

HUMAN NATURE

by Thomas Boston

Boston's theological examination of human nature as corrupted by the Fall, presenting evidence of humanity's sinful condition through the repeated patterns of disobedience in every person. He traces how all humans bear the image of fallen Adam in their natural inclinations toward sin.

7 Chapters

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Human Nature

01 - Introduction - Adam's Primitive Integrity

Human nature in its fourfold state by Thomas Boston, download number two. That man's nature is corrupted, proven. Lastly, I shall add but one observation more, and that is, that in every man, naturally, the image of fallen Adam does appear.

Some children, by their features and liniments of their face, do as it were, father themselves, and thus we do resemble our first parents. Every one of us bears the image and impress of their fall upon him. And to evince the truth of this, I do appeal to the consciences of all in these following particulars.

First, is not a sinful curiosity natural to us? And is this not a print of Adam's image, Genesis 3, 6? Is not man naturally much more desirous to know new things than to practice old known truths? How, like old Adam, do we look in this, itching after novelties and disrelishing old solid doctrines? We seek after knowledge rather than holiness, and study most to know those things which are least edifying. Our wild and roving fancies need a bridle to curb them, while good solid affections must be quickened and spurred up. Secondly, if the Lord, by His holy law and wise providence, do put a restraint upon us to keep us back from anything, does not that restraint whet the edge of our natural inclinations and make us so much keener in our desires? And in this, do we not betray it plainly that we are Adam's children, Genesis 3, 2, 3, and 6? I think this cannot be denied for daily observation evinces that it is a natural principle that stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.

Proverbs 9, 17 The very heathens are convinced that man was possessed with the spirit of contradiction, though they knew not the spring of it. How often do men give themselves a loose in these things, in which, if God hath left them at liberty, they would have bound up themselves. But corrupt nature takes a pleasure in the very jumping over the hedge.

And is it not a repeating of her father's folly that men will rather climb for forbidden fruit than gather what is shaken off the ground of good providence to them when they have God's express allowance for it? Thirdly, which of all the children of Adam is not naturally disposed to hear the instruction that causes to err? And was not this a rock our first parents split upon, Genesis 3, 4, and 6? How apt is weak man ever since that time to parley with temptations. God speaketh once, yea, twice, yea, man perceiveth it not, Job 33, 14. But readily doth he listen to Satan.

Men might often come fair off, if they would dismiss temptations with abhorrence when first they appear. If they would nip them in the bud, they would soon die away. But alas, when we see the train laid for us, and the fire put to it, yet we stand till it run along, and we be blown up with its force.

Fourthly, did not the eyes in our head often blind the eyes of the mind? And was not this the very case of our first parents, Genesis 3, 6? Man is never more blinded when he is looking on the objects that are most pleasant to sense. Since the eyes of our first parents were open to the forbidden fruit, men's eyes have been the gates of destruction to their souls, in which impure

imaginings and sinful desires have entered the heart, to the wounding of the soul, wasting of the conscience, and bringing dismal effects sometimes on whole societies, as in Achan's case, Joshua 7, 21. Holy Job was aware of this danger from these two little rolling bodies, which a very small splinter of wood will make useless, so that with the king who dirt's not, with his ten thousand meet him that came with twenty thousand against him, Luke 15, 31 and 32.

He send us and desireth conditions of peace, Job 31, 1. I have made a covenant with mine eyes, and so on. Fifthly, is it not natural for us to take care for the body even at the expense of the soul? This is one ingredient in the sin of our first parents, Genesis 3, 6. Oh, how happy might we be if we were but at half the pains about our souls that we bestow upon our bodies! If that question, what must I do to be saved, Acts 16, 30, did run but near as oft through our minds, as those questions do, what shall we eat? What shall we drink? Wherewithal shall we be clothed? Matthew 6, 31. Many a now hopeless case would turn very hopeful.

But the truth is, most men live as if there were nothing but a lump of flesh, or as if their souls serve for no other use but like salt to keep the body from corrupting. They are flesh, John 3, 6. They mind the things of the flesh, Romans 8, 5. And they live after the flesh, verse 13. If the consent of the flesh be got to an action, the consent of the conscience is rarely waited for.

Yea, the body is often served when the conscience has entered a descent. Sixthly, is not every one by nature discontent with his present lot in the world, or with some one thing or other in it? This also was Adam's case, Genesis 3, 5, and 6. Some one thing is always missing, so that man is a creature given to changes. And if any doubt of this, let them look over all their enjoyments, and after a review of them, listen to their own hearts, and they will hear a secret murmuring for want of something.

Though perhaps if they considered the manner aright, they would see that it is better for them to want than to have that something. Since the hearts of our first parents flew out at their eyes on the forbidden fruit, and a night of darkness was thereby brought on the world, their posterity have a natural disease, which Solomon calls a wandering of the desires, or, as the word is, a walking of the soul, Ecclesiastes 6, 9. This is a sort of diabolical trance wherein the soul traverses the world, feeds itself with a thousand airy nothings, snatches at this and the other created excellency and imagination and desire, goes here and there and everywhere, except where it should go. And the soul is never cured of this disease, till overcoming grace bring it back to take up its everlasting rest in God through Christ.

But till this be, if man were set again in paradise, the garden of the Lord, all the pleasures there would not keep him from looking, yea, and leaping over the hedge a second time. Seventhly, are we not far more easily impressed and influenced by evil counsels and examples than by those that are good? You will see this was the ruin of Adam, Genesis 3, 6. Evil example to this day is one of Satan's master devices to ruin men. And so we have by nature more of the fox than of the lamb, yet that ill property some observe in the creature, that is, that if one lamb skip into a water, the rest that are near will suddenly follow, may be observed also in the disposition of the children of man to whom it is very natural to embrace an evil way, because they see others upon it before them.

Ill example has frequently the force of a violent stream to carry us over plain duty, but especially if the example be given by those we bear a great affection to. Our affection in that case blinds our

judgment, and what we would abhor in others is complied with, to humor them, and nothing is more plain than generally men choose rather to do what the most do than what the best do. Eighthly, who of all Adam's sons need to be taught the art of sewing fig leaves together to cover their nakedness, Genesis 3, 7. When we have ruined ourselves and made ourselves naked to our shame, we naturally seek to help ourselves by ourselves, and many poor shifts are falling upon us silly and insignificant as that of fig leaves.

What pains are men at to cover their sin from their own consciences and to draw all the fair colors upon it that they can? And when once convictions are fastened upon them so that they cannot but see themselves naked, it is as natural for them to attempt to spin a cover to it out of their own bowels as for fishes to swim in the water or birds to fly in the air. Therefore, the first question of the convinced is, What shall we do? Acts 2, 27. How shall we qualify ourselves? What shall we perform? Not minding that the new creature is God's own workmanship or deed.

Ephesians 2, 10. More than Adam thought of being clothed with the skins of sacrifices. Genesis 3, 21.

Ninthly, do not Adam's children naturally follow his footsteps and hide themselves from the presence of the Lord? Genesis 3, 8. We are every bit as blind in this matter as he was who thought to hide himself from the presence of God among the shady trees of the garden. We are very apt to promise ourselves more security in a secret sin than in one that is openly committed. The eye of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight, saying, No eye shall see me.

Job 24, 15. And men will freely do that in secret. Wish they would be ashamed to do in the presence of a child, as if darkness could hide from an all-seeing God.

Are we not naturally careless of communion with God? I in averse to it. Never was there any communion betwixt God and Adam's children where the Lord himself had not the first word. If he would let them alone, they would never inquire after him.

Isaiah 57, 17. I hid me. Did he seek after a hiding God? Very far from it.

He went on in the way of his heart. Tenthly, how loathsome men are to confess sin, to take guilt and shame to themselves. And was it not thus in the case before us? Genesis 3, 10.

Adam confesses his nakedness, which he could not get denied, but not one word he says of his sin. Here was the reason of it. He would fain have hid it if he could.

It is as natural for us to hide sin as to commit it. Many sad instances thereof we have in this world, but a far clearer proof of it we shall get at the day of judgment, the day in which God will judge the secrets of men. Romans 2, 17.

Many a foul mouth will then be seen, which is now wiped, and saith, I have done no wickedness. Proverbs 30, verse 20. Lastly, is it not natural for us to extenuate our sin and transfer the guilt upon others? And when God examined our guilty first parents, did not Adam lay the blame on the woman, and did not the woman lay the blame on the serpent? Genesis 3, 12 and 13.

Now Adam's children need not be taught this hellish policy. For before they can well speak, if they cannot get the fact denied, they will cunningly lisp out something to lessen their fault and lay the

blame upon another. Nay, so natural is this to men, that in the greatest of sins they will lay the fault upon God himself.

They will blaspheme his holy providence under the mistaken name of misfortune or ill luck, and thereby lay the blame of their sin at heaven's door. And was not this one of Adam's tricks after his fall? Genesis 3, 12. And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.

Observe the order of the speech. He makes his apology in the first place, and then comes his confession. His apology is long, but his confession very short.

It is all comprehended in a word, and I did eat. How pointed and distinct is his apology, as he was afraid his meaning should have been mistaken. The woman, says he, or that woman, as if he would have appointed a judge to his own work, of which we read, Genesis 3, 22.

There was but one woman then in the world, so that one would think he need not have been so nice and exact in pointing at her, and yet she is as carefully marked out in his defense as if there had been ten thousand. The woman whom thou gavest me, he speaks as if he had been ruined with God's gift, and to make the gift look the blacker it is added to all this, thou gavest to be with me, a constant companion to stand by me as a helper. This looks as if Adam would have fathered an ill design upon the Lord in giving him this gift.

