

CHRIST PRECIOUS TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE

by John Fawcett

Fawcett's sermon on 1 Peter 2:7 celebrating the preciousness of Christ to believing hearts, extolling the beauty, worth, and all-sufficiency of the Savior to those who trust in Him.

5 Chapters

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01 - Introductory Remarks

Christ Precious to Those Who Believe The preciousness of Jesus Christ, to those who believe—practically considered and improved. By John Fawcett "Yes, He is very precious to you who believe!" 1 Peter 2:7 Chapter I. Introductory Remarks. The subject to which the reader's attention is invited in these pages is of the highest importance; since love to the divine Redeemer is the distinguishing characteristic of a real Christian, and most indispensably requirement in order to our serving God acceptably in this world, and to our dwelling with him in the next world. Without a sincere and loving attachment to the Author of eternal salvation, whatever works of morality we may perform, our obedience will be materially and essentially defective, as not flowing from a proper principle.

Love is the parent and promoter of everything excellent and amiable in the Christian character. It diffuses itself through the whole train of holy actions. It gives them all their motion, and dignifies them with all their real value. The eloquence of men, or even of angels, the gift of prophecy, the knowledge of all mysteries, the power to work miracles, the most extensive liberality to the poor, and even the suffering of martyrdom, are all insignificant and unprofitable without love to Jesus.

He who loved us so as to give himself a ransom for our souls, who was lifted up upon the ignominious cross, that he might draw all men unto himself, proposes to those who profess to be his disciples, the solemn and important inquiry, "Do you love me?" He values not our service—if the heart is not in it. He knows what is in man; he sees and judges the heart, and has no regard to outward acts of obedience, if no devout affection is employed in them. It is not enough for the eye to be lifted up to him, or the knee to bow before him; it is not enough for the tongue to be employed in speaking of him, or the hand in acting for his interest in the world. All this may be done by those whose religion is mere pretense! But the heart with all the inward powers and passions of the soul, must, in the first place, be given to him. "Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity;" and as the natural consequence of that, keep his commandments.

I would ground the following observations on the words of the apostle Peter, "Yes, He is very precious to you who believe!" 1 Peter 2:7. The word precious, signifies honor, price, or preciousness itself; that which is of infinite value. The people to whom Christ is precious, are, with great propriety, said to be those who believe. Unbelievers see no beauty or majesty in him, nor any loveliness that they should desire him. Hence have we so many strange notions advanced, concerning his adorable person. Many daringly deny the only Lord that bought us with his own dear life, and substitute a mere creature in his room. There are others who have such low and irreverent conceptions of him, as if they knew not the value of his person, his work, and his sacrifice, in the business of our salvation. Whereas, there is nothing in our religion which has either truth, reality or substance—but by virtue of its relation to Christ, and what he has accomplished on earth on our behalf.

Perhaps in no age, since the establishment of Christianity in the world, was greater opposition made to the real dignity and glory of the Son of God, than in the present. It is a consideration

which may justly affect the hearts of all who love him in sincerity. The doctrine of his proper Deity, is the ground of all our hope and salvation by him, and the very foundation of the Christian religion; yet the disbelief of this is openly avowed by many, who strenuously maintain, and industriously diffuse their sentiments in the world.

It is awful to consider, how many ruin their own souls by stumbling on the rock of safety, and dash themselves in pieces on that which is laid as the only foundation of hope. Yet in this the Scripture is fulfilled. The same Jesus, who is precious to those who believe, is "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to those who stumble at the Word, being disobedient." The reason here assigned why men stumble at the Word, and at what it reveals concerning Jesus Christ, is disobedience; and, perhaps it will be found, that, in many instances, the cause of men's rejecting the Savior, is a rooted aversion to that purity of heart and conduct which the evangelical system requires. "This," says our blessed Lord, "is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."

Christ is not precious to those who do not, under a sense of their absolute need of him, manifest that regard for him which the sacred Scriptures everywhere require. The religious system, adopted by many at this day, has very little of real Christianity in it. Many labored performances are now published to the world, in which we find the duties of morality recommended with peculiar elegance of style, and acuteness of reasoning, wherein we meet with little or nothing concerning the person, the work, or the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is like raising a superstructure, without a solid foundation. The great mystery of redemption by the blood of that Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, appears to be of little or no use with such people, in their attempts to promote piety and obedience.* There may be many things in such performances highly worthy of attention; there may be a striking display of learning and ability; but at the same time, that which constitutes the real essence of Christianity, and which is the proper spring of all true obedience, is entirely omitted.

*A modern writer, of distinguished eminence, justly remarks that towards the close of the last century, divines professed to make it their chief object to inculcate the moral and practical precepts of Christianity; but without sufficiently maintaining, often even without justly laying the grand foundation of a sinner's acceptance with God; or pointing out how the practical precepts of Christianity grow out of her peculiar doctrines, and are inseparably connected with them. By this fatal error, the very genius and essential nature of Christianity underwent a change. She no longer retained her peculiar character, or produced that appropriate frame of spirit by which her followers had been characterized. The example thus set was followed during the present century, and its effect was aided by various causes. The fatal habit of considering Christian morals as distinct from Christian doctrines, has insensibly gained strength. Thus the peculiar doctrines of Christianity went more out of sight; and, as might naturally have been expected, the moral system itself also began to wither and decay, being robbed of that which should have supplied it with life and nutriment. At length, in our own days, these peculiar doctrines have almost altogether vanished from the view. Even in many sermons scarcely any traces of them are to be found. Wilberforce's Practical View, Chapter 6.

'It is not so,' says a very respectable writer of the present age, 'it is not so in our view of things. We find so much use for Christ, that he appears as the soul which animates the whole body of our

divinity; as the center of the system, diffusing light and life to every part of it. Take away Christ, and the whole ceremonial of the Old Testament appears to us little more than a dead mass of uninteresting matter; prophecy loses almost all that is interesting and endearing; the gospel is annihilated, or ceases to be that good news to lost sinners, which it professes to be; practical religion is divested of its most powerful motives; the evangelical dispensation of its peculiar glory, and heaven itself of its most transporting joys. The sacred penmen appear to have written all along, upon the same principles. They considered Christ as the all in all of their religion, and as such, they loved him with their whole hearts. Do they speak of the first tabernacle? They call it a "figure for the time then present. But when Christ came as a high priest of good things to come, by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." Do they speak of prophecy? They call the testimony of Jesus the spirit of prophecy. Do they speak of the gospel? It is Christ crucified. Do they speak of the medium by which the world was crucified to them, and they unto the world? It is the cross of Christ. One of the most affecting ideas which they afford us of heaven, consists in ascribing everlasting glory and dominion "to him who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood." (Fuller's Calvinistic and Socinian Systems compared, page 217, 218.)

All the lines of evangelical truth meet and center in Jesus Christ, and therefore he himself says, "I am the truth." Were he to be excluded, the several parts of the glorious system would be disconcerted, and the whole frame would be broken in pieces. What would become of the doctrine of redemption, of pardon of sin, of justification, of preservation, or of future felicity?

Jesus is the life of all the graces and comforts of a Christian. By the knowledge and contemplation of him, and of his death in our stead—faith lives, and is strengthened from day to day. All the springs of repentance are opened, and flow freely, when the heart is melted by views of a dying Savior. Love feels the attractive power of its glorious object, and is kindled into a holy flame. Sin is mortified. The world is subdued. The hope of future glory is supported, enlivened, and confirmed, so as to become sure and steadfast, like an anchor of the soul. But without him, whom having not seen we love, these graces would wither and die; or, to speak more properly, they would have no existence.

What is said in the following pages concerning the glory and preciousness of Jesus Christ, is not to be understood as if spoken to the exclusion of the Father, or of the Holy Spirit. But I would beg permission to say, that I am not able to form any clear, satisfactory, comfortable thoughts of God, suited to awaken my love, or encourage my hope and trust—but as he has been pleased to reveal himself in the person of Jesus Christ.* God was once manifested in the flesh on earth, and he is now manifested in the same human nature in heaven, exercising universal dominion, having the government of heaven, earth, and hell upon his shoulders! "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." The light of his glory is seen in the face, or person, of Jesus Christ. This is the foundation on which the Christian's hope is built, the fountain whence he derives all his refreshment and consolation.

Until God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find;
The holy, just, and sacred Three
Are terrors to the mind.

* Jesus Christ says, "I am God, and there is none else." This does not exclude the God-head of the Father. I think it is sufficiently evident from many places of Scripture, that the Father and the

Son have an inconceivable communion, and that one and the same Divine nature, which is in the Father, dwells in the Son. For, since divine names and attributes, works and worship, are ascribed to both, they must both be truly God; and since there is but one true God, they must both have fellowship in the same God-head. Hence there is no other God-head but that which dwells in Christ; that God-head in which he partakes by his being One with the Father. "I and my Father are one. I am in the Father, and the Father is in me." Therefore the apostle says, "All the fullness of the God-head dwells bodily in him." But if Immanuel's face appear, My hope, my joy begins; His name forbids my slavish fear, His grace removes my sins. —Isaac Watts. The outlines of our plan, in the ensuing discourse, are:

1. The character of the people to whom Christ is precious.
2. The evidence they give that Christ is precious to them.
3. In what respects Christ is precious.

02 - The Character of the People, To Whom Christ is Precious

Chapter II. The character of the people to whom Christ is precious: "to those who believe." The import of the term believe is plain and easy. In common discourse it is so well understood, that no one is at a loss to determine what is intended by it. Every man knows the meaning of his neighbor, when he hears him say, 'I believe the fact which you relate;' or, 'I do not believe the report which I hear concerning you.' Now, if the term is understood, when it refers to the common affairs of life—why should we be at uncertainties about the meaning of it, when applied to religious subjects? The sacred writers do not use words in a sense directly contrary to their general acceptance. If they did this, the instructions they are authorized to give us, concerning the momentous affairs of our souls, and of eternity, would be wrapped up in impenetrable obscurity.

Yet we find in the sacred writings, two kinds of believing spoken of, and two sorts of believers described.

1. Some believe for a while—but in time of temptation fall away. Simon the sorcerer is said to have believed, when he was in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity; when his heart was not right in the sight of God.*

*It is said, Simon himself believed also; but it may be inquired, What did he believe? There is reason to conclude from the proofs which he presently gave of his ignorance and impiety, that he knew little or nothing of the real character of the glorious Redeemer. His belief of what he had heard delivered, was but in a very partial way. He believed just in the same manner as Judas repented. The repentance of that apostate was but partial; and a repentance merely on account of the dreadful consequences of his sin. Simon seems to have been prevailed upon, by the wonderful power discovered in the working of miracles, to believe that he, in whose name they were performed, must be divine. He believed that such a person as Christ existed, and likewise some little concerning what he was, as that he was a Being possessed of great power; but the chief part of the Savior's excellence, which is revealed in the gospel, and constitutes the very essence of it—was unknown to him. Much the same may be said concerning the faith of the stony-ground hearers of the word. The apostle James speaks of a kind of faith which answers no valuable purpose, because it is destitute of those works which are the proper fruits of true faith. "Do you not know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" Such a faith as this, is to be found almost everywhere, in a country favored with the light of divine revelation, and the ministry of the gospel. But it is quite uneffective, since the man who is the subject of it, is still a slave to sin, a lover of this present evil world, an enemy to God and goodness, and in the broad way which leads to destruction!

2. The other kind of believing, spoken of by the inspired writers, especially in the New Testament, is that which has pardon of sin, justification before God, and everlasting life, annexed to it. "You are not of those who draw back unto perdition—but of those who believe to the saving of the soul." This faith is accompanied with certain qualities which are not connected with the other. Though the nominal and real Christian are both said to believe, and the articles of their creed may, in many

respects, be the same—yet their dispositions and characters, are essentially different.

Now, the leading truth, which is to be believed, is—that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and the Savior of the world. "Peter said, You are Christ, the Son of the living God." That is, You are the true Messiah, and by way of eminence, the proper Son of the eternal God, and the fountain of life and happiness to all your followers. So the apostle speaks to the Romans, "If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you shall be saved." The confession which the Ethiopian eunuch made, in order to be baptised, amounted to the same thing: "As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, 'Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?' And Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' And he answered and said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.'" To believe this, is to believe the gospel; for the sum of the gospel is, "that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Or in other words, that the supreme Governor of the world, of his free mercy, for the sole sake of what his Son Jesus Christ has done and suffered— pardons, justifies, and saves the believing sinner. But nothing is more certain, than that a mere nominal Christian, a man who has a name to live, and still is dead in trespasses and sins, may give his assent to all that is expressed above. He may state the articles of an orthodox creed as correctly, in many respects, as any other person. And therefore it is necessary to pay strict attention to those things which accompany true faith—and distinguish it from that which a man may possess, and yet die in his sins.

1. True faith implies that divine illumination, whereby we are taught to know ourselves, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, whom to know is life eternal. Faith cannot exist without knowledge; for how is it possible for a man to believe that which he does not understand? Believing in Jesus Christ to the saving of the soul, is the effect of Divine teaching. "It is written in the prophets," said Jesus, "They shall be all taught of God; everyone therefore who has heard, and learned of the Father, comes unto me." When Peter made that confession before recited, his Divine Master pronounced him blessed, as being the subject of illumination from above. "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you—but my Father, who is in heaven." Those who believe, are therefore said to know the truth. And thus the apostle Paul tells us, that he "knew whom he had believed."

2. True faith is grounded on the testimony of God. What other idea of faith can we have, than that of believing something revealed, or made known? Hence the prophet says, "Who has believed our report?" The faith of a Christian, is a divine conviction of the truths which God has revealed in His Word. Has the author of our being revealed in his blessed word, the purity of his own nature, his abhorrence of sin, the strictness and holiness of that law by which we are governed? This is known and believed, when, under the illumination of the Divine Spirit—the commandment comes home to the conscience; then sin revives, the awakened sinner gives up his delusive hope, and, in that sense, dies. Has God revealed the depravity of human nature? That the heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; that we are altogether become filthy; that there is none that does good, no not one; that we are alienated from the life of God; that we are the servants of sin, the slaves of Satan, children of wrath, under the curse, condemned already, and liable to eternal destruction and misery? All this is in some measure known—and really believed by him who has true faith. No man is solicitous about being saved—who does not see and feel himself lost. The whole do not apply to the physician—but those who are sick. No man comes to

Christ for pardon—who does not see the greatness and grievousness of his sins. No man believes with the heart unto righteousness—who is not convinced of the insufficiency of his own works to justify him before God. No man looks to the Redeemer for justification—who does not see that he is under the sentence of condemnation. No man comes to Jesus that he may have life—who is not sensible, that, as a sinner, he is doomed to eternal death. Thus, true faith implies a conviction and belief of what the Word of God reveals, concerning the state and condition of fallen man. Does the divine word reveal a Savior? Does it inform us, that the Son of God took upon him our nature, stood in our place, bore our sins, satisfied justice for our offences, and reconciled us to God? Does the Father declare unto us that he is well pleased with his Son, who has obtained eternal redemption for us? This is understood and believed, by him that has true faith. Does the gospel contain promises of pardon, of righteousness, of life and salvation, made to the most wretched and guilty of mankind, who are enabled to come to Jesus for them? Does it assure us, that none who sincerely come unto him are ever cast out, on any account whatever? Saving faith is no other thing, than a sincere and hearty belief of this. It is a divine persuasion of the truth of what the Word of God makes known for our belief. Hence it is called "the belief of the truth."

Perhaps there cannot be a better definition of true faith in a few words, than that just mentioned, "the belief of the truth;" and yet it is necessary to inquire what is meant by truth. That Jesus Christ has appeared and sojourned on earth, according to what was predicted of him; that he was born of a virgin, in the town of Bethlehem; that he preached the gospel, and wrought miracles; that he suffered, was crucified, rose again from the dead, and ascended up into glory—having atoned for sin, satisfied Divine justice, and obtained eternal redemption for us—all this is truth; but it is not the whole truth. The infinite excellency of the blessed God; the equity, reasonableness, and goodness of his law; the exceeding sinfulness of sin; the ruinous and lost condition of man, as in a state of alienation from his Maker; the absolute need of holiness and purity of heart, in order to final happiness; the infinite loveliness and preciousness of Jesus Christ, and the suitableness and glory of the way of salvation by him, as in every respect honorable to God, and safe for man—these are branches of the truth which must be believed, as firmly as those above mentioned. But they have not full possession of the minds of any, excepting those whose faith is of the gift and operation of God.

Those whose hearts are not purified by faith, do not conceive of divine objects as they are in themselves; and therefore they do not believe the truth concerning them. "You thought that I was altogether such a one as yourself; but I will reprove you!" The Word of inspiration represents God in his true character; it represents men as they really are; it declares the truth concerning the evil of sin, and its just demerit; it sets forth not only the reality—but the excellency of heavenly things. That is, it holds them forth as they are in themselves; and that must undoubtedly be the truth concerning them. To conceive of them otherwise than according to this representation, is not to believe the truth—but to believe a lie! Our blessed Redeemer tell us, that he came to "bear witness to the truth," that is, among other things—to the purity and inflexibility of the divine law, to the justice and holiness of God, to the evil and demerit of sin, and to the reality of his being the only begotten of the Father, and the Savior of men. This was to bear witness of things—as they really are in themselves. It must therefore be the truth; and a hearty reception and persuasion of it, as it is revealed—which is what the apostle calls "the belief of the truth." Thus when he denominates the Thessalonians believers, he immediately signifies what it was which constituted them such,

"Because our testimony among you was believed." This testimony is elsewhere called "the testimony of God concerning his Son Jesus Christ." It is that in which the everlasting interests of men are deeply and intimately concerned. "He who has received this testimony, has set to his seal that God is true."

3. Faith is the result of serious and impartial inquiry, and of a reverential regard to the authority of God, in what he has spoken. "The word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach; for faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The truth is believed, not from common report, not from the testimony of man—but from the testimony of God. Hence, says the apostle to the Thessalonians, "For this cause we thank God without ceasing, because, when you received the Word of God, which you heard of us—you received it not as the word of men—but, as it is in truth, the Word of God, which effectually works also in you who believe."

4. True faith in Jesus Christ, is accompanied with a sincere and hearty approbation of him—as the exclusive, the all-sufficient Savior. It is not a faint, feeble, wavering assent—but such a firm persuasion as, in some measure, corresponds with the strength and clearness of the evidence with which the truth is confirmed. The whole soul acquiesces in the relief which it brings, and approves of the method of salvation which it reveals. There is great propriety in such expressions as these concerning true faith. "If you believe with all your heart." "With the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." These terms must imply the consent of the judgment, connected with the approbation and acceptance of the will, and the affections. This is faith sincere.

People may profess to believe this and the other thing, when, in fact, it is but a mere pretense—as is evident from the general tenor of their actions. He who really believes that certain substances are of a poisonous quality, will act accordingly; he will carefully avoid them. He who is fully persuaded that fire will burn, cannot be induced to rush into the flames. He who believes that the profits, the pleasures, and the honors of the world will make him happy—acts in a manner consistent with what he believes—he pursues these objects with all his might. His belief in this case, is not a mere pretense—but real, as is evident by his practice. He who certainly believes that a large estate is left him by a deceased relation, will not delay to put in his claim for it. In all these cases, and many others which daily occur in common life, we see that a real and sincere belief—is followed by a corresponding practice.

Apply this to religious subjects. A man professes and pretends to believe that God is angry with the wicked every day, and that his wrath is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men—yet he lives as unconcerned as if there were no danger—he does not flee from the wrath to come—he takes no measures for his soul's escape. Is this man's belief real and hearty—or only a mere pretense? Is it not evident, that he does not sincerely believe the solemn declarations of God's word with his whole heart?*

* Justin Martyr, in his apology for the Christians, addressed to the emperor Antoninus Pius, expresses himself to the following purpose: 'I must tell you, that of all men living we are the greatest promoters of peace, by teaching that it is impossible for any worker of iniquity, any covetous or insidious person, to hide himself from God; and that everyone is stepping forward to eternal misery—or happiness, his works giving evidence for him or against him before the Judge

of all.' He then adds, 'If men were once fully persuaded of these things, (or did they believe them with their whole hearts) who would make the bold adventure to embrace the pleasures of sin for a season—with his eye upon eternal fire at the end of the enjoyment? Who would not strive to the utmost of his power to check himself on the brink of ruin, and seek to be possessed of what is necessary to secure him from everlasting vengeance?'

Another man pretends to believe that sin is the greatest and worst of evils; that there is nothing so odious, nothing so dangerous to the soul, nothing so ruinous and destructive as sin. And yet this man secretly loves it—and daily lives in the known and allowed practice of it! What shall we think of his faith in this particular? Is he hearty in his belief? Or rather, since it has had no influence on his life and walk—is it not a mere pretense?

Others again profess to believe that there is a real excellency in true religion; that wisdom's ways are lovely, pleasant and peaceful; and that no joy can be compared with that of serving and pleasing God; and yet they live in the continual neglect of everything they pretend to approve! Can a faith so utterly ineffective—be real, and sincere? Is it thus—that men believe with the heart unto righteousness? Surely not! Do such people tell us that they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and declare that there is no object so desirable, so excellent, so lovely as he is, in their estimation? While at the same time, the world has full possession of their hearts, they mind earthly things, and are entire strangers to a heavenly life. Surely such a faith is but imaginary; for sincere faith "works by love" to its object—the Lord Jesus Christ.

5. In true faith, there is a deep conviction of the importance of what is believed. It is far from being considered as a trifling, uninteresting concern. It is viewed as the most interesting of anything that can possibly engage the attention of mankind—as what relates to the life of the soul, and to its everlasting state. He who believes is like a man whose house is on fire, and who is eager to have it saved from the devouring flames! Or like a shipwrecked mariner, struggling amidst the overwhelming billows of the deep—but beholding before him a rock whereupon he may rest with safety.

Those who talk of their faith in Christ, and at the same time have little or no abiding concern about the salvation of their souls, and the affairs of a future world, do but deceive themselves. Those who believe are compared in the Scriptures to the man-slayer, who, sensible of his danger from the avenger of blood, ran with all his might to the city appointed for the protection of such people. "You have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before you." What the angel said to Lot, when he brought him out of Sodom, may be applied to him who is warned to flee from the wrath to come; "Escape for your life, look not behind you, neither stay you in all the plain! Escape to the mountain lest you be consumed!" When the jailor at Philippi was awakened to a just sense of his guilty and ruined condition, in an agony of distress he inquired, whether there were any possible way of relief for him, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved."

Such is the description which our Lord Jesus Christ himself gives of faith in his name. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whoever believes in him should not perish—but have everlasting life. The allusion is to what God said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole; and it shall come to pass, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks upon it, shall live." Here a divine remedy was provided against a national

calamity; a sovereign antidote against spreading and mortal poison. Those who were stung and perishing, though they were at the utmost limits of the camp, might look up to the brazen serpent and find healing and life.

Physicians were of no use in that dreadful malady; human efforts, applications, plasters, or medicines were insignificant. The swift and fiery poison operated powerfully in such as were bitten, and, without relief, they were quickly brought to the very borders of the grave. But though they were just about to expire—if they could but cast a look towards the appointed remedy—they were sure of healing and recovery. On the confines of the grave, and the brink of death—they were restored to life and happiness—by a look to the brazen image of the serpent! A most lively picture this of a believing sinner. He is in himself as one ready to perish—but being enabled to believe the promises of grace in Jesus Christ, and looking to him that he may be saved, he is pardoned and healed; he is delivered from going down to the pit, through the ransom which has been found and accepted for him, and his life shall see the light: or, according to the words of our blessed Redeemer himself, "He shall not perish—but have everlasting life!"

6. True faith is connected with repentance of sin. If we are not turned from sin to God, if sin is not made bitter to us, if it does not appear hateful, if our hearts are not penetrated with sorrow, grief, and self-abhorrence on account of it—in vain do we imagine ourselves to be believers in Jesus! Looking unto him whom we have pierced, is accompanied with mourning and bitterness of soul. That faith which leaves the heart impenitent, is not saving; for repentance is absolutely necessary to salvation. Our blessed Redeemer said to a certain woman in the gospel, "Your faith has saved you, go in peace." But what was the attendant of the faith she possessed? Was it not penitence? She wept at the feet of Jesus, she washed his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head. She remembered her own evil ways, and her sins—and loathed herself in her own sight! Repentance and faith are inseparably united; the one never exists in the mind of a sinner without the other. If we have ever beheld Jesus with sincere delight, as a Savior from sin—we shall mourn heartily that ever we sinned against him. We cannot but repent of sin—while we look for the forgiveness of it, through his astonishing love in dying for us, that so he might deliver us from eternal destruction. Repentance is justly said by some, to be the tear of love dropping from the eye of faith.

