

DIVINE MEDITATIONS

by Richard Sibbes

Sibbes' collection of brief devotional meditations on various spiritual themes, offering the Puritan divine's characteristic warmth, scriptural depth, and pastoral tenderness in accessible reflective pieces.

35 Chapters

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Chapter 1

Divine Meditations

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Affliction Sanctified

Affliction Sanctified

1. Whatsoever is good for God's children they shall have it, for all is theirs to further them to heaven; therefore, if poverty be good, they shall have it; if disgrace be good, they shall have it; if crosses be good, they shall have them; if misery be good, they shall have it; for all is ours, to serve for our greatest good.
2. God's children have these outward things with God Himself; they are as conduits to convey His favor to us, and the same love that moved God to give us heaven and happiness, moves Him to give us our daily bread.
3. God pities our weakness in all our troubles and afflictions; He will not stay too long, lest we put forth our hands to evil; He will not suffer the rod of the wicked to rest upon the lot of the righteous (Psalms 125:3).
4. Is it not an unreasonable speech for a man at midnight to say, "It will never be day?" So it is an unreasonable thing for a man that is in trouble to say, "O Lord, I shall never get free of this; it will always be thus with me."
5. God takes a safe course with His children, that they may not be condemned with the world. He permits the world to condemn them, that they may not love the world. The world hates them, that they may not love the world; that they may be crucified to it, the world is to be crucified to them. Therefore they meet with such crosses and abuses and wrongs in the world. Because He will not suffer them to perish with the world, He sends them afflictions in and by the world.
6. Glory follows afflictions, not as the day follows the night but as the spring follows the winter; for the winter prepares the earth for the spring, so do afflictions sanctified prepare the soul for glory.
7. When God visits with sickness, we should think (in the use of means) our work is more in heaven with God than with men or with medicine. When David dealt directly and plainly with God and confessed his sins, then God forgave them and healed his body too.
8. Christ chiefly manifests Himself to the Christian in times of affliction because then the soul unites itself most closely by faith to Christ. The soul in time of prosperity, scatters its affections and loses itself in the creature, but there is a uniting power in sanctified afflictions by which the soul (as in rain the hen collects her brood) gathers his best affections unto his Father and his God.
9. Though God deliver us not out of trouble yet He delivers us from the evil of trouble, from despair in trouble, by supporting the spirit. Nay, He delivers by trouble, for He sanctifies the trouble to cure the soul, and by little troubles He delivers us from greater.
10. There are in the world many of the poor who yet are exceeding proud, but God sanctifies outward poverty to His children so that it promotes true poverty of spirit. As they are poor, so they have a mean esteem of themselves; it makes them inwardly more humble and more tractable to

God's government. Therefore when we are under any cross let us observe how it works, see whether we join with God or not. When He afflicts us outwardly, whether inwardly we be more humble. When He humbles us and makes us poor, whether we become also poor in spirit. When God designs to humble us we should labor through grace to abase ourselves and mortify pride.

11. Whatsoever God takes away from His children, He either supplies it with a much greater favor or else with strength to bear it; God gives charge to others to take care of the fatherless and widow and will He neglect them Himself?

12. It is a true rule in divinity that God never takes away any blessing from His people but He gives them a better; when Elijah was taken from Elisha into heaven, God doubled His Spirit upon Elisha; if God take away wife or children, He gives better things for them. The disciples parted with Christ's bodily presence, but He sent them the Holy Ghost.

13. The reason why the world sees not the happy condition of God's children is because their bodies are subject to the same infirmities with the worst of men, nor are they exempted from troubles; they are also subject to fall into gross sins, and therefore worldly men think, "Are these the men that are happier than we?" They see their crosses but not their crowns; they see their infirmities but not their graces; they see their miseries but not their inward joy and peace of conscience in the Holy Ghost.

14. It were a thousand times better for many persons to be cast on a bed of sickness and to be God's prisoners, than so scandalously to abuse the health that they have had continued so long.

15. God takes it unkindly if we weep too much and overgrieve for the loss of a wife, child or friend, or for any cross in the things of this life, for it is a sign we fetch not that comfort from Him which we should and may do. Nay, though our weeping be for our sins, we must keep a moderation in that: we must with one eye look upon our sins and with the other look upon God's mercy in Christ, and therefore if the best grief must be moderated, much more must the other.

16. He to whom this pilgrimage is over-sweet loves not heaven as he should; yet the pleasures of this life are so suitable to our nature that we would sit by them, only that God follows us with several crosses, therefore let us take in good part any cross, because it is out of heavenly love that we are exercised, lest we should surfeit upon things here below.

17. There is no condition but a Christian picks good matter of it, as a good artist sometimes will make a good piece of work out of bad materials to show his skill. A gracious man is not dejected over-much with abasement, nor lifted up over-much with abundance, but by faith carries himself in a uniform manner becoming a Christian in all conditions. Whereas those that have not been brought up in Christ's school nor trained up in a variety of conditions, they learn to do nothing. If they abound, they are proud; if they be cast down, they murmur and fret and are dejected, as if there were no divine providence that ruled the world.

18. A Christian will not do even common things but first he sanctifies them, he dedicates himself, his person and his actions to God, and so sees God in all things, whereas a carnal man sees reason only in all that he himself does. But a Christian sees God in crosses to humble him, and everything he makes spiritual; yet because there is a double principle in him, there will be some stirring of the flesh in his actions, and sometimes evil will appear most; but here is the excellency

of a Christian's state, that the Spirit will work it out at the last; He will never let his heart and conscience alone till it be wrought out by little and little.

19. There is not only a mystery but a depth in the mystery, as of election and reprobation, so of providence. There is no reason can be given why some of God's children are in quiet and others are vexed, why one should be poor and another rich. "Clouds and darkness are round about him" (Psalms 97:2); you cannot see Him; He is hid in a cloud, but "righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne." Howsoever He may wrap Himself up in a thick cloud that none can see Him, yet He is just and righteous; therefore when anything befalls us for which we can see no reason, yet we must reverence the Lord and adore His counsels and submit to Him who is infinitely wiser than we.

20. Gracious persons in times of peace and quiet often underprize themselves and the graces of God in them, thinking that they lack faith, patience and love, who yet when God calls them out to suffer crosses, eminently by His grace shine forth in the eyes of others in the example of meek and quiet subjection.

Brotherly Love

Brotherly Love

21. We should labor to agree mutually in love, for that wherein any Christian differs from another is but in petty things. Grace knows no difference. The worm knows no difference. The day of judgment knows no difference. In the worst things we are all alike base, and in the best things we are all alike happy. Only in this world God will have distinctions for the sake of order, but otherwise there is no difference.

22. All love and associations that are not begun on good terms will end in hatred. We should take heed with whom we join in league and amity. Before we plant our affections, consider the persons what they are; if we see any signs of grace, then it is good; but if not there will be a rent. Throughout our whole life this ought to be our rule; we should labor in a company either to do good or receive good; and where we can neither do nor receive good we should avoid such acquaintance. Let men therefore consider and take heed how they stand in combination with any wicked persons.

23. If any man be so ill-mannered when a friend shows him a spot on his garment that he grows angry, do we not judge him an unreasonable man? So when a man shall be told, "This will hinder your comfort another day," if men were not spiritually stupid and proud, would they swell and be angry with such a man? Therefore let us thankfully take the benefit of the judgment of others among whom we live. This was David's disposition when he was told of his danger from present temptation, as he was marching to slay Nabal and his household. So we should bless God and bless our friends that labor by their good counsel and advice to hinder us from any sinful course whatsoever it may be.

24. There is no true Christian but has a public spirit to seek the good of others, because as soon as he is a Christian he labors for self-denial. He knows he must give up himself and all to God, so that his spirit is enlarged in an increasing measure unto God and towards the church. Therefore the greater portion a man has of the Spirit of Christ the more he seeks the good of all men.

25. Those that are at peace in their own consciences will be peaceable towards others. A busy, contentious, quarrelsome disposition, argues that it never felt peace from God, and though many men think it commendable to censure the infirmities of others, yet it argues their own weakness; for it is a sign of strength, where we see in men anything good, to bear with their weakness. Who was more indulgent than Christ? He bore with the infirmities of His disciples from time to time; therefore we should labor to carry ourselves lovingly towards them that are weak. Nothing should raise us so high in our own esteem above others as to forget them to be our brethren, inasmuch as those infirmities that we see, shall be buried with them.

Conformity to Christ

Conformity to Christ

26. Christ took upon Him our nature, and in that nature suffered hunger and was subject to all infirmities; therefore when we are put to difficulties in our callings, to troubles for a good conscience, or to any hardship in the world, we must labor for contentment, because we are only with hardness made conformable unto Christ; we suffer, then reign with Him (Romans 8:17).

27. A child of God is the greatest freeman and the best servant, even as Christ was the best Servant, yet none so free; and the greater portion any man has of His Spirit the freer disposition he has to serve everyone in love.

28. We ought daily to imitate Christ in our places, to be good to all as the Apostle says, "Always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). Let us labor to have large hearts that we may do it seasonably and abundantly and unweariedly. The love of Christ will give to us the same impression that was in Him.

29. Our happiness consists in due subordination and conformity to Christ, and therefore let us labor to carry ourselves as He did to His Father, to His friends, to His enemies. In the days of His flesh He prayed whole nights to His Father. How holy and heavenly-minded was He, that took occasion from vines, stones and sheep to be heavenly-minded, and when He rose from the dead His talk was only of things concerning the kingdom of God, in His converse to His friends. He would not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed; He did not cast Peter in the teeth with his denial, He was of a winning and gaining disposition to all; for His conduct to His enemies, He did not call for fire from heaven to destroy them but shed many tears for them that shed His blood. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matthew 23:37), and upon the cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). So that if we will be minded like unto Christ, consider how He carried Himself to His Father, to His friends, to His enemies, yea to the devil himself. When He comes to us in wife, children; friends, etc. we must do as Christ did, say to Satan, "Get thee hence," and when we deal with those that have the spirit of the devil in them, we must not render reproach, but answer them, "It is written."

