doe things Evangelically.
	When a Christian can doe all things.
	Why he failes when he failes.
Where his strength is.	
Lastly, The skill to fetch strength from Christ.	

2 SAM. 15. 25, 26.

*Then the King said unto Zadok, Carry the Arke of God back againe into the Citie: If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both it and the Tabernacle thereof.*

*But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee, Behold, here am I, let him doe to me as seemeth good in his eyes.*

L O N D O N,

Printed for R. DAWLMAN, at the brazen Serpent in  
Pauls Churchyard. 1637.†

† The imprint of the first edition, 1629, is, 'London, Printed for Robert Dolman in Pauls Church-yard at the signe of the Brazen Serpent. 1629,' and of the third, 1658, 'London, Printed for Henry Cripps at his Shop in Pope's-head Alley. 1658.' The former has the woodcut described in note, Vol. IV. p. 60.—G.

## THE ART OF CONTENTMENT.

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*I have learned, in what estate soever I am, to be content. I know how to be abased, and how to abound: everywhere, in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me.*—PHILIP. IV. 11, 12, 13.

THE words are the blessed apostle's concerning himself, expressing the glorious power of the Spirit of God in a strong and grown Christian, and are to wipe away the imputation of worldliness in the apostle, serving herein also for a pattern to all God's children, that they may learn by his example that as they must be careful to avoid all blemishes and imputations, so especially that of worldliness, as being most contrary to the profession of a Christian, who hath an 'high calling,' and whose 'hope is in heaven,' Philip. iii. 14.

The Philippians had sent Paul some relief; and lest they should think that he expected great matters, he tells them that he had 'learned to be content in what estate soever he was.'

It is not amiss sometimes for God's children to speak of themselves, as Paul here as to other good ends so also to avoid false imputations in the way of just apology,\* and likewise to be exemplary to weaker Christians. Is not the doctrine of contentment and the power of grace in all estates better learned by this blessed example of Paul, when he speaks thus of himself, 'I have learned, in what estate soever I am, to be content: to want, and to abound,' &c., than if he had weakly said, Be content with your present condition? The Scriptures be intended for practice; and therefore it is that there are so many examples in them, to shew the power of God's Spirit. This is the end of Paul's speaking so of himself, 'I have learned,' &c.

To come to the words. First, In general he sets down *the power of God's Spirit in him* in regard of that blessed grace of contentment. 'I have learned, in what estate I am, therewith to be content.'

And then he doth *parcel out this general into particular conditions in this same state*, 'I know how to be abased, and how to abound.'

And then he *wraps up all in general again*, 'I can do all things,' &c.

But lest this should seem to be somewhat vain-glorious, 'I can do all

\* That is, 'defence.'—G.

things,' as if he were omnipotent (in some sense, indeed, a Christian is omnipotent), therefore he adds, 'I can do all things,' but with a blessed correction, 'through Christ that strengtheneth me.'

'I have learned,' saith he, 'I am instructed.' It is very significant in the original, viz., I am consecrated to this knowledge of contentment in all estates (a). It is a learning not of great persons, or of learned persons, but of holy persons. It is a mystical knowledge. There is a mystery in it. For as all religion is a mystery,—'great is the mystery of godliness,'—not only the speculative part, but likewise the practical part of it, so every part of religion is a mystery, repentance a mystery, faith a mystery, and this practical part of contentment in all conditions is a great mystery. And therefore St Paul saith he is instructed in it, as a consecrated person, having in him the Spirit of God. All the degrees in this world cannot teach this lesson that Paul had learned, 'to be contented.' He learned it in no school of the world, not at the feet of Gamaliel; he learned it of Christ, and by blessed experiences in afflictions. Some graces are reserved for some estates. He had learned patience and contentment in variety of estates. He had it not by nature, for he saith, 'I have learned.' It is a mystical thing, not so easily attained unto as the world is fondly\* persuaded. Your ordinary Christian thinks that religion is nothing, that it is easily learned; whereas there is no point in religion but is a mystery. There is no Christian but he finds it to be so when he sets himself heartily to go through any religious work; as to humble himself, to repent, to go out of himself, and to cast himself upon the mercy of God in Christ. Oh, will he then say, it is a mystery. There is a difficulty in this work that I never thought of till I came to it. And so to be content with our condition, whatsoever the case be, to bring our hearts low, it is a mystery. Nature never teacheth this. It is learned in the school of Christ, and not without many stripes. We must be proficient a good while before we can learn to any purpose this one lesson of contentment in any condition. But the last verse is that which I will now dwell on, wherein we may see three things observable.

First, *That God carries his children in this world through variety of conditions.* They sometimes want, and sometimes abound. Their condition is sometimes more comfortable than at others. That is the first point.

2. The second is, *That in this variety of conditions, as they know what it is to want and to abound, so in all variety of conditions they know how to carry themselves.*

Thirdly, *They know in all variety of conditions how to avoid the sins incident to that condition.* As there are graces belonging to every state, so there are sins incident to every condition. And the child of God hath learned to practise the one, and to avoid the other.

1. First, *God's children know what it is to want, and to abound by experience.* God leads them through variety of conditions, Their estate is not always one and the same.

*Quest.* What is the reason of this dispensation in God thus to rule his children, to bring them to heaven by variety of conditions?

*Sol.* Among many other reasons this is one, *that their graces may be tried.* Every grace that brings a Christian to heaven must be a tried grace. He must try his patience, his contentment, his humility. How shall these graces be tried but in variety of estates and conditions? And secondly, *How should we have experience of the goodness of God but in variety of estates?*

\* That is, 'foolishly.'—G.

When we find the stable, certain, constant love of God in variety of conditions, that howsoever our conditions ebb and flow, be up and down, like the spring weather, sometimes fair and sometimes foul, yet notwithstanding the love of God is constant always, and we have never so sure experience of it as in the variety of conditions that befall us; then we know that in God there is 'no shadow of changing,' howsoever the changes of our life be. Is it not a point worth our learning, to know the truth of our grace, and to know the constancy of God's love, with whom we are in a gracious covenant? And then again, we learn much wisdom how to manage our life hereby, even in the intercourse of our changes, to be now rich, now poor, now high, now low in estate. Wisdom is gotten by experience in variety of estates. He that is carried on in one condition, he hath no wisdom to judge of another's estate, or to carry himself to a Christian in another condition, because he was never abased himself. He looks very big at him. He knows not how to tender\* another, that hath not been in another's condition. And therefore to furnish us, that we may carry ourselves as Christians, meekly, lovingly, and tenderly to others, God will have us go to heaven in variety, not in one uniform condition in regard of outward things.