7. True faith in Jesus Christ, is attended with subjection of heart and life, to his will and government. For by faith the heart is purified, and consequently the life. To believe the gospel, is to obey from the heart, that form of doctrine which was delivered unto us. Faith works by love—both to God and man; and therefore it is positively affirmed, that "faith without works is dead." Talk not of your faith in Jesus, if you have no love to him. Pretend not to love him, if you are not concerned to please him. "This is the love of God—that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous." Our Divine Savior himself says, "He who has my commandments, and keeps them—he is the one who loves me." The works of a real Christian are not the production of a spirit of legality; they are works of faith and labors of love, which are shown to him. Such is the efficacy of a saving and living faith—that it is the vigorous root to all holy obedience; it bears up the soul amidst the severest trials; it strengthens it for the most arduous services; enables it to overcome the world, and to lay hold upon eternal life. By way of describing its efficacy, allow me to make a short extract from a very ancient Christian writer.

Justin Martyr, describing the worship and the practice of believers, says, 'We worship the Creator of the universe, not with blood, libations and incense, of which he stands in no need; but we exalt him to the best of our power, with the rational service of prayers and praises, in all the oblations we make to him; believing this to be the only honor worthy of him. We approve ourselves thankful to him, and express our gratitude in the most solemn hymns—for our creation, our preservation, the various blessings of his providence, and the hopes of a resurrection to an incorruptible life, which we are sure to have. We who were formerly guilty of impure practices—now strictly keep ourselves within the bounds of chastity. We, who devoted ourselves to magic arts—now consecrate ourselves entirely to the true God. We, who loved nothing so much as our possessions—now produce all we have in common, and spread our whole stock before our indigent brethren. We, who were instigated with hatred to one another, and would not so much as warm ourselves at the same fire with those of a different race—now live and die together, praying sincerely for our enemies. For evils done to us—we return the gentlest persuasives to convert those who unjustly hate us—that they, being brought to a conformity to Christ, might be filled with the same comfortable hopes of enjoying the like happiness with ourselves. Christ commands his disciples to shine with a distinguishing patience and meekness, and to win men over from their sins, by such gentle methods of conversion. I could give you bright examples from many converts among us, who, from men of violence and oppression—were transformed into quite another nature.' In another place he says, 'Those who do not make the precepts of Christ the rule of their lives, are to be looked upon as not true Christians, let them say ever such fine things of his law. Those who are Christians in word only, who talk of religion—but do not practice it, if such smart for their hypocrisy, it is no more than they deserve. Jesus himself has said, "Every tree which does not bring forth good fruit—is hewn down and cast into the fire. Not everyone who says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." Such is the testimony given by this very respectable advocate for the Christian cause.

True faith transforms the temper and frame of our souls into another image, even the image of Christ. This is done, in some degree, in the first saving discovery which we have of him; so that he who truly believes in Jesus is a new creature. Compare the two following passages together; in the former, the apostle says, "Neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision—but faith which works by love." "Neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision—but a new creature." We hence infer, that to be a real believer is to be a new creature. "Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Our very tempers are changed into Christ's holy likeness; the meek and lowly, the devout and heavenly mind, which was in Christ Jesus, in some degree, takes place in us.

Faith genuinely influences all the powers of the soul, and all the actions of the life, according to the degree of its vigor, strength, and liveliness. The more we live by faith in Jesus, the more steadily we look to him—the more we shall be transformed into his likeness. We lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily besets us—as we run the race which is set before us, looking unto Jesus. As the face of Moses shone when he had seen the Divine glory, so there will be some rays of holiness in our walk in the world—as we live by faith in the Son of God.

8. True faith sets all things in a different light before the eyes of the soul, and gives it quite another view of them. 'It is,' says Isaac Watts, 'like some heavenly glass applied to the organ of sense,

which not only assists and improves our sight—but represents all things in a divine light. It alters the view and appearance of all the great and mirthful things of this world. The treasures, the splendor and the entertainments of this world, were once the most inviting objects upon which we could look. But now we look on the world, with all its most glittering and the richest scenes—as trifling, poor, and despicable things. We are crucified to the world by the cross of Christ. We seek the things which are above, where our Redeemer sits at the right hand of God; and when the world begins to flatter us again, and to appear great and tempting in our eyes—renewed discoveries of Christ's glory, who is the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely, eclipse the splendor of all below the skies. "This is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith." The solemn attributes of God—his holiness, his righteousness and justice—were once the terror of our souls; so that we turned our eyes away, and could not contemplate him with pleasure. As we had no solid hope in his mercy or his love, we saw nothing in him desirable or delightful to us. We stood afar off from him; we neglected and forgot him; or, perhaps, like our first parents, we vainly endeavored to hide ourselves from him. The dreadful threatenings of his displeasure were to us, as the messengers of damnation. We beheld them as so many angels with flaming swords—to forbid our entrance into Paradise! But now, being enabled to believe in Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come, the terrors of the law have no longer have such a dreadful aspect. We know that the sword of justice has awoken against the man who is God's fellow—and that all its vengeance was executed upon him, as our surety. The threatenings of the Almighty are therefore now disarmed, and no longer stand as barriers in the way, to forbid our happiness.

We behold God in Christ, as reconciling sinners unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. Hence we are enabled to look upon him in his whole character, not only without dismay—but with a measure of delight! We "give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness;" we survey and dwell upon his glories with solemn pleasure; we lift up our eyes towards him with humble confidence, as our reconciled God, our Father and our Friend forever. Our consciences were burdened with guilt. We said unto the Most High God, "Our flesh trembles for fear of you, and we are afraid of your judgment." We could find no relief until we were led to the cross of the bleeding Prince of peace. He who hung upon the tree, took off our burdens, sprinkled us with his own blood, undertook to secure us effectually from Divine wrath, and said unto us, "Fear not—I have redeemed you! Your sins are forgiven! Go in peace!"

We believe that his blood is sufficient to atone for our offences, and procure us pardon; that his righteousness is sufficient for our acceptance unto eternal life; that his power and grace are sufficient to conquer all our sins, to deliver us out of temptations, to sanctify our vitiated appetites and passions, to incline our wills to holiness, to strengthen us for the performance of good works, to accomplish in us all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power.

9. True faith endears Christ to the soul; since it is said, "he is precious to those who so believe." It enthrones him in the heart; for he dwells in the hearts of his people by faith. The proof of this is attempted in the following pages.

10. In a word, true faith is attended with a measure of solid peace and divine joy. These are experienced in different degrees by believers in Jesus, according to the strength or weakness of their faith. But we are assured, that all true believers shall not only be justified—but they shall have peace and joy. This they do in an especial manner, when they are filled with all joy and peace in

believing, and made to abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit. True faith fixes on that which alone can give peace and rest to the mind—the atoning blood and perfect righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. "We rejoice in God through Jesus Christ our Lord, by whom we have now received the atonement." The happiness of a believer's life, consists in having his mind stayed on the all-sufficient Redeemer, by way of fervent affections, lively hope, and steady confidence. "You will keep him in perfect peace," says the prophet, "whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you." The apostle Peter, writing to a scattered, dispersed, persecuted people, concerning Jesus, says, "Whom having not seen, you love; in whom, though now you see him not—yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

It may easily be inferred from what has been said, as well as from many passages of Scripture, that the faith of a true Christian is not the mere effort of human nature and natural reason—but the gift of God. It is therefore called the faith of the operation of God. If we savingly believe the truth of the gospel, and its glorious promises—it is "given us so to believe, according to the working of God's mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead."

It may be allowed, as one writer observes, that believing, simply considered, is a natural act of the mind; but believing such things as the gospel reveals, and understanding the nature and excellency of them, must be a spiritual act. To think, and to love, simply considered, are natural acts; but to think godly thoughts, and to love holiness, are spiritual acts. The faith which is attended with such powerful effects, as has been mentioned, is not of ourselves; but is one of those good and perfect gifts which come down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, nor shadow of turning. However strong, rational, or convincing the evidence may be which accompanies the testimony of God—yet without the operation of his blessed Spirit, it will not effectually subdue the mind which is blinded by prejudice, bloated with pride, benumbed with carelessness, and poisoned with enmity against the truth.

We describe the operations of a gracious mind in detail, as if a considerable space of time were requisite for the production of them; but it ought to be remembered, that the change wrought in a sinner's conceptions and views, in his transformation from death unto life, from a state of nature to a state of grace, may be instantaneous. For there is no middle condition between death and life, enmity and reconciliation, unbelief and faith, or condemnation and justification. The publican, oppressed with conscious guilt, cried out, as he smote upon his breast, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," and he went down to his house justified. The jailor at Philippi inquired what he must do to be saved, and the same night gave evidence of an entire change of mind; for it is said, "he believed, rejoicing in God with all his house." The Lord opened the heart of Lydia, and she attended to the things which were spoken by Paul. Three thousand of Peter's hearers, on the day of Pentecost, hardened in impenitence, and fixed in unbelief—were at once pricked in their hearts, under solemn apprehensions of their sin and danger; they were directed to the Divine remedy provided for the relief of ruined man, they gladly received the word, were baptized, and the same day added to the church. The conversion of Zaccheus was somewhat similar.

It is true, all these were extraordinary instances of the power of saving grace. But in all other cases, I humbly apprehend, the change, as it is in itself, and as it is in the sight of God, must be instantaneous; though the discovery of it, both to the sinner's own satisfaction, and to the satisfaction of others, is often very gradual. The precise period when it takes place—is known to

God, though it is often unknown to the man himself, otherwise than by the effects which follow upon it. The entrance of God's Word gives light; but the light at first, is not clear and distinct. The God who caused the light to shine out of darkness, shines into the sinner's benighted heart, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Yet it is but a very little which any believer knows at first—in comparison with the discoveries which are afterwards made to him. Perhaps all he can say, bears some resemblance to the language of the young man in the gospel, who had been born blind, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." Faith, in like manner, may be at first but as a grain of mustard seed—but it is a great happiness when "your faith grows exceedingly, and," as its proper attendant, when "your love towards each other abounds." The disciples said unto the Lord, "Increase our faith."

"It is not necessary that all these several workings of the heart, should be plain, distinct, and sensible in every true believer. For the actions of the soul, and especially the springs, the motives, and designs of those actions—are so hidden, and so mingled with each other, that they are not all distinctly perceived, even by the man himself in whom they take place. When the poor man in the gospel said, "Lord I believe; help my unbelief;" there were a multitude of crowding thoughts and passions, which produced and mingled with those ideas and expressions of fear and faith—that could never be distinctly apprehended and recounted by the person who felt them." —Isaac Watts.

Yet the attendants of saving faith, or those things which prove it to be true, should be carefully attended to, lest we should deceive ourselves in a matter of so much importance. The great things which are ascribed to faith, by the inspired writers, should induce us to be very deeply concerned to be partakers of it. We find them constantly asserting such things concerning faith as may convince us of its great use. Men have remission of sins through faith; they are justified by faith; their hearts are purified by faith; they have access to God by faith; they live, they walk, they stand by faith; they overcome all enemies by faith; they are kept by the power of God through faith; and, to encompass all in one word, they are saved by faith. How necessary, how important then is the apostle's exhortation, "Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith!"

Faith, we see, is neither more nor less than a sincere belief of the truth. So the divine word defines it. "These things were written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, you might have life through his name." But then it may be said of faith—as of love to God, of desire after him, and of hope and joy in him—by their fruits you shall know them. They are all distinguished and discerned to be true and genuine—by their attendants, and the way in which they are manifested. In respect to true and sincere faith, the Word of God fully and clearly sets before us—what its attendants and its fruits are. It is the less needful to enlarge on them here, because this is intended to be done through the whole of the following chapter. I hope the brief and simple account of faith, already given, will not be found materially defective. And I would earnestly entreat the reader to examine himself concerning this important article. I apprehend it is evident from the Scriptures, that no man is a true believer, whose heart is not changed by the grace and Spirit of God. "For if any man is in Christ—he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." "Being dead in your sins—you are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God." The faith of one who lives a careless, unconcerned, thoughtless life—is a vain faith; he is yet in his sins. No man is a true believer, in whom the blessed Spirit of God does not dwell, as his teacher and guide. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God—they are the Sons of God; but if any man has not the Spirit of Christ—he is none of his."

"When he, the Spirit of truth, has come, he shall guide you into all truth. He shall reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He shall glorify me, for he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you." The man who has never had a heart-affecting discovery of the purity of God's law, of the exceeding sinfulness and just demerit of sin, of his own guilty and depraved condition, of his utter helplessness, and the insufficiency of any righteousness he can perform, to recommend him to the Divine favor; the man who has never been taught, in an efficacious way, the glory of Christ's person, the sufficiency of his sacrifice, as a proper atonement for sin, the perfections of his righteousness, the fullness of his grace, and his ability to save to the uttermost; the man who has not been taught these things, in some degree, is yet in a state of unbelief. How can he have faith who neither knows nor understands what God's Word reveals as the truth? "I know," says the apostle, "whom I have believed."

He is no true believer—whose heart is not supremely attached to Jesus Christ; who sees no beauty, no excellency, no loveliness in him; for to all those who believe—Christ is precious. When the apostle Paul requires us to examine ourselves, whether we are in the faith, he adds, "Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you are reprobates?" According to him, to be in the faith, and to have Christ dwelling in us, so as to possess the chief place in our affections, and bear sway in our souls—are one and the same thing.

He is no true believer, in whom the Word of God does not dwell, in its sanctifying power and energy. Where the truth is sincerely believed, it enters the mind, it is received into the heart, it is incorporated with the soul, and it dwells and abides there. "The truth dwells in you. My Word abides in you. It works effectually in you who believe. It is in you as the ingrafted Word, which is able to save the soul. You have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you." All these emphatic expressions are descriptive of those who believe. Hence is that remarkable account of faith, which is given us by the apostle to the Hebrews, where he tells us, that "faith is the substance of things hoped for." It realizes them, and gives them a subsistence in the mind and heart. The law of God is written there. The truth of Christ abides there, in its light, its energy, its sanctifying and governing power. It bears sway in the soul, and rules the life. Reader, this is true faith, faith in reality, or as the apostle Peter terms it, "precious faith;" precious in its author, its object, its use, its efficacy, and its end.

It must appear to every attentive reader, from what has been said, that the Lord Jesus Christ, in his work of mediation for the recovery and salvation of lost sinners, as proposed in the promises of the gospel, is the proper object of faith. Hence it is called a believing in him, and a believing on his name. If men would attend to their own experience in the applications they make to God for pardon and salvation, many unnecessary disputes concerning faith would be prevented. Every true Christian knows, that he has been enabled, with his whole heart, to believe the divine promises, containing and proposing the atonement of the Redeemer, as the procuring cause of our reconciliation and peace with God, according to the riches of his infinite grace and mercy. "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whoever believes in him, shall receive remission of sins." Every Christian knows that he has sincerely approved, and does still heartily approve of the way of justification and salvation by Jesus Christ, proposed in the gospel, as affording a most glorious display of the wisdom, the holiness, the love, and the mercy of God. Hence the apostle Paul describes the faith of those who are called, by its approbation of the wisdom and power of God in the plan of salvation. "We preach Christ crucified unto the Jews a

stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God." In the lack of this gracious acquiescence in the gospel scheme, consists the nature of unbelief. Without this, no man is influenced by evangelical motives, to hate and renounce sin, or to devote himself to God in the way of obedience. But wherever this cordial sincere approbation of the way of life by Jesus Christ does prevail in the mind, it will certainly produce humiliation for sin, and holiness of life. The immediate design of Jehovah, in the great and important concern of our salvation, is, to display his own infinite perfections; "to declare his righteousness, to commend his love, to manifest his wisdom and his power," as his Word everywhere testifies. And the business of faith, in receiving the ineffable benefits of his salvation, is to give that glory to him which he designs so to exalt. Abraham, being strong in the faith, gave glory to God; and this is the nature of faith, even in its weakest degree. "We behold his glory, as in a glass. He gives us the light of the knowledge of his glory, in the face of Jesus Christ." The soul of a believer does herein give unto God, the glory of all those holy properties of his nature, which he designed to manifest, in our salvation by his own dear Son. To him the Father said, "You are my servant, in whom I will be glorified." And he directs us to fix our believing regards on him as such: "Behold my Servant, whom I uphold, my Elect, in whom my soul delights."

Before I conclude this chapter, I would beg permission, in a plain and serious manner, to address those who are yet in a state of impenitence and unbelief.

Supposing you then, my dear reader, to be in this condition, I would entreat you, by all that regard which you ought to have for the everlasting welfare and salvation of your own soul—to consider what the blessed God says to you in his holy Word, that Word according to which you are to be judged at the last day. The gospel, as we have seen, plainly declares—that God has contrived a way for the reconciling of sinners unto himself; that this was accomplished by his substituting his only begotten Son, in the place of the guilty, sending him into the world to work out salvation for them, delivering him up to death, even the death of the cross, as an atoning sacrifice for their offences, and raising him again from the dead for their justification. It declares that, by this divine expedient, the law which they had violated is perfectly fulfilled and magnified; Divine justice fully satisfied; and God well pleased and glorified. It also declares, that whoever heartily receives and believes this testimony, upon the authority of Him who reveals it—shall most certainly be saved; and that purely by free grace, without any respect to works or merits of his own, through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ.

Upon this ground, the gospel addresses sinners as such, sinners of every rank and degree—calling upon them to regard and believe its gracious messages—that they may be saved. It not only contains a declaration of facts, concerning the person and work of the Redeemer—but the kindest invitations and exhortations, founded upon that declaration. The Son of God himself represents the preaching of the gospel, under the notion of inviting to a marriage supper, where all things are prepared and ready for the guests. All sorts of people are invited; the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind; they are called from all those places which may be supposed to be haunts of the destitute and the miserable; such as the streets and lanes of the city, and the highways and hedges of the country. The servants are commanded to bid these sons and daughters of woe and wretchedness to come to the marriage; nay, even by those efforts of persuasion, which are mighty through God—to compel them to come in, that the wedding may be furnished with guests.

What Jesus Christ represents by way of parable, the apostle Paul holds forth without a figure. Attend to what he says with the greatest closeness, my dear reader; it is not a vain thing; your life is in it: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and has committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we beg you, in Christ's stead—be reconciled to God." These ambassadors were to press home the doctrine of reconciliation upon guilty, rebellious men, as the grand motive and argument, through the power of Divine grace, to engage them to give up themselves to God, to acquaint themselves with him, and so to be at peace. This is the drift and scope, not of a few passages only—but of the whole of the New Testament. That this may not pass unnoticed, the Author of that divine book says, in the conclusion of it, "I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star. The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life!" Language more kind, more generous or more free, cannot possibly be devised. Yet this is perfectly conformable to what Jesus said to sinners, when he himself sojourned among them: "In the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirsts, let him come unto me and drink. He who believes on me, as the Scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water!" Nothing can be plainer, than that this was addressed to those who were then in a state of unbelief. O that you may attend to it, and receive it with thankfulness and joy, giving glory to God for the richness and freeness of his grace.

Let not your own inability to believe in Jesus Christ, be considered as an insuperable bar and hindrance; for he who calls you to this, can, at the same time, give you the needed power. He who spoke the world into existence, he who quickens the dead by his omnipotent Word, may, with the greatest propriety, say to him who is dead in trespasses and sins, "Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." His word is living and powerful. It is as fire to quicken the lifeless soul; and as a hammer, to break the rock in pieces. It shall not return unto him void—but shall accomplish that which he pleases, and prosper in the thing whereunto he sends it.

Unbelievers are spoken of in the Word of God—as being dead in sin; by which is intended, their lying under a charge of guilt, which subjects them to condemnation; and their being under the power and dominion of sin. But this spiritual death is not, in all respects, like the natural death of the body; for if it was—the use of means to quicken and rouse such people, would not only be improper—but absolutely hopeless. Sinner, you have a conscience, you have a sense of right and wrong, you have hopes, you have fears, and other affections, capable of being wrought upon by those means which God has appointed. Your guilt will therefore be aggravated in proportion to the means of instruction you enjoy, and the warnings and exhortations given you, if you are not brought to repentance. This is so evident from the word of God, that it seems unnecessary to produce particular proofs of it. From this consideration it is plain—that you are capable of instruction, and of conviction, by the use of those means which Divine wisdom has ordained for that purpose; otherwise your guilt would not be heightened by disregarding them.

There is such a suitableness in the means which God has appointed, for bringing you to the knowledge of the truth, that if you should obstinately reject them, you would be entirely without excuse. The gospel is the happy expedient for quickening those who are dead in sin, since it is the power of God to the salvation of everyone who believes. The most wonderful effects are ascribed to it; it enlightens the understanding, it quickens the conscience, it converts the soul, and sanctifies

the mind. And though it does not produce these effects, without the agency of the blessed Spirit of God—yet his agency is not to be considered, as abstracted from the means; for he works by them on the minds of men, and gives them all their efficacy.

Open that precious book, the New Testament, my dear fellow-sinner, and you will presently find, that the God of infinite mercy invites you to repent, and believe the gospel. At the same time, you will find, that he does not call you to believe—without showing you what you are to believe, and exhibiting the clearest and fullest evidence for it. Neither does he call you to repent—without declaring unto you, both your sin, and your danger on account of it. I will suppose that you have read this divine book, and that you have repeatedly heard the gospel preached. You are not then in the same state of total ignorance in which you once were. You know something of religion in theory. You have received some information which you once had not, both concerning your danger—and the divine remedy. Give me permission to remind you, that if you should neglect so great salvation, you will be hereby rendered quite inexcusable. For such neglect must now be the effect of perverseness, and not simply of ignorance. O, that your attention may be engaged to the evidence and the importance of the gospel-message; and that your heart may be won to believe and embrace the truth as it is in Jesus!

Remember, that the declaration of it is accompanied with the most kind and tender invitations, entreaties and exhortations, which are urged in the Scriptures, by the most alluring and alarming motives which can possibly be proposed to the human mind. God forbid that you should be armored against them all, and harden yourself in unbelief, to your own utter ruin! Give the gospel a fair hearing; consider its evidence; attend to its kind and pathetic entreaties. Search the Scriptures daily, whether these things are so. The Bereans did this, and the sacred historian tells us, that "therefore many of them believed."

Let me entreat you to attempt the solemn work of calling upon God by earnest prayer and supplication. Harken to what he himself says unto you, in reference to this: "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call you upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." The gospel holds forth immediate relief to a wounded conscience. The same hour that the jailor at Philippi asked, "What must I do to be saved?" he was told that the remedy was at hand; "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." No long course of preparation, no prerequisites, no previous qualifications are necessary. Should they indeed be sought, they would be sought in vain. Humiliation for sin, love to God, devotedness to him, and victory over sin and the world—are not to be looked for in ourselves, in order that we may, on such grounds, be encouraged to believe; so far from it, that they are spoken of in the Scriptures as the certain effects which follow believing. The legal spirit of which we are all naturally possessed, leads us to imagine, that we must not embrace the promise of life by Christ Jesus—unless we are some way fitted, prepared and qualified for so doing. This is a perversion of the free proclamation of the gospel, and turning, in some sort, the covenant of grace—into a covenant of works. This is setting the gospel remedy at so great a distance, that it is impossible for us to claim the benefit of it. Whereas, "the word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess

and are saved." The glory of this inestimable blessing is—that it is absolutely free to sinners, as such, of every rank and degree; and like the brazen serpent to the wounded, dying Israelites, it is designed to give immediate relief to perishing souls! "WHOEVER believes in him shall not perish. WHOEVER will, let him come," without seeking for any kind of preparation whatever. If he is a sinner, for such the remedy is provided. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." It is a deplorable mistake to look for the effects of faith, where the effectual cause of those effects is lacking. Does the afflicted person say, 'As soon as I am cured of this deadly disease—I will call in the help of a physician?' The man who is fallen into an horrible pit, whose feet stick fast in the miry clay, needs immediate relief, and never thinks of waiting until he is qualified to deserve it, from the friendly hand which is ready to draw him out. When Peter was sinking in the mighty deep, he instantly cried out, "Lord, save me—or I perish."

Those who have believed through grace are, in the Word of inspiration, described by those holy dispositions, and that heavenly walk, which are the necessary fruits and effects of faith; as such, I have endeavored to point them out in the preceding pages. But it would be a strange perversion of the order of things, to conclude that we must not believe the promises of salvation by Jesus Christ—until we find in ourselves those fruits which can only be experienced in consequence of believing them. Remember, my dear fellow-sinner, that your hearts can only be purified by faith, and that love to God, and conformity to his will—follow upon believing, as effects which are dependent on their cause. Let the tree first be made good—and then, its fruits will be good. "You will recognize them by their fruit. Are grapes gathered from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? In the same way, every good tree produces good fruit, but a bad tree produces bad fruit. A good tree can't produce bad fruit; neither can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that doesn't produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So you will recognize them by their fruit."

