

THE FIFTH TREATISE

Containing THE HAPPINESS AND PRIVILEGES OF THE TRUE BELIEVER

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

flesh, depart self; this soul is Mine forever.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The most perfect performances of God's children are but

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

and wisdom, and therefore none can expunge it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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