30. A wife when she marries a husband gives up her will to him; so does every Christian when he is married to Christ; he gives up his will and all that he has to Him, and says, "Lord, I have nothing, but if Thou callest for it, Thou shalt have it again."

31. Consider Christ upon the cross as a public person, that when He was crucified, and when He died, He died for your sins, and this knowledge of Christ will be a crucifying knowledge. This will stir up your heart to use your corruptions as your sins used Christ; as He hated your sin, so it will work the same disposition in you, to hate this body of death, and to use it as it used Christ. As we see this clearly, it will conform us to Christ.

32. With our contemplation let us join this kind of reasoning; God so hated pride that He became humbled to the death of the cross to redeem us from it, and shall we be proud? When we are stirred up to revenge, consider that Christ prayed for His enemies; when we are tempted to disobedience, think God in our nature was obedient unto death; and shall we stand upon terms? And when we grow hard-hearted, consider Christ became Man that He might show bowels of mercy; let us reason thus when we are tempted to any sin, and it will be a means to transform us into the likeness of Christ.

33. When we see God blasphemed or the like, let us think how would Christ stand affected if He were here; when He was here upon earth, how zealous He was against profaneness; and shall we be cold? When He saw the multitude wander as sheep without a shepherd His bowels yearned; and shall we see so many poor souls live in darkness and our bowels not yearn over them?

34. We must look upon Christ not only for healing, but as a perfect pattern to imitate; for wherefore else did He live so long upon the earth, but to show us an example. And let us remember that we shall be accountable for those good examples which we have from others. There is not an example of a humble, holy and industrious life, but shall be laid to our charge; for God purposely lets them shine in our eyes that we might take example by them.

Conscience

Conscience

35. A man keeps a good conscience in relation to others when he makes it appear that he can deny himself to do them good. The consciences of others shall think thus; "Such a man regards my good more than his own; he seeks not advantage to himself; he lives so that the world may see he is in good earnest; he speaks well and then makes it good by his life." Now if our care be so to walk, we shall then approve ourselves to the consciences of all mankind.

36. Let a particular judgment come upon any man, presently his conscience recalls back what sins long past have been committed by him, so that this waking of conscience shows that we are all sinful creatures.

37. Natural men labor to quiet all checks of conscience by sensuality; men are loath to know themselves as they are; they are of the devil's mind, they would not be tormented before their time; such men when they are alone, are afraid of themselves.

Conviction of Sin

Conviction of Sin

38. That we may be convinced of sin, the Spirit must work a clear and commanding demonstration of our condition by nature. He takes away therefore all excuses, turnings "and windings; even as when we see the sun shine we know it is day. The Spirit not only convinces us in general that we are sinners, but in particular and that strongly, "Thou art the man." This conviction is also universal, of sins of nature, of sins of life; sins of the understanding, of the will and of the affections; of the misery of sin, of the danger of sin, of the folly and madness of sin; of sins against so many motives, so many favors. Proud nature arms itself with excuses, ready evasions, many mitigations. It is necessary therefore that the Holy Ghost should join with men's consciences to make them confess, "I am the man."

39. The convincing of the Spirit may be distinguished from common conviction of conscience by this, that natural conviction is weak, like a little spark, and convinces only of our sins against the second table and not the first, especially of sins against the Gospel. Again, common conviction is against a man's will, it makes him not the better man, only he is tortured and tormented; but a man that is convinced by the Spirit, joins with the Spirit against himself; he accuses himself; he takes God's part against himself; he is willing to have his heart laid open, that he may seek and find the greater mercy.

40. It is the policy of the devil to labor to make us slight the gracious work of conviction, for he knows that whatsoever is built upon a false foundation will come to nothing, and therefore he makes us slight the work of self-examination and searching ourselves; but slight this and slight all, for if you are careless in searching and examining yourself, you will also be partial in your repentance and obedience.

41. There is a miserable camouflage in sin; naturally men will deny sin or else diminish it as Adam did, and as Saul when Samuel came to convince him. "I have," said he, "done the commandment of the Lord," and when he was driven from that, then 'he did but spare them for sacrifice'; but when nothing could satisfy, then "I pray thee honor me before the people." Things we cannot justify we will excuse; unless God come by His Spirit we are ready to shift them off, but when the Spirit comes and takes away all these fig leaves, then He convinces each of his miserable condition, not only in general, but the Spirit working together with the Word, brings him to confess, "I am the man."

42. When once the Spirit fastens the wrath of God upon the conscience of one whom He means to save, then there follow those afflicting affections of grief and shame. From thence come a dislike and hatred of sin and a divorce between the soul and the beloved sin, so that whereas there was before a scepter of sin in the soul, now God begins to dispossess that strong man. Then follows a strong desire to be better, and a holy desperation, so far, as that if God in Christ be not merciful, then the soul says, "What shall become of me?" As the Spirit lets in some terrors, so likewise He

gives us some hopes, such as, "What shall I do to be saved?" implying a resignation of the will to take any course, if only he may be saved, and then all the world for one drop of God's mercy in Christ.

Defence & Offence

Defence & Offence

43. A man ought not to commend himself, but in some special cases, first, because pride and envy in others will not endure it; secondly, it touches upon God's glory and therefore we should take heed; thirdly, it deprives us of comfort and hinders the apology of others. The heathens could say that the praising a man's self is very disagreeable. Let us take heed therefore that we do not snatch our right out of God's hand. But now on the contrary, in some cases we may praise and commend ourselves, as when we have a just call to make an apology in a way of defense, and for the conviction of them that unjustly speak evil of us. Secondly, we may speak well of ourselves in a way of example to others, such as parents to children, and this well becomes them, because it is not ours of pride or vainglory, for the motive is discovered to be love to them.

44. It is the duty of those that are God's children when they have just occasion to take the defense of others upon them. Thus did the blind man (John 9:30), he defended Christ against the Pharisees, and Jonathan spoke to his father in behalf of David, though he was called a rebel, yet he knew that he owed this unto the truth. God has a cause in the world that must be owned, and therefore when the cause of religion is brought upon the stage, God seems to say as Jehu did, "Who is on my side," Who? God commends His cause and His children to us. "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty" (Judges 5:23). So a curse lies upon those that when the truth suffers have not even a word to defend it.

45. When Joshua cursed the man that should build the walls of Jericho, he was not in any commotion or fury but in a peaceable temper. So when cursing comes from such a one, he is only a declaratory instrument and the conveyer of God's curse. Therefore every man must not take it upon him, for men often curse when they should bless, which is an arrow shot upright that falls down upon their own heads, but those that come in the Name of the Lord and are qualified for that purpose, their curses or blessings are to be regarded, for they are a means oftentimes to convey God's blessing or His curse.

Desertion

Desertion

46. If God hides His face from us what shall become of our souls? We are like the poor flower that opens and shuts with the sun. If God shines upon the heart of a man it opens; but if He withdraws Himself we hang down our heads; "Thou didst hide thy face and I was troubled" (Psalms 30:7).

47. Those that have had sweet communion with God, but have lost it, count every day ten thousand till they have recovered it again. When Christ leaves His spouse, He forsakes her not altogether but leaves something in the heart that makes her long after Him. He absents Himself only that He may enlarge and raise the desires of the soul, and after the soul has Him again it will not let Him go. He comes for our good and leaves us for our good; we should therefore judge rightly of our state and not think we are forsaken of God, when we are under desertion.

Effectual Calling

Effectual Calling

48. As grace is not of our own getting, this should teach us patience and hope towards others, waiting, if God at any time will give them repentance. Though God work not effectually the first time of conviction, nor the second, yet we must still wait, as the man that lay at the pool of Bethesda for the moving of the water.

49. It is over-curious to be exact about the first beginnings of grace because it falls by degrees like the dew undiscernably, and further, there is a great deal of wisdom as well as power in the working of grace. God offers no violence to the soul, but works sweetly yet strongly, and strongly yet sweetly. He goes so far without nature that we shall freely delight in grace. So that now the man sees great reason why he should alter his course. God does not overthrow nature; the stream is but changed, the man is the same.

50. The love of God in Christ is not barren kindness; it is a love that reaches from everlasting to everlasting; from love in choosing to love in glorifying us. In all the miseries of the world, one beam of this lovingkindness of the Lord will scatter all.

Evidence of Grace

Evidence of Grace

51. It is an evidence that we are partakers of God's grace, if we can look upon the lives of others much better than ours, and love and esteem them glorious. A man may see grace in others with a malignant eye, for natural men are so vainglorious that when they see the lives of other men outshine theirs, instead of imitation, they darken them; that grace they will not imitate, they will defame; therefore when persons can see grace in others and honor it in them, it is a sign they have grace themselves. Men can endure good in books and to hear good of men that are dead, but they cannot endure good in the lives of others to be in their eyes, especially when they come to compare themselves with them, they love not to be out-shined.

52. Spiritual conviction is not total in this life, but always leaves in the heart some dregs of doubting, though the soul be safe. As a ship that rides at anchor is tossed and troubled, but the anchor holds it, so it is with the soul that is somewhat convinced of its good state, it is sure of the main, yet is tossed with many doubts and fears, but the anchor is in heaven.

53. In true conversion the soul is changed to be of the same mind with Christ. As He is affected, so the soul of such an one is affected; and as He loathes all evil, so upon this ground there must also be in us a loathing of whatsoever is evil. But a carnal man is like a wolf driven from the sheep that yet retains his ravenous nature; so those men that are driven from their sins only by terrors of conscience, they are affrighted with sin's desert but do not hate it; therefore a loathing of evil is required; as well as our leaving it.