*Use.* Learn hence *not to quarrel with God's government*; for though he alters our conditions, yet he never alters his love. A Christian is unmoveable in regard of the favour of God to him, and in regard of sanctifying grace. In all moveable conditions he hath a fixed condition. Therefore let us not find fault with God's dispensation, but let him do as he pleases. So he bring us to heaven, it is no matter what way, how rugged it be, so he bring us thither.

2. The second general thing is this, *That in this variety of conditions, God's children know how to carry themselves.* As they know what it is to want and to abound, so they know how to abound and be abased as they should do. For there is no condition but a Christian may pick good matter out of it. As a good artsman will make a good piece of work of an ill piece of matter sometimes, to shew his skill, so a Christian can frame matter that is good out of any condition; he knows how to want, and how to abound, and that with the expression of graces too. He can practise the graces that ought and may be practised in all conditions. For instance, he can abound; that is, with expressing the graces that should be in abundance, which is, thankfulness to God; he hath, in abundance, a spirit of thankfulness; he hath a spirit to be a faithful steward in abundance; a spirit to honour God with his abundance. He hath a spirit to be humble in abundance, knowing all is as 'grass and the flower of the field.' He can be humble, he can stoop under the mighty hand of God, he can have experience in the abasement of the vanity of worldly favour, and worldly greatness. He learns what it is, and so he can learn patience, and all other graces that are to be practised in a mean estate. It were too long to name particulars; a Christian can do this. Grace is above all conditions. It can manage and rule all estates of life. It makes them serviceable to its own ends. A gracious man is not dejected over much with abasement; he is not lifted up over much with abundance, but he carries himself in a uniform manner, becoming a Christian in all conditions.

3. The third general thing is, *He can want and he can abound, without tainting himself over much with the sins of those conditions.* For instance, he

\* That is, 'touch,' = make tender, move, or qu. 'care for'? = regard. Cf. Richardson, *sub voce*.—G.

can abound without pride, though it be a hard matter. Abundance works upon the soul of a man. He had need to have a strong brain that digests abundance; it is a wild untamed thing. And we see by experience in God's children how hard a matter it is for them to manage abundance. We see how it wrought upon Solomon and David. They were better in adversity, 1 Kings, xi. 1, 2 Sam. xi. 2; and yet notwithstanding the child of God hath grace even to overcome the sins that are incident to abundance. He hath grace to be lowly-minded in a great estate; not to trust to uncertain riches; he knows by the Spirit of God what they are, and that he hath an inheritance of better things in another world, which teacheth him to set a light esteem upon all things below.

And so for dejection; the sin that we are subject to fall into in want, is putting forth our hands to evil means, to shift.\* God's child can learn to want without tainting his conscience with ill courses, and then he can want without impatience, without too much dejection of spirit; as if all were lost; whenas, indeed, a Christian in a manner is rich all alike. For God is his portion, and howsoever a beam may be took away, the sun is his; take away a stream, the spring is his; in the poorest estate, God all-sufficient is his still; and so in a manner a Christian is rich all alike. God never takes away himself, Gen. xvii. 1. He knows this, and therefore he can want, he can be abased as long as he hath the spring of all. Though a cistern be took away, he cares not, he can want and abound without murmuring, without dejection of spirit. Whereas those that have not been brought up in Christ's school, nor trained up in variety of conditions, are able to do nothing. If they abound, they are proud; if they be cast down, they murmur and fret, and are dejected, as if there were no Providence to rule the world, as if they were fatherless children. This is the excellency of a Christian, that as he knows what it is to abound by experience, so he knows how to abound with the practice of the graces, and how to want with the avoiding of the snares that usually are in that condition.

*Obj.* But hath a Christian learned this at the first?

*Ans.* No; he learns it not very easily, nor very soon. *Self-denial is the first lesson in Christ's school:* to have no wit of our own further than Christ's wisdom; to have no will of our own further than his commandment guides us; and he that hath learned self-denial, he is in a great way to learn this blessed lesson of contentment in any condition whatsoever. So that every Christian hath some degree of that, as he can deny himself. But there are many things to be learned before we can come to carry ourselves wisely in any condition.

For besides self-denial, we must learn *the doctrine of the covenant of grace*, that God in Christ is become a Father to us, and carries a fatherly mind to us. In what condition soever we are, he is a father still, and intends us well, and will provide for us in the hardest condition. Having took the relation of a father upon him, do you think that he will fail in the carriage of a father towards us? He is pitiful to us, he respects us in the basest condition. He that knows God to be his father, cast him into what condition you will, knows he hath a good portion.

And then we must know *the doctrine of the providence of this Father*, that all shall work together for the best to those that love him, Rom. viii. 28, want and abundance, prosperity and afflictions, whatsoever. God by his overruling power will bring all things to this blessed issue, to help forward the eternal good of his child. A man must know this, and divers the like

\* That is, = to resort to expedients.—G.

things that are to be known, before he can learn this blessed lesson of contentment. There is a venom and a vanity in everything without grace, wherewith we are tainted; but when grace comes, it takes out the sting of all ill, and then we find a good in the worst. There is a vanity in the best things, and there is a good in the worst. Grace picks out the good out of the worst; as God turns all to good, so grace finds good in every condition. The Spirit of God sanctifies a Christian to all conditions, and sanctifies every condition to him. Now, I beseech you, think of this that I have said, which I wish without further enlargement may add to your care, and desire to be in the happy condition of Christians. What a blessed thing is it to be in the covenant of grace, to have God to be our father, to be in Christ, that let our condition outwardly be what it will be, we shall have grace to carry ourselves in it, God will go along with us by his Holy Spirit! What a blessed thing is it, in all the uncertainties of the world, to have a certain rule to go by, as a Christian hath, which carries him along in all the uncertainties in this world! None but a Christian hath this. 'I have learned,' saith Paul. When did he learn it? Not before he was a Christian. This I could desire to press, but that I have other things to speak of, to make us in love with religion, with the state of Christians, that is thus above all conditions whatsoever, and can rule all other conditions. A Christian is not at the mercy of the world; his contentment is not a dependent contentment. You may cast him into prison, you may impoverish him, you may labour to debase and disgrace him; but can you take away his comfort? Can you take away his grace? Can you take away the love of God? No; God will rather increase all upon him. For the best things of a Christian are not at the mercy of the world, nor at the mercy of his several conditions. Prosperity and adversity, these are out of him. He hath a state depending upon the good will and pleasure of his Father, that loves him better than he loves himself, and out of love will work good out of the worst condition that can befall him. So I hasten to that which follows.

