

DIRECTIONS FOR COMFORTABLE WALKING WITH GOD

by Lewis Bayly

Bayly's practical guide to maintaining daily communion with God, offering directions for prayer, meditation on Scripture, self-examination, and the pursuit of holiness that leads to comfortable and confident walking with God.

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"But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generations. Noah walked with God." (Genesis 6:8-9) In this dreadful and dismal story of the old world's degeneracy and destruction, falling away, and final ruin—here stands in my text a radiant and illustrious star, shining lovely with singularity of heavenly light, spiritual goodness, and God's sincere service, in the darkest midnight of Satan's universal reign, and amidst the strangest confusions, idolatrous corruptions, cruelties, oppressions, and lust—which ever the earth bore. Noah, a very precious man, and preacher of righteousness, and his family, were alone excepted. The true worship of God was confined to them, when all the world besides lay drowned in idolatry and paganism, ready to be swallowed up in a universal grave of waters, which was already fashioned in the clouds by the angry, irresistible hand of the all-powerful God, who was now so implacably—but most justly, provoked by those rebellious and cruel generations, that he would not allow his Spirit to strive any more with them; but inexorably resolved to open the windows or floodgates of heaven, giving extraordinary strength of influence above, and abundance to the fountains of the great deep, commanding them to cast out the whole treasure and heap of their waters; and taking away the retentive power from the clouds, that they might pour down immeasurably, for the burying of all living creatures which breathed in the air. From whence, by the way, before I break into my text, take this note.

Doctrine. The servants of God are men of singularity. I mean it not in respect of any fantasticalness of opinion, furiousness of zeal, or turbulency of faction, truly so called; but in respect of abstinence from sin, purity of heart, and holiness of life.

REASONS.

1. God's holy word exacts and expects from all that are born again, and heirs of heaven, an excellency above ordinary, Proverbs 12:26; Matthew 5:20, Matthew 5:41. Being taken forth as the precious from the vile, Jeremiah 15:19, by the power of the ministry, they must not only go beyond the highest civil perfections of the exact moral purity among the most honest heathens, Hebrews 12:14—but also exceed the righteousness and all the outward religious conformities of the most devout pharisees, who many thousands in these times come short of, and yet hope to be saved: or they can in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. But, lest any be proudly puffed up with a sense of this singularity and excellency above his neighbor, let him know that humility is ever one of the fairest flowers in the whole garland of supernatural and divine worth; and that self-conceit would poison even angelical perfection.

2. They must upon necessity differ from a world of wicked men, by a sincere singularity of abstinence from the course of this world, the lusts of men, the corruptions of the times, familiarity with graceless companions, the worldling's language, profane sports, all wicked ways of thriving,

rising, and growing great in the world, and so forth.

3. They make conscience of those duties and Divine commands, which the greatest part of men, even in the noontide of the gospel, are so far from taking to heart, that their hearts rise against them. As, to be warm in religion, Revelation 3:16; to be zealous of good works, Titus 2:14; to walk precisely, Ephesians 5:15; to be fervent in spirit, Romans 12:11; to strive to enter in at the strait gate, Luke 13:24; to pluck out their right eyes; that is, to abandon their bosom delights, Matthew 5:29; to make the sabbath a delight, Isaiah 58:13; to love the brotherhood, 1 Peter 2:11; with a holy violence to lay hold upon the kingdom of heaven, Matthew 11:12.

4. Experience, and examples of all ages, from the creation downward, clearly prove the point. At this time, as you see, the saints of God were all harbored under one roof, and yet not all sound there. Survey the ages afterward—the time of Abraham, who was as a brand taken out of the fire of the Chaldeans; the time of Elijah, when none appeared to that blessed man of God; the time of Isaiah, who cried, "Who has believed our report?" chapter 53:1, Isaiah 53:1; the time of Manasseh, who built altars for all the army of heaven, in the two courts of the house of the Lord; the time of Antiochus, when he commanded the sanctuary and holy people to be polluted with swine's flesh, and unclean beasts to be sacrificed, the abomination of desolation to be set up upon the altar; that darksome time when the glorious Day-star, Christ Jesus himself, came down from heaven to enlighten the earth; the time of Antichrist, when all the world wondered after the beast; our times, wherein, of six parts of the earth, probably scarce one of the least is Christian. And how much of Christendom is still overgrown with popery, and other exorbitant distempers in point of religion. And where the truth of Christ is purely and powerfully taught, how few give their names unto it! and of those who profess, how many are false-hearted, or merely formal.