And after all, there is a new demonstrative here, before the sentence is complete. He says not the woman gave, but the woman she gave me, emphatically, as if he had said, she, even she, gave me of the tree. This much for his apology.

But his confession is quickly over in one word, as he spoke it, and I did eat. And there is nothing here to point to himself, and as little to show what he had eaten. How natural is this black art to Adam's posterity! He that runs may read it.

So universally does Solomon's observation hold true. Proverbs 19 3 The foolishness of man perverteth his way, and his heart frets against the Lord. Let us then call fallen Adam father.

Let us not deny the relation, seeing we bear his image. Now to shut up this point, by concurring evidence from the Lord's word, our own experience and observation. Let us be persuaded to believe the doctrine of the corruption of our nature, and to look to the second Adam, the blessed Jesus, for the application of his precious blood, to remove the guilt of our sin, and for the efficacy of his Holy Spirit to make us new creatures, knowing that except we be born again we cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Of the corruption of the understanding. Secondly, I proceed to inquire into the corruption of nature, in the several parts thereof. But who can comprehend it? Who can take the exact dimensions of it, in its breadth, length, height, and depth? The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.

Who can know it? Jeremiah 17 9 However, we may quickly perceive as much of it as may be matter of deepest humiliation, and may discover to us the absolute necessity of regeneration. Man in this natural state is altogether corrupt. Both soul and body are polluted, as the apostle proves at large, Romans 3 10-18.

As for the soul, this natural corruption has spread itself through all the faculties thereof, and is to be found in the understanding, the will, the affections, the conscience, and the memory. The understanding, that leading faculty, is despoiled of its primitive glory, and covered over with confusion. We have fallen into the hands of our grand adversary, as Samson into the hands of the Philistines, and are deprived of our two eyes.

There is none that understandeth. Romans 3 11 Mind and conscience are defiled. Titus 1 15 The natural man's apprehension of divine things is corrupt.

Psalms 51 21 Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such in one as thyself. His judgment is corrupt, and cannot be otherwise. Seeing his eye is evil.

And therefore the Scriptures, to show that men did all wrong, say, Every one did that which was right in his own eyes. Judges 17 6 and 21 25 And his imaginations, or reasonings, must be cast down, by the power of the word, being of a peace with his judgment. 2 Corinthians 10 5 But to point out this corruption of the mind, or understanding more particularly, let these following things be considered first.

There is a natural weakness in the minds of men with respect to spiritual things. The apostle determines, concerning every one that is not endued with the graces of the Spirit, that he is blind, and cannot see afar off. 2 Peter 1 9 Hence the Spirit of God in the Scripture clothes, as it were, divine truths with earthly figures, even as parents teach their children using similitudes.

Hosea 12 10 Which though it doth not cure, yet doth evidence this natural weakness in the minds of men. But we want not plain proofs of it from experiences. 1 How hard a task is it to teach many people the common principles of our holy religion, and to make truths so plain as they may understand them.

Here there must be precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line. Isaiah 28 10 Try the same persons and other things, they shall be found wiser in their generation than the children of light. They understand their work and business in the world as well as their neighbors, though they be very stupid and unteachable in the matters of God.

Tell them how they may advance their worldly wealth, or how they may gratify their lusts, and they will quickly understand these things, though it is very hard to make them know how their souls may be saved, or how their hearts may find rest in Jesus Christ. 2 Consider these who have many advantages beyond the generality of mankind, who have had the benefit of good education and instruction. Yea, and are blessed with the light of grace in that measure wherein it is ascribed to the saints on earth.

Yet how small a portion have they of the knowledge of divine things! What ignorance and confusion still remain in their minds! How often are they mired even in the matter of practical truths and speak as a child in these things! It is a pitiful weakness that we cannot perceive the things which God has revealed to us, and it must needs be a sinful weakness since the law of God requires us to know and believe them. 3 What dangerous mistakes are to be found amongst men in concerns of greatest weight! What rueful delusions prevail over them! Do we not often see those who in other things are the wisest of men, the most notorious fools with respect to their soul's interest? Matthew 11.25 Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent. Many that are

eagle-eyed in the trifles of time are like owls and bats in the light of life.

Nay, truly the life of every natural man is but one continued dream and delusion, out of which he never awakes, till either by a new light darted from heaven into his soul he comes to himself, Luke 15.17, or in hell he lifts up his eyes. 6.16.23 Therefore in Scripture account, though he be ever so wise, he is a fool and a simple one. Secondly, man's understanding is naturally overwhelmed with gross darkness and spiritual things.

Man at the instigation of the devil attempting to break out a new light in his mind, Genesis 3.5, instead of that broke up the doors of the bottomless pit, so as by the smoke thereof to be buried in darkness. When God first made man, and his mind was a lamp of light, but now when it comes to make him over again in regeneration, he finds it darkness. Ephesians 5 8 You were sometimes darkness.

Sin is closed in windows of the soul. Darkness is over all the region. It is the land of darkness in the shadow of death, where the light is as darkness.

The prince of darkness reigns there, and nothing but the works of darkness are framed there. 9 We are born spiritually blind, and cannot be restored without a miracle of grace. This is thy case, whoever thou art, that art not born again, that you may be convinced of this matter.

Take the following evidences of it. 1 The darkness that was upon the face of the world before, and at the time when Christ came, arising as the Son of Righteousness upon the earth. When Adam by his sin had lost that primitive light with which he was endued at his creation, it pleased God to make a glorious revelation of his mind and will to him, touching the way of salvation.

Gen 3 15 This was handed down by him and other godly fathers before the flood. Yet the natural darkness of the mind of man prevailed so far against that revelation as to carry off all sense of true religion from the old world, except what remained in Noah's family, which was preserved in the ark. After the flood, as men multiplied on the earth, the natural darkness of the mind prevailed again, and the light decayed till it died away among the generality of mankind, and was preserved only among the posterity of Shem.

And even with them it had nearly set when God called Abraham from serving other gods. Joshua 24 15 God gives Abraham a more clear and full revelation which he communicates to his family. Genesis 18 19 Yet the natural darkness was spit out at length, save that it was preserved among the posterity of Jacob.

They being carried down into Egypt, that darkness so prevailed as to leave them very little sense of true religion, and there was the necessity of a new revelation to be made to them in the wilderness. And many a cloud of darkness got above that now and then during the time between Moses and Christ. When Christ came, the world was divided into Jews and Gentiles.

The Jews and the true light with them were within an enclosure. Psalm 147 19 20 Between them and the Gentile world there was a partitioned wall of God's making, namely the ceremonial law. And upon that there was reared up another of man's own making, namely a rooted enmity betwixt the parties, Ephesians 2 14 15.

If we look abroad without the enclosure, and accept these proselytes of the Gentiles, who by means of some rays of light breaking forth upon them from within the enclosure, having renounced idolatry, worshipped the true God, but did not conform to the Mosaic rites, we see nothing but dark places of the earth, full of these habitations of cruelty. Psalm 74 20 Gross darkness covered the face of the Gentile world, and the way of salvation was utterly unknown among them. They were drowned in superstition and idolatry, and had multiplied their idols to such a vast number that about thirty thousand are reckoned to have been worshipped by those of Europe alone.

Whatever wisdom was among their philosophers, the world by that wisdom knew not God. 1 Corinthians 1 21 And all their researches in religion were but groping in the dark. Acts 17 27 If we look within the enclosure, and accept a few that were groaning and waiting for the consolation of Israel, we will see a gross darkness on the face of that generation.

Though to them were committed the oracles of God, yet they were most corrupt in their doctrine. Their traditions were multiplied, but the knowledge of those things wherein the life of religion lies was lost. Masters of Israel knew not the nature and necessity of regeneration.

John 3 10 Their religion was to build on their birth privilege as children of Abraham, Matthew 2 9, to glory in their circumcision and other external ordinances, Philippians 3 2 3, and to rest in the law, Romans 2 17. After they had by their false glosses cut it so short that they might outwardly go well-nigh to the fulfilling of it, Matthew 5 11 Thus was darkness over the face of the world when Christ the true light came into it, and so is darkness over every soul, till he as a day-star arise in the heart. The latter is an evidence of the former.

What but the natural darkness of men's minds can still thus wear out the light of external revelation in a manner upon which eternal happiness depends? Men did not forget the way of preserving their lives, but how quickly they lost their knowledge of the way of salvation of their souls, which are of infinitely more weight and worth. When patriarchs and prophets' teaching was ineffectual, it became necessary for men to be taught of God himself, who alone can open the eyes of the understanding. But that it might appear that the corruption of man's mind lay deeper than to be cured by mere external revelation, there were but very few converted by Christ's preaching, who spoke as never man spoke, John 12 37 and 38.

The great cure remained to be performed by the Spirit accompanying the preaching of the apostles, who, according to the promise, John 14 12, were to do greater works. And if we look to the miracles wrought by our blessed Lord, we shall find that by applying the remedy to the soul for the cure of bodily distempers, as in the case of the man sick of the palsy, Matthew 9 2, he plainly discovered that his main errand into the world was to cure the diseases of the soul. I find a miracle wrought upon one that was born blind performed in such a way as seems to have been designed to let the world see in it as in a glass or case and cure.

John 9 6. He made clay and anointed the eyes of the blind man with clay. What could more fitly represent the blindness of men's minds than eyes closed up with earth? Isaiah 6 1. Shut their eyes, shut them up by anointing or casting them with mortar as a word will bear. In chapter 44 18, he has shut their eyes.

The word properly signifies he has plastered their eyes, as the house in which the leprosy had been was to be plastered, Leviticus 14 42. Thus the Lord's word discovers the design of that

strange work, and by it shows us that the eyes of our understanding are naturally shut. Then the blind man must go and wash off this clay in the pool of Siloam.