54. To discern our state in grace, let us chiefly look to our affections for they are intrinsic and not subject to hypocrisy. Men of great parts know much and so does the devil, but he lacks love. In fire all things may be painted by the heat; so all good actions may be done by a hypocrite but there is a heat of love which he has not. We should therefore chiefly examine the truth and sincerity of our affections towards God.

Faith

Faith

55. A Christian has sense and experience of God's love, together with his faith; it is not a naked faith without any relish, but that sense and experience we have here is given to strengthen faith for time to come. Therefore when we have any sweet feelings we must not rest in them, but remember that they are given to encourage us in our way and to look for fullness in another world.

56. Confidence arises from faith when troubles make it the stronger. Therefore it is a true evidence of grace, when confidence increase with opposition, great troubles breeding great confidence. Again, it is a sign a man's confidence is well-grounded when he can carry himself equal in all conditions, when he has learned to want and to abound. He needs a strong brain that drinks much wine. When a man has an even spirit to be content in all conditions, it argues a well-grounded confidence towards God.

57. To walk by faith is to be active in our walking, not to do as we like, but it is an acting by rule. Since the fall we have lost our hold of God, and we must be brought again to God by the same way we fell from Him. We fell by infidelity, and we must be brought again by faith, and lead our lives upon such grounds as faith affords. We must walk by faith, looking upon God's promise and God's call and God's commandments, and not live by opinion, example nor reason.

58. In the exercise of our callings, when we think we shall do no good, but all things seem contrary, yet faith says, "God has set me here; I will cast in my net at Thy commandment." Let us look upon God and see what He commands, and then by faith cast ourselves upon Him and leave the success to God.

59. Sight is the noblest sense; it is quick; it can see from earth to heaven in a moment; it is large; it can see the hemisphere of the heavens with one view; it is sure and certain, for in hearing we may be deceived. Lastly, it is the most affecting sense; even so is faith the quickest, the largest, the most certain, and most affecting.

60. Faith is like an eagle in the clouds; at one view it sees Christ in heaven and looks down upon the world; it sees backwards and forwards; it sees things past, present and to come, and therefore it is that this grace is expressed by beholding.

61. True freedom is when the heart is enlarged and made subordinate to God in Christ. A man is then in a sweet frame of soul when his heart is made subject to God, and drawn out towards Him, for He having all grace sets it at liberty. God will have us make His glory our aim that He may bestow Himself upon us. True zeal and holy diligence therefore are usually attended with the joys of faith.

God

God

62. God will be "as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon" (Hosea 14:5). These are not words wastefully spent, for we have great need of such promises, especially in a distressed estate, for then our spirits are apt to sink and our hearts to faint, and therefore we have need to have the same comforts often repeated. Profane persons think "What need of all this?" But if ever you have been touched in conscience for your sins, you will then be far from finding fault when God uses all the secrets in the book of nature and translates them to spiritual things to assure us of His mercy and love.

63. God has not in vain taken upon Him the name of a Father; He fills it up to the full. It is a name of indulgence, a name of hope, a name of provision, a name of protection. It argues the mitigation of punishment; a little is enough from a father, therefore, in all temptations, it should teach us by prayer to fly under the wings of our heavenly Father and to expect from Him all that a father should do for his child, as provision, protection, indulgence, yea, and seasonable corrections also (which are as necessary for us as our daily bread), and when we die we may expect our inheritance, because He is our Father. But yet we must understand also that the name of a father is a word of relation, something also He expects from us. We must also reverence Him as a Father, which consists in fear and love. He is a great God and therefore we ought to fear Him. He is also merciful, yea has bowels of mercy, and therefore we ought to love Him. If we tremble at Him we know not that He is loving, and if we be over-bold we forget that He is a great God; therefore we should go boldly to Him with reverence and godly fear.

64. The quintessence and spirit of the things we ask in prayer are in God, as joy and peace and contentedness. Without this joy and peace, what are all the things in the world? And in the want of these outward things, if we have Him we have all, because the spirit of all is in Him and Him alone.

65. God is said to be our God, or to be a God unto us, when He applies for the good of His creature that all-sufficiency that is in Himself. God is our God by covenant because He has made over Himself unto us. Every believing Christian has the title passed over to him so that God is his portion and his inheritance. There is more comfort in this, that God is our God, than the heart of man can conceive. It is larger than the desires of his heart and therefore, though we cannot say that riches or honors or friends are ours, yet, if able to say by the spirit of faith that God is ours, then we have all in Him; His wisdom is ours to find out a way to do us good. If in danger His power is ours to bring us out. If under the guilt of sin His mercy is ours to forgive us. If in any want His all-sufficiency is ours to supply us. If God be ours then, whatsoever God can do is ours, and all things even whatsoever God has shall be ours.

66. We must take heed of coming to God in our own persons or worthiness but in all things look to God in Christ. If we look to God as a Father we must see Him to be Christ's Father first. If we see ourselves acquitted from our sins let us look at Christ risen first. If we think of glorification in

heaven let us see Christ glorified first, and when we consider of any spiritual blessing, consider of it in Christ first. All the promises are made to Christ. He takes them first from God the Father and gives them to us by His Spirit. The first fullness is in God and then He empties Himself into Christ. "And of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace" (John 1:16).

67. God oftentimes makes wicked men friends to His children, without changing their disposition, by only putting into their hearts some kind thoughts for the time, which incline them to show favor, Nehemiah 2:8, "And a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which appertained to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me." God put it into the king's heart to favor His people. So Genesis 33:4, "And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept." Esau was not changed, only God for the time being changed his affections to favor Jacob; so God stirs up the hearts of many who still remain notoriously wicked, signally to favor the best, the holiest persons.

Gifts & Their Use

Gifts & Their Use

68. Gifts are for grace and grace for glory. Gifts are peculiar to some men but grace is common to all true Christians. Gifts are peculiar to many, and common to such as are not good. Gifts are found with great sinners, but grace works love and humility, abases and sanctifies the soul. The devil has lost little of his acuteness but yet he remains mischievous. So many men have great parts, but they have also a devilish spirit. Grace comes from more special love, and yet men had rather be reckoned devils than fools; they desire to be accounted men of parts, herein they glory, not in Christ, no, but reject the riches of His grace.

Good Things

Good Things

69. We may use God's creatures without scruples or superstition, as singling out one from another, but yet may we not use them just as we please. There is a difference between our right and the use of that right. The magistrate may restrain the use of that right, and so may our weak brother in case of scandal; so that though all things be ours, yet in the use of them we must be sober, not eating or drinking immoderately nor using anything uncharitably, whereby others may take offence, for though we have a right to God's bounty, yet our right and the exercise of it, must be sanctified by the Word of God and prayer.

70. Whatsoever outward good things we have we should use them in a reverent manner, knowing that the liberty we have to enjoy them is purchased with the blood of Christ. As David when he thirsted for the waters of Bethlehem would not drink, because it was the blood of the three worthies, so though we have a free use of the created things, yet we must be careful to use them with moderation and reverence and all to the glory of God.

71. When we receive any good to our souls or to our bodies, whoever is the instrument, let us look to the Principal; as in the gifts we receive, we look not to him that brings but to him who sent them.

Grace

Grace

72. Though Christ is a Head of influence from which rich grace flows into every member, yet He is a voluntary Head, and gives grace according to His own good pleasure, and the exigence of His members. Sometimes we have need of more grace, then it flows plentifully and supplies all our wants. Sometimes we have need to know our own weakness, and then the Lord our strength and our guide leaves us to ourselves that we may know that without Him we cannot stand; that we may know the necessity of His guidance to heaven in the sense of our imperfections, and that we may see our weakness, such corruptions which we thought were wholly subdued, as Moses by God's permission was tempted to murmur - such a meek man; and David to cruelty - such a mild man. They thought they had not had those corruptions so powerful in their hearts.

73. Many men oppose the power of divine grace, and rest in common civil things and mere outward performances. But when we do not duly regard the manner, God regards not the matter of the service we do; therefore oftentimes He punishes professors for the ill performance of good duties, as we see in 1 Corinthians 11:30-31. "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged."

74. It is an ill time to get grace when we should use grace; therefore that we may have less to do when it is enough to struggle with sickness, and that we may have nothing else to do but to die and comfortably to yield up our souls to God, oh, through grace let us be exact in our accounts every day!

75. It is the endeavor of an evil man to quench a great deal of good for a little ill; but Christ cherishes a little grace though there be a great deal of corruption, which yet is as offensive to Him as smoke to us, therefore we should labor to gain all we can by love and meekness.

Growth in Grace

Growth in Grace

76. As the sun is on its course though we cannot see it move, and as plants and herbs grow though we cannot perceive them to grow, even so it does not follow that a Christian grows not because he cannot see himself grow. Nay, if believers decay in their first love, or in some other grace, yet another grace may grow and increase, such as their humility, their broken-heartedness; they sometimes seem not to grow in the branches when they may grow at the root; upon a check grace breaks out more; as we say, after a hard winter there usually follows a glorious spring.

77. It is not sufficient for a Christian to have habitual grace; there is no vine can bring forth fruit without the fresh influences of heaven, though it be planted and well rooted in a good soil; so we cannot bring forth fruit unless God assists us; our former strength will not serve when a new temptation comes.

78. As men cherish young plants at first and fence them about with hedges to keep them from hurt, but when they are grown they remove these things and leave them to the wind and weather, so God sustains His children at first with props of inward comforts, but afterwards He exposes them to storms and winds because they are better able to bear them. Therefore let no man think himself the better because he is more free from troubles than others; it is because God sees him not fit to bear greater.