4. Having spoken in particular, then he comes to the general, wherein he wraps up all: 'I can do all things, but in Christ that strengthens me.' Here is,

1. First of all, *The blessed apostle's ability*, 'I can do all things.'

2. And then here is, secondly, *the spring of his ability, whence he hath it*: 'I can do all things, but in Christ that strengthens me.'

In the apostle's ability you have,

1. *His strength itself*. 2. *The enlargement of it*.

'I am able.' And what to do? A few things? No; 'all things.' The point of doctrine offered is this, that *a Christian man is an able man*. Whosoever hath the Spirit of Christ is an able man, and his ability is a large ability; he is able to do all things. Take doing in a transcendent sense, not only to do, but take it to resist ill, to resist temptation, to suffer affliction, to enjoy prosperity, to break off sinful courses, and to take a new course, to practise all duties; for so the apostle means 'I can do,' that is, I can carry myself in all conditions, I can express all graces, I can resist all temptations, I can suffer all afflictions, I can do all this. What is the reason a Christian is so able?

1. Because, first of all, *he hath a stronger and abler spirit than his own*. The Spirit of God is a spirit of strength, 2 Tim. i. 8. It is the Spirit of power, which is the soul of his soul, and the life of his life. Now the strength of a man is in his spirit. The stronger spirit makes the abler man,

and the Spirit of God being the strongest of spirits, indeed the strength of spirits, it makes a Christian in whom it dwells the ablest man.

2. And then again, *A Christian is a new creature*; therefore he is furnished with abilities fit for the new creature. When Adam was created he was endued with all graces fit for an entire state. As when God made heaven he made stars to beautify heaven; when he made the earth, he made trees and flowers; so, when he made man, he furnished him with graces, and fitted him for that estate. Now after the fall, when God brings a man in Christ to be a new creature, he hath abilities to furnish him for that new condition.

3. And then again, *Every particular grace of the new creature is a grace of strength*. As the Spirit is a strong Spirit, so the spirit of love is as strong as death, it hath a 'constraining power,' 2 Cor. v. 14. The Spirit of God is so strong in his children, that are truly his, that it makes them even with willingness to lay down their lives, that is dearest to them in this world. Here is a sweet kind of tyranny in the affection of love, that will carry a man through thick and thin, through all, and that with pleasure, willingly and comfortably too; as the apostles were glad to suffer anything for Christ's sake, their hearts were so enlarged with a spirit of love. The spirit of faith it is a strong and mighty spirit, an able spirit. It conquers God himself, as Jacob wrestled with the wrestlings of God, and by the strength of God overcame God, Hosea xii. 3, 4. And the woman of Canaan overcame Christ by the strength she had from Christ, Mat. xv. 28. In the sense of God's displeasure it will believe God's favour in Christ, and is able to break through the thickest clouds of discomfort whatsoever, and to see the loving face of God. In a base condition it can struggle with God, saying with Job, 'Though he kill me, yet will I trust in him,' Job xiii. 15. It is a strong grace. Faith prevails with almighty God. It prevails in all inferior conditions whatsoever. You see the fruit and strength of all graces is attributed to faith, Heb. xi. 33. By faith they overcame, by faith they were strong, and did this and that; insinuating that faith is not only a strong grace in itself, but it gives vigour and strength to all graces. And so we see love, 1 Cor. xiii. 4, it is not only a strong grace, but the office of other graces is attributed unto it. It suffers long, which is the office of patience. What should I speak of other graces, these radical and fundamental graces being of such force? Now every Christian in some measure hath a spirit of faith and a spirit of love, and these are very strong, to carry him through all estates and conditions; and that with such glory and lustre that every one may wonder at the condition of a Christian. Even in the worst estate he hath a spirit not of the world but above the world. This faith overcomes the world; and he that is in them, the Spirit of God, is stronger than he that is in the world, 1 John iv. 4.

To proceed to a further demonstration of a Christian man's ability, which is intimated unto us in his very name. What is the name of a Christian? 'Anointed.' The Spirit of God is compared to oil. What is the virtue of oil? It is to make nimble, for the Spirit of God makes Christians nimble; and oil it makes strong. The wrestlers were wont to be anointed beforehand with oil; so the Spirit of God makes Christians strong. The virtue of oil anointing is to be above. Jumble it together with other liquors, it is a regal liquor, it will have the pre-eminence, and be above. So grace, although it be mingled with corruption, the Spirit of grace and faith at last will appear, the Spirit of God will be above all, at length it will work itself clear. In all temptations, a Christian as a Christian is an able man. If



he be answerable to his own name, if he be not an hypocrite, he hath an ability in him, he can do more than the world.

*Use 1.* First of all then, learn here, *that religion is not a matter of word, nor stands upon words*, as wood consists of trees. To speak thus and thus, it may come from parts, from memory, and wit; but religion is a matter of power, it makes a man able. It made Paul, what! To speak only? No; his learning made him able to *do* all things. It is a matter of practice, and there is nothing so speculative in religion but it tends to practice. Religion is an art, not of great men, not of mighty men, but of holy men. It is an art and trade. A trade is not learned by words, but by experience; and a man hath learned a trade, not when he can talk of it, but when he can work according to his trade. So we see Paul shews his learning he speaks of before, by his ability. The point of the Trinity it is a speculative point, and it tends to practice. First, to be a foundation of our worship, that we worship one God in three persons. And then it tends to shew the unity among Christians, that God will work among Christians at length, that they shall be all one in some sort, as the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one: which, though it be a point of high and deep speculation, yet it tends to practice. Now if the sublime and high points do, what point is there in religion but it tends to practice? And therefore let us not please ourselves that we have deep understandings, but let us shew our understandings by our practice. As the sheep shews how he thrives in his pasture by his wool and fleece, so shew how thou profitest in religion, by being enabled with the power of grace, that carries thee through all conditions, to avoid the sins and to express the graces in such conditions. So much grace as thou hast to carry thyself thus, so much ability thou hast, and so much religion.