No other water will serve this purpose. If that pool had not represented him whom the Father sent into the world to open the blind eyes, Isaiah 42 5, I think the evangelist had not given us the interpretation of that name which he says signifies sent, John 9 7. So we may conclude that the natural darkness of our minds is such as there is no cure for, but from the blood and spirit of Jesus Christ, whose eyes solve only, can make us see, Revelation 3 18. Evidence 2. Every natural man's heart in life is a mass of darkness, disorder and confusion, how refined soever he appears in the sight of men.

For we ourselves also say if the Apostle Paul were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, Titus 3 verse 3, and yet at the time which this text looks to, he was blameless, touching the righteousness which is in the law, Philippians 3 6. This is a plain evidence of the eye being evil, the whole body is full of darkness, Matthew 6 23. The unrenewed part of mankind is rambling through the world like so many blind men who will neither take a guide nor guide themselves, and therefore are falling over this and the other precipice into destruction. Some are running after their covetousness, still to be pierced through with many sorrows, some sticking in the mire of sensuality, others dashing themselves on the rock of pride and self-conceit, everyone stumbling on some one stone of stumbling or other, all of them are running themselves upon the sore point of justice while they eagerly follow, whether their unmortified passions and affections lead them.

And while some are lying long in the way, others are coming up, falling headlong over them. Therefore, woe unto the blind world because of offences, Matthew 18 7. Aves and judgments swarm in the world because it is night wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. All the unregenerate are utterly mistaken in the point of true happiness, for though Christianity is fixed at manner and point of principle, yet nothing less than overcoming grace can fix it in the practical judgment.

All men agree in the desire of being happy, but among unrenewed men, touching the way to happiness, there are almost as many opinions as there are men. They being turned every one to his own way, Isaiah 53 6. There like the blind sodomites about Lot's house all were seeking to find the door. Some groped one part of the wall for it, some another, but none of them could certainly say he had found it.

So the natural man may stumble on any good but the chief good. Look into thine own unregenerate heart, and there will see all turned upside down, heaven lying under, and earth atop. Look into thy life, there thou mayst see how thou art playing the madman, snatching at shadows and neglecting the substance, eagerly flying after that which is not, and sliding that which is, and will be forever.

Evidence number three. The natural man is always as a woodman, left without light, either trifling or doing mischief. Try to catch thy heart at any time thou wilt, and thou shalt find it either weaving the spider's web or hatching cockatrice eggs.

Isaiah 59 5. Roving through the world or digging into the pit, filled with vanity or else with vileness, busy doing nothing or what is worse than nothing, a sad sign of a dark mind. Evidence number

four. The natural man is void of the saving knowledge of spiritual things.

He knows not what a God he has to do with. He is unacquainted with Christ and knows not what sin is. The greatest graceless wits are blind as moles in these things.

I but some such can speak of them to good purpose, so might those Israelites of the signs and miracles which their eyes had seen. Deuteronomy 29 3. To whom, nevertheless, the Lord had not given a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear unto that day. Verse four.

Many a man that bears the name of a Christian may make Pharaoh's confession of faith. Exodus 5 2. I know not the Lord, neither will they let go what he commands them to part with. God is with them as a prince in disguise among his subjects who meets with no better treatment from them than if he were his fellows.

Psalm 50 21. Do they know Christ or see his glory and any beauty in him for which he is to be desired? If they did, they would not slight him as they do. A view of his glory would so darken all created excellency that they would take him for and instead of all, and gladly close with him as he offers himself in the gospel.

John 4 10. Psalm 9 10. Matthew 13 44-46.

Do they know what sin is who nurse a serpent in their bosom, hold fast a seat, and refuse to let it go? I own indeed that they may have a natural knowledge of those things as the unbelieving Jews had of Christ whom they saw and conversed with. But there was a spiritual glory in him perceived by believers only. John 1 14.

And in respect of that glory, the unbelieving world knew him not. Verse 10. The spiritual knowledge of them they cannot have, it is above the reach of the carnal mind.

1 Corinthians 2 14. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him. Neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned.

He may indeed discourse of them, but in no other way than one can talk of honey or vinegar who never tasted the sweetness of the one nor the sourness of the other. He has some notions of spiritual truths, but sees not the things themselves that are wrapped up in the words of truth. 1 Timothy 1 7. Understanding neither what they say nor what of they affirm.

In a word natural men fear, seek, confess, say no, not what. Thus you may see man's understanding naturally is overwhelmed with gross darkness of spiritual things. Thirdly, there is in the mind of man a natural bias to evil, whereby it comes to pass that whatever difficulties it finds while occupied about things truly good, it acts with a great deal of ease in evil, as being in that case in its own element, Jeremiah 4.22. The carnal mind drives heavily on in the thoughts of good, but furiously in the thoughts of evil.

While holiness is before it, fetters are upon it. But when once it has got over the hedge, it is as a bird got out of a cage, and becomes a free thinker indeed. Let us reflect a little on the apprehension and imagination of the carnal mind, and we shall find incontestable evidence of this woeful bias to evil.

Evidence 1. As when a man by a violent stroke on the head loses his sight, there arises to him a kind of false light, whereby he seems to see a thousand airy nothings. So man, being struck blind to all that is truly good, for his eternal interest, has the light of another sort brought into his mind. His eyes are opened, knowing evil, and so are the words of the tempter, Verify, Gen 3.5. The words of the prophet are plain, They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge, Jeremiah 4.22. The mind of man has a natural dexterity to devise mischief.

There are not any so simple as to want skill, to contrive ways to gratify their lusts, and ruin their souls. Though the power of everyone's hand cannot reach to put their devices in execution. No one needs to be taught this black art, but as weaves grow up of their own accord in a neglected ground, so doth this wisdom, which is earthly, sensual, devilish, Gen 3.15, grow up in the minds of men by virtue of the corruption of their nature.

Why should we be surprised with the product of corrupt wits, their cunning devices to affront heaven, to oppose and run down truth and holiness, and to gratify their own and other men's lusts? They grow with the stream. No wonder that they make great progress, their stock is within them, and increases by using of it. And the works of darkness are contrived with a greater advantage, that the mind is wholly destitute of spiritual light, which, if it were in them in any measure, would so far as the mind is in the darkness, it is in the light, and the mind is in the light.

And the works of darkness are contrived with a greater advantage, that the mind is wholly And why? But because he is a fool, and hath not wisdom, which would mar the contrivances of darkness. The more natural a thing is, the more easily it is done. Evidence No.

2 Let the corrupt mind have but the advantage of once being employed in or present at some piece of service for God, that so the device, if not in itself sinful, yet may become sinful by its unseasonableness, it will quickly fall upon some device or expedient, by its starting aside, which deliberation and seizing could not produce. Thus Saul, who wist not what to do before the priest began to consult God, is quickly determined, when once the priest's hand was in, his own heart then gave him an answer, and would not allow him to wait an answer from the Lord. 1 Samuel 14, 18, 19 Such a devilish dexterity hath the carnal mind in devising what may most effectually divert men from their duty to God.

Evidence No. 3 Doth not the carnal mind naturally strive to grasp spiritual things in imagination? Is it the soul were quite immersed in flesh and blood, and would turn everything into its own shape? Let men who are used to the forming of the most abstracted notions look into their own souls, and they will find this bias in their minds, whereof the idolatry which did of old instill doth so much profeld in the world, is an incontestable evidence, for it plainly discovers that men naturally would have a visible deity, and see what they worship, and therefore they change the glory of the incorruptible God into an image, and so on. Romans 1.23 The reformation of these nations, blessed be the Lord for it, has banished idolatry and images too out of our churches, but heart reformation only can break down mental idolatry, and banish the more subtle and refined image, worship, and representations of the deity out of the minds of men.

The world in the time of its darkness was never more prone to the former than the unsanctified mind is to the latter, hence are horrible, monstrous, and misshapen thoughts of God Christ to glory above in all spiritual things. Evidence No. 4 What a difficult task it is to detain the carnal mind

before the Lord! How averse it is to the entertaining of good thoughts, and dwelling in the meditation of spiritual things! If a person be driven at any time to think of the great concerns of the soul, it is no harder work to hold in an unruly, hungry beast than to hedge in the carnal mind, that it get not away to the vanities of the world again.

When God is speaking to men by His word, or they are speaking to Him in prayer, doth not the mind often leave them before the Lord, like so many idols that have eyes but see not, and ears but hear not? The carcass is laid down before God, but the world gets away the heart. Though the eyes be closed, a man sees a thousand vanities. The mind in the meantime is like a bird got loose out of a cage, skipping from bush to bush, so that in effect the man never comes to himself, till he be gone from the presence of the Lord.

Say not, It is impossible to get the mind fixed. It is hard indeed, but not impossible. Grace from the Lord can do it.

Agreeable objects will do it. Psalm 108 verse 1 A pleasant speculation will arrest the minds of the inquisitive. The worldly man's mind is in little hazard of wavering when he is contriving business, casting up his accounts, or telling his money.

If he answers you not at first, he tells you he did not hear you. He was busy. His mind was fixed.

Were we admitted into the presence of a cain to petition for our lives, we should be in no hazard of gazing through the chamber of presence. But here lies a case. A carnal mind employed about any spiritual good is out of its element, and therefore cannot fix.

Evidence number 5 But however hard it is to keep the mind on good thoughts, it sticks its glue to what is evil and corrupt like itself. 2 Peter 2.14 Having eyes full of adultery, and cannot cease from sin. Their eyes cannot cease from sin, so the words are construed.

