

BALAM'S WISH.

BALAAAM'S WISH.

---

NOTE.

'Balaam's Wish' forms one of the sermons which compose 'Evangelical Sacrifices' (4to, 1640). [Cf. Vol. V. page 156.] Its separate title-page is given below.\*

\* BALAAMS  
VVISH.

In one Funerall Sermon upon  
N V M B. 23. 10.

By

*The late Learned and Reverend Divine,*

RICH. SIBBS :

Doctor in Divinity, Mr of KATHERINE Hall  
in Cambridge, and sometimes Preacher  
to the Honourable Society of  
GRAYES-INNE.

P R O. 13. 4.

*The soule of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing.*

L O N D O N,

Printed by *E. Purslow*, for *N. Bourne*, at the Roy-  
all Exchange, and *R. Harford* at the gilt  
Bible in Queenes head Alley, in Pater-  
Noster-Row. 1639.



## BALAAH'S WISH.

---

*Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!*—NUMB. XXIII. 10.

THE false prophet Balaam goes about to curse, where God had blessed. But God reveals his wonders in his saints by delivering of them, and keeping them from dangers, when they never think of them. They never thought they had such an enemy as Balaam. The church of God is a glorious company, and the great God doth great things for it. So long as they keep close to him, their state is impregnable, as we may read here. Neither Balak nor Balaam, that was hired to curse them, could prevail, but the curse returns upon their own head.

These words I have read to you, they are Balaam's desire, Balaam's acclamation. Divers questions might be moved concerning Balaam, which I will not stand upon, but come directly to the words, wherein are considerable these things.

First, That the righteous men die, and have an end as well as others.

Secondly, That the state of the soul continues after death. It was in vain for him to desire 'to die the death of the righteous,' but in regard of the subsistence of the soul.

Thirdly, That the estate of righteous men in their end is a blessed estate, because here it was the desire of Balaam, 'Oh that I might die the death of the righteous!'

Fourthly, There is an excellent estate of God's people, and they desire that portion: 'Oh let me die the death of the righteous.' These are the four things I shall unfold, which discover the intendment of Balaam in these words.

For the first I will touch it briefly, and so go on.

*Obs. 1. The righteous die, and in the same manner outwardly as the wicked do.*

For Christ, in his first coming, came not to redeem our bodies from death, but our souls from damnation. His second coming shall be to redeem our bodies from corruption into a 'glorious liberty.' Therefore wise men die as well as fools. Those whose eyes and hands have been lift up to God in prayer, and whose feet have carried them to the holy place, as well as those whose eyes are full of adultery, and whose hands are full of blood, they die all alike, in manner alike. Ofttimes it is the

The third is that,

*Obs. 3. There is a wide, broad difference between the death of the godly and of the wicked.*

The godly are happy in their death, for here we see it is a matter desirable. This caitiff, this wretched man Balaam, Oh, saith he, 'let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.' It being the object of his desire, it is therefore certainly precious, 'the death of the righteous.' And indeed so it is; holy and gracious men, they are happy in their life. While they live they are the sons of God, the heirs of heaven; they are set at liberty, all things are theirs; they have access to the throne of grace; all things work for their good; they are the care of angels, the temples of the Holy Ghost. Glorious things are spoken of these glorious creatures even while they live.

But they are more happy in their death, and most happy and blessed after death.

In their death they are happy in their disposition, and happy in condition.

(1.) *Happy in their disposition.* What is the disposition of a holy and blessed man at his end? His disposition is by faith to give himself to God, by which faith he dies in obedience; he carries himself fruitfully and comfortably in his end. And oftentimes the nearer he is to happiness, the more he lays about him to be fruitful.

(2.) Besides his disposition, *he is happy in condition*; for death is a sweet close. God and he meet; grace and glory meet; he is in heaven, as it were, before his time. What is death to him? The end of all misery, of all sin of body and soul. It is the beginning of all true happiness in both. This I might shew at large, but I have spoken somewhat of this point out of another text.\* They are happy in their death, for 'their death is precious in God's sight.' The angels are ready to do their attendance, to carry their souls to the place of happiness. They are happy in their death, because they are 'in the Lord.' When death severs soul and body, yet notwithstanding neither soul nor body are severed from Christ. 'They die in the Lord'; therefore still they are happy. Much might be said to this purpose, and to good purpose, but that the point is ordinary, and I hasten to press things that I think will a little more confirm it. They are blessed in death.