*Use 2.* If a Christian be an able man, I beseech you, *let it serve to try ourselves by this scantling\* that I have spoken of*. Is Christianity a point of strength and ability? Let us try the truth of our estate then. Thou wouldst be a Christian; what canst thou do then? What sin canst thou resist? What canst thou bear? What holy duty canst thou do? How canst thou enjoy the good blessings that God sends thee, without defiling of thyself with those blessings, that thou art not proud of the riches nor of the honour thou hast? Grace manageth all conditions. Thus, if thou be a Christian, answer thy name; if not, thou art a hypocrite yet. For a Christian in some measure is able 'to do all things, through Christ that strengtheneth him.' I beseech you, let us not deceive ourselves. The best of us all may mourn for our want in this kind. Our consciences tell us that we might have done a great deal more than we have; that God would have enabled us if we had not been false-hearted, and betrayed ourselves, and been negligent in the use of the means, to have done a great deal more than we do. What a shame is it for Christians, that indeed have some truth of grace in them, that they cannot be a little abased in the world, but they are *à la mort*.† Why, where is the power of grace? They cannot be lift up in their condition a little, but they will scant know their brother of low degree. Where is religion now? What hast thou better in thee than a worldling hath? Nay, a heathen man, out of principles of morality, would learn to conform his carriage, outwardly at the least, better than thou. Let us learn therefore to shame ourselves when we find any murmuring and rising of corrupt nature in any condition whatsoever, and know that this

\* Cf. note a, Vol. I. page 117.—G.

† That is, 'deadened' = dead-afraid.—G.

becomes not a Christian. This is it which the apostle presseth so oft, that we should carry ourselves as becometh Christians. Oh, doth this become a Christian? A Christian should be able to do all things through Christ that strengtheneth him. What a shame is it for a professor of religion to be as worldly, as distracted with cares, as passionate, if he be a little touched, as a man that professeth no religion at all? Where is the power, where is the glory and credit of religion here? I beseech you, let us be ashamed, and know that our profession requireth that we should be able.

Use 3. Again, *This answers the common objection of carnal men.* They ward off all reproofs with this. Tell them of their faults, why it is my infirmity, it is my weakness. Is it so? Art thou a Christian or no? If thou be a Christian, thou labourest for strength against thy weakness; thou dost not make a plea for it. There is weakness indeed in the best; but that is the matter of their humiliation, and the object of their mortification. It is not their plea for idleness, to give themselves to sinful courses. Men therefore make a false plea of infirmities and weaknesses. There is no infirmity in a carnal man that hath not the Spirit of Christ. He is dead. There is no weakness in a dead person. In regard of civil carriages there may be weakness in such a man. He may be passionate, he may be froward, unbeseeming a man that is civil; but that is not in the rank we speak of. None can have infirmities but a Christian that hath the life of grace in him in sincerity and truth. And therefore if thou discover that thou hast not the truth of grace, never say it is thy infirmity. To shew what infirmities be, I rank them to three heads.

1. In the first rank of infirmities are *the imperfection of good actions*, which are either distractions and deadness in prayer and hearing; or invincible infirmities, of which as an ancient father saith well, 'Lord, deliver me from my miserable necessities' (b). A man may be in such a state sometimes in regard of the temper of the body, it being out of tune, that he cannot pray as he would do. 'The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak,' saith our Saviour, Mat. xxvi. 41. It was almost an invincible necessity in the apostles then. Again, we might resist, and we might be more cheerful than we are oftentimes. But sometimes there may be such distemper in the body, that may almost of necessity unfit us for the duty. This we call the infirmity of a Christian, because he is ashamed of it, and grieved for it.

2. Again, Infirmities are *those indeliberate passions that carry us sometimes to actions that we should not do*, being carried with a tempest of passion, when we understand not ourselves well.

3. And lastly, It is an infirmity *when we are hindered from doing that which we should do, upon passion, upon surprisal of some great fear and terror*, that we are not so bold as we should be to stand out in a cause on the sudden, as Peter was surprised with a spirit of fear that he should lose his life, Mat. xxvi. 70. It was no presumption in him, it was an infirmity in the blessed apostle for that time. These then be the signs of infirmities: to have invincible imperfections, or distraction and deadness, accompanying our good actions; to be carried in the heat and tempest of passion to that which afterwards we are ashamed of and repent for; or to be hindered from that we should do by some prevailing passion.

But otherwise infirmities are not, when we live in them, when we make a custom of them. *Customary sins are not sins of infirmity*, but the sins that we fall into, that we are overtaken with, on the sudden. Only in some cases a man may live in a sin of infirmity, when the ground of the infirmity is rooted within him, and he hath not yet purged out the root. As for instance,

a man by temper prone to anger may live long in that infirmity, being many times inordinately pettish and peevish, because he carries about him the root, temper of the body, and inclination that way. Now he that lives in such an infirmity repents daily, and gets ground of it; he is still hewing at the root, and at length, at the last stroke it falls, and he gets the victory over it.

Again, A sin of infirmity *is not a sin that we plead for*. A man is ashamed of his infirmities; he is grieved for them. Now when a man pleads for them, and makes them a shelter and cover-shade to go on in sinful courses, they are not infirmities. Therefore whosoever pleads for sins discovers a false heart; his sins are enormities, not infirmities. A Christian gets the better of infirmities. After he falls, he riseth stronger and stronger still. But when a man grows worse and worse, and is habituated in an evil course, it is not an infirmity, because he grows not out of it. Let us not deceive ourselves with this plea, to say, It is my weakness. A Christian should be ashamed to plead this; he should be able to do all things. Well, you see then this point is clear, that a Christian is an able man, he hath a strength above nature in him, notwithstanding all his infirmities. This will appear more in the second branch, in the generality, he is able to do 'all things.'