Heaven

Heaven

79. If we will walk aright in God's ways, let us have heaven daily in our eye, and the day of judgment, and times to come; so faith will steer the course of our lives, and breed love in the use of the means, and patience to pass under all conditions; let us have our eye with Moses upon Him that is invisible.

80. Many men would be in Canaan as soon as they were out of Egypt, they would be at the highest pitch presently; but God will lead us through the wilderness of temptations and afflictions till we come to heaven, and it is a part of our Christian meekness to submit to God and not to murmur because we are not as we would be, but let us rather magnify the mercies of God that work in us any love of good things, and that He vouchsafes us any of the first-fruits of glory.

81. A Christian is now in his minority and therefore not fit to possess all that he has a title to, but yet so much is allotted to him as will conduct him through life and give him a passage to heaven. If therefore he be in want, he has contentment, and in suffering he has patience. All things are his needs as well what he wants as what he enjoys.

82. Wicked men depart out of this world like malefactors that are unwilling to go out of prison, but God's children when they die, they die in obedience, "Lord. now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy Word" (Luke 2:29). To be in the body is a good condition because we live by faith, but it is better to be with the Lord because then we shall live by sight.

83. As children in the womb have eyes and ears, not for that place but for community life afterwards among men, wherein they shall use all their members; even so our life here is not for this world only but for another. We have large capacities, large memories, large affections, large expectations. God does not give us large capacities and large affections for this world, but for heaven and heavenly things.

Holy Desires

Holy Desires

84. Our desires are holy if they are exercised about spiritual things. David desires not to be great, to be rich in the world, or to have power to be revenged upon his enemies, but that he may dwell in the house of the Lord and enjoy His ordinances there.

85. A sincere heart that is burdened with sin, desires not heaven so much as the place where he shall be free from sin, but to have the image of God and Christ perfected in his soul; and therefore a sincere spirit comes to hear the Word, not so much because an eloquent man preaches as to hear divine truths, because the evidence of the Spirit goes with it to work those graces. You cannot still a child with anything but the breast, so you cannot satisfy the desires of a Christian but with divine truths. "The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee" (Isaiah 26:8).

86. When the truth of grace is wrought in a Christian, his desires go beyond his strength, and his prayers are answerable to his desires. Whereupon it is that young Christians often call their state in question because they cannot bring heaven upon earth, because they cannot be perfect, but God will have us depend upon Him for increase of grace in a daily expectation.

87. Desires are the spiritual pulse of the soul, always beating to and fro and showing the temper of it; they are therefore the characters of a Christian and show more truly what he is than his actions do.

88. When the soul admires spiritual things it is then in a holy frame, and so long it will not stoop to any base comfort. We should therefore labor to keep our souls in a state of holy admiration.

89. It is a hard matter to find out the least measure of grace, and the greatest degree of formality, for as the portrait oftentimes exceeds the person, so does an hypocrite often make a greater show than the true Christian. The lowest exercise of saving grace is in spiritual desires, and these are known to be saving if they proceed from a taste of divine things, and not merely from the object in the Word.

90. When the soul desires the forgiveness of sin and not grace to lead a new life, that desire is hypocritical, for a true Christian desires power against sin as well as pardon for it. If we have not sanctifying grace we have not pardoning grace. Christ came by water to regenerate as well as by blood to justify. It should therefore be our continual care and endeavor to grow and increase in grace, because without it we shall never get to heaven; without this endeavor our sacrifices are not accepted; without this, we cannot withstand our enemies nor bear any cross. Without it we cannot go on comfortably in our course. Without this we cannot do anything acceptable and pleasing to God.

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit

91. As it was with Christ Himself, so it is with His members. He was conceived by the Spirit, anointed by the Spirit, sealed by the Spirit. He was led into the wilderness by the Spirit, and by the Spirit He was raised from the dead; even so the members of Christ answer unto Christ Himself. All is by the Spirit; we are conceived by the Spirit, the same Spirit that sanctifies us; but first we receive the Spirit by way of Union, and then unction follows after; when we are knit to Christ by the Spirit, then it works the same in us as it did in Him.

92. The Spirit of God may be known to be in weak Christians, as the soul is known to be in the body by the pulses; even so the Spirit discovers itself in them by pulses, by groaning, sighing, complaining that it is so with them and that they are no better, so that they are out of love with themselves. This is a happy sign that the Spirit in some good measure dwells in such souls.

93. In trouble we are prone to forget all that we have heard and read that makes for our comfort. Now what is the reason that a man comes to think of that which otherwise he should never have called to mind? The Holy Ghost brings it to his remembrance; He is a Comforter, bringing to mind useful things at such times when we have most need of them.

94. It is not enough to know by the Word that there is strength and righteousness in Christ, but the Spirit must open the eyes of the soul to see, else we shall only have a natural knowledge of supernatural things. It is necessary to have a supernatural light to see supernatural things, so as to change the soul, and therefore the Spirit only works faith to see Christ is mine. Further, only the Spirit can lead the conscience to rest, because He is greater than the conscience, and can answer all inward objections and quibbles of flesh and blood; unless therefore the Holy Ghost does effectually apply what Christ has done, the conscience will not be satisfied.

95. If we desire to have the Spirit we must wait in the way of duty, as the Apostles waited many days before the Comforter came. We must also empty our souls of self-love and the love of the things of the world, and willingly entertain those crosses that bring our souls out of love with them. The children of Israel in the wilderness had no manna till they had spent their onions and garlic, so this world must be out of request with us before we can be spiritual. Let us through grace therefore, labor to see the excellency of spiritual things, and how cheap and poor must all the glory of the world appear! These things duly thought of and considered will make our desires more and more spiritual.

96. Those that care not for the Word are strangers to the Spirit, and those that care not for the Spirit never make a right use of the Word. The Word is nothing without the Spirit. It is animated and quickened by the Spirit. The Spirit and the Word are like the veins and arteries in the body, that give quickening and life to the whole body, and therefore, where the Word is most revealed there is most of the Spirit, but where Christ is not opened in the Gospel, there the Spirit is not at all visible in His saving power.

97. As we may know who dwells in a house by observing who go in and come out, so we may know that the Spirit dwells in us by observing what sanctified speech He sends forth and what delight He has wrought in us to things that are spiritual, and what price we set upon them. Whereas a carnal man lowers the price of spiritual things because his soul cleaves to something that he rejoices in far more, and this is the cause why he slights the directions and comforts of the Word; but those in whom the Spirit dwells, will consult with it, and not regard what flesh and blood will dictate, but will follow the directions of the Word and Spirit of God.

98. As the Spirit is necessary to work faith at first, so is He necessary also to every act of faith, for faith cannot act upon occasion but by the Spirit; and therefore we should not attempt to do, or to suffer anything rashly, but beg the Spirit of God and wait for His assistance, because according to the increase of our troubles must our faith be increased. The life of a Christian commences by the Spirit's working faith at first, but is promoted upon all occasions by His animating our graces already received. Faith stirs up all other graces and holds every grace to the Word, and so long as faith continues active we keep all other graces in exercise.

99. There are three main parts of our salvation; first, a true knowledge of our misery; and secondly, the knowledge of our deliverance; and then, a life conformable to the Word. The Holy Ghost only can work these; He only convinces of sin, and where He truly convinces of sin, there also of righteousness, and then of judgment, and leads us by faith to heaven.

100. Where the Spirit dwells largely in any man, there is boldness in God's cause, a contempt of the world. He can do all things through Christ that strengthens him; his mind is content and settled. He can bear with the infirmities of others and not be offended (for it is the weak in the Spirit that are offended); he is ready in his desires to say, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." But where corruption bears too much sway there is, "O stay a little that I may recover my strength;" that is, "Stay awhile that I may repent;" for the soul in the present frame is not fit to appear before God, but where the Spirit dwells in grace and divine comforts.

101. When we are young carnal delight leads us, and when we are old covetousness drowns us, so that if our knowledge be not spiritual we shall never hold out; and the reason why at the hour of death so many despair is because they had knowledge without the Spirit.

Humility

Humility

102. Poverty of spirit should accompany us all our life long to let us see that we have no righteousness nor strength of our own for sanctification; that all the grace we have is out of ourselves, even for the performance of every holy duty; for though we have grace, yet we cannot bring that grace into act without new grace, even as there is a fitness in trees to bear fruit, but without the influence of heaven they cannot be fruitful. That which oftentimes makes us miscarry in the duties of our callings is this, we think we have strength and wisdom sufficient, and then what is begun in self-confidence is ended in shame. We set about duties in our own pride and strength of parts, and find no better success; therefore it is always a good sign that God will bless our endeavors, when out of a deep sense of our own weakness, we in prayers and supplications like our Lord also water our business with strong crying and tears: "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared" (Hebrews 5:7).

103. The hearts of men, yea of good men, are apt to be taken up with outward things. When the weak disciples had cast out devils they were ready to be proud, but Christ quickly spies it and admonishes them, not to rejoice that the devils were subject to them, but that their names were written in heaven (Luke 10:20). Therefore when we find the least inclination to glory in anything we must check ourselves, and consider what grace we have to use them, what love to men we have to turn these things to the common good. For, whatsoever a man has, if he has not also humility and love to use it aright, it will turn to his sorrow.

104. God's children are strengthened by their falls; they learn to stand by their falls. Like tall cedars the more they are blown the deeper will they be rooted. That which men think is the overthrow of God's children does but root them the deeper, so that after all outward storms and inward declensions this is the issue, "They take root downward and bear fruit upward" for the Lord restoreth their souls.