"Without faith it is impossible to please God. This is the work of God," a work most acceptable in his sight, "that you believe in him whom he has sent." The history of Christ, the truths of his gospel, and the promises of his grace, "were written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, you might have life through his name." Thus the God of all grace proposed to our first parent, in his lost, forlorn, and hopeless condition, the promise of redemption by Christ, the belief of which, no doubt, brought him back from the borders of despair; and gave him immediate relief. The awakened sinner's address to God, suited to the foregoing remarks.

Almighty and everlasting God, my Creator, my Preserver, and my Judge, before whose solemn tribunal I must shortly make my appearance. I am a poor individual of the fallen race of mankind, shaped in iniquity, conceived in sin, and chargeable with actual transgressions almost without number. I have brought myself under the condemning sentence of your righteous law, and rendered myself deserving of your everlasting displeasure. It is high time for me to awake out of sleep, and to inquire, with the utmost seriousness, and the deepest concern—whether there is any possible way of escaping that wrath which is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

I feel a ray of hope spring up in my soul, since you have said, in your holy Word, "you have destroyed yourselves—but in me is your help." Jesus Christ, your only begotten Son, came into the world to save sinners, such as I am. This is no delusive supposition, no uncertain report; it is a

faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance. But I learn from the sacred Scriptures, that he who disregards this testimony, who receives it not in the love of the truth, who believes not in the Son of God, the appointed Savior, must everlastingly perish. I learn from your word, that pardon of sin, deliverance from condemnation, and the enjoyment of eternal felicity—are inseparably connected with true faith in Christ. Do mercifully impart to me, that divine illumination, without which I shall neither know the way of peace, nor believe the truth to the saving of my soul. O teach me to know myself—the deep depravity of my nature, the guiltiness of my whole life, the purity of your law which I have violated, the inflexibility of your holiness and justice which I have offended, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and my own utter inability to do anything, towards delivering my own soul out of that state of misery into which I have brought myself. Bring me to an acquaintance with you—the only true God, and with Jesus Christ, whom you have sent to redeem and save the lost and the undone—whom to know is life eternal. May your Holy Spirit set before me, in the most powerful and engaging manner, the glory of his person, the sufficiency of his sacrifice, the efficacy of his blood to cleanse from all sin, the perfection of his righteousness to clothe the naked soul, the fullness of his grace to supply every need, and his ability in every respect to save to the uttermost, all who come unto God by him. May that precious gospel, of which Christ crucified is the sum and substance, appear to me in all its truth, as the testimony of God; in all its sacred importance as the Word of life; in all its fullness, its suitableness to my case, its preciousness, and its glory—that I may be enabled to receive it with full and entire approbation, as a system most honorable to God, and safe for man, and that I may believe it with my whole heart.

Let me be a partaker of that faith which is connected with true repentance of sin, a sincere attachment to Jesus Christ, a subjection of heart and life to his will and government, a holy indifference to all that this present world can afford, and a sincere and constant endeavor to obey your commands. May I receive and embrace the truth as it is in Jesus, so that it may dwell and abide in me, in all its sacred energy and sanctifying power, working effectually in me, as it does in all those who believe. Thus let my heart be purified by faith, and give me an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in you. Never let me be a stranger to the joy of faith; but fill me with all that joy and peace in believing, which arise from the view and manifestation of pardoning mercy, through the precious blood of your dear Son; to whom with yourself, and the blessed Spirit, the one eternal God—be equal and endless praises! Amen.

03 - The Evidence Believers Give, That Christ is Precious to Them

Chapter 3. The evidence believers give, that Christ is precious to them.

God has magnified his love, and set forth the riches of his grace towards us, in a manner which should effectually allure our hearts to him. While we were enemies and rebels in open arms against him—he was pleased to send his beloved Son to die for our sins—in order to redeem us from sin and hell. He who is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, became a man of sorrows for our sakes. In the greatness of his condescension, he called himself the Son of man—but all the fullness of the God-head dwelt in him. He was declared to be God manifest in the flesh. He came down from his Father's bosom, and became man—not to condemn the world of mankind—but to give his life and blood for our sakes; to make his soul an offering for our sins, to suffer inconceivable anguish and sorrow, and to die for us, that he might bring us back to God and happiness. He poured out his soul to death, to secure us from the deserved wrath and vengeance of God. He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon him, that we through his stripes might be healed. He was stricken and smitten and afflicted by God—that he might open the way for us to partake of Divine mercy, and render the offended Majesty of heaven a more proper, and a more engaging object of our love.

He is the beloved Son of God, the first and the everlasting favorite of heaven, the highest object of his Father's delight; he is the great peace-maker between God and sinners, the chief messenger of divine love to men. If he had not undertaken to make peace by the blood of his cross, we would have continued the children of wrath forever. We would have been in the same state with the fallen angels, for whom no Savior is provided, and to whom no promise of pardon and reconciliation is made. To us the Child was born, to us the Son was given. He came to deliver us from our state of enmity and rebellion, to save us from sin and its dreadful consequences; from the curse of God's righteous law, and from everlasting destruction. His heart was pierced for the sake of sinful men. The messages of his own, and of his Father's love—he has written to us in lines of blood; he sealed the covenant of peace between God and man—with the blood of his cross, which he shed for us, to procure the remission of our sins. This is that divine Savior who, though disregarded by many, is precious to those that believe. I now proceed to consider—what evidence believers give, that he is precious to them.

Section 1. If Christ is truly precious to us—we will trust our everlasting concerns in his hands. The apostle Peter, when he speaks of Christ being precious to those who believe, represents him under the idea of a foundation. "Behold I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious: and he who believes on him shall not be confounded. Yes, He is very precious to you who believe!" That is, precious under that consideration particularly; and you show it, by making it your chief design and care to be found built upon him, as the sure foundation.

They who trust in their own hearts, and go about to establish their own righteousness, like the unbelieving Jews—do, like them, stumble at the stumbling-stone. To such Christ cannot be said, in

any sense, to be precious; since they set themselves directly to oppose the very design of his coming into this world, which was, that he might be "the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." That man is no true believer in Jesus—who rests in the law, and endeavors to lay a foundation of hope contrary to that which is laid, even Jesus Christ. He seeks not righteousness by faith—but by the works of the law. But he, to whom the Savior of sinners is precious, is dead to the law by the body of Christ, that he may live unto God. He places all his confidence for acceptance with the Father, and for everlasting life, in that divine Redeemer. He worships God in the Spirit, he rejoices in Christ Jesus, and has no confidence in the flesh. He knows whom he has believed, and is persuaded that that almighty Savior is able to keep what he has committed unto him until that day. In short, all his hopes center in Christ.

Hence the sacred writers so frequently speak of the actual out-goings of a gracious soul towards Jesus Christ, for salvation—of looking and coming to him—of receiving him—and of trusting in him. This is something more than giving credit to the testimony which is given concerning him; something different from a mere belief of the truth. But at the same time, he who really, and from his heart, believes what God's Word reveals concerning the nature of sin, his own vile and lost condition, together with the glorious way in which sinners are saved by Jesus Christ—will necessarily be induced to flee to him, to receive him, and to rest upon him for the salvation of his soul. It must be so in the very nature of things.

How could the enlightened sinner give evidence that Christ is precious to him, as one who is able to save to the uttermost, if he himself has no degree of hope, trust, or confidence in him, under that consideration. Hence, though this dependence on the Redeemer for salvation is distinct from the belief of the truth concerning him—it is distinct from it only as an inseparable effect is distinct from its cause. Faith and trust may be distinguished—but they cannot be divided. Some degree of hope or trust in Christ appears to be the necessary and immediate effect of believing what the gospel reveals concerning him. When the sinner understands and realizes what God says of the evil of sin, of the misery of fallen man, and of the appointed way of salvation by a glorious and all-sufficient Mediator; he, in consequence, flies for refuge to the hope set before him, and ventures the whole weight of his everlasting interests in his hands! The convinced sinner is deeply impressed with a sense of the insufficiency of his own works; he has given up all hope of acceptance with God by anything which he has done, or ever can do; if we therefore suppose him to have no trust in the Savior of sinners, he must be in a state of absolute despair; and this is entirely inconsistent with that faith which, as we have seen, implies the choice and approbation of God's way of saving sinners by Jesus Christ. Hope and trust are the immediate and natural consequences of such believing views of the propriety and glory of the Divine remedy, as have been mentioned in the former chapter. A great deal is said in the Old Testament concerning hope and trust. The term faith very rarely occurs. But the hope and trust so frequently spoken of by Moses, David and the prophets certainly comprehend and include what is called faith, by the writers of the New Testament. Hope and trust sweetly compose the soul of a regenerate man, and bring him into that state of rest and tranquility which is so desirable amidst the fluctuations and disquietudes to which human life is subject. All the rest we enjoy in this world, is connected with trust in God. "You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you; because he trusts in you." The special object of this trust is God, reconciled unto us through the mediation of his Son. Respect must be had to this mediation—where the goodness, the mercy, the grace, the name, the

faithfulness, or the power of God is mentioned—as that on which the soul relies. For none of these can be the object of a helpless sinner's trust—but on account of that covenant which is confirmed and ratified by the blood of the Redeemer. When the infinite mercy of God is spoken of in particular, as that in which we are to confide—we are to understand by it, his unbounded grace, setting forth Jesus Christ as the propitiation for our sins. Trust in this mercy, is what the apostle calls "receiving the atonement." Receiving it denotes our approbation of it, and our confiding in it, as the great effect of Divine wisdom, goodness, faithfulness, love and grace, which can never fail those who rely upon it.

It is not the part of wisdom, in natural things, to trust anyone with affairs of importance before we know him; if we would do so, though perhaps our concerns may be safe in his hands—yet every discouraging circumstance, every flying report, will be ready to shake our hearts, and fill us with fear. The Christian knows whom he has believed; or, as the word used by the apostle signifies, whom he has trusted. Athenians may build their altars to an unknown god; but Christians do not trust in an unknown Redeemer. "Those who know your name," O God our Savior, "will put their trust in you." This trust consists in a committing of the guilty helpless soul to the care of Christ, who is commissioned by his almighty Father to take care of lost souls, and to save them with an everlasting salvation. It is a secret application of the heart to Christ, in which we resign our guilty persons to him—to be pardoned for the sake of his sufferings. We resign our naked souls to him—to be clothed in his righteousness. We resign our sinful and polluted natures to him—to be sanctified by the power of his grace, and to be made fit for everlasting glory.

We are encouraged thus to trust in him under a full persuasion of his ability to save to the uttermost. We know that he is mighty to save. We are assured that his obedience unto death was perfect and complete; that his blood cleanses from all sin; that his righteousness renders those who believe accepted with the Father, unto eternal life; that his power and grace are sufficient to conquer all our disorderly passions, to support us under all our temptations, to purify our hearts, to strengthen our endeavors in the practice of holiness, and to keep us safely to his heavenly kingdom. This trust differs from a feeble belief of the words, the works, and the power of Christ, upon hearsay, or slight notice; it is built upon just and certain evidence. The believer has abundant testimony to the truth of Christ's being able to save. God himself has given witness from heaven, by miracles, visions, and voices. The apostles, prophets, and martyrs have filled the earth with their witness; and, by most convincing arguments, have proved the all-sufficiency of the Redeemer. The Christian has a witness in his own soul, to the power and grace of Christ, when he feels the sanctifying efficacy of the gospel upon his heart, and experiences Divine peace in his conscience, with the sweet foretastes of immortal felicity. Christ is precious on account of all those glorious qualifications which render him the fittest object of a sinner's hope and trust, and the believer gives evidence of this in his own case, by entrusting his everlasting concerns to his hands.

Section 2. If Christ is precious unto us—we shall delight to think of him, to hear of him, and to speak of him. The Christian knows that his future blessedness will consist in being where Jesus is, and beholding his glory; and he concludes that frequent contemplation of him in the present state must have a tendency, through Divine grace—to prepare him for that happy state which he has in prospect. "For we all with open face, beholding, as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord—are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

"To know God, and to love him, constitute a man holy upon earth; to know God, and to love him, will constitute a man happy in heaven. God is the supreme truth; and all the intelligence, all the knowledge of our minds ought to relate to him, as to their object. God is the supreme good, and all the motions of our wills ought to tend towards him, as towards their only and last end. On this principle, Jesus Christ has founded the religion and worship, which we profess." Fleschler A learned, pious and aged divine, makes use of the following expressions, when speaking of the importance and utility and habitual contemplation on the glory and excellency of Christ: "If we desire to have faith in its vigor, or love in its power—giving rest, delight, and satisfaction to our souls, we are to seek for them in the diligent discharge of this duty; elsewhere they will not be found. Herein would I live; herein would I die. Hereupon would I dwell in my thoughts and affections, to the withering and consumption of all the painted beauties of this world; to the crucifying of things here below, until they become as worthless, dead, and deformed—and in no way fit for affectionate embraces." The believer will surely take pleasure in musing on the glories and excellencies of his adorable Redeemer. The object of our warmest affection will be much in our thoughts. "My meditation of him," says the Psalmist, "shall be sweet. In the multitude of my thoughts within me, your comforts delight my soul." It appears from the writings of holy David—that he employed a considerable portion of his time, amidst all the business and the cares which came upon him as the king and governor of a numerous people, in meditating on the Word, the statutes, and the testimonies of God; and he ever found something in them worthy of his high esteem, and his holy joy. "O how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day. I have seen an end of all perfection—but your commandments are exceeding broad." He was particularly delighted in contemplating the glories of the expected Messiah. "My heart," says he, "overflows with a beautiful thought! I will recite a lovely poem to the king, for my tongue is like the pen of a skillful poet. You are the most handsome of all. Gracious words stream from your lips. God himself has blessed you forever. O mighty warrior! You are so glorious, so majestic!"

It is the tendency of love to excite in the mind—many thoughts about the beloved object. A right knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, will fill the mind with thoughts and meditations concerning Him—so as to excite the affections to cleave to Him with delight. A discovery of the glory of His person, of the perfection of His atoning sacrifice, and of the fullness of His grace—must inspire the heart with love to Him! He who lives the blessed life of faith in the Son of God, will frequently think of his Savior; of what he is in himself, of his love, of his humiliation, and of the manifestation of all the glorious excellencies of the Divine nature in him—for the recovery and salvation of men.

It is much to be lamented, that those who profess a sincere attachment to the Redeemer, should have their thoughts so little employed about him. Where a multitude of worldly cares, desires, fears and hopes prevail in the mind—they cumber and perplex it—so as to bring on a great disinclination to spiritual meditation. The advice of the apostle Paul is of great importance in this case, "If you then are risen with Christ—seek those things which are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God. Set your affection (your mind, your thoughts,) on things above, not on things on the earth. For (with respect to this present world, according to what you profess) you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Earthly and sensual affections fill the hearts and heads of men, with multitudes of thoughts concerning those objects on which they are fixed, so as to leave no room, nor indeed inclination for spiritual and heavenly thoughts.

"Shall not my thoughts," says the believer, "be frequently employed in meditating on the love of that infinitely glorious person, to whom I am indebted for deliverance from the greatest misery—and for all the hope I have of being one day advanced to everlasting glory and felicity! He poured out his holy soul in agonies, under the curse of the avenging law—to make me a partaker of eternal blessedness. He perfectly fulfilled the precepts of that law, that I, by his obedience, might be made righteous!" The grand blessing which our Lord solicits and demands for his disciples, in his last solemn intercession, is that they may behold his glory. It is that which will complete the blessedness of heaven, and fill its inhabitants with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Surely, then, it should be our delight to anticipate, in some degree, that celestial bliss, and to habituate our souls to this sacred exercise, which will be our business and our reward forever. This glorious and adorable Redeemer, thought upon us long before the foundations of the world were laid. He bore us on his heart when he hung on the cross; when he was torn with wounds, and racked with pain; when he poured out his dying groans, and spilt his blood. He remembers us now, when he is exalted at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens; and will never, never forget us, through all the ages of eternity! Surely, then, we ought to think of him! Impressed with a sense of his everlasting kindness—we should be ready to say, as the captives in Babylon, concerning their beloved city Jerusalem, "If I forget you, O blessed Jesus—let my right hand forget her skill. May my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth if I fail to remember you, if I don't make you my highest joy!"

What holy transports of soul, what divine delights have many Christians experienced, in meditating on the glories of the Redeemer! Ascending the mount of contemplation, their souls have taken wing, and explored the height and depth, the length and breadth of the love of Christ, which passes knowledge! They have seen, by the eye of faith—that he is infinitely lovely in himself, that he is the admiration of angels, the darling of heaven, and the delight of the Father. They have viewed him in the brightness of his ineffable glory, clothed with indescribable majesty and honor! They have been transported with the smiles of his countenance, and said of him, "He is the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely!"

They have then considered their own unworthiness, and said, "Can such a wretch as I be the object of his love? So vile a worm, so unprofitable a creature, so great a sinner, one so deserving of his everlasting abhorrence! Has he loved me, so as to give himself for me? O what marvelous kindness is this! Is my worthless name written in his book of life? Am I redeemed by his blood, renewed by his Spirit, beautified with his loveliness, and clothed in his righteousness? O wonder of wonders! Mystery beyond all mysteries! How can I forbear to love this adorable Savior? Can I withhold my choicest affections from him? Ah no! Had I a thousand lives, a thousand souls—they would all be devoted to him. You tempting vanities of this base world, you flattering honors, you deceitful riches, adieu! Jesus is my all! He is my light, my life, my unfailling treasure, my everlasting portion! Nothing below the skies is deserving of my love! Precious Redeemer, in you the boundless wishes of my soul are filled, and all my inward powers rejoice in you. I long to leave this tenement of clay, and to rest in the bosom of your love forever!" That one who loves Jesus delights to hear of him, and to converse about him—cannot be doubted, since every man is best pleased with that conversation in which the object of his dearest affections is the principal theme. It is on this account, that the gospel is a joyful sound to him who believes—because it sets forth Christ in his glory! No sermons are so precious and so animating to him—as those in which the

Redeemer's excellencies are most fully displayed. It is then that the Christian says, "I sit under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit is sweet unto my taste!" A sermon which is not enlivened with the honeyed name of Jesus, in which there is nothing of his atonement for sin, of his matchless love, and saving power—is heard with coolness and indifference; while the doctrine of the cross is as life from the dead!

Section 3. If Christ is truly precious to us—we shall be grateful for the benefits we receive from him.

It must be acknowledged, that, like many who are more forward to borrow than to pay back; we are frequently more ready to ask favors at the hand of God, than to return thanks for those we receive from him. An unhumbled heart sets a low value on Divine mercies; but those who are truly acquainted with themselves, who know what they are and have been, together with what the Lord has done for them, in raising them up from the depths of sin and woe—will call upon their souls and all that is within them—to bless the holy name of their gracious Deliverer. They will perhaps express their gratitude in some such language as the following—

"O Lord, I will praise you, for though you were angry with me, your anger is turned away, and you comfort me. Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also has become my salvation." Eternally blessed be the gracious Redeemer, who, from the plentitude of heavenly bliss, and the highest exaltation of glory, descended to base mortality, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross, to ransom my perishing soul, to rescue me from death and damnation, and to give me a lot among the righteous! How can I pretend to have a regard for him, if I am not thankful for his benefits?

"Lord you have raised me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay; you have set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. You have graciously pardoned those hateful crimes which might have caused me eternal regret, and plunged me in everlasting misery. You have given that tranquility to my once troubled conscience, which is the anticipation of Paradise. You have given me hope of seeing your face hereafter with unutterable joy, and of dwelling at your right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore!

"Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads me with his benefits, while I am in the way to the promised inheritance. Yours, O Lord, is the air I breathe, the food I eat, and the clothing I put on. The intellectual powers of which I am possessed, the use of my reason, and a capacity of knowing, of loving, of serving, and of enjoying you—are among the best and choicest of your mercies. All the happiness, and indeed, all the usefulness of my life, either to myself or others, are from you.

"Long ago might I have been cast off, as an unprofitable servant, who knew his Master's will—yet did it not. But your mercy is greater than the heavens, and the instances thereof are more in number than the sands upon the sea-shore. They are renewed every morning, and multiplied every moment.

"While I attempt to celebrate your praise, may I live to the glory of my ever bountiful Benefactor. It would be the excess of ingratitude to employ the favors I receive from you, in the violation of your commands. Every blessing of your hand furnishes me with a motive to serve you. Lord, I would show forth your praise, not only with my lips—but in my life, by giving up myself to your service, and walking before you in holiness and righteousness all my days." The religion we profess, is far

from requiring us to put on a mournful countenance. On the other hand, it enjoins upon us cheerfulness, gratitude of heart, and joy in the Lord. It is an apostolic injunction, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice!" As if it had been said, 'Endeavor to maintain a habitual joy in Christ Jesus, and in the hopes and privileges you derive from him; for the honor of your Divine Master, and the prosperity of your own souls are intimately connected with it. There is enough in the object of your affections to furnish you with matter of joy, even in the worst circumstances which can attend you in this world. The worldly man rejoices in his possessions, the voluptuous man in his vain pleasures—but you are to rejoice in the Lord. Delight yourselves in him, and he will give you the desire of your hearts. Serve him with gladness, and come before his presence with singing!' When the Ethiopian eunuch became acquainted with Christ and his salvation, how was his heart cheered with the discovery! A new sun seemed to arise, and a new world to display its beauties around him. Every object brightened before him, and he "went on his way rejoicing." Christians, go and do likewise. Call upon your souls to magnify the Lord, and let your spirits rejoice in God your Savior. His love, his goodness, his matchless and multiplied benefits demand this at your hands. If we derive not the same consolation from Christ and the gospel, which godly men have formerly experienced, it must be owing to the weakness of our faith, and the lack of sincerity, ardor and diligence in the service of God.

We are expressly commanded, "In everything, to give thanks." Whatever may be our present circumstances, our dependence on God, and our obligations to him, require us to be habitually grateful to our Divine Benefactor, since we never can be attended with such afflictions as not to have greater cause for thankfulness, than for complaint. We should reflect on our unworthiness of the least of all God's mercies, and on the riches of his undeserved grace, in loading us with benefits, which far over-balance all our afflictions. We should labor to keep up a cheerful, thankful frame of heart in every condition of life, for "the joy of the Lord is our strength!"

It is the will of God in Christ Jesus, that we should in everything, give thanks. By the gift of his Son for us, and the bestowment of his saving blessings on us, he has laid a foundation for perpetual thankfulness, which is every way sufficient to justify the reasonableness of the demand.

Section 4. If Christ is truly precious to us—we shall prefer him above every other object; he will have the chief place in our affections. The love which a Christian has to his Savior, penetrates and possesses his heart. This distinguishes it from the pretended love of hypocrites, which is only in word, or in some external actions, while their hearts are full of sinful self-love, so that it may be said of them as God once said of the Israelites, "This people honor me with their lips—but their hearts are far from me."

"Those religious performances which leave in our hearts the love of the world and its carnal pleasures, are rather a semblance of piety, than piety itself. We are only before God what we are in heart and affection. He must be the object of all our desires, the end of all our actions, the principle of all our affections, the governing power of our whole souls. All that does not flow from these dispositions, all that does not either conduct us to these, or establish us in them, however shining before men, is nothing but a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal in God's eyes!" Masillon.

Divine love so possesses the heart, as not to allow a partitioning of it to inferior objects. Thus it is distinguished from that partial love which is sometimes found in unregenerate people, which is

only transient, and never comes to perfection; because the heart is divided, and occupied with various worldly objects. The love of Christ is not rooted, nor predominant in their minds. A believer may, and, indeed, ought to love his fellow-creatures. A father should love his children, a husband his wife, and a friend his friend; but the character of love to Jesus is, on the one hand, to allow no love contrary to itself, to have place in the heart; for "no man can serve two masters; and the friendship of this world is enmity against God." And, on the other hand, this divine affection does not allow any of the objects, the love of which is in some degree compatible with itself, to hold the chief place in the heart. This chief place is for the Lord, whom we ought to love with supreme ardor. To regard him only in a secondary way, is to provoke his resentment. The choicest affections of our souls ought to be supremely fixed upon him. "How is your Beloved better than others? Yes! He is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend!" That love, which has but created things for its object, is degrading to the soul. It is a cleaving to that which can neither contribute to the happiness nor to the perfection of our nature; and, of course, which cannot give repose to our minds. For to love any object ardently, is to seek our felicity in it, and to expect that it will answer our desires. It is to call upon it to fill that deep void which we feel in ourselves, and to imagine that it is capable of giving us the satisfaction we seek. It is to regard it as the resource of all our needs, the remedy of all the evils which oppress us, and the source of all our happiness. Now, as it is God alone in whom we can find all these advantages, it is a debasing of the soul, it is idolatry to seek them in created objects.