To come to that, therefore, there are many things required of a Christian. Christianity is a busy trade. If we look up to God, what a world of things are required in a Christian to carry himself as he should do! A spirit of faith, a spirit of love, a spirit of joy, and delight in him above all. And if we look to men, there are duties for a Christian to his superiors, a spirit of subjection. And duties to equals, to carry a spirit of love; and to inferiors a spirit of pity and bounty. If we look to Satan, we have many duties, to resist him and to watch against the tempter. If we look to the world, it is full of snares. There must be a great deal of spiritual watchfulness, that we be not surprised. If we look to ourselves, there are required many duties, to carry our vessels in honour, and to walk within the compass of the Holy Ghost, to preserve the peace of our consciences, to walk answerable to our worth, as being the sons of God and co-heirs with Christ. The state of a Christian is no idle condition. Sometimes a Christian is in this state, sometimes in that; and then he must have these graces, and anon use other graces; he must have a suit of all graces, fit for all conditions. Now answerable to the variety of all the duties that are required of him, he must have ability; and therefore the apostle saith, 'I can do all things through Christ.'

5. So then the point of doctrine is this, *that the trial of a sincere Christian's estate is universality of obedience*. Universality of carriage in all conditions is the trial of Christian sincerity. He must dispense with himself in no sin, and he must be a vessel prepared for every good work, 'a vessel of glory,' as the apostle speaks, 2 Tim. ii. 21. He must baulk no service that God calls him to. What is the reason of this?

The reason is, *because a Christian hath the sanctifying Spirit, and the sanctifying Spirit hath the seeds of all graces in it*; so that where it is, there is the subduing of all sin in the root. And then all graces are answerable to the commandments of God in all duties, and to the avoiding of all sins. And therefore James saith pregnantly to this purpose, he that 'offends in one is guilty of all,' ii. 10.

Use 1. Let us take heed *we plead not immunity and freedom from some things*, and think that the good we do in some kind may excuse the bad

we do in others. You have some that will take liberty in an unclean conversation, because they are bountiful and liberal; and they will take liberty to be oppressive in their callings, because they attend upon the means of salvation. Oh no! take heed of that carriage that is against the profession of religion. There must be an universal disposition to all graces and to all duties, though they be never so contrary and cross to corrupt nature. The devil knows well where to have some men, for he sees they mind some sin, and are careless in the practice of other duties; and therefore, in the hour of temptation, the devil will surprise such men, and it will be a ground of despair if they take not heed. Put the case a man will say this, I can part with all things else, Oh, but I cannot die: I can be content to be imprisoned, but I cannot endure to be disgraced. Let a man dispense and favour himself but in one thing, and when the time comes he will be discovered to be but an hypocrite. Then Satan will work upon that, and there he will be shaken in his condition. By reason that he did not learn self-denial perfectly, he hath not grace disposing him to the practice of all Christian duties. He hath not learned to know God in covenant, to supply his wants of honour, credit, wife and children, and all that he is to part withal for Christ's sake. Now he that hath not learned this in resolution, though God do not yet call him to it, by entering into his own soul, and asking himself what he can part with, and what he can resist for Christ's sake, 'What can I endure? what can I suffer?' If his heart do not tell him, I can part with all, I will rather endure death itself, rather endure shame, or any thing, than break the peace of a good conscience, and grieve the Spirit of God. If he cannot answer his soul thus, surely I can speak little comfort to that man. For we see a Christian must be able to do all things; that is, to resist all ill, to practise all duty, to break off all sinful courses.

*Quest.* But some will object, May not a Christian be subject to some especial sin?

*Ans.* Yes, he may. God, for especial purposes sometimes, will have men of eminent graces to be subject to notable infirmities. But what, do they plead for them? No; but as by temper, or by former custom, or as they find themselves more inclined one way than another, so they gather strength especially against their especial sin. And in the beginning of conversion, there is a blow given to the reigning sin that was before; and as when Goliath was slain, and all the rest fled, 1 Sam. xvii. 51, so grace strikes at the Goliath. In conversion, there is a main stroke given unto sin. Perhaps somewhat remains still, that grace will be hewing at, and therefore grace may stand with an especial sin that a man is inclined to. But this he labours to get all strength against, as other, so strength of direction. You shall find a Christian when he is subject to any infirmity, he will speak more learnedly, and more judiciously, with greater detestation against that sin that he is most prone unto than against any other. He labours to make up the breach where the wall is weakest. So a man may be a good man, and be subject to an infirmity, but then he gathers more strength against it.

*Use 2.* Well, you see then a Christian is able to do all things through Christ that strengthens him. I beseech you, let us often enter into ourselves, and make *an use of trial*, also of that which hath been spoken, what we can do, what we can part with, what we can resist. Let us never think ourselves to be in such an estate as is fit to be, to comfort ourselves, till we can in truth and sincerity of heart renounce all whatsoever. Yet not-

withstanding, this must be understood evangelically, 'I can do all things.' What! legally, without a flaw? No; 'I can do all things' so far forth, as shall shew that I am a true Christian, and not an hypocrite; so far as shall be beautiful in the eye of others, to allure them to the embracing of religion; so far as shall make base spirits to envy to see my even carriage, and to see the power of religion; so far as shall put the world to silence for reproaching; so far as I shall enjoy assurance of the truth of grace; so far as Satan shall not get his will in every sin. Our obedience is evangelical, and not legal.

*Quest.* Now, what is it to do all things evangelically? To clear that point.

*Ans.* To do all things evangelically is, first of all, for a man to know that he is in the same state of grace, and that he hath his sins pardoned, and that he is accepted in Christ to life and salvation. That is the ground of all evangelical obedience. He must know that he is in the covenant of grace; that he hath the forgiveness of sins, and a right to life everlasting in Christ. And then comes obedience answerable to that condition; that is, a desire to obey God in all things: a grief that he cannot do it so well as he would; a prayer that he might do it so; and an endeavour together with prayer that he may do so, and some strength likewise with endeavour. For a Christian, as I said before, he hath the Spirit of God, not only to set him to an endeavour, but to give him some strength. So there is a desire, and purpose, and prayer, and grief of heart, and endeavour, and likewise some strength in evangelical obedience.