105. Many men that make a profession are like the hawk which ascends high but looks low; but those that look high as they ascend high are risen with Christ; for a Christian being once in a state of grace forgets what is behind, and looks upon ascending higher and higher, till he be in his place of happiness. As at Christ's rising there was an earthquake, so such as are risen with Him find a commotion and conflict between the flesh and the Spirit.

106. None can be truly confident but God's children. Other men's confidence is like a madman's strength; he may have the strength of two or three for a time, but it is a false strength, and it is when they are lifted up upon the wings of ambition and favor of men; but these men in the time of trial sink. The hope of the hypocrite shall perish (Job 8:13).

107. It is God's free love that has cast us into these happy times of the Gospel, and it is further love that makes choice of some and leaves others. This should therefore teach us sound humility,

considering that God must open the heart or else it will remain eternally shut.

Joy

Joy

108. The bitterest things in religion are sweet - there is a sweetness even in reproofs, when God meets with our corruptions and whispers unto us such and such things are dangerous, and that if we cherish them they will bring us to hell. The Word of God is sweet to a Christian that has his heart under its influence. Is not pardon sweet to a condemned man, and riches sweet to a poor man, and favor sweet to a man in disgrace, and liberty sweet to a man in captivity? So all that comes from God is sweet to a Christian that has his heart touched with the sense of sin.

109. A Christian's joy is right when it proceeds from right principles, from judgment and conscience, not from fancy and imagination; when judgment and conscience will bear him out; when there is fellowship between them both, for our joy must spring from peace, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God" (Romans 5:2). The Apostles began their Epistles with mercy, grace and peace; mercy in forgiveness, grace to renew our natures, and peace of conscience. These are things to be gloried in. If we find our sins pardoned, our persons accepted, and our nature renewed; we may comfort ourselves in health, in wealth, in wife, in children, in anything, because all come from the favor of God. We may joy in afflictions because there is a blessing in the worst things to further our eternal happiness. Though we cannot joy in affliction itself as being contrary to our nature, yet we may in the outcome; so that we rejoice aright when, having interest in God, we glory in the testimony of a good conscience; when looking inward, we find all at peace; when each of us can say upon good grounds that God is mine, and therefore all is mine, both life and death and all things, so far as they may serve for my truest good.

110. The religious affections of God's people are mixed, for they mingle their joy with weeping, and their weeping with joy; whereas a carnal man's are all simple; if he rejoices, he is mad; if he is sorrowful (unless it be restrained) it sinks him; but grace always tempers the joy and sorrow of a Christian, because he has always something to joy in, and something for which to grieve. What a poorness of spirit is it to be over-joyful or overmuch grieved, when all things are fading and vanish so soon away. Let us therefore bear continually in our minds that all things here below are subordinate to the upper world.

Learning & Teaching

Learning & Teaching

111. When men can find no comfort and yet set themselves to teach and encourage weaker Christians, by way of reflection they receive frequently great comfort themselves. So does God reward the conscientious performance of this duty of mutual discourse; that those things we did not so fully understand before, by discourse we come to know and relish far better. This should teach us to be in love with holy conference, for besides the good we do to others we are much profited ourselves.

112. It is much to be desired that there were that love in all men to teach what they know, and that humility in others to be instructed in what they know not. God humbles sometimes great persons to learn of others that are meaner, and it is our duty to embrace the truth whoever brings it, and oftentimes ordinary persons are instruments of knowledge and comfort to many that are greater than themselves, as Aquila and Priscilla instructed Apollos.

113. That a man may be fit to persuade others, he must have love to their persons, a clear knowledge of the cause, and grace that he may be able to speak in wisdom to their souls and consciences. As we are saved by love, so we are persuaded by the arguments of love, which is most agreeable to the nature of man that is led by persuasion not by compulsion. Men may be compelled to the use of the means but not to faith. Many labor only to unfold the Scriptures for the increase of their knowledge, that they may be able to discourse, whereas the special intent of the ministry is to work upon the heart and affections.

114. There are none that in sincerity do frequently promote holy conference but are great gainers thereby. Many men ask questions and are inquisitive to know, but not that they might put into practice. This is but a proud desire to taste of the tree of knowledge. But the desire of well-affected Christians is to know more that they might more diligently seek Christ. We gain much oftentimes by discourse with those that are young in religion. Paul desires to meet with the Romans though they were his converts, that he might himself be strengthened and comforted by their mutual faith. "That is, that I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me" (Romans 1:12).

115. Those that measure lands are very exact in everything, but the poor man whose it is knows the use of the ground better, and delights in it more because it is his own; so it is with those ministers that can exactly speak of heavenly truths yet have no share in them, but the poor soul that hears them rejoices and says, "These things are mine."

Love Toward God

Love Toward God

116. There are four things observable in the nature of love; first, an esteem of the party beloved, secondly a desire to be joined to him, thirdly a settled contentment, fourthly a desire to please the party in all things. So there is first in every Christian a high estimation of God and of Christ; he makes choice of Him above all things, and speaks largely in His commendation. Secondly he desires to be united to Him, and where this desire is, there is an intercourse; he will open his mind to Him by prayer and go to Him in all his consultations for His counsel. Thirdly, he places contentment in Him alone, because in his worst conditions he is in peace and quiet if he may have His countenance shine upon him. Fourthly, he seeks to please Him because he labors to be in such a condition that God may delight in him. His love stirs up his soul to remove all things distasteful to Him. He asks as David did, "Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" (2 Samuel 9:1).

117. We see by experience that there is a succession of love; he that loves for beauty will despise when he sees a better. So it is in the soul respecting heavenly and earthly things; when the soul sees more excellency and a satisfying fullness in heavenly things, then the love of earthly things like Dagon immediately falls down. So Paul says "I account all things as dross and as dung in comparison of Christ."

118. When we love things baser than ourselves it is like a clear stream that runs into a sink. As our love therefore is the best thing we have, and none deserves it more than God, so let Him have our love, yea the strength of our love, that we may love Him with all our souls and with all our mind and with all our strength.

119. The love of a wife to her husband may begin from the supply of her necessities, but afterwards she may love him also for the sweetness of his person; so the soul first loves Christ for salvation but when she is brought to Him and finds what sweetness there is in Him then she loves Him for Himself.

120. God comforts us in the exercise and practice of grace; we must not therefore snatch comforts before we be fit for them; when we perform precepts then God will bestow comforts. If we will make it good indeed that we love God, we must keep His commandments; we must not keep one but all; it must be universal obedience fetched from the heart-root, and that out of love.

121. When the love of Christ is manifested to us, and our love again to Christ is quickened by the Spirit, this causes an admiration in the soul, when it considers what wonderful love is in Christ, and the Spirit witnesses that this love of Christ is set upon us; from hence it begins to admire, "How is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us and not unto the world? What is the reason Thou so lovest me, and not others?" When the soul has been with God on the mount and is turned from earthly things, then it sees nothing but love and mercy. Such grace constrains us to do all things out of love to God and goodwill to men.

Man's Chief End

Man's Chief End

122. The whole life of a Christian should be nothing but praises and thanks to God; we should neither eat nor drink nor sleep, but eat to God and sleep to God and work to God and talk to God, do all to His glory and praise.

123. We glorify God when we exalt Him in our souls above all creatures in the world, when we give Him the highest places in our love and in our joy, when all our affections are set upon Him as our greatest good. This is seen also by opposition, when we will not offend God for any creature; when we can ask our affections, "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" (Psalms 73:25).

124. In the covenant of grace God intends the glory of His grace above all. Now faith is fit for it, because it has a uniting virtue to knit us to the Mediator and to lay hold of a thing out of ourselves; it empties the soul of all idea of worth or strength or excellence in the creature, and so it gives all the glory to God and Christ.

125. To glory in any creature whatsoever is idolatry, first, because the mind sets up something to glory in which is not God; secondly, it must be spiritual adultery to cleave to anything more than to God; thirdly, it is bearing false witness to ascribe excellency where there is none. We have a prohibition, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, nor the strong man in his strength, nor the rich man in his riches (Jeremiah 9:23). God will not give His glory to another, and therefore when men will be meddling with that glory which belongs to God alone He blasts them aside as broken vessels and even disdains to use them.

126. All things out of God are only like the grass. When we rejoice in anything out of God, it is a childish joy as if we rejoiced only in flowers; after we have drawn out their sweetness we cast them away. All outward things are common to sinners as well as to saints, and without grace they will surely prove snares. At the hour of death what comfort can we have in them any further than with humility and love to God we have used them well? Therefore if we would have our hearts seasoned with true joy, let us labor to be faithful in our several places, and endeavor according to the gifts we have to glorify God.

127. This life is not a life for the body but for the soul, and therefore the soul should speak to the body, "If you move me to fulfil your desires now, you will lose me and yourself hereafter." But if the body be given up to Christ, then the soul will speak a good word for it in heaven, "Lord, there is a body of mine in the grave in yonder world that did fast for me and pray with me:" it will speak for it as Pharaoh's butler to the king for Joseph.

128. It is rebellion against God for a man to make away with himself; the very heathens could say that we must not go out of our station till we be called. It is the voice of Satan, "Cast thyself down," but what says Paul to the jailer, "Do thyself no harm: for we are all here." We should so carry ourselves that we may be content to stay here till God has done that work He has to do in us and

by us, and then He will call us hence in the best time.

The Means of Grace

The Means of Grace

129. That man has made good progress in religion that has high esteem of the ordinances of God, and though perhaps he may find himself dead and dull, yet the best things have left such a taste and relish in his soul that he cannot be long without them.

130. If we do not find ourselves the people of God's delight, let us attend upon the means of salvation and wait God's good time, and not stand disputing, "Perhaps God hath not a purpose to save me", but zealous in obedience, cast ourselves into the arms of Christ and say, "If I perish, I will perish here."