(3.) And blessed *after death especially*; for then we know they are in heaven, waiting for the resurrection of the body. There is a blessed change of all; for after death we have a better place, better company, better employment; all is for the better.

There are three degrees of life:

The life in the womb, this world, heaven.

The life in the womb is a kind of imprisonment; there the child lives for a time. The life in this world, it is a kind of enlargement; but, alas! it is as much inferior to the blessed and glorious life in heaven, as the life in the womb is narrower and straiter and more base than this life wherein we behold the blessed light and enjoy all the sweet comforts of this life. They are happy after death; then the image of God is perfect in the soul. All graces are perfected, all wants supplied, all corruptions wrought out, all enemies subdued, all promises accomplished, waiting their time for the resurrection of the body; and then body and soul shall sit as judges upon the wretches that have judged them on earth, and they shall be both to-

\* See the Sermons on Phil. iii. 21. [Vol. V. pp. 143-152].—G.

gether 'for ever with the Lord.' I might enlarge the point much. It is a comfortable meditation; and before I pass it, let us make some use of it.

If godly men be blessed and happy, not only before death, in the right and title they have to heaven, but in death, because then they are invested into possession of that that makes them every way happy,

*Use 1.* Therefore this may teach us *who are truly wise*. A wise man is he that hath a better end than another, and works to that end. A true Christian man, he hath a better end than any worldling. His end is to be safe in another world, and he works and carries his forces to that end. 'Let my last end be like his,' saith Balaam, insinuating that there was a better end in regard of condition and state than he had aimed at. A gracious man, his end is not to be happy here; his end is to enjoy everlasting communion with God in the heavens, and he frames all his courses in this world to accomplish that end, and he is never satisfied in the things that make to that end. A worldling he hath no such end. He hath a natural desire to be saved,—as we shall see afterwards,—but a man may know that is not his end, for he works not to it. He is not satisfied in prowling for this world; he is not weary of getting wealth; he is not satisfied with pleasure. So that his end is the things of this life. Therefore let him be never so wise, he is but a fool, for he hath not the true end, nor works to it. Wicked men are very fools in the manner of their reasoning; for they will grant that there is a happy estate of godly men in death, and after death better. If it be so, why do they not work and frame their lives to it? Herein they are fools, because they grant one thing and not another which must needs follow. They do believe there is such a happiness to God's children, and yet seek not after it.

*Use 2.* If there be such a blessed estate of God's children in death and after death, I beseech you *let us carry ourselves so as that we may be partakers of that happiness*: let us labour to be righteous men, labour to be in Christ, to have the righteousness of Christ to be ours, to be out of ourselves, in Christ; in Christ in life, in Christ in death, and at the day of judgment in Christ, 'not having our own righteousness,' as the apostle saith, 'but his righteousness,' Philip iii. 9, and then the righteousness of grace and of a good conscience will alway go with the other. For this makes a righteous man to be in Christ, and to have his righteousness, and to have his Spirit, and the beginnings of the new creature in us. Let us labour to be such as may live and die happily and blessedly, and be for ever happy. So much for that third point.

That which I intend mainly to dwell on is the last, and that is this, that

*Even a wicked man, a wretched worldling, may see this; he may know this happiness of God's people in death, and for ever, and yet notwithstanding may continue a cursed wretch.*

Balaam here wishes, 'Oh that I might die the death of the righteous, and that my last end might be like his.' It was a strange speech of such a man as this was, that his soul should be rapt up in this manner; but indeed Balaam was scarce himself, he scarce understood what he said, no more than the beast that carried him.

But God will sometimes even stir up the hearts of wicked men to a sight and admiration of the excellent estate of God's children. Why? For diverse reasons. Among the rest for this, *that he may convince them the more of their own rebellion, when they see a more excellent estate than they are in, if they will not take the course to partake of it.* Therefore at the day of

judgment it will justify the sentence of damnation upon such wretches, and they may pronounce self-condemnation upon themselves. Oh what a terror will it be when they shall think, I had a better estate discovered; I heard of it in the ministry of the word, and God's Spirit revealed an excellent estate, and I might have gotten it if I had improved the blessed means that God made me partaker of, and now I am shut out for ever and ever from communion in that estate. To convince wretched men, I say, and to justify the just sentence of damnation upon them, that their hearts may go with the sentence, at the day of judgment, God thus enlightens them oftentimes, that they see better courses if they had grace to take them.