If Christ is truly precious to us—we shall be induced to devote our souls and our bodies, our talents, our powers and our faculties, as a living sacrifice to him. To contemplate his adorable perfections will be our highest joy. We shall be ready to obey him in opposition to all the threats and the solicitations of men. We shall rely upon him, though all outward appearances seem to be against us; and rejoice in him, though we have nothing else to comfort us. If we enjoy health and plenty, friends and reputation, the Lord is still the object of our earnest desires and our supreme delight. "Whom have I in heaven but you? There is none upon earth that I desire besides you! As the deer pants for the water-brooks, so longs my soul after you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?" The religion of Jesus does not consist in dull and lifeless formality. "God is a spirit, and those who worship him must do it in spirit and in truth." Our hearts should be warmly and vigorously engaged in cleaving to him; we should be fervent in spirit, in serving the Lord. Such is the infinite excellency of Jesus Christ, the Author of eternal salvation, that there can be no suitableness in the exercises of our minds towards him, unless they are lively and powerful. Lukewarmness is nowhere so odious and detestable as here. There is something very significant in the apostles of Christ being said to be baptized with the Holy Spirit, and with fire—as it is expressive, among other things—of the fervor of those affections which the Spirit of God excited in their hearts. The apostle Paul speaks of love, as of the greatest importance in religion. He represents it as the fountain whence proceeds all that is truly good. He speaks of it as that without which the greatest knowledge and gifts, and the most splendid profession, are vain and unprofitable. The sum of vital religion consists in this divine affection, and in those things which are the fruits of it. The children of God are described as those "who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." This loving apostle, in whom the true spirit of Christianity was so fully exemplified, gave every kind of evidence that Jesus Christ was precious to him. It appears from all his writings that this servant of the Lord was, in the whole course of his life, after his conversion, inflamed, actuated, and, as it were, swallowed up, by a most ardent love to his Divine

Master. Hence he esteemed all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of him, and counted them but dung that he might win Christ, and be found in him. He declares that he was overpowered by this divine affection, and carried forward by it in the service of him whom he so ardently loved, through all difficulties and sufferings. "For the love of Christ constrains us;" not only his love to us—but our love to him. The knowledge a believer has of the excellency of Christ, tends to raise in his mind a high esteem of him. As it is impossible for any man to love an unknown object, so it cannot be expected that Christ should be supremely precious unto us, unless we know him to be excellent and desirable, beyond whatever may be compared with him. We shall not esteem him above all things, if we have not elevated views of his transcendent worth.

We may possibly delight in some objects of an inferior nature, as they contribute to our health, our ease, or our comfort. Our homes, our food, and our other temporal enjoyments are dear to us, because they minister to our comfort and convenience in the present life. We have a compassionate regard for the poor, though perhaps we see little real excellency in their character. We feel our affections of pity moved towards them, as fellow-creatures in distress. We have a natural attachment to our country and our kindred, because of their relation to us. But we love the Divine Savior with a very superior kind of love. We know that he is in himself possessed of the highest excellencies, and that he is able to bestow upon us the richest benefits. Our esteem of him rises in proportion to the knowledge we have of him. Godly men therefore ardently desire to increase in the knowledge of him, that their affections may be more intensely fixed upon him. And though the believer's regard for his Savior is far from being wholly a selfish principle—yet the hope of interest in Christ's favor serves to draw forth and confirm his attachment to him. It seems impossible for any man to contemplate his supreme excellencies with delight—if he is destitute of hope. Christ is precious to those who believe—not to those who despair. The evil spirits said to Jesus, when he sojourned on earth, "We know you who you are—the Holy one of God;" but they know that there is no hope of their ever enjoying his favor; and therefore they continue in their enmity and rebellion against him. Terror, slavish fear, and despair are so opposite to love, that the apostle John does not scruple to say concerning the Supreme Being, that it is a sense of his love to us which draws forth our attachment to him: "We love him—because he first loved us."

Much has been said, and perhaps with propriety, concerning love to Jesus Christ for his own infinite excellency, as being the most distinguishing proof of a real gracious affection; but at the same time, it does not appear either from the Word of God, or from matter of fact—that sincere love to Jesus ever exists in any mind destitute of hope. So far as slavish fear prevails, it is a bar to love to Jesus; and therefore "he who fears" that Christ is not his friend—but may disown him at last, "is not made perfect in love." Hope of a saving interest in Christ opens the springs of affection; it draws and attracts the heart to its object. And therefore when we are required to give to our Maker and Sovereign, our whole heart and mind, and soul and strength, the manner in which the command is expressed is worthy of peculiar notice, "You shall love the Lord your God."

It is a maxim laid down by some respectable writers, that an unselfish love to God is essential to being a true Christian; or, as they express it, 'Whoever seeks anything in God beside God himself, does not sincerely love him.' It is allowed, that God is in himself—an object infinitely amiable—that, were it possible for an intelligent being to exist independent of God, it would be impossible for such a being to contemplate the Divine Nature and not to love it. But it should be remembered, that, even in the case supposed, consciousness of conformity to the nature and fitness of things, would

be attended with pleasure; and pleasure is personal interest; so that, strictly speaking, pure unselfish love to God seems to be impossible.

Sincere Christians love God under the severest strokes of his providence. They find a pleasure in loving him, and in submitting to his sovereign will, which amply compensates them, and gives them the highest interest in this love. There are, as it should seem, not three different kinds of love to God—but three distinct degrees of the same love to him:

1. Our love may be drawn forth towards him by the temporal benefits which we receive from his indulgent hand. Yet temporal blessings are not the objects of our supreme love; but God, the giver of them.

2. Our love may be kindled and excited towards him by the spiritual blessings which he bestows upon us, according to the riches of his grace; such as his regarding and answering our prayers, his granting unto us discoveries of his mercy, in forgiving our sins, and the like. "I love the Lord," says the Psalmist, "because he has heard the voice of my supplication."

3. God is to be loved for his own infinite amiableness and excellency. But this love, being attended with pleasure, cannot be separated from mental interest. 'I love him,' says the most spiritual and heavenly-minded man upon earth, 'who is the health of my countenance, and my God. I will go to the altar of God; to God my exceeding joy.' With respect to these three degrees of love, if the experience of Christians in common be attended to—it will perhaps be found, that most begin with the first, grow into the second, and end in the last. And to the last, as to that degree which is most elevating, most honorable to God, and productive of the most noble effects—all godly men should aspire.

'A Christian's desire,' says one of our old divines, 'is to God chiefly, and to God simply; to God as the God of grace, for more strength and ability to serve him; and to God as the God of all comfort, for the pleasure of fellowship and communion with him.' Horton

If Jesus Christ is precious to us, the bent of our souls will be towards him. We shall choose him above and beyond every other object, as our most desirable portion, and exceeding great reward. If anything in this world be chosen by us, as our chief good—our hearts will run out in strongest affections towards it. We shall look for our felicity in that object, be it what it may; that object therefore, and not Christ, will be most precious unto us.

If our regard for the Redeemer is supreme, as it ought to be, our whole hearts will go out after him in the most intense longings, and with the most pleasing desires. The heart of a believer is restless until it finds its Savior; until it obtains a solid hope and persuasion of his love, a growing conformity to him, and sincere delight in him. The soul rests and acquiesces in him alone, and is not happy without the enjoyment of some tokens of his love. The language of such a one is, 'If I have Christ for my friend, and my everlasting portion—I have all. When his face is hidden, and his comforts withdrawn, I seek him with restless desire, and often cry, O that I knew where I might find him! After a season of darkness, when the light of his countenance is again lifted up upon me, I say, Return unto your rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.' (For several hints in this part of the work, I am indebted to Isaac Watts, in his excellent Discourse on the Love of God.) The sense we have of our continual and absolute need of Christ, has a tendency to engage our affections to Him. At our first conversion, when we were turned from darkness to light—we saw

ourselves lost—and that none but Christ could save us. We felt the wounds of a guilty conscience—and we knew that He alone could heal them. We trembled before the offended Majesty of God—and we were persuaded that He alone could deliver us from the wrath to come. We saw that there was no remission of sin, no reconciliation with God, no salvation but through Christ Jesus—hence He became, at that period, all in all to us.

We still see the absolute necessity of this precious Savior in every respect, so that without him we can do nothing, as he himself has told us. We have need of him, when we are dark—to enlighten us; when we are dull and lifeless—to quicken us; when we are straitened—to enlarge us; when we are weak—to strengthen us; when we are tempted—to support us; when we have fallen—to raise and restore us; when we are full of doubts and perplexity—to comfort us and give us peace; when we are disquieted with fears—to encourage us; when we are staggering at the promises through unbelief—to confirm our faith. As none but Christ can do these things for us—he must be precious to our souls. The following aspiration shall close the present section: 'Reign, blessed Jesus, in my heart, reign supreme, and without a rival. I would sincerely love you above all things in heaven or earth. I see that you are infinitely glorious in your own self, and worthy of the highest esteem and love. You are the only all-sufficient good, the overflowing spring of grace and blessedness. All things beneath and besides you—are vanity and emptiness. In comparison with you, they are less than nothing. You have drawn my heart towards yourself, and made me willing to make choice of you, as my Savior, and my Portion. I would renounce all that the world calls good or great, that I may be entirely yours. Be my everlasting inheritance, and I shall desire nothing that a whole world of creatures can bestow. Whom have I in heaven but you? There is nothing on earth that I desire in comparison of you!

'I am but a stranger in this world, wherever I may be situated, or however I may happen to be distinguished. And surely it is my privilege that I am so. When I look not upon myself as a stranger and a pilgrim, when I am captivated with anything in this place of my exile—I forget myself, and act far beneath my character, as a candidate for an immortal crown.

'I hope I have counted the cost of being one of your disciples; I hope I have laid in the balance—all which this world can flatter me with, and compared it with the gain of godliness. The odds I find to be infinite. I would therefore bid adieu to the gaudy pomps and empty vanities of life, and give my heart to you. I hear the voice of infinite mercy directing me to set my affections on things above. I would obey the celestial Monitor. What can present scenes afford, to tempt me to relinquish the choice I have been enabled to make? What can they offer, as an equivalent to his favor, whose smiles enlighten the realms of bliss, and fill all inhabitants of heaven with unbounded and everlasting delight?'

Section 5. If Christ is truly precious to us—we shall sincerely desire his presence, and long to enjoy intimate communion with him.

It is well known, that this is the tendency of a sincere attachment, whoever is the object of it. Hence we desire to have the company of our dear friends and relations. Absence is one of the sharpest pains of love. Our blessed Redeemer has said, "He who loves me shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." If he is precious unto us, we shall earnestly desire the fulfillment of that promise, that he would make known unto us more and more—of the loveliness of his person, and of his special kindness and love to our souls. Distance

from him, the suspension of his favor, or the hidings of his face—will give us pain.

We shall often say, 'Lord, when will you come unto me, according to your promise? Let me find you graciously near, assuring my soul that I am yours, and that you are mine forever. Fill my heart with those heavenly comforts and holy joys—which you bestow on those who love you. I cannot bear this absence from you. Come, Lord Jesus, dwell in my heart by faith, that I being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth and length, the depth and height of your love; and to know your love which passes knowledge; that I may be filled with all the fullness of God. When the eyes of men are opened to see their sin, their danger by it, and the insufficiency of their own works to justify and save them—no object is so desirable to them as the Lord Jesus Christ. The riches, the honors, and the pleasures of the world—are but vanity and emptiness to them, in comparison with him. He is therefore said to be the "desire of all nations," because men in all nations under heaven, who are made sensible of their need of him, uniformly desire acquaintance with him, and a saving interest in him above everything else. Their desires, like so many needles touched by the loadstone, have all a tendency to be attracted to him as their center. They all meet in him—as the same blessed object. Were those who are illuminated by his Spirit and grace, collected together from the remotest corners of the earth, it would be found, on the strictest examination, that their desires have all the same tendency. Now, that which is the object of our ardent desire—is precious in our estimation. To win our hearts, the divine Redeemer died. To draw men unto himself, was the end he had in view when he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth—will draw all men unto me." Surely such a Savior is worthy of our warmest desires, and our most fervent love. All others are in such a state of blindness and infatuation with the world, as to see no beauty or excellency in Jesus, that they should desire him. But to those who believe—he is so precious that the desire of their souls is to him, and to the remembrance of him. But as bread and water are made necessary and desirable by hunger and thirst—so this desire after Christ springs from a sense of need.

'Come down from on high, O Sovereign of my heart; take possession of me for yourself. Inspire me with that holy flame of spiritual affection, that my soul may offer up the perpetual incense of holy love and desire towards you.

'O may all the alluring trifles and vain delights of this world stand aloof from my heart; for I have devoted it to my Redeemer for a habitation. Keep your distance, O captivating delusions, from the gates of my heart, where he only should dwell. There may he reign alone, over all my desires forever!

'I seek after him in his public ordinances; I search for him daily in my retired devotions; I there give my soul a greater latitude, where no eye beholds me, where no ear can hearken to my vows. There I tell him all my heart—in secret groans and cries. He knows what my sighs mean, and what are my fears, and my painful sorrows. There I blush before him—for my secret sins, and pour out the tear of penitential sorrow. There I utter my bitter complaints, of the disorderly passions I daily feel within me; I lament over the vanity of my thoughts, and spread before his eyes—all my soul's sores and diseases. I lay myself low in the dust at his feet, and tell him with humble confusion of face—how much I have done to dishonor him, how unworthy I am of his notice, and yet how I long for communion with him.

'O when shall these days of sin and temptation, these tedious seasons of absence and distance from my God and Savior, have an end? I breathe out from time to time, the most earnest desires after him, and after the endearing sensations of his love. My soul thirsts for God, the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?' My passions fly to seek their King, And send their groans abroad;

They beat the air with heavy wing, And mourn an absent God.

Round the creation wild I rove, And search the globe in vain;

There's nothing here that's worth my love, Til he returns again.

Pensive I climb the sacred hills, And near him vent my woes;

Yet his sweet face he still conceals, And still my passion grows.

How long shall my poor fainting soul Seek you, my Lord, in vain?

Reveal your love, my fears control, And ease me of my pain. Your presence, gracious Lord, can cheer This dungeon where I dwell;

'Tis paradise when you are here; When you are gone, 'tis hell.

Immortal joys your smiles impart;

Heaven dawns in every ray;

One glimpse of you will ease my heart, And turn my night to day!

Section 6. If Christ is truly precious to us—we shall be concerned that others may know and love him.

It is the nature of love—to wish well to the beloved object; and, if possible, to do good to him who has a place in our hearts. Now, since the blessed Redeemer can receive no good from us—all we can do is to be heartily concerned for the manifestation of his excellencies and honors among men. And this concern we shall surely feel—if our hearts are right in his sight. The apostle Paul, in whom every part of the Christian character was exemplified to a proper degree, expressed a most earnest solicitude for the conversion and salvation of the Jews. On this subject we find him declaring the sentiments and feelings of his heart, in the following solemn and moving manner: "I say the truth in Christ, I am not lying; my conscience also bears me witness in the Holy Spirit. That I have great heaviness, and continual sorrow in my heart—for I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." The sense of these last words appear to be this, 'As Christ subjected himself to the curse, that he might deliver us from it, I think I could be content to be made an anathema after his example, and be like him exposed to all the execration of an enraged people, and even to the infamous and accursed death of crucifixion, if my brethren and kinsmen according to the flesh might hereby be delivered from their blindness, unbelief and impenitence, and be partakers of the blessings of the Redeemer's kingdom.' This is true Christian heroism, in its highest purity and excellence.

While we talk of our regard for the Redeemer, what sentiments of compassion do we feel for those who are strangers to him? Are we willing to submit to the most pressing difficulties, and do we

think nothing too great to be done, too great to be borne—if their conversion and salvation might thereby be promoted?

Among the heathens, we find whole nations, who trained up their children in a regard for the public good, as the highest object and the noblest end of all their cares. We meet with heroes among them, who eternalized their names by their zeal for the welfare of their fellow-citizens. We find Phocion, who, in taking that poison which was presented to him by his cruel persecutors, exhorted his son to take the same poisons—because he owed more to his country than to his father. Aristides, who, in going out to a banishment to which he was unjustly condemned, lifted up his eyes to heaven, and prayed, that the Athenians might never have cause to remember the cruelties they had exercised on him. Codrus, who, having learned that the oracle had promised victory to the people whose prince should perish in war, devoted himself to death. It would be easy to extend the list, by mentioning Camillus, Sertorius, Paulus Aemilius, and others, famous in the page of ancient history, for this virtue. But the apostle of the Gentiles excelled them all, as far as the gospel he preached surpasses the dictates of the heathen moralists.

"Brethren," says he, to the converts at Rome, "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." They were in a state of impenitence and unbelief; they made light of Christ, and persecuted his followers, having a zeal for God—but not according to knowledge. The apostle longed after them all in the affections of Jesus Christ. The steady belief in God's secret purposes, was no check upon his ardor for their conversion. He sought it of him, who alone could effect it; he sought it with the greatest earnestness and constancy. He knew their destruction was inevitable, if they continued in unbelief and impenitence. The salvation of souls appeared to him in all its magnitude, as that which had employed the counsels of Jehovah from eternity; that which the Son of God spent his life and shed his blood to procure; and that which is of infinite importance to sinners themselves. Hence arose the ardor of his mind, in this noble cause.

He to whom Jesus is precious, who has himself experienced the power and sweetness of his saving love—will be ready to say to others, with the Psalmist, "O taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed are all who trust in him." Such a one will use his endeavors to bring his fellow-sinners under the means of grace. He will reveal his love to them, and compassion for them—by seasonable hints, exhortations and entreaties. He will earnestly pray that the Word which they hear may savingly profit them. He will be careful to lay no stumbling-block before them. He will try to convince them of their danger, and to inform them where their only help lies. He will strive to recommend the good cause, and to win their souls to make choice of it, by the meekness of wisdom, the labor of love, and the attractive power of a humble and holy life.

Section 7. If Christ is truly precious to us—we shall be grieved when he is dishonored. The sins of those who pretended some regard for the gospel—but lived not under the influence of its sanctifying truths, excited the sorrow of the apostle Paul, because the author of that gospel was precious to him. "Of these," says he to the Philippians, "I have told you often, and now tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ!" He could not think of them, though they were enemies, without weeping, nor make mention of them in his letter, without bedewing the page with tears.

It is the burden of a Christian's heart, that the commands of him who made the world, who gave being to all things, and who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, should be

trampled upon, and disregarded by men in general; and more especially, that this should be the case with any who profess to hope for salvation by him. A pious man is more particularly grieved for the sins of that city, town, congregation, or family—to which he belongs. When Lot sojourned among the Sodomites, "that righteous man, dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day on account of their unlawful deeds." And the prophet Jeremiah most pathetically wished that his head were waters, and his eyes fountains of tears—that he might weep day and night, for the sins, and consequent calamities of his countrymen. In another place he thus addresses them, "But if you will not hear—my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, my eyes shall sorely weep, and run down with tears." A true Christian is a child of God; and it must grieve and distress him to see his heavenly Father so greatly offended and dishonored as he is by many. He is a disciple of Jesus, and loves his Divine Master; hence he cannot but be distressed that men should make light of him, of his gospel, his authority and commands. He is fully persuaded that those who sin against him—wrong their own souls; and that all who hate him—love death, and that which will issue in their own destruction. Under such considerations as these, the Psalmist broke out in the following strong expressions, "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because men keep not your law." The stain of sin can only be washed away by blood; this intimates that sin deserves death. It is not the length of time employed in committing sin, which ought to decide as to the degree or the duration of its punishment; but the nature and the atrociousness of the offence.

Sin is a slighting every instance of God's goodness, with which we are surrounded. The earth which sustains us, the sun which enlightens us, the food which nourishes us, and, in short, all the creatures designed to our use—are so many motives to obedience, and consequently are so many aggravations of our guilt and ingratitude, in rebelling against so good and gracious a God. But let us consider the greatness of that Being, against whom sin is committed. Approach to his throne; his eyes are as a flaming fire; the majesty of his glory fills heaven and earth. Regard the celestial multitudes, who are the ministers of his will. And especially consider, that this great God is united to mortal flesh, to the end that he might suffer for us—all that which the fury of men, all that which the rage of Devils could imagine to be most rigorous. Now think what the nature of sin is, as committed against such a Being. To hate such a God, to despise such a Savior, to trample on his laws, to disregard his gospel, and to be unawed by his threatenings—is deserving of the deepest hell. That burning lake, that eternal misery, with its unfathomable deeps, Devils with their rage, hell with its horrors—have nothing in them, which seems too severe for rebels capable of such astonishing ingratitude!

Charles the Ninth, king of France, sent a message to the Prince of Conde, a zealous Christian, and gave him three things to choose—to go to mass, or to be put to death, or to suffer banishment for life. The Prince nobly answered, 'The first I will never choose, God helping me, for I abhor the idolatry of the mass; but for the two other, I leave it to the choice of the king, to do as he pleases. For there is more evil in the least sin, than in the greatest misery.'

I cannot forbear observing, that there are many causes for this grief at the present day; and if the Redeemer is indeed precious to us, our hearts must be affected while we are witnesses to the dishonor done to him by multitudes about us. If we look into the professing world, we shall find many, who, on account of their scandalous lives, may justly be denominated the enemies of the cross of Christ. They profess to know him, and to believe in him—but in works they deny him.

Many openly oppose the important doctrines of his proper deity; of his atonement for sin; of the work of his blessed Spirit on the hearts of men, in bringing them near to God; and of justification and salvation by his death. This cannot but give pain to those who, with the apostle Paul, are fully persuaded that another foundation for the hope of sinners, no man can lay, than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ; who believe, according to the Scriptures, that there is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved. It appears to them, that an opposition to these leading truths of the gospel carries in it an attempt to rob the Redeemer of his glory, to take the crown from his head, and to overthrow that whole system of evangelical truth which is held forth in the New Testament: since the leading design of this system is, "That we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, we might have life through his name."

There are others again, who profess to believe the truth, and yet show little or no regard to it, in a practical way. The power of godliness is, in many places, manifestly on the decline. Iniquity abounds, and the love of many has waxed cold. That love which is the very bond of perfectness, is rarely to be found; few indeed there are—who love one another fervently with a pure heart. Most seem to content themselves with mere speculations in religion, and that dead faith which the Word of God condemns, as unprofitable. While in others, the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts for other things choke the Word which they hear, so that it becomes unfruitful. Instead of having their hearts in heaven, they mind earthly things, and seem to be intent on gaining the world—though they lose their own souls in the vain pursuit! Others turn aside from the holy commandment which was delivered unto them, and fall into such scandalous practices as give great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.

He who loves the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, or, in other words, he to whom the divine Redeemer is precious, must be greatly distressed to think that he should be thus wounded in the house of his professed friends.

If we look into the world at large, we find everything to shock and disquiet a serious mind. The whole world, says the apostle John— lies, is buried or entombed, in wickedness! The abominable sin of drunkenness is practiced everywhere, by those whose god is their belly, and who glory in their own shame. The unclean spirit seems to have full possession of others, who live in the detestable, infatuating, and ruinous vice of lewdness, and are hurried on by their ungovernable passions, from bad to worse, from one degree of wickedness to another. The mouths of many are full of cursing and bitterness; their common discourse is interlarded with profaneness and blasphemy. The hearts of those who fear God are wounded, and their ears are stunned by multitudes, who, on all occasions, take His holy and sacred name in vain, and call for damnation on their own souls! Our streets, our roads, and all our public places are crowded with these diabolical monsters in the shape of men, who seem to have studied the language of the bottomless pit! "They blaspheme You; Your enemies take Your name in vain." Psalms 139:20. "Do not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, because the Lord will punish anyone who takes His name in vain." Exodus 20:7 The profanation of the Lord's day is grown to an amazing height. Nothing tends more to the increase of vice and wickedness. It is an inlet to sin of every kind. What sense of God and of duty is likely to be kept up, when divine worship is wholly neglected, and that day is entirely devoted to sensual gratification in the service of sin and Satan—which ought to be employed in acts of piety? The profanation of the Sabbath has, in many instances, been a leading step to an infamous end. The man to whom Jesus is precious, must be disquieted on account of

these and many other abominations, which are constantly practiced in the world. What proof do we give of regard to his law, his name, or his honor—if we are unmoved by these things? "I beheld transgressors, and was grieved, because they kept not your law." Doddridge's moving verses on these words of the pious Psalmist shall close this section.