A Christian then in the gospel can do all things when he hath his sins forgiven, and is accepted in Christ, when he can endeavour to do all, and desire to do all, and in some measure practise all duties in truth. For the gospel requires truth and not perfection. That is the perfection that brings us to heaven in Christ our Saviour. We have title to heaven; in him is the ground, because forgiveness of sins is in him. Now a Christian's life is but to walk worthy of this, and to fit himself for that glorious condition that he hath title unto by Christ, to walk sincerely before God. Sincerity is the perfection of Christians. Let not Satan therefore abuse us. We do all things, when we endeavour to do all things, and purpose to do all things, and are grieved when we cannot do better. For mark, this goes with evangelical obedience always. God pardons that which is ill, for he is a Father. He hath bound himself to pardon, 'I will pity you as a father pitieth his child,' Ps. ciii. 13. From the very relation he hath took upon him, we may be assured he will pity and pardon us, and then he will accept of that which is good, because it is the work of his own Spirit, and will reward it. This in the covenant of grace he will do. A Christian can do all then; and wherein he fails, God will pardon him. What is good, God will accept and reward; and what is sick and weak in him, God will heal, till he have made him up in Christ.

Thus we see in what sense this is to be understood, a Christian can do all things through Christ. For as it is said of gold, the best gold you have hath allowance of such grains, so take the best Christian, you must have some allowance. Some imperfection cleaves to him. He cannot do all perfectly. For then what need the covenant of grace? He can do all things so as he flies to the mercy of God in Christ for life everlasting. He can do all things required of a Christian in the covenant of grace in regard of sincerity. These things must be well and soundly understood, and then we can take no offence at the doctrine.

*Quest.* What is the cause that a Christian fails then when he doth fail ?

*Ans.* 1. A Christian fails, *when he doth not understand the promises of the new covenant of grace*, that God hath given not only promises of the pardon of sin, but of all kind of graces, a promise of the Spirit in general. He will give his Spirit to those that ask it, and a promise of every other particular grace : that he will write his law in our hearts, and he will teach us to love one another, and he will put his fear into our hearts. We have not a grace but either there is a promise of it generally, or specially. Now when a Christian forgets this, he fails for want of understanding the privileges and promises.

*Ans.* 2. Again, he fails *for want of wisdom to plant himself in such helps, whereby he might be able to do all things* ; for it is the folly sometimes of Christians to be rash in venturing upon occasions ; and then he hath no more strength than Samson had when he adventured. He loseth his strength when he ventureth rashly. But if a Christian be wise to keep out of temptation, and to keep himself in good company and acquaintance, using holy means and helps to godliness, wherein the Spirit works, a wise Christian may perform all.

*Ans.* 3. Again, *for want of resolution.* A Christian goes not out always with his spiritual armour, as he should. He goes not out with a purpose to please God in all things, and to avoid all sins ; but his armour is loose about him. If a Christian would resolve, in the power of God, to break through all difficulties, and to do all duties, God would second him. ' Arise, and be doing, and the Lord will be with thee,' 1 Chron. xxii. 16. Let a Christian go on constantly in a good way, and he shall find experience of God's helping of him. Without manly resolutions, a Christian fails.

*Quest.* What is the reason that a Christian many times stands in strong and great duties, and is foiled in little duties ?

*Ans.* Because he is watchful in the one, and careless in the other. Indeed, it is want of will. If we would have strength, and would carry ourselves manfully, we might have grace to carry ourselves even to the glory of our profession and to the credit of it. But we willingly favour corruption, and are not willing to put it out of ourselves to the utmost ; whereupon we want much comfort that Christians should enjoy ; and hereupon come many breaches in our life. In a word, if a Christian were careful, there is no duty, but he might perform it in some measure. He may go wondrous high upwards, always with this exception, that he never look to be justified by it. For God hath not established the covenant so. That is done by Christ. Again, if he be careless, he may sink wondrous low. There is no sin but the sin against the Holy Ghost, but he may fall into it in some manner.

I hasten to the last point. ' I can do all things,' but how ? with what strength ? ' Through Christ that strengtheneth me.'

This is to salve up an objection which might be made against the blessed apostle, ' I can do all things.' Here is a proud word. Oh no ; ' it is in Christ that strengthens me.' St Paul was wondrous cautious and careful to avoid spiritual pride, or the least touch of it, as it is 1 Cor. xv. 10. ' Not I,' saith he. He checks himself presently : ' I laboured more than they all ; not I, but grace within me.' Of all other sins, take heed of spiritual pride, check it presently. ' I can do all.' Oh but, lest proud thoughts should arise, ' it is in Christ that strengtheneth me.' My strength is out of myself. As the heads of those rivers, that ran through paradise,

and that watered the city of God, they were out of paradise, so the head and spring of those streams that water the church of God, and particular Christians, they are out of themselves, they are in Christ. It is otherwise with us than it was in the 'first Adam.' He had strength, and had no promise to stand. He had power to stand, if he would. But a Christian's strength is out of himself, in the 'second Adam,' Christ. And it is well that it is in the keeping of so strong a Saviour, for we should forfeit it as Adam did, if it were in our own hands. It is derived to us, as much as he thinks good; but the spring is in him. And we have not only a will, but the promise and ability to do good; we do all through Christ.

6. So the point of doctrine is this, *that the original of a Christian's strength is in Christ.* God is the original of all strength. But God himself hath no intercourse of the new covenant with man out of the second person. All our comfort, and all our grace, it comes through Christ, who having taken our nature upon him, and having satisfied God, is fit to derive all grace and comfort to us. For he is near us, he is of our nature, and God in him is well pleased so as we may now go boldly to Christ; we are bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. God himself out of Christ is 'a consuming fire.' Now, in Christ God favours man; he is gracious and lovely to us, and we to him; because Christ his beloved Son hath took our nature upon him, and now in our nature he is in heaven. So Christ the mediator is the fountain of all strength; he is the spiritual Joseph that had laid up store for all Egypt, and all that came. He is the high steward of his church, the second in the kingdom of heaven; he is the Joseph, he dispenseth all riches and treasures; all are in him for the church's sake. In him we do all things. As we can do all things for him as a mediator that died for us and procured favour for us, so we can do all things in him as an head to whom we are united. For there must be union before there can be communion. As in marriage there must be a uniting before there be a communion of estates and conditions, so before we can do anything for Christ we must be in Christ. We have all as through Christ, as in Christ. Thence comes communion with Christ's Spirit. So then it is Christ by his Spirit, for he doth all by his Spirit: 'The Lord is that Spirit,' 2 Cor. iii. 17. Christ doth all in the church by his Spirit. Now, the Spirit is the union of Christ, he strengthens all; all our strength is by Christ's Spirit. Now, this Spirit of God first sanctifies Christ, the human nature of Christ, before he sanctifieth us. We have all grace and power and strength at the second hand. It comes not from Christ as God immediately. And grace comes not from the Holy Ghost immediately to us; but the Holy Ghost first sanctifies Christ his human nature and then he sanctifies us, and we out of Christ's fulness receive grace for grace. The same Spirit that sanctified his nature in the womb of the virgin, and that sanctified his holy nature that now he hath in heaven with him, the same Spirit is sent from him to sanctify every member of the church. All is in the head, John i. 16. As first the ointment was poured on Aaron's head, and from thence it ran down to the skirts of his garments, Ps. cxxxiii. 2, so all grace is poured upon the head of Christ first, and then from him upon the skirts, even upon the meanest Christian, as answerable to their portion; and to those things that God means to call them to, they have grace to carry them. You see then how to conceive of this, how we have all in Christ, that is, by the Spirit of Christ, and how it comes by the Spirit.