What a thing is this, that a wicked man should see such an estate and not take it! And what serves that knowledge for but to damn them the more! This is the estate of many men that live in the bosom of the church, and partake of the means of salvation, and yet live in sins against conscience. They get knowledge by the ministry, and by good books and acquaintance, and such like. They have a savour in the use of good things. Something they have, some little apprehension of the estate of a better life.

Again, for another end God reveals to them the excellent estate of his children sometimes, *to keep them in better order, to awe them, that they be not open enemies to the church, but may do good service*; for conceiting that there is such a happiness, and that perhaps they may partake of it, they will not carry themselves malignantly against those that are true professors.

There are several degrees of wicked men. Some are well-willers to good things, though they never come far enough. Some are open, malicious persecutors. Some again are better than so. They have a hatred to goodness, but they do not openly shew themselves; as hypocrites, &c. God reveals these good things to wicked men to keep them in awe. The net draws bad fish as well as good; so the net of the word, it draws wicked men, it keeps them from violence and open malice. Besides, even the majesty of the word, and the conviction of that excellent estate that belongs to God's children, it keeps them from open malice and persecution. This is another end that God aims at. What may we learn hence?

*Use 1.* Seeing this is so, it should teach us *that we refuse not all that ill men say; they may have good apprehensions, and give good counsel.* It had been good for Josiah to have followed the counsel of wicked Pharaoh, a heathen. God often enlightens men that otherwise are reprobates. Refuse not gold from a dirty hand; do not refuse directions from wicked men. Because they are so and so, refuse not a pardon from a man, a base creature. We ought not therefore to have such respect of persons as to refuse excellent things because the person is wicked. But that which I intend to press is this: If this be so, that wicked men may have illumination whereby they discover an excellency, and likewise may have desires raised up to wish and desire that excellency,

*Use 2.* It should stir us up *to go beyond wicked men.* Shall we not go so far as those go that shall never come to heaven? We see here Balaam pronounceth the end of the righteous to be happy. This should therefore stir us up to labour to be in a different estate from wicked men. Let us therefore consider a little wherein the difference of these desires is, the desires that a Balaam may have, and the desires of a sound Christian, wherein the desires of a wicked man are failing.

(1.) These desires, first of all, *they were but flashes*: for we never read

that he had them long. They were mere flashes ; as a sudden light, that rather blinds a man than shews him the way. So these enlightenings they are not constant. Wicked men ofttimes have sudden motions and flashes and desires. 'Oh that I might die the death of the righteous.' Oh that I were in such [a] man's estate. But it is but a sudden flash and lightning. They are like a torrent, a strong sudden stream, that comes suddenly and makes a noise, but it hath no spring to feed it. The desires of God's children they are fed with a spring, they are constant ; they are streams, and not flashes.

(2.) Again, this desire of this wretched man, it was not *from an inward principle, an inward taste that he had of the good estate of God's children*, but from an objective delight and admiration of somewhat that was offered to his conceit by the Holy Ghost at this time. It was not from any inward taste or relish in himself that he speaks, but from somewhat outward, as a man that saw and heard excellent things, that ravished him with admiration, though he had not interest in them himself.

(3.) Again in the third place, this desire of the happiness of the estate of God's children, *it was not working and operative, but an uneffectual desire*. It had only a complacency and pleasing in the thing desired ; but there was not a desire to work anything to that end. This wretch therefore would be at his journey's end, before he had set one step forward to the journey. It was a desire of the end without the means. It was not an operative effectual, but a weak transient desire. Where true desires are, they are not only constant, and proceed from an inward interest and taste of the thing desired, but they are effectual and operative. They set the soul and body, the whole man on work, partly to use the means to attain the thing desired, and partly to remove the impediments ; for where desire is, there will be a removing of the impediments to the thing desired ; as he that intends a journey, he will consider what may hinder him, and what may help him in it. He that sets not about these things, he never means it, for a man cannot come to his journey's end with wishing ; we can attain nothing in this life with wishing. There is a working, I say, that tends to remove impediments so far as we may, and tending to use all means to effect and bring the thing to pass. We see, then, there is a main difference between the desires of this wretched man Balaam and the desires of the true church of God. To go on and follow the point a little further.