5. Methinks worldly wisdom should rather wonder that any one is won unto God, than cry out and complain, Is it possible there should be so few? since all the powers of darkness, and every devil in hell, oppose, might and main, the implanting of grace in any soul; since there are more snares upon earth to keep us still in the invisible chains of darkness and sin, than there are stars in heaven; since every inch, every little artery of our bodies, if it could, would swell with hellish venom to the bigness of the greatest Goliath, the mightiest giant, that it might make resistance to the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit; since our souls, naturally, would rather die and put off their immortality and everlasting being, than put on the Lord Jesus—in a word, since the new creation of a man is held to be a greater work of wonder than the creation of the world.

6. Let us set aside in any country, city, town, family:

First, all atheists, papists, and distempered heretics—from the blessed truth of doctrine taught in our church.

Secondly, all whoremongers, drunkards, swearers, liars, revelers, worldlings, unjust, and fellows of such infamous rank.

Thirdly, all merely civil men, who come short of other honest heathens, and, lacking holiness, shall never see the Lord, Hebrews 12:14.

Fourthly, all gross hypocrites, whose outsides are painted with superficial flourishes of holiness and honesty—but their inward parts filled with rottenness and lust, who have their hands in godly

exercises, when their hearts are in hell.

Fifthly, all formal hypocrites, who are deluded in point of salvation, as were the foolish virgins, and that proud pharisee, Luke 18:11.

Sixthly, all final backsliders, of which some turn sensual epicures, and plunge themselves into worldly pleasures with far more rage and greediness, by reason of former restraint by a temporary profession; others become scurrilous deriders of the holy way; some, bloody goads into the sides of those with whom they have formerly walked into the house of God as friends.

Seventhly, all unsound professors for the present, of which you would little think what a number there is.

I say, let these and all other strangers to the purity and power of godliness be set apart, and tell me how many true-hearted Nathaniels we are likely to find.

USES—

1. Try then the truth of your spiritual state by this mark of a sober and sincere singularity. If you still hold correspondence with the world, and conform to the fashions thereof, if still you swim down the current of the times, and shift your sails to the turn of every wind; if your heart still hankers after the tasteless fooleries of the popular, and follow the multitude to do evil; if you are carried with the swing and sway of the place where you live, to uphold, by a boisterous combination, lewdness and vanity, to scorn profession, oppose the ministry, and walk in the broad way. In a word, if you do as the most do, you are utterly undone forever. But if with a merciful violence you are pulled out of the world by the power of the word, and happily weaned from the sensual, insensible poison of all bittersweet pleasures, and fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness; if, by standing on God's side, and hatred of all false ways, you have become the drunkard's song, as David was, and a by-word among the sons of Belial, as was Job; if the world lowers and looks sour upon you for your looking towards heaven, and your fellows abandon you as too precise; if your life be not like other men's, and your ways of another fashion, as the epicures of those times charged the righteous man when the Book of Wisdom was written; in a word, if you walk in the narrow way, and be one of that little flock which lives among wolves, and therefore must needs be little; so that by all the leopards, lions, and bears about you, I mean all sorts of unregenerate men, you are hunted for your holiness as a partridge on the mountains, at least by the poison and persecution of the tongue—I say then you are certainly in the high way to heaven.

2. If the saints of God be men of singularity in the sense I have said, then away with those base and brainless cavils against those who are wise unto salvation. What! are you wiser than your forefathers? than all the town? than such and such learned men? than your own parents? Nay further, to Noah it might have been said by the wretches of those times—Are you wiser than all the world? He, out of the height of his heroic resolution, easily endured and digested the affronts and indignities of this kind from millions of men. But take these spiteful taunts, and bind them in the mean time as a crown unto you, and advance forward in your holy singularity with all sweet content and undauntedness of spirit, towards that glorious immortal crown above; and let those miserable men, whose eyes are hoodwinked by Satan, and so blinded with earthly dust that they cannot possibly discern the invisible excellences and true nobleness of the neglected saints, follow the folly of their worldly wisdom, and sway of the greater part, to endless woe, and then give

believers leave to talk.