That is, their hearts and minds, venting by the eyes what is within, are like a furious beast which cannot be held in once it has got out of its head. Let the corrupt imagination once be let loose on a favored object, it will be found hard work to call it back again, though both reason and will are for its retreat. For then it is in its own element, and to draw it off from its impurities is the drawing of a fish out of the water, or the rending of a limb from a man.

It runs like fire set to a train of powder, that rests not till it can get no further. Evidence 6 Consider how the carnal imagination supplies a want of real objects to the corrupt heart, that it may make sinners happy at least in the imaginary enjoyment of their lusts. Thus the corrupt heart feeds itself with imagination sins.

The unclean person is filled with speculative impurities, having eyes full of adultery. The covetous man fills his heart with the world, though he cannot get his hands full of it. The malicious person with delight acts his revenge within his own breast.

The envious man within his own narrow soul beholds with satisfaction his neighbor laid low, and every lust finds a corrupt imagination a friend to it in time of need. This it does not only when people are awake, but sometimes even when they are asleep, whereby it comes to pass that those sins are acted in dreams which their hearts pant after while they are awake. I am aware that some question the sinfulness of these things, but can it be thought that they are consistent with

that holy nature and frame of spirit which was in innocent Adam and in Jesus Christ, and should be in every one? It is the corruption of nature, thence, that makes filthy dreamers condemn.

Jude verse 8 Solomon had experience of the exercise of grace in sleep. In a dream he prayed, in a dream he made the best choice. Both were accepted of God.

First Kings 3, 5, and 15 And if a man may in his sleep do what is good and acceptable to God, why may he not also in his sleep do that which is evil and displeasing to God? The same Solomon would have men aware of this, and prescribes the best remedy against it, namely, the law upon the heart. Proverbs 6, 20, 21 When thou sleepest, says he, it shall keep thee to wit from sinning in thy sleep, that is, from sinful dreams. For a man's being kept from sin, not his being kept from affliction, is the immediate proper effect of the law of God impressed upon the heart.

Psalms 119 verse 11 And thus the whole verse is to be understood as appears from verse 23 For the commandment is the lamp, and the law is light, and reproofs of instruction are the way of life. Now the law is a lamp and light, as it guides in the way of duty, and instructing reproofs from the law are the way of life, as they keep from sin. They guide not into the way of peace, but as they lead into the way of duty, nor do they keep a man out of trouble, but as they keep him from sin.

Remarkable is that particular in which Solomon instances the sin of uncleanness, to keep thee from the evil woman, verse 24, which is to be joined to verse 22, enclosing the twenty-third in a parenthesis, as some versions have it. These things may suffice to convince us of the natural bias of the mind to evil. Fourthly, there is in the carnal mind an opposition to spiritual truths, and an aversion to this, and to them.

It is as little a friend to divine truths as it is to holiness. The truths of natural religion, which do, as it were, force their entry into the minds of natural men, they hold prisoners in unrighteousness, Romans 1.18. As for the truths of revealed religion, there is an evil heart of unbelief in them, which opposes their entry, and there is an armed force necessary to captivate the mind to the belief of them, 2 Corinthians 10.4.5. God has made a revelation of his mind and will to sinners, touching the way of salvation. He has given us a doctrine of his holy word.

But do natural men believe it indeed? No, they do not. For he that believeth not on the Son of God believeth not God, as is plain from 1 John 5.10. They believe not the promises of the word. They look on them in effect only as fair words, for those that receive them are thereby made partakers of the divine nature, 2 Peter 1.4. The promises are as silver cords let down from heaven to draw sinners unto God, and to waft them over into the promised land.

But they cast them from them. They believe not the threatenings of the word, as men travelling in deserts carry fire about with them to fright away wild beasts. So God has made his law a fiery law, Deuteronomy 33.2, hedging it about with threats of wrath.

But men are naturally more brutish than beasts themselves, and will need touch the fiery smoking mountain though they should be thrust through with a dart. I doubt not, but most, if not all of you, who are yet in the black state of nature, will hear plead not guilty. But remember the carnal Jews in Christ's time were as confident as you are.

They believed Moses, John 9.28.29. But he confutes their confidence roundly, telling them John 5.46. Had you believed Moses, you would have believed me. If you believe the truths of God, you

dare not reject as you do him who is truth itself. The very difficult you find in assenting to this truth discovers that unbelief which I am charging you with.

Has it not proceeded so far with some at this day, that it has steeled their foreheads with impudence and impiety, openly to reject all revealed religion? Surely it is out of the abundance of the heart of their mouth speaketh. But though you set not your mouths against heaven as they do, the same bitter root of unbelief is in all men by nature, and reigns in you, and will reign, till overcoming grace brings your minds to the belief of the truth. To convince you in this point, consider these three things.

Evidence 1. How few are there who have been blessed with an inward illumination by this special operation of the Spirit of Christ, leading them into a view of divine truths in their spiritual and heavenly luster. How have you learned the truths of religion which you pretend to believe? You have them merely by the benefit of external revelation, and by education, so that you are Christians, because you were not born and bred in a pagan, but in a Christian country. You were strangers to the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the word in your hearts, and so you cannot have the assurance of faith with respect to the outward divine revelation made in the word.

1 Corinthians 2 10-12 Therefore you were still unbelievers. It is written in the prophets, They shall all be taught of God. Every man, therefore, that is heard and has learned of the Father, cometh unto me, says our Lord.

John 6 45 Now you have not come to Christ, therefore you have not been taught of God. You have not been so taught, and therefore you have not come. Ye believe not.

Behold the revelation from which the faith, even of the fundamental principles in religion, doth spring. Matthew 16 16-17 Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood is not revealed unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

If ever the Spirit of the Lord take thee in hand to work in you that faith which is the operation of God, it may be that as much time will be spent in raising the old foundation as will make you find the necessity of the working of his mighty power, to enable you to believe the very foundation principles which now you think that you make no doubt of. Ephesians 1-19 2 How many professors have made shipwreck of their faith, such as it was in time of temptation and trial? See how they fall like stars from heaven when Antichrist prevails. 2 Thessalonians 2 11-12 God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned to believe not the truth.

They fall into damning delusions, because they never really believed a truth, though they themselves and others too thought they did believe it. 3 Consider the utter inconsistency of most men's lives with the principle of religion which they profess. You may as soon bring East and West together as their principles and practices.

Men believe that fire will burn them, and therefore they will not throw themselves into it. But the truth is, most men live as if they thought the gospel a mere fable, and the wrath of God revealed in His word against their unrighteousness and ungodliness a mere scarecrow. If you believe the doctrines of the word, how is it that you are so unconcerned about the state of your souls before

the Lord? How is it that you are so little concerned about this weighty point, whether you be born again or not? 4 Many live as they were born, and are likely to die as they live, and yet live in peace.

Do such believe the sinfulness and misery of a natural state? Do they believe that they are children of wrath? Do they believe that there is no salvation without regeneration, and no regeneration but what makes a man a new creature? If you believe the promises of the word, why do you not embrace them, and seek to enter into the promised rest? What sluggard would not dig for a hid treasure if he really believed that he might so obtain it? Men will work and sweat for a maintenance, because they believe that by so doing they shall get it, yet they will be at no tolerable pains for the eternal weight of glory. Why? But because they do not believe the word of promise, Hebrews 4, 1 and 2. If you believe the threatenings, how is it that you live in your sins, live out of Christ, and yet hope for mercy? Do such believe God to be the holy and just one, who will by no means clear the guilty? No, no, none believe, none, or next to none, believe what a just God the Lord is, and how severely he punishes. Fifthly, there is in the mind of man a natural proneness to lies and falsehood, which makes for the safety of lusts.

They go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. Psalm 58, verse 3. We have this with the rest of the corruption of our nature from our first parents. God revealed the truth to them, but through the solicitation of the tempter they first doubted, then disbelieved it, and embraced a lie instead of it.

For an incontestable evidence hereof we may see the first article of the devil's creed, Ye shall not surely die, Gen 3, 4, which was obtruded by him on our first parents, and by them received, naturally embraced by their posterity, and hailed fast, till light from heaven obliged them to quit it. It spreads itself through the lives of natural men, who, till their consciences be awakened, walk after their own lusts, still retaining the principle, They shall not surely die. And this is often improved to such perfection, that men can say in the face of the denounced curse, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst.

Deuteronomy 29.19 Whatever advantage the truths of God have over error, by means of education or otherwise, error has always with a natural man this advantage against truth, namely, that there is something within him which says, O that it were true, so that the mind lies fair for assenting to it. And here is a reason of it. The true doctrine is a doctrine that is according to godliness, 1 Timothy 6.3. And the truth which is after godliness, Titus 1.1. Error is a doctrine which is according to ungodliness, for there is never an error in the mind, or an untruth vented in the world, in matters of religion, but what has an affinity with one corruption of the heart or another, according to that of the Apostle 2 Thessalonians 2.12. They believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

So that truth and error, being otherwise attended with equal advantages for their reception, error, by this means, has most ready access into the minds of men in their natural state. Wherefore it is nothing strange that men reject the simplicity of gospel truths and institutions and greedily embrace error, an external pomp in religion, as they are so agreeable to the lusts of the heart and the vanity of the mind of the natural man. Hence also it is that so many embrace atheistical principles, for none do it but in compliance with their irregular passions, none but those whose advantage it would be that there were no God.