(4.) Where desires are in truth, the party that cherisheth those desires, *will be willing to have all help from others to have his desire accomplished*. If a man desire to demolish a place, if any will come and help him down with it, or if any man desire to weed his ground, he that will help him, he will thank him for his pains. Where there is a true desire, there is a willing closing with all that offer themselves, that the thing desired may be brought to pass. Where there is a desire of the happy estate of God's children, there will be a willing entertainment of any help. Let a man come to a man that desires grace and glory, and discover his especial sins that hinder him, you must weed out this, and you must pull down this, he will thankfully embrace all admonitions, because he truly desires the end ; therefore he desires the means that tend to the end. He desires the removing of the hindrances ; he will be thankful, therefore, for any help that he may have, and especially that of the ministry, that it may powerfully enter into his soul, and rip him up. Why ? Because he desires to please God in all things, and he would not cherish a motion or desire contrary to the Spirit of God. Therefore the more corruption is presented

and made odious to him, the more the 'inward man' is discovered, the more he blesseth God, and blesseth the blessed instruments; and of all means he is willing to attend upon such.

Where there is swelling and rising against the blessed means, either in private admonition or public teaching, let men pretend what they will, there is no true desire of grace and to be in the estate of God's people; for then they would not be contrary to the means. This wretched man Balaam, when the angel stood in his way, with his sword drawn, to stop his way, yet notwithstanding he goes on still. He was so carried with covetousness, and so blinded, that neither the miracle of the beast speaking, nor of the angel in his way, nor God in the way, could stop him. Alas! where was this desire then? No, no! The glory of earthly things dazzled the glory of the estate of God's people. Therefore we see he goes against all means that was used to stop him in his journey.

If a man desire to be good, and to leave his sins, he will not stand against the means.

Have we not many that stand against the ministry of God's ministers [who] are God's angels? They stand in the way, and tell people, if you live in this course you shall not inherit heaven; if you live in oppression and base lusts, unless you be changed, you shall all perish. They come to particular reproofs, and hold forth the sword of God's Spirit, yet men break through all and wreak their malice upon God's messengers. Is here a true desire when they are not willing to have the hindrances removed? when there is not respect of the means that should be used?

(5.) Again, true desires of grace, *they are growing desires*. Though they be little in the beginning, as springs are, yet as the springs grow, so do the waters that come from them. So these desires, they grow more and more still. They grow sometimes in God's children, that they will have no stop till they come to have their full desire, to have perfect union and communion with God in heaven. The desires of a blessed soul, they are never satisfied till it come to heaven. 'Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth,' saith the church, Cant. i. 2. Oh, let me have nearer communion with Christ! It desires in the word and sacraments to come nearer and closer to God, and in death then, 'Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly,' Rev. xxii. 20. And when the soul is in heaven there is yet nearer union, a desire of the body's resurrection, that both may be for ever with the Lord. Till a Christian be perfect in body and soul, there is desire upon desire, till all desires be accomplished. They are growing desires, as St Peter saith: 'As new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby,' 1 Peter ii. 2. It is a desire that is never satisfied, because there is alway somewhat to be desired till we be perfectly happy.

(6.) And then they are desires *that will not be stilled*. A child, if it have not strong desires, it will be stilled with an apple; but if the desires be strong, nothing will still it but the dug. So God's children, if their desires be strong, it is no bauble they desire, nothing but grace and inward comfort will quiet the inward man. It is a desire that is growing and strong. It will not be stayed with anything in this world, but will break through all impediments; as a strong stream, it will never rest till it have communion with God. And therefore the desires that men think are good and earnest enough, that go on plodding in a constant course, and never labour to grow, they are no desires at all, no sanctified desires from a supernatural principle of grace. The desires of a Christian grow, and are never satisfied till he have perfect happiness.