3. Let everyone, who in sincerity of heart seeks to be saved, ever hold it a special happiness and his highest honor to be singled out from the universal pestilent contagion of common profaneness, and the sinful courses of the greatest part, and to be censured as singular in that respect. Neither is this a singular thing that I now suggest—but it has been the portion of the saints in all ages to be trod upon with the feet of imperious contempt, as a number of odd despised underlings; whereas indeed they are God's jewels, and the only excellent upon earth. "Behold," says Isaiah, chapter 8:18, Isaiah 8:18, "I and the children whom the Lord has given me are for signs and wonders in Israel." "I am as a wonder unto many," says David, Psalms 71:7. "I am in derision daily, everyone mocks me," says Jeremiah, chapter 20:7, Jeremiah 20:7,. "We are made," says Paul, "a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men," 1 Corinthians 4:9. "We are made as the filth of the earth, the off-scouring of all things," 1 Corinthians 4:13. In Augustine's time, those that made conscience of their ways, dared not plunge into the corruptions of the times, were scornfully pointed at, not only by pagans—but even by unreformed professors, professors at large as we call them, as fellows that affected a preciseness and purity above ordinary and other men—they would thus insult and scoffingly fly in the face of such a holy one, "You are a great man, sure you are a just man, you are an Elijah, you are a Peter, you come from heaven!" In after times, if a man were but merely civil, ingenuous, chaste, temperate, he was made a by-word and laughing-stock to those about him. They presently said—He was proud, singular, beside himself, hypocrite, etc. Thus it was, is at this time, and will be to the world's end, that every vile whoremonger, beastly drunkard, ignorant scoundrel, scoffing Ishmael, and self-guilty wretch, will have a bitter sneer or reproach to throw, like the madman's firebrand, into the face of God's people, as though they were a company of nasty fellows, and a contemptible generation. This, I say, ever was and ever will be the world's opinion of the ways of God's people. The children of darkness ever harbor such conceits, and peremptorily pass such censures upon the children of light.

It is strange, men are content to be singular in anything but in the service of God, and the salvation of their souls! They desire, and labor too, to be singularly rich, and the wealthiest in a town; to be singularly proud, and in fashion by themselves; to be the strongest in the company to pour in strong drink. They would, with all their hearts, be in honor alone, and adored above others. They would dwell alone, and not allow a poor man's house to be within sight. They affect singularity in wit, learning, wisdom, valor, worldly reputation, and in all other earthly honors; but they can by no means endure a singularity in zeal and the Lord's service. In matters of religion they are resolved to do as the most do, though in so doing they certainly damn their own souls, Matthew 7:13. Basest cowardliness and fearfulness fit for such a doom! Revelation 21:8. They are afraid of taking God's part too much, of fighting too valiantly under the colors of Christ, of being too busy about the salvation of their souls, lest they should be accounted too precise, fellows of an odd humor, and engrossers of more grace than ordinary. It is one of Satan's dreadful depths, as wide as hell, and brim-full with the blood of immortal souls, to make men ambitious and covetous of singularity in all other things but in godliness and God's services—not to allow it in themselves, and to persecute it in others.

Now, in this story of Noah, so highly honored with singularity of freedom from the sinful contagion of those desperate times, and happily exempted from that most general and greatest judgment upon earth that ever the sun saw—a universal drowning—gloriously mounting up upon the wings

of salvation, and safety both of soul and body, when a world of giant-like rebels sunk to the bottom of that new sea as a stone or lead, I consider,

1. The cause of such a singular blessed preservation, which was the free grace and favor of God; "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord," Genesis 6:8.

2. The renown and honor of Noah's name; in that he stands here as the father of the new world, and the holy seed and progenitor of Jesus Christ; "These are the generations of Noah," ver. 9, Genesis 6:9.

3. The description of Noah's personal goodness, preservation, and posterity. These latter two follow. His personal description stands in the end of ver. 9; "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations; and Noah walked with God," where we find him honored with three noble attributes, which make up the character of a complete Christian—honesty, uprightness, and piety. And they receive much excellency and luster from a circumstance of time; "In his generations," which were many and mainly corrupt.

I. The CAUSE of such a singular blessed preservation, which was the free grace and favor of God; "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord," Genesis 6:8. Preservation is of God's Free Grace

Without any further unfolding my text's coherence and dependence upon either precedent or following parts, (for historical passages are plainer, and do not ever exact the length and labor of such an exact resolution as other Scriptures do,) I collect from the first point, wherein I find God's free grace to be the prime and principal cause of Noah's preservation, this

Doctrine. The free grace and favor of God are the first mover and fountain of all our good. Consider for this purpose such places as these— Jeremiah 31:3; Hosea 14:4; Deuteronomy 7:7-8; Romans 9:11-13; John 3:16; Joshua 24:2-3; Ephesians 1:5. And it must needs be so. For it is utterly impossible that any finite cause, created power, or anything out of God himself, should primarily move and incline the eternal, immutable, uncreated, omnipotent will of God. The true original and prime motive of all gracious, bountiful expressions and effusions of love upon his elect, is the good pleasure of his will. And therefore to hold that election to life is made upon foresight of faith, good works the right use of free will, or any created motive, is not only false and wicked—but also an ignorant and absurd tenet. To say no more at this time, it robs God of his all-sufficiency, making him go out of himself, looking to this or that in the creature, upon which his will may be determined to elect. The school-men, though otherwise a rotten generation of divines, yet are right in this.