131. In the ark there was manna, which was a type of our sacraments; and the testaments, which was a type of the Word preached; and the rod of Aaron, a type of government. Wheresoever therefore there is spiritual manna and the Word preached and the rod of Aaron in the government, there is a true church though there be many personal corruptions.

132. In times of calamity God will take care of His fruitful trees, as in Deuteronomy 20:19. The Israelites were commanded not to destroy the trees that bear fruit; so though God's judgments come amongst us, yet God will take special care of His children that be fruitful; but the judgments of God will light heavy upon barren trees; though God may long endure barrenness in the want of means, yet He will not in the use of means. It were better for a bramble to be in the wilderness than in an orchard; nothing will keep the axe from the root but fruitfulness in God's vineyard.

Mercy

Mercy

133. If God's mercy might be overcome with our sins we should overcome it every day. It must be rich mercy that can fully and forever satisfy the soul, and therefore the Apostle never speaks of it without the extensions of love, the height and depth. We lack words; we lack thoughts to form any idea of it. We should therefore labor through grace to frame and raise our souls to rich and large conceptions and apprehensions of mercy that is sovereign and divine.

134. God is rich in mercy, not only to our souls but in providing all things we stand in need of. He keeps us from evil and so He is called a Buckler. He gives us all good things and so He is called a Sun. He keeps us now in a good condition, and will advance us still higher, even so far as our nature shall be capable in the heavenly world.

135. No sin is so great but the satisfaction of Christ and His mercies are greater; it is beyond comparison. Fathers and mothers in tenderest affections are but beams and trains to lead us upwards to the infinite mercy of God in Christ.

136. He that seeks us before we sought Him, will He refuse us when we seek after Him? Let no man therefore despair or even be discouraged; if there be in you the height and depth, and length and breadth of sin, there is also much more the height and depth and length and breadth of mercy in God, and though we have played the harlot with many lovers, yet let us return again. For His thoughts are not as ours, and His mercies are the mercies of a reconciled God.

Man by Nature

Man by Nature

137. Every man naturally is a god unto himself, not only in reflecting all upon himself, but in setting about divine things in his own strength, as if he were principal in his own actions, coming to them in the strength of his own wit, and in the strength of his own reason. This seed is in all men by nature, until God shall have turned a man out of carnal self by the power of the Holy Ghost.

138. The righteousness of works leaves, the soul in perplexity; that righteousness which comes by any other means than by Christ leaves the soul unsettled, because the law of God promises life only upon absolute and personal performance. Now the heart of man tells him that this he has not done, such and such duties he has omitted, and this breeds perplexity because he has not any support.

139. No man is a true divine but the child of God; he only knows holy things by a holy light and life. Other men though they speak of these things, yet practically they know them not. Take the most mystical points in religion such as justification, adoption, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, the sweet benefit of communion of saints, the excellent state of a Christian in extremity, to know what is to be done upon all occasions, inward sight and sorrow for sin; they know not what these things mean, for however aptly they may discourse of them, yet the things themselves are mysteries. Repentance is a mystery; joy in the Holy Ghost is a mystery; no natural man though he be never so great a scholar knows these things experimentally. He knows them only as physicians know physic by their books, but not as a sick man by his own experience.

140. Whatsoever is good in a natural man is depraved by a self-end; self-love rules all his actions. He keeps within himself and makes his chief end himself, and he is a god to himself. God is but his idol. This is true of all natural men in this world; they make themselves their last end, and where the end is depraved, the whole course is corrupted.

141. A man may know that he loves the world if he be more careful to get than to use it; we are but stewards, and should consider, "I must be as careful in distributing as in getting," for when we are all in getting, and nothing in distributing, this man is a worldling; though he be moderate in getting without wronging any man, yet the world has got his heart because he makes not that use of it he should.

142. It has been an old imputation to charge distraction upon men of the greatest wisdom and sobriety. John the Baptist was accused of having a devil, and Christ to be beside Himself and the Apostles to be full of new wine, and Paul to be mad. The reason is because as religion is a mystical and spiritual thing, so the tenets of it seem paradoxes to carnal men; as first, that a Christian is the only freeman, and other men are slaves; that he is the only rich man, though never so poor in the world; that he is the only beautiful man, though outwardly never so deformed; that he is the only happy man in the midst of all his miseries. Now these things though true seem strange to natural men, and therefore when they see men earnest against sin, or making

conscience of sin, they wonder at this commotion for trifles. But these men go on in a course of their own and make that the measure of all; those that are below them are profane, and those that are above them are indiscreet. By fanciful affections, they create idols, and then cry down spiritual things as folly. They have principles of their own, to love themselves and to love others only for themselves, and to hold on the strongest side and by no means expose themselves to danger. But when men begin to be religious, they deny all their own aims, and that makes their course seem madness to the world, and therefore they labor to breed an ill opinion of them, as if they were madmen and fools.

143. Those that lay the imputation of folly and madness on God's children, will be found to be fools and madmen themselves. First, is not he a fool that cannot make a right choice of things? And how do carnal men make their choice when they embrace perishing things for the best? Secondly, a carnal man has not a spiritual capacity to apprehend spiritual things aright; he cannot see things invisible. Thirdly, his heart accounts it a vain thing to serve the Lord. Fourthly, he judges his enemies to be his best friends, and his best friends to be his worst enemies. Fifthly, the principles of all his actions are unsound, because they are not directed to the right object, therefore all his affections are mad, such as his joy, his love, his delight. His love is but lust; his anger vexation. For his confidence, he calls God's love into question, but if a false suggestion comes from the devil, that he embraces; and therefore is he not mad? And this is the condition of all natural men in the world.

Obedience

Obedience

144. Partial obedience is not obedience at all; to single out easy things that do not oppose our lusts, which are not against our reputation, therein some will do more than they need; but our obedience must be universal to all God's commandments, and that because He commands it. Empty relationships are nothing; if we profess ourselves God's servants and do not honor Him by our obedience, we take but an empty title. Let us seek grace to make our professed relationship good, at least in our affections, that we may be able to say, I desire to fear Thy Name; yea with my spirit within me will I seek thee early (Isaiah 26:8-9).

145. All the contention between the flesh and the Spirit lies in this, whether God shall have His will or we have ours. Now God's will is straight but ours is crooked, and therefore if God will have us offer up our Isaac we must submit to Him, and even acquiesce in the whole will of God. The more (through grace) emptied of self, the more free and happy we shall be by being more subject to God, for in what measure we part with anything for Him we shall receive even in this world an hundredfold in joy and peace.

146. Sincerity is the perfection of Christians. Let not Satan therefore abuse us. We do all things when we endeavor to do all things and purpose to do all things and are grieved when we cannot do better; then in some measure we do all things.

147. There are many that will give some way to divine truths, but they have a reservation of some sin. When Herodias is once touched, John Baptist must lose his head. Such truths as come near, make transgressors fret because their consciences tell them they will not yield obedience to all. Some sin has got the dominion over their affections, but conscience says, "I warn thee against this sin," and then that hatred which should be turned upon the sin is turned upon the Word and the minister. Some vermin when they are driven to a stand will fly in a man's face, so these men, when they see they must yield, grow malicious, so that what they will not follow, that they will reproach. Therefore it should be our care at all times to yield obedience according to what we know of the divine will.

Prayer

Prayer

148. Prayer exercises all the graces of the Spirit; we cannot pray, but our faith is exercised, our love, our patience, which makes us set a high price upon that we seek after and to use it well.

149. It is not so easy a matter to pray as men think, and that in regard of the unspiritualness of our nature compared with the duty itself which is to draw near to a holy God; we cannot endure to sever ourselves from our lusts. There is also a great rebellion in our hearts against anything that is good. Satan also is a special enemy. When we go to God by prayer, the devil knows we go to fetch help and strength against him, and therefore he opposes all he can; but though many men mumble over a few prayers, yet indeed no man can pray as he ought but he that is within the covenant of grace and by the Holy Ghost.

150. A child of God may pray and not be heard, because at that time he may be a child under displeasure. If any sin lie unrepented of we are not in a fit state to pray. Will a king regard the petition of a traitor that purposes to go on in his rebellion, or a father hear a disobedient child? Therefore when we come to God, we should renew our repentance, faith and purposes of better pleasing Him, and then remember the Scripture and search all the promises as part of our best riches, and when we have them, we should humbly challenge God with His own promises. This will make us strong and faithful in our prayers when we know we never pray to Him in vain.

151. In prayer we tempt God if we ask that which we labor not for; our faithful endeavors must second our devotion, for to ask maintenance and not put our hands to the work is only to knock at the door and yet pull the door to us that it might not open. In this case, if we pray for grace and neglect the spring from whence it comes, how can we speed? It was a rule in ancient time, "Lay your hand to the plough and then pray." No man should pray without ploughing, nor plough without prayer.

152. When we pray God oftentimes refuses to give us comfort because we are not on good terms with Him; therefore we should still look back to our past life. Perhaps God sees you running to this or that sin, and before He will hear you, you must renew your repentance for that sin, for our nature is such that it will knock at every door and seek every corner before we will come to God, like the woman in the Gospel - she sold all before she came to Christ - so that God will not hear before we forsake all helps and all false dependence upon the creature, and then He gets the greatest glory and we have the greatest sweetness to our souls. That water which comes from the fountain is the sweetest, and so divine comfort is the sweetest when we see nothing in the creature, and God is the best discerner of the fittest time to bestow His own consolations.

153. When God means to bestow any blessing on His church or children He will pour out upon them the spirit of prayer and, as all pray for everyone, so everyone prays for all; this is a great comfort to weak Christians when they cannot pray, that the prayers of others shall prevail for them.