Arise, my tenderest thoughts, arise; To torrents melt my streaming eyes: And you, my heart, with anguish feel Those evils which you can not heal.

See human nature sunk in shame;

See scandals poured on Jesus' name; The Father wounded through the Son; The world abused; the soul undone.

See the short course of vain delight Closing in everlasting night; In flames which no abatement know, Though briny tears forever flow. My God! I feel the mournful scene; My affections yearn o'er dying men And fain my pity would reclaim, And snatch the fire-brands from the flame. But feeble my compassion proves, And can but weep where most it loves; Your own all-saving arm employ, And turn these drops of grief to joy.

Section 8. If Christ is truly precious to us—we shall be ready to deny ourselves for him.

"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. Luke 9:23. If we judge of our regard for Jesus merely by the fervency and frequency of our emotions towards him, we shall, at some seasons, perhaps, have painful suspicions respecting our sincerity. He himself has been pleased to give us a safe and proper rule of judgment in this case: "If you love me, keep my commandments. He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me." His Word and will have a prevailing, governing influence on the hearts and lives of those to whom he is precious. A steady desire and endeavor to avoid those things which are displeasing in his sight—is a practical proof that he is dear to us. To deny ourselves is—to give up our own supposed wisdom, that we may be entirely under the guidance of God; to resign our own wills that we may be subject to his will; and to yield our passions to his government. To deny ourselves is—to forego everything sinful to which self is inclined; to practice every good thing to which self is averse; and to be ready to give up everything dear to ourselves at the call of God—as our ease, our friends, our goods, our health, or even our life. It is a disowning, or renouncing ourselves for Christ; making ourselves nothing—that he may be all. This cannot be done unless he is precious to us, or, which is the same thing, unless he is the object of our supreme affection. But if this is the case, we shall give up ourselves, with all that we have, to him, without making any reserve. We shall, on a deliberate counting of the cost, choose the religion of Jesus, with all that appertains to it; choose it as attended with all its difficulties. So Moses chose to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin which are but for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. This is what our Lord means by the strong figurative expressions of plucking out the right eye, and cutting off the right hand; that is, parting with everything dear to us, when it stands in competition with him, or is opposed to his service or his honor. For he justly reminds us, that "no man can serve two masters; either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other." He constantly teaches us the necessity of preferring him and his interest and service—to the dearest objects on earth. "For he who loves father or mother, son or daughter more than me, is

not worthy of me. Whoever doesn't take up his cross and follow me—is not worthy of me." When matters come to such a crisis, that a man must either break with his nearest and dearest relations and friends—or break with Christ—he who prefers their favor and friendship to Christ's, and will not give up temporal endearments for his sake—is not worthy to be owned as one of his real disciples, nor can he partake of the spiritual and eternal blessings which belong to such. He who prefers his own ease and safety in this world—to the truths and the service of Christ, cannot be justly deemed one who sincerely loves him, or one to whom he is precious. The same lesson of instruction is taught us by the parable of the treasure hidden in a field, which, when a man has found it—he goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field. And likewise by that of a merchant-man, seeking fine pearls, who having found one pearl of great price—he goes and parts with all, that he may possess that pearl. He is willing to give up the riches, the honors and pleasures of this world—for the enjoyment of that inestimable treasure which he has discovered. To have a heart to forsake all for Christ, is the same thing, in effect, as actually doing it—so far as there is occasion, and so far as we are put to the trial. What our Lord speaks of "selling all that we have," is to be understood of a disposition of mind to be ready and prepared to do it, if it be necessary. Many of the primitive Christians showed their regard for the Savior and his followers, by actually doing this, though their example is no farther binding upon us, than as it relates to that disposition of mind which all the followers of Jesus should possess, namely—a readiness to part with all for his sake, whenever there is a proper call to it.

Self-denial, in respect to things in themselves sinful, should be universal, otherwise we do not give proper evidence of the sincerity of our love for Christ. Many go very far in a profession of religion, and yet live in the habitual indulgence of some sin, either great or small, secret or open. Judas made so fair a show, that all the other disciples questioned their own sincerity, rather than his. Yet Judas was covetous! Herod was a hearer of John the Baptist, nay, heard him gladly, and did many things which John recommended; yet Herod was resolved to live in incest. It is the same in many other cases. O reader, examine yourself, and beware of splitting upon this rock. If your heart is not sound in the statutes of Heaven, you are in danger of being put to shame another day.

Let us labor then, to mortify corrupt affections, and not willfully indulge ourselves in any sinful habit, custom, or practice. Without habitually resigning ourselves to God, and laboring to subdue sinful passions and inclinations, supposing we are real Christians, we cannot expect our souls to prosper in the use of the means of grace. If Agag is spared, from whatever motive, our sacrifices, like those of Saul, will neither be acceptable to God, nor profitable to ourselves.

Satan and sin unite their art To keep me from my Lord:

Dear Savior, guard my trembling heart, And guide me by your Word. The path to your divine abode Through a wide desert lies; A thousand snares beset the road, A thousand dangers rise!

Whenever the tempting foe alarms, Or spreads the fatal snare, I'll fly to my Redeemer's arms, For safety must be there!

Dear Lord, obedient to your call, I would the world resign, Deny myself, give up my all, And be forever thine!

Section 9. If Christ is truly precious to us—we shall be distressed that we are not more conformed to his blessed image and holy will. In proportion as he is precious to us, will be our aversion to sin

and all unholiness. In the undertakings, the sufferings, and the death of our Redeemer for us—we have such a representation of the evil of sin, and of the dreadful punishment due to it, as must tend to inspire our hearts with holy hatred against it.

We see in the wounds, the sorrows, and the crucifixion of the Savior—the dreadful malignity of sin. We see how hateful it is to God, since he punished it so severely in his beloved Son, when in our place, he bore it in his own body on the tree. We read the nature of sin—in characters of blood—on the cross of Christ. All the labored declamations of moralists on the intrinsic deformity of vice, can never represent it in such proper colors as it is seen here.

Those who have a due sense of the spirituality of the divine law, and who strictly examine their own hearts and lives by that perfect rule of righteousness, will ever see abundant reason for humiliation and self abasement before God. From sincere love to Jesus Christ, will arise—hatred of those things which are contrary to his will, and which oppose and hinder us in our endeavors after conformity to him. The vain imaginations of our own evil hearts—will be matter of grief and sorrow to us, "I hate vain thoughts—but I love your law." The Christian is grieved and distressed that his thoughts and affections are so much taken up concerning the affairs of the present life, and that he should be so insensible and unmoved at many times, in respect to eternal realities; that his heart should be so hard, so dull and unaffected about matters of infinite importance. He mourns to think that his love to God is so cold, that his desires after him are so languid, that his zeal for him is so low, and his gratitude for favors received, is so small. His heart is pained within him—that he should feel himself so insensible and unmoved under the sound of the gospel. That he should sit and hear of the astonishing love of God in Christ Jesus, and of His giving his beloved Son to bleed and die for his own sins—without being melted into penitence, or inspiring him with love and zeal for Jesus. His heart is pained—that he should be so unaffected with the amazing kindness and compassion of Jesus Christ, manifested in His dying agonies, His bloody sweat, His ignominious cross, His loud and bitter cries, His pierced side, and bleeding heart—and all this for His bitter enemies—to deliver them from deserved and eternal destruction, and to bring them to the possession of everlasting glory and felicity!

'Surely,' says he, 'if there is a call for the exercise of fervent affections anywhere—it is here at the foot of the cross! O how disquieted I am—to think that I should be so stupid and insensible, even when I could wish my heart to be most ravished! Can anything be presented to my thoughts more important, more wonderful, or more interesting? And yet how superficial and ineffectual, at some times—are the impressions which are made upon my mind by these views!

"Blessed Jesus! how cold, how feeble, how languid is my love to You—who is altogether lovely! Alas! how readily are my fluctuating passions captivated by worldly things! O that I might feel the force of that motive—of loving You, who has first loved me! May Your love, O precious Savior, constrain me, and attach me intimately to Yourself—when I consider what you have done for me! Do, by a gentle but powerful influence—attract my desires. Though my eyes have never seen Your lovely face, though no accent of your voice has reached my ear—yet you can make yourself more intimate to my soul, than any of the objects of sense. O, let me not live so estranged from You! Warm my cold, and frozen heart—and kindle in my bosom, a flame of holy fervor towards you.

Keep me, O my God, in every hour of temptation. Unsupported by your preventing hand—I fall. But, armed with your protection, I shall stand fast, be strong, and victorious. O strengthen me to

war a good warfare, that at length I may be overcome, through Him who loved me. Be at my right hand to save me, lest the enemy should triumph over me, and I be made the reproach of the foolish. I dread the thought of being left to myself! In the hour of temptation I have a thousand times experienced my own weakness and instability. Every divine impression has seemed to be obliterated. The celestial scenes which before engaged my attention have disappeared; paradise, and the glories of heaven, have fled like an airy vision; and the most important truths of Christianity have been concealed from my view—as if I had never known them! Lord, what is man! My soul is humbled within me, because of my foolishness." At some seasons, the believer's mind is so oppressed with a sense of his own vileness—that he is ready to sink into despondency and dejection. In his retired moments he pours out his complaints in such language as this: 'The clogs of guilt, and the clouds of darkness hang heavy on my soul. What language can express the depth of my distress on account of sin! The spirit of a man may sustain his infirmities; but a wounded spirit—who can bear? A sense of the vilest ingratitude to the best of Beings, stings my heart, and deprives me of repose. All is gloomy within; all is discouragement without. What returns have I made for favors received? I cannot bear the sight of my own vileness. I abhor myself, and repent as in dust and ashes. The several periods of my life have been marked with repeated instances of ingratitude to him, who is the giver of every good and perfect gift, whom I desire to love, and to obey with my whole heart. My unstable soul has been perpetually departing from God, inclining to folly, and verging towards that which is evil. This, this is wretchedness indeed! For this I condemn myself almost without ceasing. My spirits droop, my heart desponds, my soul is disquieted within me. Lord, be merciful to me, pardon my iniquity—for it is great!' Yet amidst these gloomy, these self-condemning thoughts, light sometimes breaks in upon the mind, and then The humble Christian feels within A spring of consolation from above, And secret cordials, which repair his strength, Raise and uphold his fainting, languid heart.

Among the many considerations which excite the believer's sorrow for the evil propensities of his mind, and the sins of his life—is that of the Redeemer's death for his offences. To think of the love of Jesus to my poor soul, manifested in his sorrows, his sufferings, his agonies, and the shedding of his precious blood—pierces my heart, and makes me loathe myself in my own sight. While I look to him upon the cross whom I have pierced by my offences, surely I ought to mourn, and be in bitterness, as one who mourns for his first-born. Shall not I shed tears of grief for those sins, for which my Redeemer shed his precious blood!

It is true, the constitutions of men are different, some have tears at command, and others can scarcely weep on any occasion. But the lack of tears, should in this case, be made up by inward grief. Yet I must beg permission to say, that if men can shed tears on lighter occasions (and all the causes of sorrow are light—in comparison with this) but never shed a tear on account of their ingratitude to a dying Savior, it seems to indicate a lack of love to him, and that they have not a just sense of the evil and malignity of sin. The penitent woman, mentioned in the gospel, sat at the feet of Jesus weeping; she washed his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head.

'Break, break, O my stony heart! And you my eyes—why are you not fountains of tears, that I might weep day and night? Lord, I abhor myself on account of the defilement which cleaves unto me. Behold I am vile, I will lay my hand upon my mouth, and put my face in the dust! I have experienced a thousand proofs of your goodness, the remembrance of which fills me with shame,

because of my ingratitude. I cannot in any instance charge you with severity. Your laws are not rigorous or grievous—but holy, just, and good. And yet I have frequently violated the sacred rules which my heart approves. But the height of my folly lies in having so often sinned against infinite goodness and love. I have abused your kindness, and affronted your clemency. O Lord, I beseech you, pardon my iniquity, for it is great.'

Such exercises of mind as these, strongly indicate the sincerity of our love for the divine Savior.

Alas! how wide my spirit flies, And wanders from her God! My soul forgets her heavenly prize, And treads the downward road.

How my wild passions rage within, Nor your commands obey; And flesh and sense enslaved to sin, Draw my best thoughts away. Shall creatures of a meaner frame Pay all their dues to thee;

Creatures which never knew your name, Nor ever loved like me?

Great God! create my soul anew, Conform my heart to thine;

Melt down my will, and let it flow, And take the mold divine!

Then shall my feet no more depart, No more my senses rove;

Devotion shall be all my heart, And all my passions love!

Section 10. If Christ is truly precious to us—we shall adhere to him in all conditions.

We shall persevere in his ways and service, amidst all the various trials with which we may be exercised. If people who make a profession of religion live any considerable time in this world of affliction and trouble—they must meet with many trials of their sincerity and steadfastness. It evidently appears from the sacred Scriptures, that the all-wise God designedly brings his children into a state of trial and difficulty for their good; and particularly that it may be made manifest to themselves and others, that they belong to him, by their being enabled to endure this course of severe discipline, without fainting in the day of adversity.

After the patriarch Abraham had stood his ground amidst many other sharp exercises, it pleased God, towards the close of his life, to try him, by giving him that singular and solemn command, to take his only son Isaac, whom he loved, and to offer him up for a burnt sacrifice. Abraham fully demonstrated the sincerity and strength of his faith—by his readiness to obey this mysterious command. When the children of Israel had nothing to drink but the bitter waters of Marah, it is said that there "the Lord tested them." Their being destitute of provisions for the support of life, was to answer the same end; until at length, in their greatest extremity of distress, "the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you." He afterwards told them, that the design of their being led through the wilderness for the space of forty years—was to humble them, to test them, and to know what was in their hearts, whether they would keep his commandments or not. The wilderness was great and terrible, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought; where there was no water to supply them—but what was "brought out of the flinty rock." The Lord thus dealt with them, not from a lack of regard to them—but as he repeatedly declared, for the purpose of trying them, that "he might do them good in their latter end. For the Lord your God tests you—to know whether you love him with all your heart, and with all your soul." When they were

settled in the land of promise, the Lord said to them, "I will not henceforth drive out the nations which Joshua left when he died, that through them I may test Israel, whether they will keep the way of the Lord, to walk therein—or not." Some such method as this God is pleased to take with his spiritual Israel in all ages.

We have a very singular and instructive instance of the end and use of adversity—in the case of Job. That holy man was severely tried; yet, in the depth of his calamity, we hear him say, "My foot has held his steps; his way have I kept, and not declined; neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips. I have esteemed the Words of his mouth more than my necessary food. Though he slays me—yet will I trust in him. He knows the way that I take; when he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold."

Now, the man is blessed, who endures temptation; the outcome will be glorious; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life. We are therefore admonished not to think it strange, concerning the fiery trial which is to try us, as though some strange thing happened unto us. By our steady adherence to Christ and his cause, in the midst of all—we have the fairest opportunity given us, of proving how precious he is to our souls.

True Christians have such views of the transcendent excellency of the Redeemer, that they are powerfully drawn after him, and attached to him—in all conditions of life into which they may be brought. They see him as worthy to be followed, though they should be called to forsake all for him, and to endure the severest persecutions for his sake. Others, in time of temptation, fall away. But true Christians endure the storm, for the love which they bear to his name. Through the views which they have of his superlative amiableness and excellency—they are thoroughly disposed to be subject to him, and engaged to labor with earnestness and activity in his service, amidst all the difficulties, trials, and troubles which they may meet with in so doing. It is the discovery of his divine excellency, which makes them adhere to him; for this so deeply impresses their minds, that they cannot forget or forsake him. They will follow him wherever he goes, and the solicitations and the persecutions of men, and the guile and malice of Satan—are employed in vain, to draw them away from him.

Some "have had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yes, moreover, of bonds and imprisonments. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheep skins, and goat skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy; they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." Yet all could not wean their hearts from Jesus, nor extinguish their love to him! They were enabled to maintain their attachment to him in the midst of all—because he was precious to their souls!

Section 11. If Christ is precious unto us—we are concerned to make his glory the end and aim of all our actions. Our blessed Lord died—that those who live by his death should not live unto themselves, making their own honor, ease, or pleasure—the end of their living in this world; but that they should devote their lives to the service, the interest, and the glory of their great Lord and Savior, who died in their place, to take away their sins by the sacrifice of himself, and who rose again for their justification.

We have a choice example of this, in the apostle Paul. When a prisoner at Rome, he wrote to the brethren at Philippi, to establish them in the truth which they had received, and to exhort them not to be shaken in mind by the persecutions which he endured; for he was persuaded these would, in the outcome, be for the furtherance of the gospel. "I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death." He then adds, "For to me to live is Christ—and to die is gain." As if he had said, 'I have expressed my hope that Christ shall be glorified in me, whether I die or live, and in this hope I am encouraged, because he is the supreme end of my life. I value life only as it may be employed to the purpose of his honor. The interest and the glory of my Redeemer are the great ends I pursue, with unabating ardor and delight; that in publishing his blessed gospel, and suffering for his sake, I may gain over souls to him, and so promote his honor in the world.' As the life of a Christian is derived from Christ, so it is directed to him. It is most certain, that, when he is actuated by the noble principles which the gospel inspires—that the honor of his Savior's name, and the advancement of religion, lie nearest his heart. And this seems to be the special import of the words above recited, from the connection in which they stand, "To me to live is Christ;" —that is, 'he is all and in all to me; I live only for him.' The whole of the apostle's life serves to illustrate this declaration. In the midst of shame, hunger, nakedness, chains, and imprisonment, he was happy if his Lord and Master might be honored thereby. He did not count his life dear unto himself, so that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. When his friends endeavored to dissuade him from going to Jerusalem, because of the dangers to which he would be exposed in that city, he said, "Why all this weeping? You are breaking my heart! For I am ready not only to be jailed at Jerusalem but also to die for the sake of the Lord Jesus!" This heavenly man lived and breathed only for the honor of the Redeemer, and for the advancement of his kingdom in the world. The Jews hated him to the point of rage and madness. The Gentiles threatened him, sought his life, and persecuted him everywhere. When at Rome, in the hands of Nero, as in the paws of a raging lion, he was tranquil and serene; concerned for nothing so much as the honor of Christ. Whence was that calmness of mind which he invariably manifested on such occasions? Was his heart made of iron or steel? Was he insensible to the troubles which agitate other men? No—he was no stoic. His soul was all tenderness and sensibility. But a supreme regard to Christ carried him above all. The Savior's love constrained him. Jesus was precious unto him. Where his honor was in question, Paul would neither be influenced by the desire of life, nor the dread of death. A regard for the glory of his Divine Master, overcame all. Noble spirit! This is Christian heroism in all its sublimity; infinitely superior to the brutal ferocity of your Alexanders and your Caesars. Their only aim was to aggrandize themselves, though this should be done by cruelty and oppression. The highest wish of this blessed apostle—was to glorify the Redeemer, in promoting the welfare, the liberty and happiness of those whom he died to save. But it is not enough to admire so fine an example. We ought in our inferior stations, so far as we are able—to imitate it. We know who has repeatedly told us—that unless we prefer him to all that is dear to us in this world—we cannot be his disciples. The steady and reigning design of our souls should be—that we may live to Christ, and make his honor the end of all our actions. We should count our services, our exertions, our labors, and even our sufferings delightful, if this end may be any way promoted by them. All we possess, should be consecrated to him who gave himself for us. The members of our bodies, and the faculties of our souls should be employed for him. Our tongues should sing his praises, our

ears should hearken to his voice, our eyes should review his wonderful works, our feet should run in his ways, and our hands should be employed in the execution of everything in our power, which is pleasing in his sight. In all places, in all companies, in every undertaking, civil or religious, it should be our aim to glorify him. The general rule laid down by the apostle Paul, should be always kept in remembrance, "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do—do all to the glory of God!" And in another place, he speaks much to the same purpose, "Whatever you do, in word or deed—do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by him."

We should never forget that we are not our own—but are bought with a price, for this very end—that we should glorify God with our bodies, and with our spirits which are his. All the operations of his grace upon us are for the same purpose—that we should show forth the virtues and the praise of him who has called us out of darkness into the marvelous light. This will be our delightful employment through the revolutions of a blissful eternity. That Jesus who is precious to us has said, "If any man serves me—him will my Father honor;" and surely, those who expect to be glorified with him in heaven, should make it their business, their aim, and their constant endeavor—to glorify him upon earth. To present our bodies, together with our souls to him, a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable in his sight—is a reasonable service.

It grieves me, Lord, it grieves me sore, That I have lived to you no more, And wasted half my days;
My inward powers shall burn and flame With glowing zeal for your great name, I would not speak—but for my God, Nor move—but to his praise.

Section 12. If Christ is truly precious to us—we shall long to be with him.

We shall not only entertain joyful hopes of future felicity—but we shall live in expectation of the promised inheritance. We shall feel, at certain seasons, ardent desires of seeing Him upon his throne of glory—to whose humiliation, agonies and death, we are indebted for all our salvation. We shall wish to join the happy society who, without ceasing, celebrate his praise, crying, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing! For he has redeemed us to God by his blood!" The weather-beaten traveler longs to be at home—that he may enjoy the company of those who are most dear to him. The mariner, after having been exposed to many storms and tempests, in a long and dangerous voyage—longs to reach the port of rest. The desired haven is much in his thoughts, and the nearer he approaches it, the more constantly and ardently he looks out for it. Just so, does the believing soul long to be in the immediate presence of him, whom having not seen he loves.

'The hearts of believers,' says the judicious Dr. Owen, 'are like the needle, which cannot rest until it comes to the point to which it is directed, by the mysterious virtue of the magnet. For being once touched by the love of Christ, and receiving from it an impression of secret, ineffable virtue—they will ever be in motion, and restless, until they come to him, and behold his glory. That soul which can be satisfied without it, and cannot be eternally satisfied with it—has neither part nor lot in the matter.'

'I have waited,' says the Christian, 'for your salvation, O Lord—when will you admit me into your holy habitation? How long shall I lie at this great distance from you?'

Whoever considers what it is—to behold the glorious face of Jesus in heaven, to contemplate a beauty which never fades, to be enriched with a beneficence which can never be exhausted, and

blessed with a love which is unmerited and infinite—will find abundant reason to say again and again, "I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far! Why is the time of my absence from him prolonged? When shall the days of my pilgrimage have an end? When shall I see the face of my Redeemer, without a veil between? Many of my friends are gone before me; and now, secure of the conquest over all their enemies, they possess the rewards of victory, and are triumphing in the regions of immortality. They survey what was once to them—the battlefield, and look back with unutterable pleasure on the dangers which are now past. Their united foes are forever vanquished, and they inherit uninterrupted tranquility and repose. Their eyes behold the King in his beauty. They are in his presence where there is fullness of joy, and at his right hand where there are pleasures for evermore! O how I long to join their blessed society. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly! This must be the language of my soul—until the solemn, the sweet moment of your appearance arrives!"