Uses. 1. All praise then is due unto Jehovah, the Author of all our good, the Fountain of all our bliss, the Well-spring of immortality and life, "in whom we live and move, and have our being;" our natural being, the being of our outward state; our gracious being; the everlastingness of our glorious state. Were the holiest heart upon earth enlarged to the vast comprehension of this great world's wideness; nay, made capable of all the glorious and magnificent hallelujahs and hearty praises offered to Jehovah, both by all the militant and triumphant church, yet would it come infinitely short of sufficiently magnifying, admiring, and adoring the inexplicable mystery and bottomless depth of this free, independent mercy, and love of God, the Fountain and First Mover of all our good.

We may, and are bound to bless God for all the means, instruments, and second causes, whereby it pleases him to confer and convey good things unto us; but we must rest principally, with lowliest thoughts of most humble and hearty praisefulness, at the well head of all our welfare, Jehovah, blessed forever. We receive a great deal of comfort and light from the moon and stars—but we are chiefly indebted to the sun; from the greater rivers also—but the main sea is the fountain. Angels, ministers, and men may please us—but Jehovah is the principal. Let us then imitate those lights of heaven and rivers of the earth; do all the good we can with those good things God has given us by his instruments; and then reflect back towards, and return all the glory and praise unto, the Sun of righteousness and Sea of our salvation. The beams of the moon and stars return as far back to glorify the face of the sun, which gave them their beauty, as they can possibly; so let us ever send back to God's own glorious self the honor of all his gifts, by a fruitful improvement of them, in setting forth his glory, and by continual fervent ejaculations of praise to the utmost possibility of our renewed hearts. And here I cannot forbear—but must needs most justly complain of the hateful, intolerable unthankfulness of us in this kingdom, the happiest people under the arch of heaven, had we hearts enlarged to conceive aright of God's extraordinary love, and such miraculous mercies as never any nation enjoyed. Walk over the world, peruse the whole face of the earth from east to west, from north to south, and from one side of heaven to another, you shall not find such another enlightened Goshen as this island wherein we dwell. Of six parts of the earth, five are not Christian; and in Christendom, what other part is so free from the reign of popery, the rage of schism, or the destroying sword? Or where besides does the gospel shine with such glory, truth, and peace? Or in what nook of the world are there so many faithful souls who cry unto God day and night against the abominations of the times, for the preservation of the gospel, that God's name may be gloriously hallowed, his kingdom come, his will be done in every place, and who themselves serve him with truth of heart? And yet we are too ready, if we have not the height of our desires, and our wills to the full, instead of patience, tears, and prayers, which best become the saints, to embitter all other blessings, and to discover most horrible unthankfulness for them, by repining, grumbling, and discontent; by not rejoicing, as we ought, in every good thing which the Lord our God has given unto us, and by not improving the extraordinariness of his mercies to our more glorious service of him, and more humbly and precisely walking before him.

Away then with all sour, melancholy, causeless, sinful discontent; and "praise the Lord; sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise in the congregation of the saints. Let Israel rejoice in him who made him—let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. For the Lord takes pleasure in his people—he will beautify the meek with salvation. Let the saints be joyful in glory—let them sing aloud upon their beds," Psalms 149:1-2, Psalms 149:4-5. In a word, let us of this island, as we have just cause above all the nations of the earth, and above all ages of the church, from the very first creation of it, praise Jehovah most heartily, infinitely, and forever.

2. Never reproach any for deformity of body, dullness of mind, weakness of wit, poorness in outward state, baseness of birth, etc. "For who makes you to differ from another?" 1 Corinthians 4:7; either in natural gifts, as loveliness of body, beauty, feature, stature, wit, strength, &c.; see Job 10:10-11; Psalms 139:13-15; in civil endowments, or any artificial skill, until it comes even unto matters of husbandry; see Isaiah 28:24-28; in outward things; see Ps. 132; more particularly in preferment and promotion, see Psalms 75:6-7; in children, 1 Samuel 1:27; Psalms 127:3; in a good wife; see Proverbs 19:14; in spiritual things; see Ezek. 16; in anything you can name. We are

all framed of the same mold, hewed out of the same rock, made as it were of the same cloth—the path of the scissors making the only difference between one person and another. It is therefore only the free love and grace of God which make all the difference. Whereupon it was an excellent speech of a French king, as his chronicler reports—"When I was born, there were a thousand other souls more born; what have I done unto God more than they? It is his mere grace and mercy which does often bind me more unto his justice; for the faults of great men are never small."