Lastly, man naturally is high-minded, for when the gospel comes in power to him, it is employed in casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, 2 Corinthians 10.5. 3. Lowliness of mind is not a flower that grows in the field of nature, but is planted by the finger of God in a renewed heart and learned of the lowly Jesus. It is natural to man to think highly of himself and what is his own, for the stroke which he has got by his fallen Adam has produced a false light whereby mole-heels about him appear like mountains, and a thousand airy beauties present themselves in his deluded fancy. 3. Vain man would be wise, so he accounts himself, and so he would be accounted by others.

Though man be born like a wild Assas-cult Job 11.12, his way is right, because it is his own, for every way of man is right in his own eyes. Proverbs 21.2. His state is good, because he knows none better. He is alive without the law.

Romans 7.9. And therefore his hope is strong, and his confidence firm. It is another tower of Babel reared up against heaven, and it will not fall, while the power of darkness can hold it up. The word batters it, yet it stands, while one breaches are made in it, but they are quickly repaired at another time.

It is all made to shake, but still it is kept up, till either God himself by his Spirit raises a heart to quake within the man which tumbles it down, and leaves not one stone upon another. 2 Corinthians 10.4.5. Or death batter it down, and raise the foundations of it. Luke 16.23. And as a natural man thinks highly of himself, so he thinks meanly of God, whatever he pretends.

Psalm 51.21. The thought is that I was altogether such in one as thyself. The doctrine of the gospel and the mystery of Christ are foolishness to him, and in his practice he treats them as such. 1 Corinthians 1.18 and 2.14. He brings a word and the works of God and the government of the world before the bar of his carnal reason, and there they are presumptuously censured and condemned.

Hosea 14.9. Sometimes the ordinary restraint of providence is taken off, and Satan is permitted to stir up the carnal mind, and in that case it is like an ant's nest, uncovered and disturbed, where doubts, denials, and hellish reasonings crowd in it, and cannot be laid by all the arguments brought against them, till power from on high subdueth the mind, and still the mutiny of the corrupt principles. Thus much of the corruption of the understanding, which although the half be not told, may discover to you the absolute necessity of regenerating grace. Call the understanding now Ichabod, for the glory is departed from it.

Consider this, you that are yet in a state of nature, and grown out your case before the Lord, that the sun of righteousness may arise upon you, before you be shut up in everlasting darkness. What avails your worldly wisdom? What do your attainments in religion avail, while your understanding lies wrapped up in its natural darkness and confusion, utterly void of the light of life? Whatever be the natural man's gifts or attainments, we must as in the case of the leper, Leviticus 13.44, pronounce him utterly unclean, as plague is in his head. But that is not all, it is in his heart too.

His will is corrupted, as I shall soon show. Of the Corruption of the Will 2. The will, that commanding faculty, which sometimes was faithful and ruled with God, is now turned traitor in rules with and for the devil. God planted it in man, wholly a right seed.

But now it is turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine. It was originally placed in due subordination to the will of God, as was shown before, but now it is gone wholly aside. However some magnify the power of free will, a view of the spirituality of the law, to which acts of moral discipline in no wise answer, and a deep insight into the corruption of nature given by the inward operation of the spirit, convincing of sin, righteousness, and judgment, would make men find an absolute need of the power of free grace, to remove the bands of wickedness from off their free will.

To open up this plague of the heart, I offer these following things to be considered. 1. There is in the unrenewed will an utter inability for what is truly good and acceptable in the sight of God. The natural man's will is in Satan's fetters, hemmed in within the circle of evil, and cannot move beyond it any more than a dead man can raise himself out of the grave.

Ephesians 2.1. We don't deny him a power to choose, pursue, and act what, as to the matter, is good. But though he can will what is good and right, he can will nothing right and well. John 15.5. Without me, i.e. separate from me as a branch from the stalk, as both the word and context carry it, he can do nothing, to wit, nothing truly and spiritually good.

His very choice and desire of spiritual things is carnal and selfish. John 6.26. He seeth me, because he did eat of the loaves, and were filled. He not only comes not to Christ, but he cannot come.

Verse 44. And what he can do acceptable to God, who believeth not on him, whom the Father has sent? To evidence this inability for good in the unregenerate, consider these two things. Evidence 1. How often does a light so shine before men's eyes, that they cannot but see the good which they should choose, and the evil which they should refuse? And yet their hearts have no more power to comply with that light, than if they were arrested by some invisible hand.

They see what is right, yet they follow and cannot but follow what is wrong. Their consciences tell them the right way, and approve of it too, yet their will cannot be brought up to it. Their corruption so chains them, that they cannot embrace it, so that they sigh and go backward, notwithstanding their light.

If it be not thus, how is it that the word and way of holiness meet with such entertainment in the world? How is it that clear arguments and reason on the side of piety and a holy life, which seem to have weight even with the carnal mind, do not bring men over to that side? Although the existence of a heaven and hell were but a maybe, if were sufficient to determine the will to the choice of holiness, were it capable of being determined thereto by mere reason. But men, knowing the judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. Romans 1.32 And how is it that those who magnify the power of free will, do not confirm their opinion before the world, by an ocular demonstration, in a practice as far above others in holiness, as the opinion of their natural ability is above that of others? Or is it maintained only for the protection of lusts, which men may hold fast as long as they please, and when they have no more use for them, throw them off in a moment and leap out of Delilah's lap into Abraham's bosom? Whatever use some make of that principle, it does of itself and in its own nature cast a broad shadow for a shelter to wickedness of heart and life.

It may be observed that the generality of the hearers of the gospel of all denominations are plagued with it. For it is a root of bitterness natural to all men, from whence springs so much fearlessness about the soul's eternal state, so many delays and off-puts in that waiting manner, whereby much work is laid up for a deathbed by some, while others are ruined by a legal walk in unacquaintedness with the life of faith, in the making use of Christ for sanctification, all flowing from the persuasion of sufficient natural abilities. So agreeable is it to corrupt nature.

Evidence number two. Let those who, by the power of the spirit of bondage, have had the law opened before them in its spirituality for their conviction, speak and tell if they found themselves able to incline their hearts towards it in that case, nay, whether the more the light shone into their souls, they did not find their hearts more and more unable to comply with it. There are some who have been brought unto the place of the breaking forth, who are yet in the devil's camp, who from their experience can tell that light led into the mind cannot give life to the will, to enable it to comply therewith, and could give their testimony here if they would, but take Paul's testimony concerning it, who in his unconverted state was far from believing his utter inability for good, but learned it by experience.

Romans 7.8-13. I own, the natural man may have a kind of love to the letter of the law, but here lies the stress of the matter. He looks on the holy law in a carnal dress, and so while he hugs the creature of his own fancy, he thinks that he has the law, but in very deed he is without the law. For as yet he sees it not in his spirituality.

If he did, he would find it the very reverse of his own nature, and what his will could not fall in with, till changed by the power of grace. Secondly, there is in the unrenewed will an averseness to good. Sin is the natural man's element.

He is unwilling to part with it as fisher to come out of the water into dry land. He not only cannot come to Christ, but he will not come, John 5.40. He is polluted and hates to be washed, Jeremiah 13.27. Wilt thou not be made clean? When shall it once be? He is sick, yet utterly averse to the remedy. He loves his disease, so that he loathes the physician.

He is a captive, a prisoner and a slave, but he loves his conqueror, his jailer and master. He is fond of his fetters, prison and drudgery, and has no liking to his liberty. For evidence of this averseness to good in the will of man, I will instance in some particulars evidence number one, the untowardness of children.

Do we not see them naturally lovers of sinful liberty? How unwilling are they to be hedged in? How averse to restraint? The world can bear witness that they are as bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke, and more, that it is far easier to bring young bullocks tamely to bear the yoke than to bring young children under discipline and make them tamely submit to be restrained in sinful liberty. Everybody may see in this, as in a glass, that man is naturally wild and willful, according to Zophar's observation, Job 11.12, that man is born like a wild ass's colt. What can be said more? He is like a colt, the colt of an ass, the colt of a wild ass, compare Jeremiah 2.24, a wild ass used to the wilderness, that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure, in her occasion who can turn her away.

Evidence number two. What pain and difficulty do men often find in bringing their hearts to religious duties? And what a task is it to the carnal heart to abide at them! It is a pain to it to leave

the world, but little to come before God. It is not easy to borrow time from the many things, to spend it upon the one thing needful.

Men often go to God in duties with their faces towards the world, and when their bodies are on the mount of ordinances, their hearts will be found at the foot of the hill going after their covetousness, Ezekiel 33.31. They are soon wearied of well-doing, for holy duties are not agreeable to their corrupt nature. Take notice of them at their worldly business, set them down with their carnal company, or let them be sucked in the breasts of the lust. Time seems to them to fly and dry furiously, so that it is gone ere they are aware.

But how heavily does a prayer, a sermon, or a Sabbath last? The Lord's day is the longest day of all the week with many, therefore they must sleep longer that morning, and go sooner to bed that night, than ordinarily they do, that the day may be made of a tolerable length. For their hearts say within them, When will the Sabbath be gone? Amos 8.5. The hours of worship are the longest hours of that day, hence when duty is over they are like men eased of a burden. And when the sermon is ended, many have neither the grace nor the good manners to stay till the blessing be pronounced.

But like the beasts, their head is away, as soon as a man puts his hand to loose them. And why? Because while they are at ordinances, they are as Doag detained before the Lord, 1 Samuel 22.7. Evidence 3 Consider how the will of the natural man rebels against the light, Job 24.13. Light sometimes enters in, because he is not able to keep it out, but he loves darkness rather than light. Sometimes by the force of truth, the outer door of the understanding is broken up, but the inner door of the will remains fast bolted.

Then lusts arise against light. Corruption and conscience encounter and fight in the field of battle, till corruption getting the upper hand, conscience is forced to turn its back. Convictions are murdered, and truth is made in hell prisoner, so that it cannot create any more disturbance.