Use 1. First of all, then, you see here how these two agree: a Christian,

when he is a Christian, hath freedom of will and power. He hath power and free will. As far as he is freed by the Spirit of Christ, so far he is free. For, 2 Cor. iii. 17, 'where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.' So, John viii. 36, Christ says, 'If the Son shall make you free, then you shall be free indeed.' 'He can do all things,' therefore he is free. But it is in Christ; therefore his freedom is from him. We speak, but it is Christ's Spirit that openeth our mouth. We believe, but it is Christ by his Spirit that opens our hearts to believe. We are mighty, but it is in God. We are able to do great matters, but it is in Christ that strengtheneth us. We are strong, but it is in the Lord; as it is written, 'Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might,' Eph. vi. 10. The understanding is ours, the affections are ours, the will is ours; but the sanctifying of all this, and the carriage of all these supernaturally above themselves, to do them spiritually, that is not ours, but it is Christ's. So we see what is ours, and what is not ours. We are able to do; but the strength, and the grace, and ability is from Christ. A wind instrument sounds, but the man makes it sound by his breath. We are like wind instruments. Indeed, we sound, but no further than we are blown upon; and we yield music, but no further than we are touched by the Spirit of God. We are light, but as the air is, as it is enlightened by the sun; and therefore we must understand these points, that God may have glory, and that we may know what is ours.

And then again we see here, *that we have in Christ not only a general ability, that we are able, but we have the very act itself, the deed itself.* He strengtheneth us. There is a spiritual life and a spiritual power and will, and then the act and deed itself. Now, we have not only from Christ the life of grace at the first, and then a spiritual power answerable to that again, whereby our powers are renewed, so as we are able to do something in our will, but we have the deed itself. The doing is from Christ; he strengtheneth us for the present. Now, you have some that teach loosely this point, that we have general universal grace, whereby we are enabled, if we will, to believe, and to do this thing, if we will. But I say that is not all; but we have the will and the deed itself from Christ by his Spirit, and in every holy action Christ helps us to do these things in very deed.

First, *He moves the soul to the action, and applies the soul to the thing.* By the Spirit he doth this. For though we have power, we could not exercise it but by the Spirit, in this or that particular act.

Second, *Again, he works a preserving of the grace in that act.* God preserves his own work against temptation, and against impediments; for there is no act but it is opposed. The devil is in every good work, either at the beginning to hinder it, or at the end to defile it, one way or other. Now, God preserves his own work by his Spirit. First, He moves us to do, and then he preserves us in doing, and arms us against the impediments of good works. Then he determines the good work, and limits it, how far we shall do well, thus far, and thus far; the degrees come from Christ. For sometimes he doth it by his glorious power, as Paul saith, Eph. i. 19. Sometimes we are strengthened to do more, and sometimes less, as he will. Not only the act itself, and the application of the soul, and the preserving of grace in every act, we sink else, but the degree that we do sometimes better, it comes from Christ now strengthening of us more, and now less, as he sees good.

Know, by the way, that *he is a voluntary head.* Though he be an head of influence that flows into every member, yet he is a voluntary head, according to his own good pleasure, and the exigents of his members.



Sometimes we have need of more grace, and then it flows into us from him accordingly. Sometimes we have need to know our weakness, and then he leaves us to ourselves, that we may know that without him we cannot stand ; that we may know the necessity of his guidance to heaven, in the sense of our imperfections ; that we might see our weakness and corruptions, that we had thought we had not had in us : as Moses was tempted to murmur, a meek man, Num. xi. 21, *seq.*, and David to cruelty, a mild man, 2 Sam. xi. 15, that thought they had not had those corruptions in them. God leaves Christians sometimes to themselves, that they may know that they are not strong by their own spirit. So the degrees are from Christ, sometimes more and sometimes less. Sometimes we are in desertion, that we may know the manner of Christ's governing us till we come to heaven.

*Use 1.* Well, I beseech you, let us know that out of Christ there is no grace. A civil man doth nothing in religion well. There cannot be a beam without the sun ; there cannot be a river without a spring ; there cannot be a good work without the spring of good works, Christ. Therefore, we should fetch all from him, since there is no grace out of him at all.

*Use 2.* Again, let us be sure, in all particular actions, to be poor in spirit. When we have any temptation to resist, any trouble to bear, or any duty to do, let us empty ourselves. No grace is stronger than humility. No man is weaker than a proud man. For a proud man rests on nothing, and an humble man that empties himself, he stands upon the Rock. We should therefore make use of the strength of Christ, that hath not only abundance for himself, but an abundance for us, an overflowing for every Christian for his good. Let us empty ourselves, as the prophet saith to the widow, Bring 'empty vessels' now, and we shall have oil enough, 2 Kings iv. 3. There is enough in Christ ; but first we must empty ourselves by humility, and then there is fulness in him. 'Of his fulness we receive grace for grace,' John i. 16. His fulness is like the fulness of the clouds that is ready to drop, and like the fulness of breasts, that are ready to yield what they have. He is willing. It is our fault, and baseness, and pride, that hinders us. Let us as much as we can empty ourselves of ourselves, and stir up the spirit of faith. Go to Christ. So much faith as we carry, so much grace we bring from him. If we do but touch him by faith, the issue of our corruptions will be dried up in some measure, and we shall have a spring of graces in us answerable to the graces in him, Mat. ix. 20.