The three worthies of David brake through the host, and got the water of Bethel for David: 'Oh that I had of the water of Bethel,' 2 Sam. xxiii. 15. So where there are strong desires they are like David's worthies, they carry the soul through all impediments, they grow stronger and stronger, and are never satisfied till they come to the water of life. Let us consider these things, whether we have this desire or no. If we have but sometimes flashes, inconstant, ineffectual desires, desires that grow not, that are soon satisfied, and are stilled with anything, alas! these desires the Spirit of God never kindled and bred in the heart; they are ordinary flashes, that shall serve for our deeper damnation. Therefore let us take heed, and not rest in a castaway's estate; let us not rest in Balaam's state, but labour that the desires of our souls may be as they should.

Desires, I confess, are the best character to know a Christian; for works may be hypocritical, desires are natural. Therefore we ought to consider our desires, what they are, whether true or no; for the first thing that issues from the soul are desires and thoughts. Thoughts stir up desires. This inward immediate stirring of the soul discovers the truth of the soul better than outward things. Let us oft therefore examine our desires. And let me add this one thing to the other, let us examine our desires by this, besides the rest,

(7.) *Whether we desire holiness, and the restoration<sup>1</sup> of the image of God, the new creature, and to have victory against our corruptions; to be in a state that we may not sin against God, to have the Spirit, to be 'new born,' as well as we desire happiness, and exemption from misery. Balaam desired happiness, but he desired not the image of God upon his soul; for then he would not have been carried with a covetous devil against all means. No; his desire was after a glimpse of God's children's glory only.*

A wicked man can never desire to be in heaven as he should be; for how should we desire to be in heaven? to be freed from sin, that we may praise God and love God; that there may be no combat between the flesh and the spirit. Can he wish this? No. His happiness is as a swine to wallow in the mire, and he desires to enjoy sensible delights. As for spiritual things, especially the image of God, and the vision of God, they are not fit objects for him, as far as it is a freedom from sin, but as he hath a conceit, oh they are goodly things to be seen, &c. So it corresponds with his disposition, but to be free from sin, and from the conflict of the flesh and spirit, and to be set at liberty to serve God alway, he cannot desire it so. Tell him of heaven, he loves it not. There is no gold, there is not that that he affects,\* therefore he cares not for it, he cannot relish it, he is not changed. Therefore it is a notable character of a true Christian to desire heaven, to be freed from sin, to have communion with God in holiness. Other prerogatives will follow this.

Let us therefore consider what our desires are, how they are carried, for desires discover what the soul is. As a spring is discovered by the vapours that are about it, so is this hidden state of the soul discovered by the breaking out of desires. They are the breath and vapour of the soul. Let us consider what is set highest in our souls, what we desire most of all. Oh, a Christian soul that hath 'tasted of the loving-kindness of the Lord,' accounts it 'better than life itself,' Ps. lxiii. 3. It is not 'corn, and wine, and oil' he desires, 'but, Lord, shew me the light of thy countenance,' Ps. iv. 6. The desires of his heart are large to serve God, and to do good, more than for the things of the world. He desires earthly things, but as

\* That is, 'loves,' 'chooses.'—G.

instruments for better things, and this is the desire of every sanctified soul in some measure.

Let us hence make a use of conviction of the folly of base men, that live in the church, and yet come not so far as Balaam, that come not so far as those that shall go to hell. They turn over all religion to a 'Lord, have mercy upon us,' and 'Christ died for us,' and 'we hope we have souls to God-ward,' as good as the best, and to a few short broken things. They turn religion to compendiums, to a narrow compass, and make the way to it wide and broad, and complain of preachers that they straiten the way to heaven.

This is the disposition of worldlings; whereas, alas! there must be a righteousness that must 'exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees,' Mat. v. 20; there must be a righteousness from an inward principle; there must be a strong, constant desire of righteousness, more than of any thing in the world, before we can be assured of our interest and part with God's people. Let us take heed that we delude not ourselves this way.

But to come to an use of direction. How may we so carry ourselves, as we may have a spring of blessed desires, a spring of holy desires, that may comfort us, that we may have our interest and portion in the state of God's people?