While the word is preached or read, or the rod of God is upon the natural man, sometimes convictions are darted in on him, and his spirit is wounded in greater or lesser measure. But those convictions not being able to make him fall, he runs away with the arrow sticking in his conscience, and at length, one way or another, gets him out and makes himself whole again. Thus while the light shines, men naturally, averse to it, willfully shut their eyes, till God is provoked to blind them judicially, and they become proof against his word, and providence is too.

So go where they will, they can sit at ease, there is never a word from heaven to them that goeth deeper into their own ears. Hosea 4.17 Ephraim is joined to idols, let them alone. Evidence 4 Let us observe the resistance made by elect souls, when the Spirit of the Lord is at work to bring them from the power of Satan unto God.

Zion's king gets no subjects but by the stroke of sword, in a day of his power. Psalm 110.2 and 3 None come to him, but such as are drawn by divine hand. John 6.44 When the Lord comes to the soul, he finds a strong man, keepeth the house in a deep peace and security there, while the soul is fast asleep in the devil's arms.

But the prey must be taken from the mighty, and the captive delivered. Therefore the Lord awakens the sinner, opens his eyes, and strikes him with terror, while the clouds are black above

his head, and the sword of vengeance is held to his breast. Now he is at no small pains to put a fair face on a black heart, to shake off his fears, to make head against them, and to divert himself from thinking on the unpleasant and ungrateful subject of his soul's case.

If he cannot solve it himself from them, carnal reason is called in to help, and urges that there is no ground for so great fear. All may be well enough yet, and if it be ill with him, it will be ill with many. When the sinner is beat from this, and sees no advantage in going to hell with company, he resolves to leave his sins, but cannot think of breaking off so soon.

There is time enough, and he will do it afterwards. Conscience says, Today, if you will hear his voice hard and not your heart's. But he cries, Tomorrow, Lord, tomorrow, Lord, and just now, Lord, till that now is never like to come.

Thus many times he comes from his prayers and confessions with nothing but a breast full of sharper convictions. For the heart does not always cast up the sweet morsel as soon as confession is made with the mouth, Judges 10, 10 to 16. And when conscience obliges him to part with some lusts, others are kept as right eyes and right hands.

And there are rueful looks after those that are put away, as it was with the Israelites, who with bitter hearts remembered the fish they did eat in Egypt freely. Numbers 11, verse 5. Nay, when he is so pressed that he must need say before the Lord that he is content to part with all his idols, the heart will be given the tongue to lie. In a word, the soul, in this case, will shift from one thing to another like a fish from the hook at its jaws, till it can do no more, and power come to make it yield as a wild ass in her month, Jeremiah 2, 24.

Thirdly, there is in the will of man a natural proneness to evil, a woeful bent towards sin. Men naturally are bent to backsliding from God, Hosea 2, 7. They hang, as the word is, toward backsliding, even as a hanging wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly in an instant. Set holiness and life upon the one side, sin and death upon the other, and leave the unrenewed will to itself, it will choose sin and reject holiness.

This is no more to be doubted than that water poured on the side of a hill will run downward and not upward, or that a flame will ascend and not descend. Evidence number one. Is not the way of evil the first way which the children of men go? Do not their inclinations plainly appear on the wrong side, while yet they have no cunning to hide them? In the first opening of our eyes in the world, we look a squint hellward, not heavenward.

As soon as it appears that we are rational creatures, it appears that we are sinful creatures. Psalm 58, verse 3. The wicked are restrained from the womb, they go astray, as soon as they are born. Proverbs 22, 15.

Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him. Folly is bound in the heart, it is woven in our very nature. The knot will not unloose, it must be broken asunder by strokes.

Words will not do it, the rod must be taken to drive it away, and if it be not driven far away, the heart in it will meet to knit again. Not that the rod of itself will do this, the sad experience of many parents testifies to the contrary, and Solomon himself tells you, Proverbs 27, 22. Though thou shouldst bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from

him, it is so bound in his heart.

But the rod is an ordinance of God appointed for that end, which like the word is made effectual by the spirits accompanying his own ordinance. This, by the way, shows that parents in administering correction to their children have need first of all to correct their own irregular passions, and look upon it as a matter of awful solemnity, setting about it with much dependence on the Lord, and following it with prayer for the blessing, if they would have it effectual. Evidence number two.

How easily are men led aside to sin, the children who are not persuaded to good or otherwise simple ones, easily wrought upon, those whom the word cannot draw to holiness are led by Satan at his pleasure. Profane Esau, that cunning man, Genesis 25, 27, was as easily cheated of the blessing as if he had been a fool or an idiot. The more natural a thing is, the more easy it is.

So Christ's yoke is easy to the saints insofar as they are partakers of the divine nature, and sin is easy to the unrenewed man. But to learn to do good is as difficult as for the Ethiopian to change his skin, because the will naturally hangs towards evil and is averse to good. A child can cause a round thing to run when he cannot move a square thing of the same weight, for the roundness makes it fit for motion, though it goes with a touch.

Even so, men find the heart easily carried towards sin, while it is as a dead weight in the way of holiness. We must seek for the reason of this from the natural set and disposition of the heart, whereby it is pruned and bent to evil. Where men's will naturally but in equal balance to good and evil, the one might be embraced with as little difficulty as the other, but experience testifies it is not so.

In the sacred history of the Israelites, especially in the book of Judges, how often do we find them forsaking Jehovah the mighty God and doting upon the idols of the nations about them? But did ever any one of these nations grow fond of Israel's God and forsake their own idols? No, no, though man is naturally given to changes, this is but from evil to evil, not from evil to good. Jeremiah 2, 10 and 11 Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. Surely the will of man stands not in equal balance, but hath a cast to the wrong side.

Evidence 3 Consider how many go on still in the way of sin, till they meet with a stop of that from another hand than their own. Isaiah 57, 17 I hid me, and he went on forwardly in the way of his heart. If God withdraw his restraining hand and lay the reins on the sinner's neck, he is under no doubt what way to choose.

For observe it, the way of sin is the way of his heart. His heart naturally lies that way, it hath a natural propensity to sin. As long as God suffers him, they walk in their own way.

Acts 14, 16 The natural man is so fixed in his woeful choice that there needs no more to show he is off from God's way than to say he is upon his own. Evidence 4 Whatsoever good impressions are made on him, they do not last. Though his heart be firm as a stone, yea, harder than a nether millstone, and point of receiving them, it is otherwise unstable as water, and cannot keep them.

It works against the receiving of them, and when they are made, it works them off and returns to its natural bias. Hosea 6, 4 Your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away. The morning cloud promises a hearty shower, but when the sun arises, it vanishes.

The sun beats upon the early dew, and it evaporates, so the husbandman's expectation is disappointed. Such is the goodness of the natural man. Some sharp affliction or piercing conviction obliges him in some sort to turn from his evil course, but his will will not be renewed.

Religion is still against the grain with him, and therefore this goes off again. Psalm 78, 34-37 Though a stone thrown up into the air may abide there a little while, yet its natural heaviness will bring it down again. So do unrenewed men return to the wallowing in the mire, because though they wash themselves yet their swineish nature was not changed.

It is hard to cause wet wood to take fire, hard to make it keep fire, but it is harder than either of these to make the unrenewed will attain goodness, which is a plain evidence of the natural bent of the will to evil. Evidence 5 Do the saints serve the Lord now as they were wont to serve sin in their unconverted state? Very far from it. Romans 6, 20 When you were the servants of sin, you were free from righteousness.

Sin got all, and admitted no partner. But now, when they are the servants of Christ, are they free from sin? Nay, there are still with them some deeds of the old man, showing that he is but dying in them. And hence their hearts often misgive them, and slip aside into evil, when they would do good.

Romans 7, 21 They need to watch, and keep their hearts with all diligence. And their sad experience teaches them, that he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool. Proverbs 28, 26 If it be thus in the green tree, how must it be in the dry? 4 There is a natural contrariety, direct opposition, and enmity in the will of man to God himself and his holy will.

Romans 8, 7 The carnal mind is enmity against God. For it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. The will was once God's deputy in the soul, set to command therefore him.

But now it is set up against him. If you would have the picture of it in its natural state, the very reverse of the will of God represents it. If to fruit hangen before one's eyes be but forbidden, there is sufficient to draw the heart after it.

Let me instance in the sin of profane swearing and cursing, to which some are so abandoned that they take pride in it, belching out horrid oaths and curses, as if hell opened with the opening of their mouths, or larding their speeches with minced stoves, and all this without any manner of provocation, though even that would not excuse them. Pray tell me, number one, what profit is there here? A thief gets something in his hand for his pains. A drunkard gets a bellyful, but what do you get? Others serve the devil for pay, but you are volunteers that expect no reward but your work itself, an affronting of heaven.

And if you repent not, you will get your reward in full tell. When you go to hell, your work will follow you. The drunkard shall not have a drop of water to cool his tongue there, nor will the covetous man's wealth follow him into the other world.

You may drive on your old trade there. Eternity will be long enough to give you your heart's fill of it. Number two.

What pleasure is there here, but what flows from your trampling on the holy law? Which of your senses doth swearing and cursing gratify? If it gratify your ears, it can only be the noise it makes

against the heavens. Though you had a mind to give up yourselves to all manner of profanity and sensuality, there is so little pleasure can be strained out of these sins, that we must neither conclude your love for them, in this case, as a love to them for themselves, a devilish unhired love without any prospect of profit or pleasure from them otherwise. If any shall say, These are monsters of men, be it so, yet alas, a world as fruitful as such monsters, they are to be found almost everywhere.