154. When we shoot an arrow, we look to the fall of it; when we send a ship to sea, we look for its return; and when we sow seed, we look for a harvest; so likewise when we sow our prayers, through Christ, in God's bosom, shall we not look for an answer and observe how we speed? It is a seed of atheism to pray and not to look how we speed. But a sincere Christian will pray and wait, and strengthen his heart with promises out of the Word, and never leave praying and looking up till God gives him a gracious answer.

Sin

Sin

155. If we would make it evident that our conversion is sound we must loathe and hate sin from the heart; now a man shall know his hatred of evil to be true, first if it be universal. He that hates sin truly hates all sin. Secondly, where there is true hatred it is fixed; there is no appeasing it, but by abolishing the thing it hates. Thirdly, hatred is a more rooted affection than anger; anger may be appeased, but hatred is against the whole kind. Fourthly, if our hatred be true, we hate all evil in ourselves first, and then in others. He that hates a toad would hate it most in his own bosom. Many like Judah are severe in censuring others but are partial to themselves (Genesis 38:24). Fifthly, he that hates sin truly, hates the greatest sin in the greatest measure; he hates all evil in a just proportion. Sixthly, our hatred is right if we can endure admonition and reproof for sin and not be enraged with him that tells us of it; therefore those that swell against reproof, hate not sin; only with this caution, it may be done with such indiscretion and self-love that a man may hate the reprover's proud manner. In disclosing our hatred of sin in others, we must consider our calling; it must be done in a sweet temper, reserving due respect to those to whom reproof is offered, that it may be done out of true zeal, and not out of anger nor pride.

156. There are some sins that let Satan loose upon us. Such as first, pride. We see it in Paul, "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure" (2 Corinthians 12:7). Secondly, conceitedness and presumption, as we may see in Peter. "Peter answered and said unto Him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended" (Matthew 26:33). Thirdly, security, which is always the forerunner of some great punishment or great sin (which also is a punishment) as we see in David. Fourthly, idleness: it is the hour of temptation when a man is out of God's business. Fifthly, intemperance, either in diet or otherwise. Therefore Christ commands us to pray and watch, and keep to sobriety in the use of created things. Sixthly, there is a more subtle intemperance of passion. In whatever degree we give way to wrath and revenge and covetousness, in that degree Satan has advantage against us. Seventhly, when a man will not believe and submit to truths revealed, though likewise natural truths. Therefore "God gave them up unto vile affections" (Romans 1:26), because they would not cherish the light of nature, much more when we do not cherish the light of His grace.

157. Christians find their corruptions more offensive to them than when they were in the state of nature, and therefore it is that they think their state is not good, but corruption boils more because it is restrained.

158. As the woman in the law, when she was forced by any man, if she cried out was then blameless; so if we unfeignedly cry unto Christ and complain of our corruptions that they are too strong for us, this will witness to our hearts that we are not hypocrites.

159. After a gracious pardon for sin, there are two things remaining in us, infirmities and weaknesses. Infirmities are corruptions stirred up, which hinder us from good and excite us to evil, but yet they are so far resisted and subdued that they do not break forth into action. Weakness, this appears when we suffer an infirmity to break out into act for want of watchfulness, as if a man be subject to an angry temper; when this is working disturbance in the mind it is infirmity; but when for want of watchfulness it breaks forth into action then it is weakness. These diseases are suffered to attend us to remind us frequently of the bitter root of sin, for if sin did not sometimes break forth we should think our nature perfectly cured. Who would have thought that Moses, so meek a man, could have broken out into passion? We see it also in David and Peter and others, and this is to show that the corruption of nature in them was not fully healed. But there is this difference between the slips and falls of God's children and of other men, when other men fall, they settle in the mire, but when God's children fall, they see their weakness, they see the bitter root of sin, and hate it the more, and are never at rest till it be cast out by the strength of grace and repentance.

160. There is through sin venom and vanity in everything (without grace) wherewith we are tainted, but when grace comes it removes the curse and takes out the sting of all evil, and then we find a good even in the worst.

Temptation

Temptation

161. In every evil work that we are tempted to, we always need delivering grace, as to every good work God's assisting grace.

162. It is hard to discern the working of Satan from our own corruptions, because for the most part he goes secretly along with them; he is like a pirate at sea who fires upon us under our own colors. Like Judas to Christ, he comes as a friend, therefore it is hard to discern; but it is partly seen by the eagerness of our lusts, when they are sudden, strong and strange, so strange sometimes that even nature itself abhors them. The Spirit of God leads sweetly on, but the devil hurries a man like a tempest, as we see in Amnon for his sister Tamar. Again, when we resist the motions of God's good Spirit, dislike His government, and give way to passion, then the devil enters. Let a man be unadvisedly angry, and the devil will make him envious and seek revenge; when passions are let loose they are chariots in which the devil rides; some by nature are prone to distrust and some to be too confident; now the devil joins with them and so draws them on further; he broods upon our corruptions; he sits as it were upon the souls of men, and there broods and hatches all sin. All the devils in hell cannot force us to sin. Satan works by suggestions, stirring up humors and fancies, but he cannot work upon the will; we betray ourselves by yielding before he can do us any harm; yet he ripens sin when cherished in the heart and brings it forth into actual transgression.

163. Take heed of Satan's policy, that God has forgotten me because I am now in extremity; nay rather, God will then show mercy, for now is the special time of mercy; therefore beat back Satan with his own weapons.

164. Temptations at first are like Elijah's cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, but if we give way to them they will soon overspread the whole soul. Satan nestles himself when we dwell upon the thoughts of sin; we cannot prevent the sudden risings of sin, but by grace we may keep them down, and they should never long remain without opposition. Let us labor therefore as much as we can to be in good company, and run in a good course, for as the Holy Ghost works by these advantages, so we should wisely observe and improve them.

Thankfulness

Thankfulness

165. It is the peculiar wisdom of a Christian to pick arguments out of his worst condition to make him thankful; and if he be thankful he will be joyful; and so long as he is joyful he cannot be miserable, but happy.

166. We have oftentimes occasion to bless God more for crosses than for our comforts. There is a blessing hidden in the worst things to God's children, as there is a cross in the best things to the wicked; to the saints there is a blessing in death, a blessing in sickness, a blessing in the hatred of our enemies, a blessing in all losses whatsoever. Therefore in our afflictions we should not only justify God but glorify and magnify Him for His mercies, that rather than we should be condemned with the world, He will graciously take this course.

167. Our whole life under the Gospel should be nothing but thankfulness and fruitfulness. But oh! take heed therefore of turning the grace of God into wantonness. The honor, grace and authority of the Gospel all require that we should deny all ungodliness, and worldly lust, and live righteously, and soberly, and godly in the present world. Therefore, when we find ourselves tempted to act otherwise, instantly we should think - oh! this is not the life of a Christian under the gospel. The gospel requires a more fruitful, a more zealous conduct, more love to Christ.

Watchfulness

Watchfulness

168. For want of watchfulness, God often gives us up for a time to such a perplexed state that we shall not know that we have any grace, and though we may have a principle of grace in us, yet we shall not know it, but may even go out of the world in darkness.

169. This is a common rule, that we cannot converse with company that are not spiritual, but if they vex us not they will taint us, unless we are put upon them in our callings; we should therefore make special choice of our company, and walk in continual watchfulness.

170. We should labor to judge ourselves before God for those things that the world takes no notice of, for spiritual, for inward things, e.g. for the motions of pride, of worldliness, of revenge, of security, unthankfulness and such-like unkindness towards God, and for our barrenness in all good duties, that we owe to God and men. Such sins the world cannot see, yet these should humble our hearts, for when we do not make conscience of spiritual sins, God gives us up to some open abominations that stain and publicly disgrace our holy profession.

171. Watchfulness is an exercise of all the graces of the Spirit, and these are given to keep our souls awake. We have enemies about us that are never asleep, and our worst enemy is within us, and so much the worse because so near. We live also in a world full of temptations, and wicked men are full of malice; we are passing through our enemy's country and therefore have need to be ever vigilant. The devil also watches us to spoil every good action, therefore we have need to pray always and watch that all our graces be in perpetual exercise. We should constantly watch with a fear of jealousy, taking heed of a spirit of drowsiness and laboring also to keep ourselves unspotted from such a defiling world.

172. Though we be sure of victory over our spiritual enemies yet we must fight. The devoted kings of Canaan must be fought with and all be slain. Christ that fights for us fights with us, and crowns us when He has given us the victory. The time will come before long when we shall say of our enemies as Moses said of the Egyptians, "For the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more for ever" (Exodus 14:13). "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might" (Ephesians 6:10).

173. However diligent we may be in our callings yet the ability and the blessing can only come from God. We pray for daily bread and He gives it though we labor for it. There is a gift of success and unless it be given us from above, we shall then with the disciples only toil but catch nothing all the day.

174. Christianity is a busy trade; if we look up to God, what a multitude of things are required in a Christian to carry himself as he should do - a spirit of faith, a spirit of love, a spirit of joy and delight in Him above all - and if we look to men, there are duties for a Christian to his superiors, a spirit of subjection; to equals he must show a spirit of love, and to inferiors a spirit of pity and bounty. If we

look to Satan, we have a commandment to resist him and watch against the tempter. If we look to the world, it is full of snares. There must be a great deal of spiritual watchfulness, that we be not surprised. If we look to ourselves, there are required many duties to carry our vessels in honor, and to walk within the compass of the Holy Ghost, to preserve the peace of our consciences, to walk answerably to our worth, as being the sons of God and joint coheirs with Christ. The Christian must dispense with himself in no sin; he must be a vessel prepared for every good work, he must refrain from no service that God calls him to. Therefore the life of a Christian abounds with honorable and profitable employment.