That we may have these desires, *let us desire of God the spirit of revelation.* Desires follow discovery, for desires are the vent of the soul upon the discovery of some excellency it believes. Therefore let us beg of God the spirit of revelation, to discover the excellent estate of God's people. And because this is given in the use of means, let us present ourselves with all diligence under such means, as where we may have somewhat of the kingdom of God, that the riches of Christ being unfolded, our desires may be carried to such things; for there is never any discovery of holy and good and gracious things to a Christian soul, but there are new desires stirred up. Our souls are like a mill that grinds what is put into it; so the soul it works upon the things that are put into it. If it have good desires and good thoughts put into it, by good means used, and by prayer, it feeds upon them. Let us alway, therefore, be under some good means, that good thoughts may be ministered unto us, that may stir up gracious desires for the soul to work upon. Let us be in good company. 1 Sam. x. 12, 'Saul among the prophets,' we see he prophesied; and the heart is kindled and enflamed when we are among those that are better than ourselves, especially if their hearts be enlarged to speak of good things. But to come nearer.

2. That we may have holy and gracious and constant desires, *let us take notice and make trial continually of the state and frame of our souls, which way for the present they are carried, in what current our desires run.* If they run the right way, to heavenly things, it is well; if not, take notice what draws and diverts and turns the streams of our desires the false way. Let us think what the things be, and the condition of those things that draws our desires down, and make us earthly and worldly, whether the pleasures or profits or honours of this life. The way to have better desires is to wean ourselves from these things, by a constant holy meditation of the vanity of these things that the soul is carried after. Solomon, to wean his heart from these desires, from placing too much happiness in these things, he sets them before him and saith, 'they were vanity and vexation of spirit,' Ecces. i. 14. Let us set them before us as nothing, as they

will be ere long. 'Heaven and earth will pass away,' Mat. xxiv. 35; the world will pass away, and the concupiscence and lust of it. Let us consider the baseness, fickleness, and uncertainty of things that our souls are carried after, and this will be a means to wean them from them. And the soul being weaned from earthly things, it will run amain another way. Let us study, therefore, to mortify our base affections, and study it to purpose, to cut off the right hand and to pull out the right eye; spare nothing, that God may spare all. That God may have mercy upon us and spare us, let us spare nothing. These 'lusts they fight against our souls,' 1 Peter ii. 11.

And, as I said before, feed our souls; minister unto them better thoughts continually. Those that are governors of those that are young, season them while they be young with good things; for while the soul is not filled with the world, and while covetousness and ill lusts have not wrought themselves into the soul, good things and good desires are easily rooted and planted, and grow up in the soul. As letters graven in the body of a tree, they grow up with the tree, and the fruit of the tree grows up with the tree, and therefore the twigs break not with the greatness of the weight of it, because they grow up together. So plant good things in those that are young, inure them to know good things, to hate ill ways, plant in them blessed desires, and inure them to holy exercises and good duties, that good exercises may grow up with them, as the fruit with the tree. We see what a hard matter it is to convert an old man, to draw the desires of a carnal worldly man to heaven. When we speak of good things to him, his soul is full of the world. What is in his brain? The world. What is in his heart? The world. So he is dry, and exhausted of all good things, and that that is in him is eaten up with the world. It is a great providence in those that govern youth, that they labour not that their desires may be strong to the best things.

And let us all, both young and old, labour *for heavenly wisdom*, that when good things are ministered to us from without, or good motions stirred up by the Spirit of God, to close with them, and not to quench those motions and resist the Spirit, but to embrace those motions, and cherish them, till they come to resolutions, and purposes, and actions. If we have a motion stirring us up to repentance, let us ripen it till it come to perfect repentance, till we repent indeed, and have turned from all our evil ways, and turn to God with full purpose of heart, that it may be a motion to purpose. If it be a motion to faith, let us never leave cherishing of it by the promise till our hearts be 'rooted in faith.' If it be a motion to any other good thing, let us cherish and follow them to purpose, and embrace every motion, as an angel sent from heaven from God to a good end, to put us in mind, to invite us to good, and to drive us from ill.