Allow me to say, they must be admitted as a mouth of the whole unregenerate world against heaven. Roman 3.14. Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Verse 19.

Now we know that what thing soever the law saith, saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. I have a charge against every unregenerate man and woman, young and old, to be verified by the testimonies of the scriptures of truth, and the testimony of their own consciences, namely, that whether they be professors or profane, seeing as they are not born again, they are heart enemies to God, to the Son of God, to the Spirit of God, and to the law of God. Hear this, ye careless souls, that live at ease in your natural state.

First, you are enemies to God in your mind. Colossians 1.21. You are not as yet reconciled to Him. The natural enmity is not as yet slain, though perhaps it lies hid, and you do not perceive it.

Number 1. You are enemies to the very being of God. Psalm 14.1. The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. The proud man would that none were above himself, the rebel, there were no king, and the unrenewed man, who has a massive pride in rebellion, that there were no God.

He saith it in his heart, he wishes it were so, though he is ashamed and afraid to speak it out. That all natural men are such fools appears from the apostles quoting a part of this psalm, that every mouth may be stopped. Romans 3.10-19. I own, indeed, that while the natural man looks upon God as a creator and preserver of the world, because he loves his own self, therefore his heart rises not against the being of his benefactor.

But his enmity will quickly appear when he looks on God as a rector and judge of the world, binding him under the pain of the curse to exact holiness, and girding him with the cords of death because of his sin. Listen, in this case, to the voice of the heart, and thou will find it to be no God.

2. Your enemies to the nature of God, Job 21.14, they say unto God, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.

Men set up to themselves an idol of their own fancy instead of God, and then fall down and worship it. They loved him no other way than Jacob loved Leah, while he took her for Rachel. Every natural man is an enemy to God, if he is revealed in his word.

The infinitely holy, just, powerful, and true Being is not the God whom he loves, but the God whom he loathes. In fact, men naturally are haters of God. Romans 1.30. If they could, they certainly would make him otherwise in what he is.

For consider, it is a certain truth that whatsoever is in God is God. Therefore his attributes or perfections are not anything really distinct from himself. If God's attributes be not God himself, he is a compound being, and so not the first being, to say which is blasphemous, for the parts compounding are before the compound itself.

But he is Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. Now upon this I would, for your conviction, propose to your conscience a few queries. 1. How stand your hearts affected towards the infinite purity and holiness of God? Conscience will give an answer to this, while the tongue will not speak out.

If ye be not partakers of his holiness, ye cannot be reconciled to it. The pagans, finding they could not be like God in holiness, made their gods like themselves in filthiness, and thereby discover what sort of a god the natural man would have. God is holy.

Can an unholy creature love his unspotted holiness? Nay, it is a righteous only that can give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. God is light. Can creatures of darkness rejoice in it? Nay, every one that doth evil hateth light.

John 3.20. For what communion hath light with darkness? 2 Corinthians 6.14. 2. How stand your hearts affected with the justice of God? There is not a man who is wedded to his lusts, as all the unregenerate are, but would be content with the blood of his body to blot that letter out of the name of God. Can the malefactor love his condemning judge, or an unjustified sinner a just God? No, he cannot. Luke 7.47. To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

Hence as men cannot get the doctrine of his justice blotted out of the Bible, it is such an eyesore to them that they strive to blot it out of their minds. They ruin themselves by presuming on his mercy, while they are not careful to get a righteousness wherein they may stand before his justice. But saying their heart, the Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil.

Zephaniah 1.12. 3. How stand you affected to the omniscience and omnipresence of God? Men naturally would rather have a blind idol than the all-seeing God. Therefore they do what they can, as Adam did, to hide themselves from the presence of the Lord.

02 - The Proofs of Man's Depravity

Human Nature in its Fourfold State by Thomas Boston, Download No. 2 That man's nature is corrupted, proven. Lastly, I shall add but one observation more, and that is, that in every man, naturally, the image of fallen Adam does appear.

Some children, by their features and liniments of their face, do as it were father themselves, and thus we do resemble our first parents. Every one of us bears the image and impress of their fall upon him. And to evince a truth of this, I do appeal to the consciences of all in these following particulars.

First, is not a sinful curiosity natural to us, and is this not a print of Adam's image, Genesis 3, 6? Is not man naturally much more desirous to know new things and to practice old known truths? How, like old Adam, do we look in this, itching after novelties and disrelishing old solid doctrines? We seek after knowledge rather than holiness, and study most to know those things which are least edifying. Our wild and roving fancies need a bridle to curb them, while good solid affections must be quickened and spurred up. Secondly, if the Lord, by His holy law and wise providence, do put a restraint upon us to keep us back from anything, does not that restraint wet the edge of our natural inclinations, and make us so much keener in our desires? And in this, do we not betray it plainly that we are Adam's children, Genesis 3, 2, 3, and 6? I think this cannot be denied for daily observation evinces, that it is a natural principle that stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.

Proverbs 9, 17 The very heathens are convinced that man was possessed with the spirit of contradiction, though they knew not the spring of it. How often do men give themselves a loose in these things, in which if God hath left them at liberty they would have bound up themselves. But corrupt nature takes a pleasure in the very jumping over the hedge.

And is it not a repeating of her father's folly that men will rather climb for forbidden fruit and gather what is shaken off the ground of good providence to them when they have God's express allowance for it? Thirdly, which of all the children of Adam is not naturally disposed to hear the instruction that causeth to err? And was not this a rock our first parents split upon, Genesis 3, 4, and 6? How apt is weak man ever since that time to parley with temptations. God speaketh once, yea, twice, yea, man perceiveth it not, Job 33, 14. But readily doth he listen to Satan.

Men might often come fair off if they would dismiss temptations with abhorrence when first they appear. If they would nip them in the bud, they would soon die away. But alas, when we see the train laid for us and the fire put to it, yet we stand till it run along, and we be blown up with its force.

Fourthly, did not the eyes in our head often blind the eyes of the mind? And was not this the very case of our first parents, Genesis 3, 6? Man is never more blinded when he is looking on the objects that are most pleasant to sense. Since the eyes of our first parents were open to the forbidden fruit, men's eyes have been the gates of destruction to their souls, in which impure imaginations and sinful desires have entered the heart, to the wounding of the soul, wasting of the

conscience, and bringing dismal effects sometimes on whole societies, as in Achan's case, Joshua 7, 21. Holy Job was aware of this danger from these two little rolling bodies, which a very small splinter of wood will make useless, so that, with the king who dirt's not, with his ten thousand meet him that came with twenty thousand against him, Luke 15, 31 and 32.

He sendeth and desireth conditions of peace, Job 31, 1. I have made a covenant with mine eyes, and so on. Fifthly, is it not natural for us to take care for the body, even at the expense of the soul? This is one ingredient in the sin of our first parents, Genesis 3, 6. O how happy might we be if we were but at half the pains about our souls that we bestow upon our bodies! If that question, what must I do to be saved, Acts 16, 30, did run but near as oft through our minds as those questions do, what shall we eat, what shall we drink, wherewithal shall we be clothed? Matthew 6, 31. Many a now hopeless case would turn very hopeful.

But the truth is, most men live as if there were nothing but a lump of flesh, or as if their souls serve for no other use but like salt to keep the body from corrupting. They are flesh, John 3, 6. They mind the things of the flesh, Romans 8, 5, and they live after the flesh, verse 13. If the consent of the flesh be got to an action, the consent of the conscience is rarely waited for.

The body is often served when the conscience has entered a descent. Sixthly, is not every one by nature discontent with his present lot in the world, or with some one thing or other in it? This also was Adam's case, Genesis 3, 5, and 6. Some one thing is always missing, so that man is a creature given to changes. And if any doubt of this, let them look over all their enjoyments, and after a review of them, listen to their own hearts, and they will hear a secret murmuring for want of something.

Though perhaps if they considered the manner aright, they would see that it is better for them to want than to have that something. Since the hearts of our first parents flew out at their eyes on the forbidden fruit, and a night of darkness was thereby brought on the world, their posterity have a natural disease, which Solomon calls a wandering of the desires, or, as the word is, a walking of the soul, Ecclesiastes 6, 9. This is a sort of diabolical trance wherein the soul traverses the world, feeds itself with a thousand airy nothings, and snatches at this and the other created excellency and imagination and desire, goes here and there and everywhere except where it should go. And the soul is never cured of this disease, till overcoming grace bring it back to take up its everlasting rest in God through Christ.

But till this be, if man were set again in paradise, the garden of the Lord, all the pleasures there would not keep him from looking, yea, and leaping over the hedge a second time. Seventhly, are we not far more easily impressed and influenced by evil counsels and examples than by those that are good? You will see this was the ruin of Adam, Genesis 3, 6. Evil example to this day is one of Satan's master devices to ruin men. And so we have by nature more of the fox than of the lamb, yet that ill property some observe in the creature, that is, that if one lamb skip into a water, the rest that are near will suddenly follow, may be observed also in the disposition of the children of man to whom it is very natural to embrace an evil way, because they see others upon it before them.

Ill example has frequently the force of a violent stream to carry us over plain duty, but especially if the example be given by those we bear a great affection to. Our affection in that case blinds our judgment, and what we would abhor in others is complied with, to humor them, and nothing is

more plain that generally men choose rather to do what the most do than what the best do. Eighthly, who of all Adam's sons need to be taught the art of sewing fig leaves together to cover their nakedness, Genesis 3, 7? When we have ruined ourselves and made ourselves naked to our shame, we naturally seek to help ourselves by ourselves, and many poor shifts are falling upon us silly and insignificant as Adam's fig leaves.