175. Take a circumspect Christian and whatsoever he does, he does it in fear; if he calls God, Father, it is with filial fear, and he eats and drinks with cautious fear. Jude speaks of them that eat without fear; but the true servant of God has a holy fear accompanying him in all his actions, in his words, and even in his recreations, in his meat and drink, and throughout his life. He that has not this fear, how bold is he in wicked courses and loose in all his conduct! But mark a true Christian and you shall always see in him some happy expressions of a holy fear.

176. Though our salvation be sure and we shall not be condemned with the world, yet the knowledge of this does not make us secure, for though God will not banish us with sinners yet He will sharply correct us here. By a careful and sober life we might obtain from His mercy in Christ many blessings and prevent many judgments, and make our pilgrimage more comfortable; therefore it argues neither grace nor wit, that because God will save me therefore I will take sinful liberties. No, though God will save you, yet He will take such a course with you, you shall endure such sharp anguish for your sin, that thereby sin shall become far more bitter than the sweetest fruit of it was ever pleasant.

Wisdom

Wisdom

177. God's children are neither madmen nor fools; it is but a scandal cast upon them by the madmen of the world. They are the only wise men if it be well considered. First, they make the highest end their aim, which is to be children of God here, and saints hereafter in heaven. Secondly, they aim to be found wise men at their death, and therefore are always making their accounts ready. Thirdly, they labor to live answerable to the rule; they observe the rule of the Word to be governed continually by it. Fourthly, they improve all advantages to advance their grand end; they labor to grow better by blessings and crosses, and to make a sanctified use of all things. Fifthly, they swim against the stream of the times and though they eat and drink and sleep as other men, yet (like the stars) they have a secret settled course of their own which the world cannot discern; therefore a man must be changed and set in a higher rank before he can have a sanctified judgment of the ways of God.

178. We ought not at any time to deny the truth nor yet at all times to confess it, for good actions and graces are like princes that only appear abroad on some special occasions, and so if some circumstances in our confession be wanting the action is marred. It is true of actions as of words, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Proverbs 25:11), therefore wisdom must be our guide, for speech is then only good when it is better than silence.

179. We must not only stand for the truth, but we must stand for it in a holy manner, and not as proud persons do; we must observe that rule, "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15). We must not bring passion into God's cause nor must our lives give our tongues the lie.

The Word of God

The Word of God

180. The Word from the mouth of God is more ancient than the Scripture, for the first word of Scripture was the promise, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15). The Scripture is but the mode, the manner of conveying the Word of God. This Scripture is the rule whereby we must walk and the judge also of all controversies of religion, and in spite of the church of Rome it will judge them. Augustine has an excellent remark;

"When there is contention betwixt brethren, witnesses are brought, but in the end, the words, the will of the dead man is brought forth, and these words determine. Now shall the words of a dead man be of force, and shall not the word of Christ determine? Therefore look to the Scripture."

181. Those that care not for the Word of God reject their comfort; all comfort must be drawn out of the Scriptures, which are the breasts of consolation; many are bred up by education to know the truth and are able to discourse of it, but they lack the Spirit of truth, and that is the reason why all their knowledge vanishes away in time of trial and temptation.

182. A man may know that the Word has wrought upon his conscience when he comes to hear and learn and reform. A man that has an heart without guile is glad to hear the sharpest reproofs because he knows that sin is his greatest enemy. But if we live in a course that we are loath should be reprov'd it is a sign our hearts are full of guile. Corrupt men mould their teachers and fashion them to their lusts, but a good and upright heart is willing that divine truths should have their full authority in the soul, and continues in the way of duty, though never so contrary to flesh and blood.

183. He that attends to the Word of God, not only knows the words (which are but the shell) but he knows the things. He has spiritual light to know what faith and repentance are. There is at that time a spiritual echo in the soul. "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek" (Psalms 27:8). Therefore must men judge of their profiting by the Word, not by carrying it in their memories, but by being made able by it to bear crosses and to resist temptations.

184. It may be asked, how shall we know the Scriptures to be the Word of God? For answer, grant first, that there is a God, it will follow then that He must be worshipped and served, and that this service must be discovered to us, that we may know what He requires; and then let it be considered what Word of God can be different from this. Besides, God has blessed the superstition of the Jews (who were very strict to every letter) to preserve it for us; and the heretics, since the primitive church, have so observed one another that there can be no other than this Word. But we must further know that we must have something in our souls suitable to the truths contained in it before we can truly and savingly believe it to be the Word of God, so that we find it has a power in working upon our hearts and affections: "Did not our heart burn within us, while he

talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" (Luke 24:32). Again, it has a divine operation to warm and pacify the soul, and power to make a I Felix tremble; it has a searching quality to divide between the marrow and the bone. We do not therefore only believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God because any man says so, or because the church says so, but also and principally, because we find it by experience working the same effects in us, that it speaks of itself. Therefore let us never rest till when we hear a promise, we may find something in us by the sanctifying Spirit that may be suitable to it, and so assuring us, that it is this Word alone that informs us of the good pleasure of God to us and of our duty towards Him.

185. The Word of God dwells in our hearts when it rules in the soul, when it directs our thoughts, affections and conversations, so that we dare not do anything contrary thereunto. but we shall be checked. Who shall get out that which God's finger has written in our hearts? No fire nor faggot, no temptation whatever.

86. When the Word dwells as a familiar friend in the heart to direct, counsel and comfort us, then it is a sign it abides there. The devil knows good and hates it, therefore knowledge alone is nothing; but when the promise alters the temper of the heart itself, then it is engrafted there.

187. Those that have eyes dazzled with the false luster of the world lack spiritual light; Christ Himself when here on earth lived a concealed life; only at certain times some beams broke out. So let it comfort us that our glory is hid in Christ; now it is clouded with the malice of wicked men and with our own infirmities, but let us comfort ourselves that we are glorious in the eyes of God and His holy angels.

188. Nature cannot work above its own powers, as vapors cannot ascend higher than the sun draws them. Our hearts are naturally shut, and God opens them by His Spirit in the use of means. The children of Israel in the wilderness saw wonders upon wonders, and yet when they came to be proved, they would not believe.

189. There should not be intimate familiarities except where we judge men true Christians; and towards those whom upon good grounds we judge to be such, we must be gentle and easy to be entreated. We therefore wrong them if we show ourselves strange to them.

190. There are many things to hinder the grace of waiting.

There is a great deal of tedious time and many crosses to meet with, such as the scorn and reproach of this world, and many other trials. God seems also to do nothing less than to perform His promise; but let us comfort ourselves that He waits to do them good that wait upon Him.

191. In a combat a man indeed is never overcome (let him be never so vexed in the world) till his conscience be cracked; if his conscience be good and his cause stand upright, he conquers, and shall be more than a conqueror in Christ's strength.

192. A Christian in his right temper is compared to the best of everything; if to a lily, the fairest; if to a cedar, the tallest; if to an olive tree, the most fruitful; "And his smell shall be as Lebanon." We should therefore make use of natural things and apply them to spiritual things. If we see a lily, think of God's promise and our duty, then we shall grow as lilies; when we see a tall tree, then think "I must grow higher in grace," and when we see a vine, think "I must grow in fruitfulness;" when we go into our orchards or gardens, let a sight of these things raise our thoughts higher, to a

consideration of what is required and of what is promised.

193. When we come to be religious, we lose not our pleasure, but transform it; perhaps before we fed upon profane authors, now we feed upon holy truths. A Christian never knows what comfort is in religion till he comes to say with Augustine, "Lord, I have long lacked the true manna, all my former food was nothing but husks."

194. God takes care of poor weak Christians that are struggling with temptations and corruptions; Christ carries them in His arms. All Christ's sheep are diseased, and therefore He will have a tender care of them (Isaiah 40:11).

195. As we receive all from God, so we should lay all at His feet and say, I will not live in a course of sin, that will not stand with the favor of my God; for He will not lodge in the heart that has a purpose to sin.

196. There is no true zeal for God's glory unless it is joined with true love to men: therefore let men that are violent, injurious and insolent, never talk of glorifying God so long as they despise the lowest of men.

197. What is the reason that God's children sink not to hell when troubles are upon them? Because they have an inward presence strengthening them; for the Holy Ghost helps our infirmities, not only to pray, but to bear crosses, lightening them with some views of God's gracious countenance; for what supports our faith in prayer but inward strength from God?

198. It is as foolish an idea to think that we can fit ourselves for grace as if a child in the womb could forward its natural birth: if God has made us men, let us not make ourselves gods.

199. What we are afraid to speak before men, and to do for fear of danger, let us be much more afraid to think before God;

therefore we should stifle all evil ideas in the very conception, in their very rising: let them be used as rebels and traitors, be smothered at the very first.

200. God's children are hindered in good duties by an inevitable weakness in nature, as after labor with drowsiness; therefore the spirit may be willing when the flesh is weak. If we strive therefore against this deadness and dullness, Christ is ready to make excuse for us (if the heart be right) as He did for His disciples.

201. That which we drew from the first Adam was the displeasure of God; but we draw from the second Adam the favor of God; from the first Adam we drew corruption, from the second Adam we draw grace; from the first Adam we derive misery and death, and all the miseries that follow death; we draw from the second Adam life and happiness; whatsoever we had from the first Adam we have it repaired more abundantly in the second.

202. Grace makes us glorious because it puts glory upon the soul, carries the soul above all earthly things, tramples the world under her feet; it prevails against corruptions that foil ordinary men.

203. Christ is our pattern whom we must strive to imitate; it is necessary that our pattern should be exact so that we might see our imperfections and be humbled for them, and live by faith for our

sanctification.

204. This life is a life of faith, for God will try the truth of our faith, so that the world may see that God has such servants as will depend upon His bare word; it were nothing to be a Christian if we should see all here; but God will have His children to live by faith, and take the promise upon His word.

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