Let none then, I say, overlook, disdain, or brow-beat their brethren, by reason of any extraordinary gifts, eminence of parts, singularity of God's special favor, or indulgence towards him in any good thing, which he denies to others. Especially, yourself being vouchsafed the mercy of conversion, never insolently and imperiously demean those poor souls who are beside themselves in matters of salvation, who, like miserable drudges, damn themselves in the devil's slavery, and allow their corrupt nature to carry them to any villainy, lust, or lewd course. Alas! our hearts should bleed within us at beholding so many about us imbruing their cruel hands in the blood of their own souls, by their ignorance, worldliness, drunkenness, lust, lying, scoffing at piety, hating to be reformed, etc. What heart, except it be hewed out of the hardest rock, or has sucked the breasts of merciless tigers—but would yearn and weep to see a man made of the same mold with himself wilfully, as it were, against the ministry of the word, a thousand warnings, and God's many compassionate invitations, cast himself, body and soul, into the endless, easeless, and remediless miseries of hell? And the rather should we pity and pray for such a one who follows the swing of his own heart to his own everlasting perdition, because the matter whereof we were all made is so nearly alike; only the free mercy, goodness, and grace of God make the difference. If God should give us over to the unbridled current of our corrupt nature we might be as bad, and run riot into a world of wickedness as well as he—if the same God visit him in mercy, he may become every way as good, or better than we.

3. If the free love of God be the fountain of all our good, away then with that feigned 'foresight of faith', right use of free will, and good works, which should move God to elect before all eternity; and that luciferian self-conceit of present merit, a fit monstrous brood of that beast of Rome, "who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God," 2 Thessalonians 2:4. For 'foreseen meritorious works' are equally opposite to grace—as works meritorious really existing. Here you must call to mind those eight considerations which I opposed against that wicked tenet of merit, which does justly deserve never to taste of God's free mercy.

II. Personal Goodness Brings Comfortable Blessings The renown and honor of Noah's name; in that he stands here as the father of the new world, and the holy seed and progenitor of Jesus Christ. "These are the generations of Noah." Whereas the fame and memorial of all the families upon earth besides lay buried and rotting in the gulf of everlasting oblivion, as their bodies in the universal grave of waters; the family of Noah, a righteous and holy man, is not only preserved in safety from the general deluge—but his generations registered and renowned in the book of God, and conveyed along towards the Lord Jesus, as his progenitors and precedent royal line.

Doctrine. Personal goodness is a good means to bring safety, honor, and many comfortable blessings upon posterity; see Deuteronomy 5:29; Exodus 20:6; Psalms 37:25, Psalms 112:1-3; Proverbs 20:1; Proverbs 11:21; Acts 2:39.

REASONS

1. Parents professing true religion make conscience of praying for their children before they have them, as did Isaac and Hannah; when their children were still in the womb. When they are born, as did Zacharias. In the whole course of their lives, as did Job. At their own death, as did Isaac—Genesis 25:21; 1 Samuel 1:10; Genesis 25:22; Luke 1:64; Job 1:5; Genesis 27:4. And prayers, we know, are, for the procuring of all favor at the hands of God, either for ourselves or others, the most undoubted sovereign means we can possibly use.

2. Godly parents do infinitely more desire to see the true fear of God planted in their children's hearts, than, if it were possible, the imperial diadem of the whole earth set upon their heads. And therefore their principal care is, and the crown of their greatest joy would be, by godly example, pious education, daily instruction, loving admonitions, seasonable reproofs, restraint from wicked company, the corruptions of the times, etc., by all dearest means and utmost endeavors, to leave them gracious when they die, and go out of this world. And "godliness," says Paul, "has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come," 1 Timothy 4:8. It gives right and full interest to all the true honor, blessings, and comforts, which are to be had in heaven or in earth.

3. Children are ordinarily apt, out of a kindly instinct of natural lovingness, from many and strongest motives, to imitate and follow their parents either in baseness or godly demeanor, to heaven or hell.