Supposing we were to have no pleasure on this side heaven—yet the prospect of being happy there, to all eternity, should teach us to be calm and patient under every calamity here, and even to bear these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, with a holy joy. There we shall see Jesus, live with him, and enjoy the glorious light of his countenance, not for a day, a month, an age—but forever. And who can tell the pleasure, peace, joy, and transport of a glorified saint, in the immediate presence of his ever-adorable and all-gracious Redeemer? When he is admitted into his glorious palace above the skies—with what surprise and astonishment must he be seized? We can conceive but very imperfectly, of the first impressions made upon him by the objects into the midst of which he finds himself transported. He there sees multitudes from all nations, countries, and languages, uniting in the admiration of infinite love, casting themselves before the throne of God, laying their crowns at his feet, and crying, from the abundance of a heart penetrated with the perfection of a Being so worthy of their homage and adoration, "Blessing, and glory, and honor to him who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever!" May we not suppose such a newly arrived inhabitant of the celestial place to say within himself, 'Is this heaven—and am I here!' The glory of heaven is described to us by a variety of figures, and metaphorical expressions. We can only judge of happiness and misery, according to what we are conversant with in the present state. But in a future state, the veils of flesh and blood shall be taken away. The darkness which now beclouds our minds will be dispelled, and all the scales of ignorance will fall from our eyes. We shall no more see as through a glass darkly—but face to face. Then we shall know what is meant by the marriage-supper of the Lamb, and by sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God. In heaven, there are angels, archangels, cherubim and seraphim, thrones, dominions, principedoms. In heaven, there are patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, myriads of saints, a great multitude which no man can number. In heaven, there are the throne of glory, the fullness of joy, the rivers of pure and everlasting delight, the pleasures which flow from God's right hand for evermore! The departing saint no sooner leaves his earthly tabernacle, than he mingles with the morning stars and sons of light. The supreme excellent God unveils himself, and allows him to gaze on his infinite beauty. That Supreme Being displays there, the bright assemblage of his adorable perfections. There is the eternal Father; there the well-beloved Son, clothed in a body like our own; and there the blessed Spirit. The Christian longs to be in heaven upon many accounts; but chiefly—that he may see and enjoy his God without interruption; next to this, that he may forever be favored with the blessed communion of saints. When he lays aside his frail garments of mortality, he is clothed with the

white robes of purity, glory, and honor. He immediately feels the force, and breathes the raptures of immortal love. The ecstatic moments, crowned with joy and ever-blooming life, now begin their everlasting round. The believing prospect of future glory—is the great persuasive to holy obedience, and constant patience under the trials of life; since nothing can be too much to do or to suffer, in the view of that blessed state. How happy is the condition of the man who waits, with firmness and steadiness, for that crown of glory—to which he has a clear and certain right! He can draw from a well-grounded hope of it—pleasures suitable to an intelligent creature, and an immortal soul! He, in the midst of so many pains, so many miseries, so many labors with which this mortal life abounds, feels in his bosom—that source of consolation which is connected with a firm expectation of eternal felicity! How is he fortified against the terrors of death! Death to him is disarmed of its sting, and the grave of its boasted victory. What can we wish, more suited to our circumstances in these regions of mortality—than to know that our Redeemer lives, and that we shall shortly live with him, where death shall be known no more! To an impenitent sinner—death appears as the messenger of God's vengeance, who comes to lead him to that tribunal where all his crimes will be examined and punished! When that dreadful moment arrives, the blandishments of the world vanish like a dream; a gathering gloom veils the face of nature, and eclipses all its beauty. No created enjoyment can cheer the sullen hours, while he stands shivering on the brink of an unknown, unfathomable eternity. These solemnities are new to him, and infinitely more dreadful than he had ever imagined. The king of terrors stands conquering before him—and draws his sable curtain round the bed of languishing. The time of our abode in this transitory world is very uncertain, and the final event of things very solemn and important. The ancient heathens, to avoid the thought of death, forbore to mention the very name of it. And as it was impossible to live upon earth without having occasion to speak of the end of life, they expressed by a paraphrase, that which they were so reluctant to name. Instead of calling it death, they termed it a submitting to destiny, a falling by the stroke of fate, a departing, and a sleeping. But to change the name of a frightful object—will not much diminish the horror of it. The two expressions last mentioned are adopted, and, at the same time, sanctified by the inspired writers. Paul speaks with holy tranquility of the time of his departure being at hand. And death is called a sleep, as it is, to a godly man, the period of his entering into rest. And it has this name given it with a peculiar respect to the resurrection, when those who sleep in the dust of the earth—shall awake, and arise, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. May I have that love for Jesus, which will render it a desirable object to depart—that I may be forever with him! This is the only way to die with comfort. May the great purposes of life be answered in me, and at length the hour of death be welcomed with cheerfulness, that I may then have nothing to do but to resign my spirit into the hands of my Savior! I shall then bid adieu to this tenement of clay, to have no farther connection with it. It requires something more than human fortitude to support the soul under the immediate views of this separation. Here the resolution of nature and the aids of reason fail. But faith can triumph over the grave, And trample on the tombs; My Jesus, my Redeemer lives, My God, my Savior comes!

Then, O my soul, your deliverance will be complete from all that now enfetters you. My bonds will fall off; I shall be perfectly free from all the snares of sense and sin, which have formerly entangled me. I shall be oppressed with no weights, held down by no clogs of guilt, weakness or affliction. My whole soul, and my body too, after the great resurrection day, will enjoy the glorious liberty of the children of God. How unspeakable will be the pleasure of having every faculty and affection at

my command, and of having the free exercise of all! When the poor prisoner has his fetters knocked off, and full liberty is given him to leave his loathsome dungeon, and breathe the free air—how great is his joy! The bird escaped from the cage, claps its wings, and with alacrity takes its aerial flight. This is a faint emblem of the joy I shall feel, when mortality shall be swallowed up of life. The language of the happy society will be in that day, "Our soul has escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler; the snare is broken, and we are escaped! They will then feel themselves free from all confinement, and no longer say, "When we would do good—evil is present with us." My soul is winged with fervent desire after the bright vision of my Savior's face, and intensely longs for her dismissal from the regions of mortality. Oh, when shall the blissful time arrive! I sigh for permission to enter the world of perfect light and love. I am still in a state of warfare; yet various as the sources of suffering are, the conflict—in which I am supported by the hope of future rest—can neither be long nor altogether painful. The great object of my expectation cannot be very far distant. A few years, a few months, nay, even a few days may bring me into that state of being, where the Fountain of everlasting light displays his glories, and where neither clouds nor darkness can ever intercept his radiant brightness! I long, with increasing desire, that my kind Father would sign my release, and speedily dismiss me from this scene of combat. When shall the storms of life be past? When shall I reach the haven where I long to be? When shall I enter the regions of perfect light and felicity, the paradise of God, where the tree of life forever blooms, and where an unbounded spring of joy, in all its glory, forever flows!

Come, blessed angel, raise my soul
To this divine abode;

Hasten—for my spirit longs to see
My Savior and my God!

04 - In What Ways is Jesus Christ Precious to Those Who Believe

Section 6. The LOVE of Christ is precious to those who believe. This is the most powerful inducement which can be proposed to us—to excite our ardent affections towards the gracious Redeemer. Neither the reasonings of philosophers, the persuasions of orators, nor even the displays of divine goodness in the works of creation and providence, will answer this end—if our hearts are armored against the attractions of a Savior's love. Can we contemplate the agonies he endured for us, and thus place ourselves under the beams of his unparalleled love, and not feel in our melting hearts some returns of affection and regard for him! The apostle John speaks very justly, when he says, "We loved him—because he first loved us." And another apostle makes use of very strong terms when treating on the same subject, "The love of Christ," says he, "constrains us." The love of Jesus was most strongly manifested in his dying for us. What can be expected to attract our love—if this does not? He himself speaks of it as that which should be efficacious in winning the hearts of men; "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me."

Those who are indifferent to the compassion of the dying Redeemer, lose the strongest motive to love and obedience. They are acting the part of the foolish Galatians, who were carried away from this glorious subject, by a kind of infatuation. "O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been evidently set forth, crucified among you." O how desirable is it to be enabled constantly to behold him by faith—as crucified for us! Surely we should never forget, that, when he might have left us to perish—such was his love, he died—that we might live, he endured the greatest agonies—that he might snatch us from the jaws of eternal destruction, and open to us the gates of everlasting peace and felicity! Well may such a Savior be precious to us! Surely those who love him most, have reason still to be grieved—that they do not love him more.

He has loved us—so as to ransom us with his blood! He ransoms us from a voluntary bondage; from the most vile and miserable captivity; a captivity from which nothing but Almighty grace could have set us free! Could we have made any pretense to merit, the case would have been different. But since we were totally unworthy, entirely helpless, wretched and undone—human vanity is forever silenced, and all boasting eternally excluded. It was the good pleasure of him who saves us—to love us freely.

It is this love of Christ for His people—which tunes the harps of heaven, and affords the glorified saints, a never-failing subject of harmony and praise! On this theme, they fix their meditations. They admire the glorious mystery of the victorious cross—and sing the wonders of redeeming love. This love is celebrated by them with peculiar praises; "And they sang a new song: 'You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God.' Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sang: 'Worthy is

the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!' Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: 'To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, forever and ever!'" Revelation 5:9-13

What is most wonderful of all, is that Jesus should show such love as this for sinful men—men who were the enemies of God. "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. When we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son. You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly." His love to them was dying love—and in this, the greatness of it most of all appears. When in his agony he sweat great drops of blood falling down to the ground—it was for enemies! The shame and spitting to which he meekly submitted, the torments inflicted on his body, and the inexpressible sorrows which overwhelmed his soul—were all endured for enemies—to save them from ruin, and to exalt them to eternal glory and felicity! It was for them, that he submitted to have the arrows of Divine vengeance spent upon him—which occasioned his bloody sweat, and his solemn outcry upon the cross, "My God, my God—why have you forsaken me!" His body was torn—and his heart was broken—for his enemies!

Probably, through violent fermentation, the crimson fluid became a mixture of blood and water, partly issuing from the pores of his body in the garden, and partly flowing from his side, when pierced by the spear; "Forthwith there came out blood and water." He endured all this for the honor of Divine justice, and to take away the dishonor which we have done to God by our sins, and so to commend or set forth his love to us, in the most striking manner possible.

Oh! for this love, let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break, And all harmonious human tongues
The Savior's praises speak!

He suffered from the hand of Divine justice—as if his sins had been infinite, though he was holy, harmless, and undefiled. The reason was, "The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Therefore he was stricken, smitten and afflicted by God." It was for our transgressions, that he was wounded; it was for our iniquities, that he was bruised. Our peace is procured by his chastisement; and our healing by his stripes. If such a Savior is not precious to us—nothing can equal our ingratitude. He died for those who spilt his blood, and who mocked him in the midst of his severest agonies, as is evident from his intercession for them; "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." O loving Savior! it is fit and right that every knee in heaven and earth should bow to you, and that every angel, and every saint should love you, and adore you forever!—O my soul, Survey the wondrous cure, And at each step let higher wonders rise.

Pardon for infinite offence! And pardon
Through means which speak its value infinite! A pardon
bought with blood! With blood divine! With blood divine of Him I made my foe!

Persisted to provoke! Though wooed and awed, Blessed and chastised, a flagrant rebel still! Nor I
alone! A rebel universe! My species up in arms!—Not one exempt!

Yet for the foulest of the foul—he dies! The gracious manifestations of his love to our souls are exceedingly precious. "There are many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift you up the light of your countenance upon us! This will put gladness into our hearts—more than the increase of corn, or wine, or oil. Your favor is life, yes, your loving-kindness is better than life itself!"

"O blessed Jesus, your love is wonderful! It is the admiration of angels, the joy and song of glorified saints. The experimental sense of it on earth, sweetens the bitterness of life, and disarms death of all its terrors! It was love which moved you to bow the heavens, to come down and sojourn on earth, to humble yourself, to take on you the form of a servant, and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. You pitied me in my lost estate. You sought and found me—when I sought you not. You spoke peace to me in the day of my distress, when the clouds of guilt and darkness hung heavy on my soul—and I was brought to the borders of despair. You have borne with all my weakness, corrected my mistakes, restored me from my wanderings, and healed my backslidings. May your loving-kindness be ever before my eyes, to induce me to walk in your truth. May it be the daily theme of my meditations, and the constant joy of my heart!"

"When I am favored with the light of your countenance, and the comfortable sense of your love—my soul is filled and satisfied. All the glittering glories of this world are then darkened, and turned into deformity. They are but broken cisterns—but you are the fountain of living waters. The streams of creature enjoyments, are shallow and deceitful as a brook—but you are the full ocean of never-failing delight and satisfaction!

"To your love I must ascribe my whole salvation; and through all the ages of a blissful eternity—I shall proclaim the wonders of redeeming love, and tell to listening angels what your love has done for my soul. Unto him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests to God—to him be glory and dominion forever and ever! Amen."

Section 7. Christ's THRONE of GRACE is precious, to those who believe.

"Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." Hebrews 4:16. The men of the world are totally ignorant of that delightful fellowship, which is carried on between Christians and their exalted and interceding Savior—what petitions they daily present before his throne, and what gracious answers they receive from him. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are ever open to their cries. Whoever else may overlook or disappoint them—he will not. When their spirits are overwhelmed within them—he knows their path. When human means and efforts fail, when everything looks dark before them, when their way seems to be shut up on every side, and they are brought to the lowest ebb—still they have welcome access to the Divine throne, where they may tell all their needs, and unbosom all their cares and sorrows, with the certain hope of obtaining mercy, and finding grace to help in the time of need.

Prayer is not only a duty—but an inestimable privilege! The condescension of God is wonderful, in bending his gracious ear to sinful worms. When the heart of a Christian is under a proper influence—he finds a greater pleasure in approaching the Divine throne, than in anything this world can afford. He obtains more light, strength, comfort and refreshment, by one hour's converse with God—than he could do by any other means! The prophet Daniel fully showed how precious the throne of grace was to him, since neither the prohibition of the king, nor the threatened horrors of the den of lions—could prevail with him to omit one opportunity of approaching it.

What an unspeakable privilege it is—to have liberty of access to God! To have his permission, nay, his invitation and command—to come boldly to his throne of grace, and to call him our Father

in Christ! Amidst surrounding dangers, snares and temptations, we may fly to him as our refuge, and lift up our hearts to him in fervent and earnest prayer. To him we may tell all our inmost cares—and open all our griefs. His ears are always attentive to our requests, and the gales of his blessed Spirit will dispel the gloom in which we are involved, and breathe internal peace and fragrance on our souls. In the exercises of private devotion, we may nourish and express all the holy affections of our souls, with the greatest freedom. We may say a thousand things to our heavenly Father in secret—which would not be proper in public devotion. We may pour out our souls before him, in the strongest and most pathetic sentiments of holy desire, and divine delight. We may tell him all the disquietudes of our consciences, the secret anguish and shame of our hearts—because of those offences which are known to him alone. We may sigh deeply, and pour out the tear of penitence into his bosom. We may tell him how intense our desires are—to experience more of his love, and to be conformed to his image. We may rejoice in his sight with divine exultation and holy triumph, in the prospect of being shortly with him in the heavenly world.

Let the favorites of an earthly prince value themselves on being permitted to hold converse with their sovereign; I would ever esteem it a privilege infinitely superior, to have free and welcome access to the King of kings!

Section 8. The DOCTRINE of Christ is precious, to those who believe. The truths of the gospel reveal a method of salvation every way honorable to God and his righteous government; and every way suitable to our necessities. The ground, the substance, and the spirit of the glad tidings sent from heaven to a lost world are, that Jesus Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures. The apostle Paul was determined, as a minister, to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified. This theme, and the truths connected with it, engrossed all his thoughts. He dwelt so much upon these subjects, that it might appear as if he knew nothing else; and as if nothing else were, comparatively speaking, worthy of his attention. When our Lord, after his resurrection, honored his disciples with his company in their journey to Emmaus, he began at Moses and all the prophets, and expounded to them in all the Scriptures—the things concerning himself. Did they hear the Divine truths he advanced with indifference? Far from it! These truths were precious to their souls, as appears from their own animated expressions; "Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and opened to us the Scriptures?" The Word of Christ in general, is precious to those who believe. As the coin of Caesar bore his image and superscription, so the Divine Word bears the image of Christ, and consequently must be dear to those who love him. They revere that sacred injunction, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, that you may be able also to admonish one another."

David, the king of Israel made while living, this public declaration, and left it, when he died, to be observed by all succeeding generations—that the Word of God was better to him than thousands of gold and silver; that it was sweeter to him than honey, and the honeycomb; and that it was his meditation all the day. If he tasted so much sweetness in the least valuable part of the Divine Word, how much richer is the feast to us in these latter days! Since the gospel is now added to the law; the Lord has put his final hand to the work, has "sealed up the sum—and rendered it full of wisdom and perfect in beauty." The divine Redeemer cannot, in this world, be seen face to face. This is the felicity of the heavenly state. But in his holy Word, as in a looking-glass, we behold his glory. The lineaments of his beauty are here drawn by a divine pencil. The Bible must consequently be a precious book, in the estimation of every Christian. This inestimable book

unfolds to us the path of peace, the way of eternal salvation. We here learn, how the guilty may be pardoned, in perfect consistency with the honor of infinite holiness. We here learn, how God can be just, and the justifier of the ungodly, who, in themselves deserve everlasting condemnation. We are indebted to this sacred volume for all the light that ever chased the glooms of doubts, or cheered the bosom of despondency; for all that gives confidence to faith, energy to hope, ardency to love, or fervor to devotion; for whatever can tranquilize the mind in life, or administer consolation at the last hour. We have here the doctrine which is according to godliness; we have here the words of everlasting life! The volume of my Father's grace Does all my grief assuage;

Here I behold my Savior's face, Almost in every page! The general design of this divine book is, to establish the soul in believing the testimony, which God has given concerning his son Jesus Christ; to direct it in doing his will, and to comfort it in all the sufferings and afflictions attendant on the present state. The sacred volume therefore insists much on faith, obedience, and patience. The first, faith—is certainly the ground-work of the other two.

Holy men of God, whose sentiments and experiences are here left upon record, have given us the most magnificent eulogies of this Word. They represent it as a source of felicity. They tell us—that it converts and restores the soul; that it gives wisdom to the simple; that it is more to be desired than the richest treasures, or the sweetest enjoyments which this world can afford; that it is adapted to instruct, to correct, to comfort, and to render the man of God perfect. They assure us, that these are not mere fancies, destitute of sense and truth; the inspired witnesses unitedly testify, that they themselves have known the power of the divine Word by their own experience; that when they have made it the subject of their attentive meditation, they have been "satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and have rejoiced in it more than those who find great spoil." To expatiate on the several doctrines contained in the Bible, and to point out the preciousness of each, is not my present design. It may suffice to say, that they all center in Christ Jesus—and are all valuable in the estimation of his people, on that account. Does this precious book speak of the love of God—the source of all good to man? It is in Christ Jesus. Does it unfold the ancient counsels of infinite wisdom and grace? They are the eternal purposes of the Father in Christ Jesus our Lord. Does it speak of redemption? It is by his blood. Does it speak of justification? It is through his righteousness. Does it speak of conversion? We are called by his grace. Does it speak of regeneration? We are quickened together with Christ. Does it speak of adoption? We are the children of God—by faith in Jesus Christ. Does it speak of perseverance? Because he lives—we shall live also. Does it speak of eternal glory? It is the gift of God—through our Lord Jesus Christ.

How divinely excellent are these sacred truths! With what sovereign efficacy do they operate upon the mind and heart, when accompanied by the agency of the blessed Spirit! How powerfully do they awaken repentance, and melt the soul into holy sorrow! In what an illustrious light do they represent the majesty and the grace of the blessed God; and how do they command our humble adoration! How do they display the wonders of his wisdom, and the riches of his mercy in Christ Jesus—to produce faith, and attract desire and love! What a blessed foundation do they lay for an infinite eternity of devout meditations, suited to every case!

These divine truths relieve the soul, under every distress; that by the patience and comfort of the Scriptures, we may have hope towards God. The believer lives on the divine variety of beneficial and transporting objects set before him in the sacred pages. Here he finds the fountains of life set

open—every stream flowing with holiness and consolation. It is his prevailing desire, that all his affections may be under the command and influence of the divine Word—that while it affords him intense delight, it may animate him to active zeal in the practice of everything which it enjoins—teaching him to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, while he looks for the blessed hope, in that world which is to come. A certain martyr, who was condemned to die for his inviolable adherence to the doctrines of Scripture, gave this expressive testimony, in his last moments, of his regard for that divine book. Being arrived at the stake, and having composed himself for suffering, he took his final leave of all below, in these affecting words, 'Farewell sun and moon! Farewell all the beauties of creation, and all the comforts of life! Farewell my honored friends! Farewell my beloved relations! And farewell you—precious book of God!'

Section 9. The PROMISES of Christ are precious, to those who believe.

These shall stand in force, though heaven and earth shall pass away. Length of time cannot diminish their efficacy, nor alter what the mouth of the Lord has spoken. The sun may fail to rise, and men expect its returning light in vain—but the promises of everlasting truth cannot be broken. "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, says the Lord who has mercy on you." The course of nature may be reversed, and all be chaos again; but the promises of God cannot fail for evermore, since he who made them is immutable, and cannot by any change deceive the hopes of those who trust in him. It is impossible that he should promise anything that it is beyond his ability to perform. He is not as a man, that he should lie, nor as the son of man that he should repent. Has he said, I will surely do you good—and shall he not do it? Has he spoken, and shall he not accomplish the thing which has gone out of his lips! Our fathers trusted in him—and were not confounded; they relied on his faithful Word—and were delivered. All the succeeding generations of his people, from the beginning of time, have placed their confidence in what he has spoken, and none could ever charge him, either with lack of compassion, or breach of truth.

"He has given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these you may be partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." They are great, as being made by the Most High God, the Possessor of heaven and earth. God's promises treat of the greatest things that language can express, or thought conceive; deliverance from sin, all its consequences; the bestowment of all grace, and of everlasting glory hereafter. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man—the things which God has prepared for those who love him." The promises are precious in their origin—the free and sovereign grace of God. The promises are precious in their nature—as they contain the most precious things. The promises are precious in their suitableness to our case, and to all our needs. The promises are precious in their efficacy upon our souls—to subdue our fears, to support our faith, to calm our disquietudes, to elevate our hopes, to afford us comfort in all our sorrows, and to transform us into the Divine likeness; for by these promises we are made partakers of the Divine nature.

Section 10. The LAWS of Christ are precious to those who believe. The laws of his mouth are better than thousands of gold and silver. To be under these divine restraints, is the sweetest liberty. A practical regard to the commands of Christ is the best evidence that he is precious to us.

It is very remarkable with what emphasis he himself speaks on this head, how much he insists upon this one article, and how often he repeats it. "If you love me—keep my commandments. If a man loves me—he will keep my words. He who loves me not, keeps not my sayings. Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit—so shall you be my disciples. You are my friends—if you do whatever I command you." A holy conformity to the Divine will, is as much the end of all that God does for his people—as fruit is the end of all that the farmer does about his field or his vineyard. Regard for Christ then is best shown—by obedience to his will. "He who has my commandments, and keeps them—he it is that loves me." We have the commands of our divine Master—but do we keep them? If you know these things—happy are you if you do them. He who is our Redeemer, is also our Lord and Governor. If we have a sincere attachment to him—we shall be subject to his authority, and take care to please him. Above all other things—we shall be afraid of displeasing and offending him. Our obedience to him will be hearty and sincere, constant and impartial. Our miscarriages will fill us with disquietude and sorrow. The genuine language of our hearts will be, "O that my ways were directed to keep your statutes! Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all your commandments." One of the disciples of Jesus says, "His commandments are not grievous;" another, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." Our regard for his laws is shown, not only in the sincerity—but in the willingness and cheerfulness of our obedience. Reluctance to his service is inexcusable; weariness and dullness in his service is shameful. Our obedience should be universal and constant. We should be steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labor is not in vain in the Lord.

We are commanded to love the Author of our being with all our mind, with all our soul, and with all our strength. To love him with all our mind—is to have the highest esteem of him, in our judgment, as the most excellent and the best of beings, and as our only all-sufficient good. To love him with all our soul—is to choose him for our eternal portion, to give up ourselves to him as our Lord and Ruler, and to receive him as our God, and our reconciled Father, according to the discoveries of his grace in Christ Jesus. And to love him with all our strength—is to worship him with holy diligence, and, according to the utmost of our capacity and power to do his will, and promote his honor in the world. The mere flashes of sudden passion, in a devout moment, without a supreme and settled esteem of God in the mind, and a careful and active obedience to his commands, are of little consequence. The hearers who received the Word, like seed which fell on stony ground, are said to receive it with joy; but their devotion and religion were only a sudden blaze, which quickly expired. They endured but for a while. On the other hand, those who receive the seed into good ground, are they, who having heard the Word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.

"Lord, let my obedience to your commands be universal; my whole being subject to your whole will, and that continually and perseveringly, even to the end of life. Let obedience have its root in my heart, that it may not wither like grass which has no deepness of earth—but be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, bringing forth fruit in due season. Let my obedience arise from a holy reverence of you, the great Lawgiver; a reverence tempered with love and gratitude. I shall then account none of your commands either grievous or unimportant—but esteem them all to be right and precious. Under the influence of the great truths I profess to believe, may the vices of my mind, and the disorders of my life be effectually subdued and corrected, that in righteousness and holiness I may walk before you, in the land of the living. Engrave your law on the fleshly tablet of

my heart, that I may love it exceedingly; then my constant study and endeavor will be to exhibit a copy of it in the various actions of my life. Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all your commandments; in keeping of them there is great reward."

Section 11. The WAYS of Christ are precious to those who believe. When we are enabled, in sincerity, to make choice of our Lord Jesus Christ, as our prophet, our priest, and our king—we feel the force of our obligations to him, we see the beauty and honor of his service, and are convinced that nothing is worthy, in any sense, to stand in competition with it. And in proportion as he is precious to us—his ways and his service will be pleasant; so that we shall do the will of God from the heart.