And because desires are fickle and fading of themselves unless there be some art in helping of them, therefore let us add to these things a daily course of renewing of our covenant with God, that this day, as God shall enable me, I have a constant purpose against all sin, I will regard no iniquity in my heart, I will have respect to all good ways discovered. Renew our covenants and resolutions of old. Saith David, 'I have sworn and will perform it, that I will keep thy statutes,' Ps. cxix. 106. And as we determine and resolve, so make particular vows sometimes against particular hindrances, to abstain from such things.

*Quest.* What needs all this ado? saith the wicked atheist. Will not

less serve the turn, but there must be these vows, and purposes, and resolutions?

*Ans.* No; God values us by our resolutions and purposes, and not by ineffectual glances and wishes. Will wishing help us take a journey, or to do anything in this world? And can we not do anything in this world with wishing, and can we for heaven? No; certainly there must be resolutions, and covenants, and purposes, &c. What is the difference between a Christian and another man? A Christian unlooseth his heart from base desires. Nothing shall tie him to the base world. But his conscience tells him that he is free from living in sins against conscience, and as for infirmities, he labours and resolves against them. Therefore he is fit to die and to resign his soul. Whensoever God shall take him, he is in a good way, in good purposes and resolutions. God values us according to our purposes and resolutions. David did not build the temple, Abraham did not offer Isaac, but they resolved upon it, and it was accounted as done. This is our comfort, that God takes the resolution for the deed; and the perfection of a Christian is, that God accepts of these resolutions when he determines on the best things, till he bring his heart in some measure to that estate.

*Quest.* What is the reason that many men at the hour of death will admit no comfort?

*Ans.* The reason is, their hearts were naught. They respected some iniquity in their hearts. They were in bad ways, and allowed some reigning sin; and till these be mortified, we can minister no comfort. It is only the resolved Christian that is a fit subject for comfort.

But to answer an ordinary let\* or two that the devil casts in men's ways in these things.

*Obj.* But doth not God accept the will for the deed? Put the case I have a good will to do a thing; though I do it not, God accepts that.

*Ans.* I answer, God accepts the will for the deed, only where the impediments and hindrances are impossible to be removed; as, put the case a poor man would be liberal if he had it, God accepts the will for the deed, because he wants opportunity. But it never holds when a man can do it. God accepts not the will for the deed when a man hath a price in his hand to get wisdom, and yet is a barren plant and not a tree of righteousness. It is a sign of a naughty heart.

*Obj.* Oh, saith another, 'God quencheth not the smoking flax,' Mat. xii. 20, therefore, though I have weak desires, all shall be well.

*Ans.* It is true God doth not quench the smoking flax, but he doth not leave it smoking, but blows the spark, that in time it comes to a flame. Where there are beginnings of goodness embraced, it will grow from smoking flax to a flame. They are growing desires, as I said before. Therefore flatter not thyself that Christ will not quench the smoking flax. It is true, if there be a desire of growth, for then I must speak comfort to a poor Christian that cannot be so good as he would, but desires it, and complains, Oh 'that my ways were so direct, that I might keep thy statutes!' Ps. cxix. 5. With his desires, he complains that he cannot do it, and useth the means to grow. It is a good sign; God will not quench the smoking flax till he have brought corruption into subjection in us. Let every good soul comfort itself with this, if thou have these blessed desires, God meets with thee, for he desires thy salvation, and Christ desires thy reconciliation, and it is the desire of thy heart, and thou usest the means.

\* That is, 'hindrance,' = objection.—G.

Thou wilt not live in sins against conscience. Be of good comfort. We that are the ministers of God, and I at this time, bring the news of pardon; Christ's desire and thine meet in one.

Let us enlarge these things in our own deep and serious meditation. Alas! for want of serious meditation in our hearts of such like truths as these, men perish and sink suddenly to hell. There is but a step between ordinary profane persons and hell, and yet they never think of renewing their covenants with God, and entering into the state of grace, but content themselves with that which comes short of thousands that are now in hell, that have had more wishes and desires. Men put all upon empty things, 'God is merciful,' &c. No; God will not be merciful to such as bless themselves in ill courses; his wrath shall smoke against such, as I said; for in thus reasoning, they make a covenant with hell and death as much as they can. They that do thus forget God and good courses, and God will forget them; they treasure up wrath, and God treasures up wrath against them. Let us take heed of Balaam's wishing, and labour to have such desires as may be accepted of God and comfortable to us.