4. A father who truly fears God dares not to heap up riches or purchase high stations for his children by wrong doing, or any wicked ways of getting; whereupon both he and his family fare far the better, and happily avoid the flaming edge of those many fearful curses denounced in God's book against all unjust dealers. Such as that, Ecclesiastes 5:13-14, "There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for their owners to their hurt. But those riches perish by evil use. And he brings forth a son, and nothing is in his hand." And Habakkuk 2:9-10, "You are doomed! You have made your family rich with what you took by violence, and have tried to make your own home safe from harm and danger! But your schemes have brought shame on your family; by destroying many nations you have only brought ruin on yourself."

Use. 1. Would you, then, have your little babes you love so dearly, blessed upon earth, truly noble, God's favorites, and meet you in heaven? The be holy yourself! Men are very careful and curious to have their seed-corn and breed of cattle choice and generous; and will they not endeavor to nurture, manage, and conduct the immortal souls of their children with grace, by godly education, to the highest advancement of which those noble natures are capable, to everlasting bliss, fruition of all heavenly joys, and world without end?

2. This may also serve to reprove and correct those covetous madmen that labor more to have their children great than good, rich than religious. It is a madness of that kind which lacks terms to express it—that a man should go to hell himself, and fit his children to follow him, in seeking to establish his house and raise his posterity by sacrilege, simony, bribery, usury, oppression—or any other course of cruelty and wrong. For so they lay their foundation in fire-works, which is able to blow up themselves and their posterity, body and soul, root and branch!

3. Let this fill the heart of the dying Christian with sweetest peace. For, whereas the bloody knife of profane men's unconscionable and cruel negligence in training up their children religiously, does stick full deep in their souls, and, leaving this life, they bequeath unto them the curse of God,

together with their ill-gotten goods. But the Christian happily finds his conscience, by reason of his former thirsty desire and sincere endeavor to do his children good spiritually, freed from the horror of such blood-guiltiness, and leaves them to that comfortable outward estate which no injury or usury has impoisoned, and to that never-failing providence of our heavenly Father, which then is accustomed to work most graciously and bountifully for us, when we, renouncing the arm of flesh, the favor of man, riches of iniquity, and all such broken reeds, depend most upon it. If we must needs be our own carvers for things of this life, either by right or wrong, fraud or fair dealing—so that we may thrive and grow great in the world—then we are justly cast off from all merciful care over us, and exposed to ruin and curse. But, if we rest sincerely for ourselves and our family upon the all-powerful Providence, it will never fail nor forsake us—but ever exercise and improve its sweetness and wisdom for our true and everlasting good.

III. In the third point, we have a description of Noah's spiritual state, which is the complete character of a true Christian, consisting of three attributes—

1. Justness.
2. Sincerity.
3. Piety.

I gather from the first attribute—Every truly religious man is also a righteous and true-dealing man.

I gather from the second attribute—Sincerity is the sinew and touchstone of true Christianity. But these two I have so often pressed in the course of my ministry, that I will pass by them at this time.

See what kind of honesty to men that is, which is not accompanied with piety towards God; the same is that piety towards God which is not attended with honesty to men. Dishonest religion, irreligious honesty, insincere religion and honesty, are all of the same nature—and all out of the right path. If you have respect only to the commandments of the first table, and outward performance of religious services—but neglect duties of the second, and conscientious interactions with your brethren, you are but a pharisee and formal professor. If you deal justly with your neighbor—and yet are a stranger to the mystery of godliness, cannot pray, nor submit to a sincere and searching ministry, which the first table enjoins, you are but a mere moral man. If you put on a flourish and outward face only of obedience and conformity to both, and yet be true-hearted in neither, as did the pharisees, Matthew 23:14-23, you are but a gross hypocrite. Bear yourself holy towards God, honestly towards man, and trueheartedly towards both, or you are nothing in Christ's kingdom—but still in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. Put on righteousness and true holiness in this life, Ephesians 4:24, or you shall never put on a crown of glory in the life to come.

"In his generations," which were many, and mainly corrupt, Noah stood out, and stuck unto God through so many ages, and against so wicked a world; from which we may learn- Doctrine. That consistency is ever an inseparable attendant upon true Christianity. But because a double constancy is here implied, 1. One in respect of continuance of time.

2. Another in respect of opposition to the corruptions of the times.

I may observe two points.

