

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, befilded 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 pray 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

dwelling 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 deathbed, 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 contemn 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 Diotrefes 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 spiritfull 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, falsehood, 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 contemn the world. Christ contemned 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 contemn 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 trespases, 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 busy-bodies, 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 gripping 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 bonds slave 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.