Those whom our Lord Jesus Christ has purified unto himself, as a people for his very own possession—are zealous for good works. They give up themselves to his service, and make it their principal business to please him, and to live to him. Their Christian course is compared to those exercises in which men exert their strength, and that with the greatest earnestness and eagerness; particularly running, wrestling, and fighting. Where love to Jesus reigns in the heart—it will induce a man to act in a manner suitable to it. Supreme love, as an excellent writer has observed, governs all the active train of human passions, and leads them, in sweet captivity, to cheerful obedience. And as the inward affections will be thus engaged towards the Redeemer, the outward powers will be employed in corresponding exercises. The way in which we are to show that Jesus is precious to us, is by walking in his truth, and fulfilling every present duty with delight. It is then that we find the ways of wisdom, to be ways of pleasantness, and all her paths to be paths of peace. Love to Jesus Christ induces us to account every duty a privilege, and to esteem the service of our Divine Master perfect freedom.

There is nothing in the ways of religion which ought to be deemed burdensome. To walk in them with fervor and spirituality of mind, and with regularity, integrity, and circumspection, has a tendency to make us calm, easy, and happy. The yoke of Christ is an easy yoke—not a galling yoke. The more we wear it, the easier and the pleasanter it is. We should esteem the worship of God as the most needful part of our daily business, and the most delightful part of our daily comforts. His laws are the dictates of the highest wisdom and goodness. It befits us to rejoice that we are under his government, and to serve him with the greatest cheerfulness. The consolations which come from Jesus, are only to be experienced in the ways of piety, and the paths of holiness. And these are no fantastic delusions—but substantial and divine delights; joys with which a stranger cannot understand. They serve to enlarge the mind, and give it a more elevated turn, while it derives its sovereign supports from the source of all excellency and perfection, and rests on nothing unworthy the dignity of an immortal soul, on nothing beneath him who is the Fountain of boundless and immortal felicity. The life of the negligent and loose professor of Christianity, seems to be a perpetual struggle to reconcile impossibilities; it is an endeavor to unite what God has forever separated: peace—and sin; unchristian practices—and Christian comforts; a quiet conscience—and a disorderly life; a heart full of the cares and concerns of the present world—and a well-grounded and cheerful expectation of the happiness of the next. An attempt to unite these is as vain, as an endeavor to put asunder what God has joined together.

If Christ is precious to us, we shall have a high value, a sincere regard for those ways in which he has promised his presence with his people. We shall be ready to say with those of ancient times,

"O Lord, we love to obey your laws; our heart's desire is to glorify your name."

Section 12. The PEOPLE of Christ are precious, to those who believe. So dear are the followers of Christ to those who believe—that they are ready and willing to treat such as brethren; to show kindness and good-will to them on all occasions; and though they are poor and despised in the world—to esteem them as the excellent in the earth, because of their conformity and relation to Christ. We make it manifest that we have a sincere affection to such, when we reveal a pitiful and tender spirit towards them in calamity, when we are ready to bear their burdens, and willing to spend part of our substance, and to suffer many inconveniences in our worldly interests, in order to promote their welfare in soul and body.

Consider the example of the apostle Paul. All his epistles abound with expressions of a pledge and overflowing affection to the followers of Christ. He expresses his ardent love to them, by calling them dearly beloved and longed for. He would have them to know the abundant love which he had towards them. He says, "We were as gentle among you as a mother feeding and caring for her own children. We cared so much for you that we were pleased to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us." The apostle John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, who was indulged with the sweetest familiarity with him, and even permitted to lean on his bosom, says more concerning love to the brethren than any other apostle. To collect all that he writes on this subject, would be to transcribe a considerable part of his epistles. His addresses to the children of God are exceedingly tender and endearing, breathing out nothing but the most fervent love. This sweet and holy affection had full possession of his heart, and the expressions of it flowed freely and abundantly from his lips and his pen. He proposes the serious inquiry, "Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him—how can the love of God be in him?" He considers love to the brethren as that by which we may know that we are passed from death unto life.

If we do not love our brethren whom we have seen—how can we love God whom we have not seen? All Christ's disciples bear his image; if the original is precious to us, we shall have some regard for the picture, however imperfect it may be in the present state. The love we are to manifest to the brethren is different, as a writer well observes, from that universal benevolence which we owe to men in general, and to the regard we have for our natural relations in particular. It is an injunction given by our Lord Jesus to his disciples in a special manner, "A new commandment I give unto you—that you love one another." Sometimes it is connected with the command to believe in Jesus; to signify unto us, that without faith in him we are incapable of loving his followers in a proper manner. "This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment." The love intended, is a love to those who know the truth—for the truth's sake, which dwells in them. It is far from being confined to any particular party or denomination of Christians, the objects of it are—all of every name, place, or nation, who give evidence of their being saints, and faithful brethren in Christ Jesus. The motive or reason enforcing this love is, the regard which the Redeemer has to his followers, "As I have loved you, see that you also love one another." To impress this injunction the more, he repeats it, "This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you." And he shows in what manner he had loved them, in the words immediately following: "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Jesus did more than this, he

laid down his life for enemies. But as he is here speaking of love to one another, as friends and brethren, he enforces his injunction by this instance of his love towards them, considered as his friends. The apostle John, taking up the idea suggested by his divine Master, says, "Hereby we perceive the love of Christ, because he laid down his life for us." He also draws the same inference from it which his Master did, with particular application to himself, and to those whom he addresses: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another—we ought (if called to it) to lay down our lives for the brethren." This is a new motive to brotherly love. A motive peculiar to the gospel; a motive which, in a special manner, respects the friends of Christ, for whom he had so high a degree of regard as to lay down his life in their stead. In the passage cited above, it is supposed, that these friends of Christ believe the great doctrine of atonement, and that, as such—they should be influenced by it to that mutual affection which is required of them, by him who ransomed them with his blood.

Obedience to this command of our adorable Savior, is the grand evidence of our being his true followers; "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples—if you have love to one another." Hence it is evident, that the love intended is not a hidden principle in the mind, which does not reveal itself in outward acts of kindness. It must mean an attachment so sincere, so fervent, as to be attended with effects which all men can see; a love which is operative and beneficial; a love in deed and in truth, producing such fruits in all the behavior of Christians towards one another, as will, in a striking and convincing manner, distinguish them from all the world besides, and mark them out to all observers, as the disciples of a living Savior. Nor is this love intended only to produce a conviction in others, that the subjects of it belong to Christ; it is also to be the evidence of the same thing in their own consciences. "We know that we have passed from death unto life—because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother, abides in death. My little children (for such you are to resemble in true simplicity of heart) let us not love in word, neither in tongue only—but in deed and truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our hearts condemn us (of being destitute of this love) God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us—then have we confidence towards God."

Obedience to this new commandment of brotherly love, is of such importance in the religion of Jesus, that it is evident from the divine Word, there is no real Christianity without it; since it is not only represented as the visible distinction between Christ's disciples and the men of the world—as the great evidence of our being born of God, and having a right knowledge of him; of his dwelling in us, and of our dwelling in him, as the apostle John shows. But it is one of the principal evidences of what is now under our immediate consideration; namely, of our regard to Christ himself, or of his being precious to us. "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is a child of God. And everyone who loves the Father loves his children, too. If we love one another, his love is perfected in us." As if it had been said, 'The objects of his love, who bear his holy image, are daily before our eyes, that we may have an opportunity of testifying our love to him, by showing kindness to them for his sake. If therefore we love one another, our love to the unseen Redeemer produces its proper effect, and is proved to be true and sincere.' Without this operative principle of brotherly affection, in vain do we pretend, either that Christ has the chief place in our hearts, or that we are savingly interested in his love to us. This is that love concerning which the apostle Paul writes so largely to the Corinthian church. He shows its excellence above the most useful and extraordinary

gifts of the Spirit, and declares, that though a man, who is destitute of it, should give all his goods to feed the poor, and his body to be burned—that it would profit him nothing. He describes this love, as being directly opposite to every malignant passion and disposition; to pride, selfishness, evil-surmising, and envy. He shows that it is kind, bountiful, and beneficent; engaging the followers of Christ, in every prudent and possible way, to serve one another. He intimates, that in the present, imperfect state, it is requisite to use much self-denial in maintaining and manifesting this love, and that it requires the exercise of humility, patience, meekness, and long-suffering, in enduring all trying things, and bearing one another's burdens. But as on the one hand—love does not rejoice in iniquity, so as to bear with a brother in any gross error, or in any practice contrary to the gospel—but is solicitous to restore such a one, in the spirit of meekness. So, on the other hand, it, rejoices in the saving truth of Christ, which so gloriously manifests his love to men. The truth of the gospel is one of the first objects of a believer's delight, and his love to the brethren is just in proportion as he perceives the truth to dwell in them, in its power and efficacy; for he loves them "for the truth's sake, which dwells in them." This love, when compared with faith and hope, is said to be greater than either of them, and that on two accounts. In the first place it excels them in duration—for when faith and hope shall have issued in the sight and enjoyment of their respective objects, then love will be made perfect, and it will prevail and reign forever in the regions of unfading felicity. And in the second place, love may be considered as superior to faith and hope, even in the present state, because, in its nature, it is the very image of God. It is one of the principal things wherein the child of grace resembles his heavenly Father, and is conformed to his likeness; for "God is love." It is that in which the believer most imitates the Lord Jesus Christ, in the peculiarly endearing part of his character, his love to men. "Be followers of God as dear as children. And walk in love, just as Christ has loved us, and given himself for us." To set this article in the most striking point of light imaginable, we are expressly taught, that by this love to the saints, Christ will, when he comes to judge the world at the last day, distinguish his own people from all others. Let the reader attentively consider the account given by the supreme Judge himself, of what will be the process of that solemn day, in the twenty-fifth chapter of the evangelist Matthew. They on the left hand will be condemned, as having given no proof of attachment to Christ, by showing regard to his followers. "Then the King will say to those on the right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me. I assure you, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters—you were doing it to me!'"

How important then is this evidence of the preciousness of Christ to our souls! How careful should we be to cultivate brotherly love both in ourselves and others! "Above all things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness." Love is the sweetest, the most effectual, the most perfect, and the most lasting bond, that ever united the hearts of men together.

Section 13. The INTERESTS of Christ are precious, to those who believe.

It is not enough for a man to talk in high strains of the melting and moving of his affections to the Redeemer, to tell of the inward experiences he has had, at certain periods, of love to him, how his heart was drawn out to him at this or the other time—when, in the general course of his life, he is indifferent to the cause of Christ, and unwilling to lay out himself for the promoting of his kingdom

among men. We are to make it manifest that Christ is precious to us—by constant endeavors to advance his cause and interest in the world.

Transient elevations of mind may easily produce words of affection and kindness; but words are cheap, and religion is more easily expressed in lofty professions than in actions. A practical, steady, and persevering regard for Jesus Christ, is a costly and laborious thing. It requires much self-denial and vigorous exertions in our daily walk. Men are much more easily brought to talk about the Savior of sinners, than to live to him.

We find the true spirit of Christianity, as has been observed on the other occasion, fully exemplified in the apostle Paul. He did not satisfy himself with those strong and ardent expressions of love to Christ, with which his epistles everywhere abound; he exerted himself to the utmost of his power in promoting the interest of the Redeemer.

He expected nothing in so doing—but poverty, contempt and hardship. He was so poor, that he was frequently under the necessity of working with his own hands for a morsel of bread. He cheerfully submitted to hunger and nakedness, stripes and imprisonment; he was content to be counted the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things, amidst his unwearied attempts to glorify his divine Master, in the conversion of sinners, and the edification of those who had believed through grace. He had established the kingdom of Christ in Asia; he had brought many of the inhabitants of Macedonia and Achaia to subjection to the gospel; he had erected the standard of divine truth in Arabia; yet he purposed in the Spirit to go to Spain, and then to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome." The universe at large is but just sufficient to be the field of his vigorous exertions in the good cause. He included in the plan of his apostolic labors, the metropolis and the boundaries of the known world. (Hervey.) In this way did this exalted and heavenly man make it manifest that Christ was precious to him. And are there left to us no opportunities of proving the sincerity of our attachment to him? The same spirit which actuated this noble champion, should actuate us, according to our capacity and ability, in the more contracted sphere in which God's providence has fixed us. A period will certainly commence, when the kingdom of Christ shall prevail far and wide; the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the seas. All the ends of the earth shall see his salvation. Princes shall be subject to the Redeemer's scepter, and Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hands unto God. The fullness of the Gentiles shall come in, and all Israel be saved. Our Lord has taught us to pray that his kingdom may come; and those who know the Lord should not keep silence; they should continue to present their ardent petitions to him, and give him no rest, until he establishes his church through the nations, and make her a praise in the earth.

If four hundred million of our fellow-men are yet involved in heathenish darkness, worshipping and bowing to stocks and stones, the works of their own hands, the love of Christ should constrain us to exert ourselves in the promotion of such means as are most likely to bring them to the knowledge of the true God, and of his Son Jesus Christ. We should not satisfy ourselves barely with praying for this event. The appointed methods are to be tried, for the accomplishment of it, in a dependence on God, and under the guidance of his merciful providence. The gospel is ordained to be preached to every creature, that its sound may go out through all the earth, and its words to the ends of the world.

Many awful events have taken place in Europe, of late years, and what will be the outcome of present commotions, it is impossible for such short-sighted creatures as we are to determine. Our Lord has put a check on our too curious inquiries into futurity, by saying, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father has put in his own power." Amidst the desolations of war, and the daring efforts of infidelity and irreligion, we have seen the zeal of professing Christians, of various denominations, revived, respecting the advancement of Christ's kingdom, both at home and abroad. It is pleasing to hear of the efforts made in different parts of this nation, to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, by publishing the gospel, and causing it to be published in towns, villages, and neighborhoods, where it was not known. Societies are formed for the support of itinerant preachers. May the Lord of the harvest send forth laborers, and graciously succeed the pious endeavors of all those who are engaged in this good work.

Multitudes among us are likewise deeply and earnestly concerned for the heathen nations, that they might be brought to see the light of life. Liberal contributions are made in different places, for the support of missionaries. Many individuals have been made willing to leave their dearest relations, to give up all worldly prospects, to put their lives in their hands, and to encounter all the hazards and dangers to which they may be exposed, in transporting themselves to the most distant parts of the earth, in order to spread abroad the savor of the knowledge of Christ among the benighted nations. The expense attending these undertakings must of course be considerable; he, therefore, to whom the cause of the Redeemer is precious, has a fair opportunity of manifesting his regard for it, by contributing according to his ability, for the promotion of it.

It is well known that the efforts of men will not be successful, without the displays of Almighty Power; but this is no reason why the means which infinite wisdom has ordained, should not be tried; and since the hearts of so many pious people of different persuasions, and in places far distant from one another, are, at this period, affected in the same way, there is reason to hope that a Divine hand is in the work, and consequently, that the outcome will, in due time, be favorable.

Reader, is the interest of Christ precious to you? Let me then ask, What have you contributed, in the way above-mentioned, towards the promoting of it? Poverty is commonly pleaded in such cases, as an excuse. But it is of no avail in the sight of God, since, if his Word be true—to give is the way to get—and to scatter, the way to increase. The poor widow, who cast her two mites into the treasury, in the account of God, cast in more than all the rest. That Jesus whom we profess to love, has said, "Give, and it will be given to you; a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over—will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you." "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted, according to that a man has, and not according to that he has not."

Section 14. The DAY and HOUSE of Christ are precious to those who believe. For the illustration of this, let the reader attentively observe the spirit and import of the following passages: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after—that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple. As the deer pants after the water-brooks—so pants my soul after you, O God; my soul thirsts for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God! My soul thirsts for you, my flesh longs for you, in a dry and thirsty land, where there is no water—to see your power and your glory, as I have seen

you in the sanctuary. How amiable are your tabernacles, O Lord Almighty! my soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God." The pious man, sensible of the diseases of his soul, waits with eagerness and constancy at the pool of divine ordinances for relief, in humble expectation that he who heals the needy and the helpless with his mercy, will look upon him, and heal him. The day which is to be spent in converse and communion with God, in the public and private exercises of devotion, must needs be precious to those who love Jesus. It is the Lord's day. The hours of it are all his own, to be employed in his immediate service. On this day we attend upon him in his ordinances, we sing his praise, we hear the words of everlasting life, and we pay our vows to God in the presence of his people. Surely, a day in his courts—is better than a thousand spent elsewhere; and we should rather choose to be doorkeepers in the house of God—than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. Hear what he says to us by his holy prophet. "If you turn away your foot from (profaning) the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day; and shall call the Sabbath a DELIGHT; the Holy of the Lord, honorable; and shall honor him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words—then shall you delight yourself in the Lord; and I will cause you to ride upon the high places of the earth (to rise above this transitory world, and live a heavenly life) and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it." The several parts of public worship to be observed on his holy day, are suited to work upon our senses, and, by that means, to awaken pious affections within us. In singing the praises of God, solemnly calling upon his name, and hearing the blessed gospel—we find a variety of holy desires, hopes and joys excited, and our spiritual interests greatly promoted. On this day we sometimes approach to the Lord's table, and enjoy that precious ordinance which is wisely and graciously designed to revive in our minds the remembrance of him who gave his life a ransom for our souls. This institution is happily contrived to represent, in a lively and striking manner, the love, the sufferings, and the death of our blessed Redeemer, together with the benefits which we derive from them. When we unite in this solemnity, all the springs of pious affection should be let loose, while we contemplate the dying agonies of the Prince of Peace. We should feel the sweet meltings of godly sorrow, and the warmest exertions of gratitude, love and joy. The Lord's day, and the worship of his house are precious, as they are emblematical of that happy state and world, where congregations ne'er break up, and sabbaths have no end.

It is in the worship and service of God, that we are, by degrees, prepared for the enjoyments and employments of heaven. How glorious will that change be—when we are called from these earthly courts, to join the general assembly and church of the first-born! Here we are attended with much frailty, infirmity and sin; we are sometimes so oppressed with a consciousness of our own vileness, that we are ashamed to lift up our faces towards heaven. But there, the pure in heart shall see God without confusion. Here we abide not in his tabernacles—but go and come, as visitants. There we will dwell as inhabitants forever. And if the ordinances of God's house are the joy of our hearts in this world, if a day in his courts be preferable to a thousand spent elsewhere—what will be the worship and the enjoyments of heaven!

Section 15. The BENEFITS of Christ are precious to those who believe. To be raised from a state of death in sin—to a divine and spiritual life; to be brought out of darkness—into marvelous light; to be delivered from guilt and condemnation; to be justified freely by the riches of grace, displayed in the redemption which is by Jesus Christ; to have welcome access to God; to be treated by him as

his adopted children; and to be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life—these are some of the benefits which we receive by Jesus Christ! These benefits result from his mediation, and hang clustering on his cross! And as they are of infinite value in themselves, they must be precious to those who believe. While the Christian contemplates these favors, he is often ready to say with the Psalmist, "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits towards me!"

These are benefits which will extend their duration and happy effects through eternity. In the bestowment of them, the God of all grace raises us from the dust and the dunghill—to set us among princes, even among the princes of his people. They are blessings worthy of him who bestows them, and sufficient to exalt the riches of his abounding grace, to the admiration of all the multitudes of heaven, and of redeemed men on earth. These are the things into which the angels desire to look. They will furnish matter of admiration, joy, gratitude and delight—to the redeemed, forever and ever.

How they are affected with them, and how precious they are in their estimation in this world, may be learned from their own language: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. Let all that is within me bless his holy name. Who forgives all your sins, and heals all your diseases. Who redeems your life from destruction, and crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love. Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us—that we should be called the sons of God! It does not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. In the day of his glorious appearance, he will receive us with acclamation of joy and triumph, into his own palace in the new Jerusalem, where we shall have the bright vision of his face, and be made partakers of such exalted felicity as it cannot now enter into our hearts to conceive. There are no benefits like those which our divine Redeemer bestows; there are none to be compared with them! How precious are your thoughts and designs of love unto me, O God, how great is the sum of them!

Section 16. The CHASTISEMENTS of Christ are precious to those who believe. The believer's love to Jesus Christ, not only continues under the rod of correction—but is quickened and increased by it. Thus it is distinguished from that pretended love, which exists only in times of prosperity. The afflicted Christian is enabled to consider, that whom the Lord loves—he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives; and that he afflicts us not for his own pleasure—but for our profit—to make us partakers of his holiness. The Lord can so manifest himself to his afflicted people, and cause his goodness to pass before them in such a manner, that the season of affliction shall be to them a season of great consolation. He is to them—a fountain of life, of strength, of grace and comfort in the afflictive hour, and of his fullness they receive, as their necessities require. The men of the world are totally ignorant of these Divine supports. As they have no guide in the time of prosperity—but are carried along with the stream towards the gulf of perdition; and in adversity they have no resource—but must feel all the bitterness of affliction, without finding Divine support under it, or deriving spiritual advantage from it. The Lord Jesus Christ is a sun to enlighten and cheer his afflicted followers, and a shield to defend them. He is a hiding-place from the storm, a covert from the tempest, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

All the afflictions of God's people are designed, under his gracious management—to test, to make manifest, and to exercise those graces and virtues which he has implanted in them. Though afflictions in themselves are not joyous but grievous, nevertheless they yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness in those who are exercised thereby. Afflictions serve to quicken the spirit of devotion in us; and to rouse us from that formality and indifference which frequently attend a long course of ease and prosperity. We are constrained to seek God with sincerity and fervor, when his chastening hand is upon us, since we then feel our absolute need of that help and deliverance which he alone can give us. When the loss of a temporal enjoyment casts us into excessive despondency and dejection—it is evident that what we have lost was the object of our inordinate love. The most innocent attachments cease to be innocent, when they press too strongly upon us. To cleave to any created object, and to look for happiness from it—is to make an idol of it—and set it up in God's throne. Should this object be a friend, a brother, a wife, or a child—the idolatry is still odious in the eyes of that God, to whom we owe our chief affection. Our warmest passions, our most fervent love, desires, hopes, and confidences—should always have God for their object. The perfect felicity of the saints, in the life to come, will consist in the enjoyment of God! and it is his pleasure that their present happiness should not center in any of the good things of this life. Losses and disappointments, are the trials of our faith, our patience, and our obedience. When we are in the midst of prosperity, it is difficult to know whether it is a love for the Benefactor, or only for the benefits which attaches us to religion. It is in the midst of adversity—that our piety is put to the trial. Affliction is the godly man's shining moment.

Afflictions serve most effectually—to convince us of the vanity of all that this world can afford; to remind us that this is not our rest; and to stir up our desires and hopes respecting our everlasting home. They produce in us a spirit of sympathy towards our companions in tribulation. They give occasion for the exercise of patience, meekness, submission, and resignation. Were it not for the wholesome and necessary discipline of affliction—these excellent virtues would lie dormant. They serve to convince us more deeply of our own weakness and insufficiency, and to endear the person, the grace, the promises, and the salvation of our Redeemer, more and more to our hearts. Thus we are taught to esteem his very chastisements as precious, on account of the benefits we derive from them; even as Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; and the apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus. "We also rejoice in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope." Romans 5:3-4 An eminent writer says, 'Love to God is not only continued in a Christian, under the rod of correction—but it is inflamed, or increased; contrary to that false love which exists only in prosperity, and is quite extinct in adversity. For false love in religion flows only from temporal interest, and is dependent on sinful self-love. But true love to God regards his glory and our salvation—two things which can never be separated; because God has united them so, that they constitute the very essence of religion. Whenever, then, it pleases God to chastise us—these two great interests, his glory and our salvation, present themselves before our eyes. And whether we consider chastisements as the fruits of our own sins, which have offended God; or as paternal strokes, to establish us in holiness, they always serve to promote our love to God. Add to these, that, when a believer sees his God frown—he cannot but fear, in some sense, that his wrath will go farther. Hence these expressions of the Psalmist, "Forsake me not, O Lord; O my God, be not far from me!" When he is apprehensive that God will forsake him, he stretches forth the arms of his

love towards him, he weeps on his bosom, he follows the example of the two disciples with respect to their Divine Master—they constrained him, saying, Abide with us!’