1. Grace once truly rooted in the heart can never be removed. See for this purpose, Matthew 24:24; 1 John 2:19, 1 John 2:21; John 10:28; Romans 8:35, Romans 8:38-39; Luke 22:32; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Ephesians 4:30, etc. Proofs for this, may be taken from,

1. The dearness, strength, constancy, inviolableness of God the Father's love unto his children. It is dearer than a mother's to her sweetest babe, Isa. 49:15; it is stronger than the mountains, Isaiah 54:10; it is as constant as the courses of the sun and moon and stars; of the day and of the night, Jeremiah 31:35-36, and Jeremiah 33:20-21; it is as sure as God himself, Psalms 89:33-35.

2. Christ's triumphant sitting down and intercession at his Father's right hand; which may forever, with sweetest peace, and freedom from slavish trembling, assure us of our rootedness in Christ, constancy in grace, and everlasting abode with him in the other world. Being once implanted into Christ by a lively fruitful faith, and blessedly knit unto him by his Spirit, as fast as the sinews of his precious body are knit unto his bones, his flesh to his sinews, and his skin to his flesh—he that would tear us from Christ's mystical body, must pull him out of heaven, and remove him from the right hand of his Father. What furious or infernal power can or dare lay a finger on us in this kind? Christ has taken the poisoning power out of everything that would hurt us, or would drag us to hell. He has conquered, led captive, carried in triumph, and chained up forever, all the enemies of our souls, and enviers of our salvation. They may, in the mean time, exercise us for our good—but they shall never be able to execute their malicious wills, or mortally hurt us, either here, or in the next life.

3. The irrevocable sealing of the blessed Spirit, Ephesians 1:13-14, and. Ephesians 4:30. And who or what can or dare reverse the deed, or break up the seal of the Holy Spirit? Here then, as you see, the blessed Trinity is the immovable ground of our continuing on in grace.

4. The lasting and immortal power of the word when once rooted in a good and honest heart, Luke 8:15; 1 Peter 1:23.

5. The certainty and sweetness of promises to this purpose, Jeremiah 32:39-40; Zechariah 10:12; John 8:12; 2 Samuel 7:14-15; Ps. 89:83-37.

6. The force and might of faith, 1 Peter 1:2-9.

7. The efficacy of Christ's prayer, Luke 22:32; John 17:15-20; Romans 8:34.

8. The durable vigor of saving graces, John 4:14; Romans 11:29.

9. The inability, nay, impossibility, of all causes or creatures to pluck out of God's hand, John 10:29, or to draw any of his redeemed children to a total or final falling away. It is not the devil himself can do it, 1 John 5:18. It is not the world, 1 John 5:4; John 16:33. It is not the concurrent fury and united forces of all the powers of darkness, Matthew 16:18. It is not sin, 2 Samuel 7:14-15; Ps. 89:81, 32. It is not weakness of faith, or other graces, Matthew 12:20. It is not the imposture of false prophets, Matthew 24:24. It is no creature, or created power, Romans 8:38-39.

USE

1. This point, thus confirmed, does confound that forlorn tenet of the popish teachers, which tells us that a justified and sanctified man may fall finally and totally from grace. In which I have

heretofore upon another occasion, in your hearing, punctually refuted those which I conceived Bellarmine's best arguments. I will not now trouble you with his sophistry again.

2. This sweet and precious truth may crown the hearts of all those who are truly Christ's with unspeakable and glorious joy. Let new converts and babes in Christ, who are accustomed to be very fearful and much troubled lest they should not hold out, because upon their first entrance into the ways of christianity they are cunningly and concurrently encountered with so many oppositions—from the devil, who then rages extraordinarily; from the world, which then offers more and more alluring baits; from the flesh, which naturally is very impatient of any spiritual restraint; from carnal friends, who cannot endure their change; from their old companions, who cry out, 'they are turning puritans'; from the times, which discourage and look sourly upon their zeal; sometimes from the father who begat them; from the mother who nursed them; from the wife who lies in their bosom; from a world of enemies to grace.

I say, in such a case, let them grasp in the arms of their faith the proofs and promises in the present point, and ride on, because of the word of truth. Let them sweetly, with full assurance and unconquerable resolution, repose upon that everlasting encouragement, for the finishing of their spiritual building, which Zerubbabel received from the mouth of God himself, for success of the material building, a type of this—"Not by might nor by power—but by my Spirit, says the Lord Almighty. Who are you, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain; and he shall bring forth the head stone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it," Zechariah 4:6-7. And that they may more comfortably and constantly go on, let them often cast their eyes upon these and the like cautions, at their very first giving their names unto Christ.