I beseech you, therefore, let us labour for these two graces, especially since all is out of us in the covenant of grace ; not only salvation is out of us, but grace that brings us to heaven is out of us, to empty ourselves in humility, and by faith to go to Christ. The one grace makes us go out of ourselves, the other carries us to Christ and to the promises of Christ. Learn to do this in every action, for we may be foiled in every particular action for want of humility and faith. We must not trust to any grace or any ability in us, but trust to our spring, go to Christ when we have anything to do.

*Quest.* What is the reason that Christians fail ?

*Ans.* They think, I had grace yesterday, and before, and hereupon they go not for supply of new strength to Christ. Know that in every act, in every temptation, in every particular suffering, we need a particular new strength, and a greater strength than we had before, if the temptation be greater, if the work be greater. As it is with a porter, he cannot carry a new burden that is heavier than he did before, without a new strength,

without more strength than he had before, so a Christian cannot bear a new affliction without new strength, without more strength. Therefore consider what the nature of the business is that we are to do, and the strength of the temptation that we are to encounter with, and answerably go to Christ for a measure greater than we had before. He never upbraids us nor casts us in the teeth, as James saith, chap. i. 5 (c). There is an art, a skill of fetching strength from Christ to do all things, if we would learn it. As there is a skill to be a Christian, it is a trade, so there is a skill to fetch the strength that he hath from his spring, from Christ. Now, that skill in a word is this :

1. First, *To know our own want, and to know the necessity of grace, and the excellency of the state of holiness*, that of all conditions it is the best, and of all conditions a sinful estate is the worst. This will make us go out of ourselves to Christ. Well, how shall we fetch strength from Christ then ?

2. *Consider wherefore Christ hath the treasures of all in him*, and go to him for particular graces we want whatsoever. When we know the excellency and necessity of it before, then make use of the virtue of his death and resurrection. Thus, are we tempted to any sin ? Make use of the death of Christ, of his great love in giving himself, and then of the holiness of God in giving Christ to die for sin, he hates sin so ; and then,

3. *Consider of the fruit of his death* that was to free and deliver us from sin. When we think of these things, Did God and Christ so love me ? Is it the holiness of God, and the holiness of Christ, that God became man to die for me, and shall I go and trifle, and be tempted to sin, and offend so holy and so gracious a God, that hates sin so infinitely ?

These be strong reasons fetched from Christ. We have from him both the reasons why we should do good and why we should not do evil, and we have the strength. There are two things requisite for a man to do a thing as a man. The reason why he should do it, and strength to perform it, both these are from Christ.

As from ill we are stopped by the consideration of Christ's death, so when we are moved to grace, consider the virtue of Christ's resurrection. Why is Christ now in heaven in our nature ? Is it not to fill his church with his Spirit ? Why doth he make intercession in heaven ? Is it not that we should not be discouraged notwithstanding our daily infirmities ? Shall we not make use of it ? He is glorious for us, not for himself, but for his mystical body. As he hath made his natural body glorious, so he will make his mystical body glorious by little and little. He being, therefore, in heaven making intercession, go to him in the want of grace. And so for infirmities. The Spirit of God raised him at the lowest, and shall not the Spirit of God raise me from this and that. Yes, the Spirit of God will raise me from the baseness and misery of sin to be better and better. The same Spirit will enable me that raised his body. And so fetch virtue and strength from Christ, make use of Christ for every turn. Oh that we could learn these things ! Then we should be able to go through all conditions : we should be able to live, able to die. I beseech you, therefore, consider what hath been spoken. Let us study Christ every day more and more, not for redemption and reconciliation only, though that in the first place, but study Christ to be all in all to us, to be our sanctification to fit us for heaven. Study the promises in Christ, lose no privilege. God would not have left them in his word but for our good. Take heed of base despair ; Oh, I shall never overcome this sin and that. What ! shut the

people out of Canaan? Base despair lost them earthly Canaan, Numb. xiv. 22, *seq.* So take heed it shut not you out of heavenly Canaan. I shall not be able to get the victory over sin, and I shall not be able to suffer. No. Why are the promises? and why is Christ in heaven? Shall we, by despair and by base infidelity, lose Christ, and the promises, and all that is put into our hands, and betray our souls basely to Satan? I beseech you, consider of the necessity of these things. We know not what times God may call us to ere long. Despair not beforehand. Let fall what will, get into Christ, to be in him in an happy and eternal condition. We shall have strength from him to carry ourselves in all estates. Come what will, he will stand by us; he will not fail us nor forsake us. When did Paul speak these glorious words? In prison. 'I can do all things through Christ,' &c. Did the Spirit of God leave Paul in prison? Was it not better for Paul to have grace than to be freed from the thing? Wicked men may be freed from trouble, only a Christian hath grace to carry himself well in trouble. Come what will, if we be in Christ, either we shall be freed from troubles, or we shall have grace to bear them. Either we shall have that we want, or we shall have contentment without it. Is it not better to have grace without the thing? Is it not better to have a glorious Spirit of glory resting on us? Did not the Spirit of glory rest on Paul? Could not God have freed Paul from prison? Yes. But where had been then the demonstration of a contented spirit, of an heavenly mind? Where had been this example of a Christian bearing the cross comfortably? Paul lost nothing. Here you see how many stars shine in the night of his affliction, what a lustre he had in the dark state of imprisonment. Shall we then be afraid of any condition? No. Get the Spirit of God; get understanding of Christ, and the promises and privileges by him, and then let God cast us into what condition he will, we shall be safe and well.

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NOTES.

(a) P. 178.—'I have learned. . . . It is very significant in the original.' The original is *μεμύνημαι*, = I have been fully taught, I have been initiated. The Vulgate is closer than our version, 'institutus sum.' The Bishop of Gloucester (Ellicott) has an interesting note on this *ἄπ. λεγόμεν.* of the New Testament *in loc.* (ver. 12).

(b) P. 184.—'Lord, deliver me from my miserable necessities.' The saying is that well known one of Augustine, 'A necessitatibus meis libera me Domine.' Cf. note a, Vol. IV. p. 304.

(c) P. 192.—"'He never casts in the teeth," as James saith.' The verb is *ὀνειδίζω*, which the authorised version in Mat. xxvii. 44, renders precisely as Sibbes does here. G.