Afflictions are not to punish—but to purify the believing soul. They are not in wrath—but in mercy. Amidst the distresses and miseries of life, it is a felicity to belong to Christ, without whose permission or appointment, no evil can befall us! He only permits afflictions for our good, and knows by experience, what it is to suffer them. His kind hand will speedily put a end to all the pains we feel—when we have derived from them all the good which he intends to do for us, by them. An ungodly man, in affliction, is like a ship at sea in a storm—without pilot, without anchor, without cable, chart, or compass, or even the most distant view of the haven of rest and safety. It is far otherwise with the afflicted believer. The stormy winds and raging waves of the ocean, in all their fury, beat upon his little bark, and he sometimes cries, "All your waves and your billows are gone over me; my strength and my hope from the Lord have perished!" But in this distress he is still supported, when he is enabled to reflect, that his God and Father sits upon the floods, and rules the raging of the sea; that all the waves thereof are at his direction, and though they seem to threaten his ruin, they shall answer the purposes of his final safety, by bringing him nearer and nearer to the haven where he would be. He has much satisfaction from a review of his chart and compass; he perceives that he is in a right course, though for the present—the sea is rough and stormy. His anchor is good, his pilot is able and skillful; he confides in him who sits at the helm, with the greatest security, and, at some seasons, the wished-for port of peace and rest appears in view. He then rejoices in prospect of the triumph which will attend his safe arrival, when he shall ride into the harbor, amidst the acclamations of those who are waiting to receive him—to partake of their unmingled joy, and live in eternal repose!

How many, how suitable, how sovereign are the supports our heavenly Father affords to his afflicted children! They make the affliction, which in itself would seem heavy and tedious, appear to be light, and but for a moment. It is happier to be in the furnace of affliction with these supports—than to be in the highest prosperity without them. Blessed with the hopes and comforts of Christ, the true Christian would prefer the lot of Lazarus, with all the poverty and distress which he endured—to that of the rich man, who, amidst all the splendor and affluence which this world could afford, lived a life of alienation from God, and destitute of the sovereign supports which can be only enjoyed, by those who love and fear him.

Section 17. The EXAMPLE of Christ is precious, to those who believe.

Among all the advocates for morality which ancient or modern times have furnished, we cannot find one complete pattern of purity. But in Jesus we have a perfect example; an example which has the force of a law, and contains the strongest inducement to holiness. We see, in our Divine Leader, the several precepts of God's Word drawn out in living characters. We behold them reduced to practice, and represented to the life, in the whole of his conduct towards God and man. We see one in our nature, amidst all the assaults of temptation, amidst all the opposition which malignity could invent, and all the allurements of this guilty world, behaving in a manner exactly agreeable to the dictates of the Divine law, and leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps. And surely it must be delightful, not only to contemplate his character—but, to the utmost of our power, to imitate the most perfect pattern which ever was exhibited. It must be desirable, by constant and strenuous exertions, according to our measure, to endeavor to trace the steps of his

lovely feet. "He who says he abides in him, ought himself also to walk even as he walked."

It is impossible to contemplate the character of Jesus, with serious and devout attention—and not be charmed with it. We see in him all the human passions in the highest perfection. His joys were grave, his griefs were just; his gentleness and his severity, his holiness and his humanity, were in perfect harmony with each other. He manifested great tenderness, and genuine affection, and sensibility to human woe—on all occasions. As he did no sin—so, on the other hand, every shining virtue was exemplified in him to highest degree. His lowliness and meekness; his contempt of the world; his heavenly temper; his love to the Father, and zeal for his honor; his activity and diligence in doing good; his submission to the Father's will; his patience amidst the heaviest and severest sufferings; his constancy in the exercises of retired devotion; and his praying for his enemies who spilt his blood—can never be sufficiently admired. The command of Christ is our rule—but his life is the copy which he has set us. If you would walk holily, you must not only endeavor to do what Christ commands—but labor to do the work as he did it. Let the various actions of your lives be performed in a holy imitation of him. Thus you will represent Christ on earth, and hold him forth to all that see you.

Set Christ in his holy example before you, as the painter would the person whose picture he intends to draw. This is a pleasant and efficacious way of maintaining the power of holiness. When you are tempted to any vanity, set the blessed Redeemer before you, consider his example, and ask yourself, "How would Jesus—my Lord and Master have acted in such a case? Would he have spent his time upon such trifles? Would he have spoken such and such; or done this or the other thing, which I am solicited to do? And shall I give way to that which would be a manifest deviation from his example? God forbid!"

Let me imitate his example and goodness, now he is seated on his throne of glory. Has he pardoned my sins? Let me learn to forgive my offending fellow-creatures. Has he had patience with me, and borne with my manners from year to year? Let me strive to exercise patience towards ungrateful men. Does he scatter his favors abroad and communicate felicity to his creatures? Let me imitate him in being ready to distribute. Is he continually mindful of me—are his cares for my welfare and salvation incessant? Let me be concerned for the present and everlasting well-being of others, who are united to me by the ties of nature, of society, and of religion.

Mark his unwearied activity through the whole of his life in this world. He who laid the foundations of the earth, and by his excellent wisdom made the heavens, who shakes the system he has made, and the pillars thereof tremble; who seals up the stars, and speaks to the sun, and it shines not! He has fixed a mark of honor upon industry and diligence, being employed in the humble occupation of a carpenter, before he entered on his public ministry. The Jews said of him, "Is not this the carpenter?"

O Christians, fix your eyes intensely on the great exemplar! Thus you will, through Divine grace, daily grow in love with meekness, patience, and lowliness of heart. Can you grow angry and impatient at trifles, when you view the Son of God enduring such vile treatment against himself, without the least complaint? Can you repine under any affliction, though ever so severe, when you consider, how it pleased the Father to bruise the Son of his love, while he, with divine submission said, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass from me, except I drink it—may your will be done!"

The more I contemplate His lovely character, while He sojourned on earth--the more I am delighted with it. To have the same mind in me which was in Christ Jesus, and to tread in His steps--should be my constant aim. Those who are received by Him to the possession of everlasting felicity in heaven—have humbly traced His footsteps upon earth. Of them it is said, "These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes!" They are forevermore led by Him, even in the celestial world--to the enjoyment of ever-new delights and pleasures!

"Blessed Savior, may your holy example be ever before my eyes, in its most illustrious and transforming light! O that all the devout affections which reigned in your heart when you sojourned with men upon earth—might also, in some measure, reign in my heart. O that I could copy out the wonders of your zeal for the honor of your Father, and of your love and compassion for the sinful and miserable sons of men. Your holy affections were engaged in every act of worship, with divine ardor and fervency. I am ashamed to think of the coldness, the dullness, and the formality of my prayers and praises. O let the sacred fire of true devotion be kindled in my bosom. Melt down my hard and unfeeling heart, and mold my spirit after your likeness. In flame my whole soul with love to you—as a happy preparative for the enjoyment of your presence in glory!"

05 - Practical Improvement of the Subject

Chapter 5. Practical Improvement of the Subject.

1. What has been said on this subject may serve to convince us—that the evangelical system is a righteous and an equitable one. It has been objected against it, that while faith in Jesus Christ is so much insisted on as a point of distinction between the godly and the wicked, and the grand criterion by which the states of men will be finally determined; that we denigrate the holiness and justice of God—as if he paid no regard to their moral characters.

It will be found at last, that the real cause of men's rejection of gospel truth, is, a rooted aversion to that purity of heart and conduct which the gospel requires. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone that does evil hates the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd." This is a plain account why so many continue in unbelief—an account which cannot be controverted. Sinners are obstinately attached to wicked habits; they stumble at the Word, being disobedient; this is the grand reason assigned for their infidelity. On this ground, if they are not happily brought to repentance, the sentence of condemnation will be pronounced against them at last; and the equity of it will be acknowledged by angels, and the whole assembled world. On the other hand, while the true Christian is justified freely by Divine grace, he is, at the same time, renewed in the spirit of his mind. In consequence of this, a total change of conduct takes place; old things pass away, behold, all things become new. To him who believes, Jesus is precious; this is evidently proved by the whole of his behavior, both towards God and man. And at the last day, though he will be far from offering any claim of merit—yet his works will be taken notice of, as the fruits of his faith, and as evidences of the sincerity of his love. His holy practice will then be a public and undeniable testimony, that God has saved him in a way perfectly consistent with that love of righteousness, which is essential to his nature.

2. We hence see how necessary it is, that men should be thoroughly convinced of their absolute need of such a Savior as Jesus is. He is precious to none but those who know that they are absolutely undone without him. To you who believe, he is precious; but no man believes in him without a sense of need. Sufficient proof of this has already been offered.

Sinner, you have violated the holy, just, and righteous law of God—your Maker and Sovereign. That law condemns you for ten thousand transgressions committed against it. Look into the records of your own conscience. Consider what you have done from your infancy to the present moment. Remember that your sins expose you to the wrath of the Almighty, and render you deserving of everlasting punishment: for the wages of sin is death. You are every moment in danger of eternal destruction. Your condition is miserable. God is strictly just; and to impenitent sinners, he is a consuming fire. In yourself, you are utterly helpless. Nothing you can do will be of any avail for your relief. Be deeply sensible of your undone condition, your absolute misery—and know that there is no help, no salvation for you—but in Christ. Without this conviction, you will remain in a state of indifference towards him. You will never fly to him for refuge, as the only hope

set before you; you will never sincerely believe in him, nor love him. You will never put a proper value on his atoning sacrifice, as that which alone delivers from the wrath to come, procures pardon, peace with God, and everlasting salvation.

Consider these things with all seriousness, and without a moment's delay. Life and death are set before you—life, if you sincerely believe in the Savior; death, if you disregard him. Consider the case of a malefactor, condemned to die for the violation of the laws of his country. The sentence is passed upon him, and the day approaches for the execution of it. His state is dreadful, his danger is great—but not to be compared with yours. O that you may be deeply and abidingly convinced of your perilous situation! On this conviction your safety depends!

3. It will appear, from what has been advanced, that the number of those to whom Christ is precious—is but small. The grossly ignorant have no regard for him, because they know not his worth. Those who are notoriously erroneous do not love him; for those who do not believe and receive the truth of Christ, do not love him. "If any man loves me, he will keep my words;" by his words we are to understand the doctrines which he taught, as well as his precepts and commands. The openly wicked and profane can surely pretend to no regard for Christ. They are justly characterized as haters of God. "His citizens hated him, and said—We will not have this man to reign over us." All those who persecute the godly are confessedly excluded; for how can they love the Head—who persecute the members of the body? To the covetous and worldly-minded, Christ is not precious; for they love the world, and "if any man loves the world—the love of the Father is not in him." Those who are under the dominion of sin do not sincerely love Jesus; for the dominion of sin consists principally in the love of it, and, by consequence, in a willing subjection to it. Therefore, the prevailing love of sin is inconsistent with the love of Christ. All mere formal professors of religion, and all self-righteous people stand excluded in this inquiry. They have confidence in the flesh, and therefore reject the sure foundation laid in Zion. When all these different classes of mankind are set aside—the number left will be but small. Multitudes are either grossly ignorant, enemies to the truth, openly profane, persecutors of the godly, lovers of the world, under the dominion of sin, or such as make an empty profession of religion, and go about to establish their own righteousness. Hence, those to whom Christ is precious, are but few. "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."

4. Let every man beware of concluding himself a believer in Christ, upon slight and insufficient grounds. The primitive societies of God's people, in all probability, had fewer mere nominal Christians among them, than the churches of Jesus Christ generally have at the present day. There were not many, who, from their infancy, were trained up in the ways of religion and godliness. So that the danger of deception is, in some respects greater now, than it was in the days of the apostles; since it is the common custom among us, to make a sort of external profession of Christianity. But let us remember, that the true believer embraces the truths of God in his understanding, and acquiesces in them with his whole heart; his meditation is fixed on the attributes of God, and the loveliness, worth, and excellency of his Son Jesus Christ; he sets the Lord before him, and steadily aims at a conformity to his will, to his image, and to his example; and he experiences the powerful efficacy of the divine Word—to establish him in virtue and holiness. I cannot be a true disciple of Jesus, unless he teaches me by his grace, renews me by his Spirit,

washes me by his blood, and forms my heart to obey his commands, and imitate his meekness, humility, zeal and love. I must submit to his authority without hesitation, and be ready to reduce to practice, the knowledge I have of his truths and ways. True faith transforms the whole man. It delivers the sinner from the tyranny of his passions—and purifies both the heart and life.

5. As it is life eternal to know Jesus Christ—so it is death eternal to be ignorant of him. The knowledge of him is not only necessary to all the graces, to all the duties, and to all the comforts of Christianity—but it is necessary to the very existence of Christianity. Those who know not Jesus Christ—know not the way of peace—and if they die in that state, their end will be eternally miserable.

If you have not that knowledge of Jesus Christ which is attended with sincere love to him—you lie under the most dreadful sentence of condemnation. "If any man loves not the Lord Jesus Christ—let him be anathema, maranatha;" that is, let him be accursed when the Lord shall come. Will he, at his coming, annul this dreadful denunciation? No! he will descend from heaven, in flaming fire, to take vengeance on those who don't know God, and who don't obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Consider this, O you who have no sincere regard for the precious Redeemer. Where will you hide your guilty, your defenseless head, when he appears? It will, by and bye, be said, "The great day of his wrath is come—and who shall be able to stand!"

6. Consider, my dear fellow-sinner, that as Jesus Christ is the Former of all things, you were made by him, and therefore you ought to love him. He has endowed you with a rational and an immortal soul, a soul capable of knowing and of loving him—and will you withhold that love from him which he so justly demands? Perhaps you are a professor of religion—yet if Christ is not precious to you, your profession is unprofitable. In that divine book called the Bible, you have the history of his life, his sufferings, and his death; you have a clear display of his dignity, his glory, his power to save, and his infinite and unbounded love to sinners. Can you read all this—and not love him? Can you love those inferior objects, in which there are slight degrees of excellence—and can you not love Jesus Christ, who is altogether lovely, and the sum of all excellence and perfection? Do you respect those on whom God has conferred some measure of honor, authority and power—and do you not love Jesus Christ, who is the Lord of Glory, and to whom all power and authority in both heaven and earth are given? Do you respect a fellow-creature possessed of wisdom and learning—and do you not love Jesus Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge? Do you esteem a man who is liberal, generous, or bountiful—and have you no love for him, who gives us all things richly to enjoy, and who by giving his life a ransom for our souls, has become the Author of eternal salvation, with all its glorious blessings and privileges? You profess to have a sincere value for your friends, who have shown you many acts of kindness—and will you not love the Friend of sinners? Remember his words; "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." He alone can rescue you from eternal destruction; he alone can bestow upon you pardon, righteousness, peace and everlasting felicity. Shall such a friend have no place in your heart? Do you love liberty? and can you be indifferent towards him, whose office is to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound? There is no deliverance from the condemnation of the hand of justice, the tyranny of Satan, the dominion of sin, and the power of death and the grave—but by him. Do you love peace and pleasure; and can you disregard the Prince of peace, who reconciles sinners to God, by the blood of his cross, and gives true peace of conscience, together with joy unspeakable and full of glory?

There is everything in Christ to encourage poor sinners to apply to him, to look for salvation in his name, and to inspire their hearts with love to his person. There are motives and arguments of every kind to excite you to choose him for your Savior, your friend, and your portion. You are guilty—his blood cleanses from all sin. You are miserable—he is rich in mercy. You are helpless—he is mighty to save. You are impoverished—his riches are unsearchable. His treasures of grace are inexhaustible. Approach unto him, be not afraid of a disappointment; he has assured you he will in no wise cast you out.

There is an inexhaustible fullness in Him, answerable to all your necessities, be they ever so many, or ever so great. He is the ever-flowing, the over-flowing fountain of living waters. He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we can ask or think. It has pleased the Father, that in Him all fullness should dwell. Indeed, we have all received grace after grace from His fullness. His kindness and mercy are unbounded. If the kindness of men has a tendency to win your hearts--how much more should the infinite love of Jesus constrain you to love Him? He is the only-begotten Son, the most dearly-beloved of the Father. He is worthy of the Father's love, who says of him, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Surely then, it is reasonable, it is highly proper that he should be the object of your love.

7. Let those who regard the comfort, the peace and the prosperity of their own souls, apply themselves to the study of Jesus Christ, and daily aspire after more knowledge of him. All that is excellent, all that is desirable, all that is comforting is concentrated in him. He is fairer than the children of men, the chief among ten thousands, and altogether lovely! O how unspeakably, how infinitely precious! It is eternal life to know him. No knowledge so enlivening, so cheering, so comforting—as the knowledge of Christ. It is ever new, ever fresh in excellency, to those who aspire after it.

If we desire to be conformed to his blessed image, we should labor to have our thoughts as much as possible, employed in contemplating his excellency; that we may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the length and breadth, the depth and height of the love of Christ, which passes knowledge. This is the way to increase in holiness and in happiness; or, to use the more emphatic language of the apostle, to "be filled with all the fullness of God." For "while we with open face behold, as in a looking-glass, the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

It is not probable that Jesus Christ should be very precious to those who are not acquainted with the glorious perfections of his person, his transcendent worth, and surpassing excellency. Love is founded in knowledge. When we have suitable discoveries of his glory, our wills are inclined and determined to make choice of him, as our Savior, and our all-sufficient portion. Love to Jesus is maintained and continued in its warmth and fervor—by frequent meditation on His adorable person, His dying love, and His infinite excellence and preciousness. If we lose sight of His ineffable glories—our attachment to Him, as the spring of our happiness--will be weakened, and the fervency of our love for Him will be abated. No motions of the soul are so sweet and delightful—as those which are directed to the Fountain of happiness. The outgoings of the heart after Christ are pleasant, especially when he is pleased to manifest himself unto us, as he does not to the world. There is a mixture of heavenly comfort in the love we feel to so worthy an object; "Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you

believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy!"

8. If Jesus Christ is so superlatively precious in himself, we have reason to be ashamed that we love him no more. Alas! how languid are our affections towards him who is altogether lovely, and how easily are our hearts captivated with vanity and trifles! This is matter of humiliation, grief, and sorrow. It is remarked in the life of John Mollius, an eminent disciple of Jesus, that he was sometimes observed to be in heaviness, and to weep bitterly; when his friends inquired into the cause of his trouble, his usual answer was, 'O! it grieves me, that I cannot bring this heart of mine to love Jesus Christ more fervently.' Is not our love to the Redeemer very small, in comparison with that to which some of his followers have attained? Have not thousands of martyrs joyfully endured the most cruel pains and tortures—for the love which they bore to him? O what blessed lives did the primitive disciples of Christ live! What divine satisfaction, what heavenly splendor, what convincing power attended their practice, while their whole souls, with all their affections, were devoted to their Redeemer, and engaged in the affairs of his kingdom! They lived on earth—as the heirs of heaven ought to do. May we not justly be ashamed that we have this precious Savior so little in our thoughts? Forgetful of him, our thoughts range abroad on a thousand subjects to little profit, nay, often to our hurt! If we examine our thoughts for one day, how few of them have been employed upon him who should be our highest love, and nearest to our hearts! Is not this matter of lamentation? Is it not a sad indication of the indifference of our minds towards him? A warm and fervent love would bring him often to our remembrance. We should say with the Psalmist, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, your comforts delight my soul." Or, as he says in another place, "My meditation of him shall be sweet; I will be glad in the Lord." Can they rejoice in the Lord always—who very rarely think of him? "Where your treasure is, there will your hearts be also." Every man thinks much on that which is highest in his esteem, and dearest to his affections. This is a fact, the truth of which, cannot be called in question. But if we judge of our regard for Christ by this rule, what reason have we for deep humiliation before him! What slender proof do we give that he is precious to us! How low, how faint and feeble is our love for him!

Thought being the immediate attendant of love, where love is strong and fervent—it powerfully engages the mind to habitual musing on the beloved object. And therefore when the Psalmist says, "O how love I your law," he adds, "it is my meditation all the day." Is it possible that we should spend any day of our lives without thinking on what Jesus Christ has done for us? His astonishing love, in becoming incarnate, sojourning more than thirty years in this wretched and miserable world, as a man of sorrows, for our sakes; his fulfilling all righteousness for us; his enduring the contradiction of sinners against himself; and his laying down his life in our stead—are subjects of contemplation upon which our minds should perpetually revolve.

We should think on what he is now doing for us in heaven; for he is gone there to prepare a place for our accommodation, and he ever lives to make intercession for us. He tells us he will never forget us—and shall we perpetually forget him? Hear what he says, "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands!"

It is a proof that our love to the Redeemer is but small, when our tongues are rarely employed in speaking of him. We all know, that the subject which lies nearest our hearts, will frequently slide

upon our tongues, and employ our discourse. The man of pleasure talks much of his carnal delights; and the man of business, of the affairs of commerce. "He who is of the earth, speaks of the earth; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." The man of news talks perpetually about that in which he most delights. And have we nothing to say about him who rescues our souls from everlasting destruction, and gives us a lively hope of full felicity in heaven! Have we not reason to be ashamed of our negligence, as to the private exercises of devotion? How little time do we spend in those exercises, and how little pleasure do we often take in them! Alas! I fear our closets bear witness against us, concerning the deficiency of our love to Jesus Christ. Did we love him with a fervent affection—we would often retire from the world, that we might converse with him, and pour out our hearts before him. A slight performance of the duties of the closet, is a certain indication that our love to the Redeemer is but small. Conscience! discharge your office; testify against the negligent reader—how greatly deficient he is in his love, in this one instance. Tell him of the greatness of the Savior's love, what he has done, what he has suffered on his account—and what poor returns of affection are made to him. Tell the negligent professor how inattentive he is to the Redeemer's example in this particular. Tell him what poor, what lifeless, what slight devotions he pays to that loving Savior, who has promised such great things to those who seek him with their whole hearts! Have we not reason to be ashamed, that we are so prone to faint in the day of adversity, and to shrink back when we are called upon to take up our cross in following Christ? Had we fervent love to him, we would, with courage and fortitude, endure great afflictions and trials, which lie in our way to the everlasting enjoyment of him. It has induced many to glory in tribulation, to rejoice that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus, to take joyfully the confiscation of their goods, and to esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures which this world can afford. Under the influence of this—a dungeon has been accounted a paradise; a prison a palace; and death the gate of life! Some have embraced the stake to which they were bound, and welcomed the flames by which were to be consumed to ashes. If we therefore faint in our day of adversity, which scarcely deserves to be mentioned, in comparison with what many have endured—it is an indication that our strength is small.

9. Let your knowledge, your faith, and your love—influence your practice. Show to the world around you, that Jesus is indeed precious to you, in a constant endeavor to glorify him, by a life of meekness and holiness, a life unspotted and divine. Nothing convinces like facts. Let the powerful operation of the Redeemer's love upon your hearts, be seen in all your interaction with others; and upon every occasion, let it be made manifest, that you neither have believed nor run in vain. The pure faith of a Christian, illustrated by works of grace and righteousness, supported under innumerable difficulties and temptations, and carried on to a death of triumph and joy—is a proof of the truth and reality of the religion of Jesus, which most effectually puts to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

Christ has in some sense, entrusted his honor to his followers. They profess to be his friends, and his advocates on earth. Hence they should be particularly cautious and watchful, lest his worthy name be blasphemed through their misconduct. You will best vindicate his honor, and set forth his preciousness—by a holy, humble, and heavenly life. See that you walk worthy of him, unto all well-pleasing. Thus you will adorn the doctrine of God your Savior in all things, and make manifest the virtues of him who has called you to his eternal kingdom and glory. Let those who have their

eyes upon you, see that Christ is precious to your soul—by your zeal for his honor, your activity in promoting his interest, your readiness to deny yourselves on all occasions for his sake, your steady adherence to him in all conditions, and your constancy in the use of all those means wherein you may expect to enjoy communion with him.

10. Those to whom Jesus is precious have a happy lot, whatever their circumstances may be, as to the present life. God, in his Providence, has put a vast variety into the conditions of men. Some are rich, and some are poor—while others enjoy a desirable medium between the two extremes. Some are placed in the most eminent stations; others live in obscurity, and are, comparatively, of little use to society. It is no dishonor for the followers of Christ to be poor in this world. Their Divine Master had nowhere to lay his head. But a sincere attachment to the Redeemer, ennobles and dignifies the soul. None in this world are so great, and so honorable, as those who love him. They cleave to him who is infinitely worthy of their warmest affection, and who can and will make them completely happy! "Delight yourself in the Lord—and he shall give you the desire of your heart." Others cleave to objects which are unworthy of the ardours of an immortal soul. They debase themselves, and will one day be ashamed of their pursuits. But neither the hope, nor the love of true Christians, shall ever make them ashamed. Amidst poverty, amidst afflictions, troubles and outward distresses—they have a refuge at hand, sufficient to support them, to defend them, and to afford them everlasting consolation!

They now delight to contemplate the Redeemer's excellency, and they will confess hereafter, when they see him face to face, and are partakers of his glory—that, while on earth, they knew nothing comparatively of his preciousness and worth. They will then all unite in that everlasting song, "Salvation to OUR GOD, who sits upon the throne, and to THE LAMB forever and ever!" Amen.

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