(1.) Propose such interrogations as these to your own heart—Are you content to abandon your bosom sin, and the sensual froth of former pleasures, hereafter to delight in God, as your chief joy? Can you take up your cross, and follow Christ, his truth and holy ways, amidst the many by-paths that lead to hell, and different opinions of multitudes of men? Are you willing to suffer adversity, disgrace, and ridicule—with the righteous and despised godly ones? Can you endure to have things laid unto your charge, which you never did, thought, or dreamed of; to become the drunkard's song; a by-word to those that are viler than the earth; to be the song of ridicule at their feasts? Lamentations 3:63. In a word—can you, for Christ's sake, deny yourself, your worldly wisdom, natural wit, carnal friends, old companions, pleasures, profits, preferments, ease, excellency of learning, acceptance with the world, outward state, liberty, life, or whatever else you can name dearest unto flesh and blood? If your heart answers not affirmatively, (I mean, out of the resolution of a well-advised regenerate judgment; for I know the flesh will grumble and reclaim,) you will certainly fall away, or end in formality.

(2.) Look to your repentance—that it be sincere, universal, constant, from the heart, for all known sins—to your dying day. 1. If some worldly cross be the continued principal motive of your repentance —2. or the humor of melancholy —3. if it be confusedly only for sin, and in general—4. or for some one special notorious sin only —5. or for some lesser sins, with neglect of greater, as for tithing mint, etc.—6. if it be only legal—7. but for some sins, of what kind soever; leaving but so much as one known sin not taken to heart—8. or but for a time—all will come to naught. A foundation of godly sorrow, deliberately, advisedly, and sincerely laid at first, will be forever after a comfortable encouragement to faith, spiritual joy, well-doing, and walking with God.

(3.) Take the touchstone of fruitful, powerful, and special marks, to discern and distinguish justifying saving faith from all false and insufficient faiths; for a temporary faith may go far.

(4.) Let knowledge and love grow up together in you, and mutually transfuse spiritual vigor into each other. Presume not upon any knowledge, without a humble inflamed love. Neither build too much upon the heat of zeal, without the light of knowledge—either of these may be single and superior in some, who afterwards may shamefully fall away.

(5.) Above all things, look unto your heart. If your outward reformation were angelical, in words, actions, and all external demeanor—and yet your heart remained unchanged, you are but a painted tomb, and cannot be saved. Let a man take a wolf, beat it black and blue, break its bones, knock out its teeth, cut away its claws, put upon it a sheep's skin—yet still it retains its wolfish nature. In like manner, let a man become ever so harmless outwardly, yet without a new heart all is in vain.

(6.) Incorporate yourself into the company of God's people, by all engagements and obligations of a profitable, intimate, and comfortable fellowship in the gospel. There is a secret tie unto perseverance, in the communion of saints. He is not likely to walk long that walks alone, especially if he might enjoy good company. Shunning society with the godly, is a plain sign of a temporary faith.

(7.) Consider well (for the contrary is a notable discovery of counterfeits) that your calling to grace must settle you more surely in your honest particular employment; and make you therein more faithful, conscientious, and laborious.

Let Christians also of longer standing, and more strength in their assaults on perseverance, have recourse unto this tower of truth, and labor to prevent that which they fear.

1. By constancy, in a careful use of all the means; the word, prayer, conference, meditation, sacraments, etc. To which, let them preserve their love, and practice what they hear, without omission or delay. He who gives way to a heartless neglect, or customary hardness of heart, in the use of the ordinances, may justly suspect his nearness to some fearful sin, or fierce temptation, to some heavy judgment, or dangerous apostasy.

2. As soon as they discover any spiritual weakness or decay, assault or temptation, let them often flee unto the throne of grace, and mightily oppose with the most fervent prayers of extraordinary private humiliation.

3. Let them keep perfection single in their eye and aim; and, towards the attainment thereof, acquire and acquaint themselves with rules of holy life, daily directions, and ways of the most godly and self-denying men.

4. Let them watchfully deny all occasions of falling back—spiritual pride, known hypocrisy, desire to be rich, undervaluing and declining the most searching means, negligence in pious duties, discontinuance of intimateness with the godly, etc.

5. Let them consider that all which is past is lost, if they fall off, 2 John 8. This former point of constancy in grace did arise from a consideration of blessed Noah's continuance in goodness through so many ages. Now, in that he did not conform to the iniquities of the times—but did stand

unstained, amidst the most wicked generations which ever dwelt upon earth, I gather the necessity of another constancy, and that is in respect of opposition to the corruptions of times.

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