What pains are men at to cover their sin from their own consciences and to draw all the fair colors upon it that they can? And when once convictions are fastened upon them so that they cannot but see themselves naked, it is as natural for them to attempt to spin a cover to it out of their own bowels as for fishes to swim in the water or birds to fly in the air. Therefore the first question of the convinced is, What shall we do? Acts 2, 27. How shall we qualify ourselves? What shall we perform? Not minding that the new creature is God's own workmanship or deed.

Ephesians 2, 10. More than Adam thought of being clothed with the skins of sacrifices. Genesis 3, 21.

Ninthly, do not Adam's children naturally follow his footsteps and hide themselves from the presence of the Lord? Genesis 3, 8. We are every bit as blind in this matter as he was, who thought to hide himself from the presence of God among the shady trees of the garden. We are very apt to promise ourselves more security in a secret sin than in one that is openly committed. The eye of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight, saying, No eye shall see me.

Job 24, 15. And men will freely do that in secret, which they would be ashamed to do in the presence of a child, as if darkness could hide from an all-seeing God. Are we not naturally careless of communion with God? I in a verse do it.

Never was there any communion betwixt God and Adam's children where the Lord himself had not the first word. If he would let them alone, they would never inquire after him. Isaiah 57, 17.

I hid me. Did he seek after a hiding God? Very far from it. He went on in the way of his heart.

Tenthly, how loathsome men are to confess sin, to take guilt and shame to themselves. And was it not thus in the case before us? Genesis 3, 10. Adam confesses his nakedness, which he could not get denied, but not one word he says of his sin.

Here was the reason of it. He would fain have hid it if he could. It is as natural for us to hide sin as to commit it.

Many sad instances thereof we have in this world, but a far clearer proof of it we shall get at the day of judgment, the day in which God will judge the secrets of men. Romans 2, 17. Many a foul mouth will then be seen, which is now wiped and saith, I have done no wickedness.

Proverbs 30, verse 20. Lastly, is it not natural for us to extenuate our sin and transfer the guilt upon others? And when God examined our guilty first parents, did not Adam lay the blame on the woman and did not the woman lay the blame on the serpent? Genesis 3, 12 and 13. Now Adam's children need not be taught this hellish policy, for before they can well speak, if they cannot get the fact denied, they will cunningly lisp out something to lessen their fault and lay the blame upon another.

Nay, so natural is this to men that in the greatest of sins they will lay the fault upon God himself. They will blaspheme his holy providence under the mistaken name of misfortune or ill luck and thereby lay the blame of their sin at heaven's door. And was not this one of Adam's tricks after his fall? Genesis 3, 12.

And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. Observe the order of the speech. He makes his apology in the first place and then comes his confession.

His apology is long, but his confession very short. It is all comprehended in a word, and I did eat. How pointed and distinct is his apology as he was afraid his meaning should have been mistaken.

The woman says he, or that woman, as if he would have appointed a judge to his own work, of which we read, Genesis 3, 22. There was but one woman then in the world so that one would think he need not have been so nice and exact in pointing at her, and yet she is as carefully marked out in his defense as if there had been ten thousand. The woman whom thou gavest me, Here he speaks as if he had been ruined with God's gift, and to make the gift look the blacker it is added to all this, thou gavest to be with me, a constant companion to stand by me as a helper.

This looks as if Adam would have fathered an ill design upon the Lord in giving him this gift. And after all, there is a new demonstrative here before the sentence is complete. He says not the woman gave, but the woman she gave me, emphatically, as if he had said, She, even she, gave me of the tree.

This much for his apology. But his confession is quickly over in one word, as he spoke it, And I did eat. And there is nothing here to point to himself and as little to show what he had eaten.

How natural is this black art to Adam's posterity! He that runs may read it. So universally does Solomon's observation hold true. Proverbs 19.3 The foolishness of man perverteth his way, and his heart frets against the Lord.

Let us then call fallen Adam father. Let us not deny the relation, seeing we bear his image. Now to shut up this point, sufficiently confirmed by concurring evidence from the Lord's word, our own experience and observation, let us be persuaded to believe the doctrine of the corruption of our nature, and to look to the second Adam, the blessed Jesus, for the application of his precious blood, to remove the guilt of our sin, and for the efficacy of his Holy Spirit to make us new creatures, knowing that, except we be born again, we cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Of the corruption of the understanding. Secondly, I proceed to inquire into the corruption of nature, in the several parts thereof. But who can comprehend it? Who can take the exact dimensions of it, in its breadth, length, height, and depth? The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.

Who can know it? Jeremiah 17.9 However, we may quickly perceive as much of it as may be matter of deepest humiliation, and may discover to us the absolute necessity of regeneration. Man in this natural state is altogether corrupt. Both soul and body are polluted, as the apostle proves at large, Romans 3.10-18. As for the soul, this natural corruption has spread itself through all the faculties thereof, and is to be found in the understanding, the will, the affections, the conscience, and the memory.

The understanding, that leading faculty, is to spoil of its primitive glory, and covered over with confusion. We have fallen into the hands of our grand adversary, as Samson into the hands of the Philistines, and are deprived of our two eyes. There is none that understandeth.

Romans 3.11 Mind and conscience are defiled. Titus 1.15 The natural man's apprehension of divine things is corrupt. Psalm 51.21 Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such in one as thyself.

His judgment is corrupt, and cannot be otherwise, seeing his eye as evil. And therefore the Scriptures, to show that men did all wrong, say, Every one did that which was right in his own eyes. Judges 17.6 and 21.25 And his imaginations, or reasonings, must be cast down by the power of the Word, being of a peace with his judgment.

2 Corinthians 10.5 But to point out this corruption of the mind, or understanding more particularly, let these following things be considered first. There is a natural weakness in the minds of men with respect to spiritual things. The apostle determines concerning every one that is not endued with the graces of the Spirit, that he is blind, and cannot see afar off.

2 Peter 1.9 Hence the Spirit of God in the Scripture closes the word divine truths with earthly figures, even as parents teach their children using similitudes. Hosea 12.10 Which though it doth not cure, yet doth evidence this natural weakness in the minds of men. But we want not plain proofs of it from experiences.

1. How hard a task is it to teach many people the common principles of our holy religion, and to make truth so plain as they may understand them. Here there must be precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line. Isaiah 28.10 Try the same persons and other things, they shall be found wiser in their generation than the children of light.

They understand their work and business in the world, as well as their neighbors, though they be very stupid and unteachable in the matters of God. Tell them how they may advance their worldly wealth, or how they may gratify their lusts, and they will quickly understand these things, though it is very hard to make them know how their souls may be saved, or how their hearts may find rest in Jesus Christ. 2. Consider these who have many advantages beyond the generality of mankind, who have had the benefit of good education and instruction.

Yea, and are blessed with the light of grace, in that measure wherein it is ascribed to the saints on earth. Yet how small a portion have they of the knowledge of divine things! What ignorance and confusion still remain in their minds! How often are they mired even in the matter of practical truths, and speak as a child in these things! It is a pitiful weakness that we cannot perceive the things which God has revealed to us, and it must needs be a sinful weakness, since the law of God requires us to know and believe them. 3. What dangerous mistakes are to be found amongst men in concerns of greatest weight! What rueful delusions prevail over them! Do we not often see those who in other things are the wisest of men, the most notorious fools, with respect to their soul's interest? Matthew 11.25 Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent.

Many that are eagle-eyed in the trifles of time are like owls and bats in the light of life. Nay, truly the life of every natural man is but one continued dream and delusion, out of which he never awakes, till either by a new light darted from heaven into his soul he comes to himself. Luke 15.17 Or in hell he lifts up his eyes.

16.23 Therefore in Scripture accounts, though he be ever so wise, he is a fool and a simple one. Secondly, man's understanding is naturally overwhelmed with gross darkness and spiritual things. Man, at the instigation of the devil, attempting to break out a new light in his mind, Genesis 3.5, instead of that, broke up the doors of the bottomless pit, so as by the smoke thereof to be buried in darkness.

When God first made man, his mind was a lamp of light. But now when he comes to make him over again in regeneration, he finds it darkness. Ephesians 5.8 Ye were sometimes darkness.

Sin is closed at windows of the soul. Darkness is over all the region. It is the land of darkness and the shadow of death, where the light is as darkness.

The prince of darkness reigns there, and nothing but the works of darkness are framed there. We are born spiritually blind, and cannot be restored without a miracle of grace. This is thy case, whoever thou art, that art not born again.

That ye may be convinced of this matter, take the following evidences of it. Number 1 The darkness that was upon the face of the world before, and at the time when Christ came, arising as the Son of Righteousness upon the earth. When Adam, by his sin, had lost that primitive light with which he was endued at his creation, it pleased God to make a glorious revelation of his mind and will to him, touching the way of salvation.

Genesis 3.15 This was handed down by him and other godly fathers before the flood. Yet the natural darkness of the mind of man prevailed so far against that revelation as to carry off all sense of true religion from the old world, except what remained in Noah's family, which was preserved in the ark. After the flood, as men multiplied on the earth, the natural darkness of the mind prevailed again, and the light decayed, till it died away among the generality of mankind, and was preserved only among the posterity of Shem.

And even with them it had nearly set, when God called Abraham from serving other gods. Joshua 24.15 God gives Abraham a more clear and full revelation, which he communicates to his family. Genesis 18.19 Yet the natural darkness was spit out at length, save that it was preserved among the posterity of Jacob.

They being carried down into Egypt, that darkness so prevailed as to leave them very little sense of true religion, and there was the necessity of a new revelation to be made to them in the wilderness. And many a cloud of darkness got above that now and then during the time between Moses and Christ. When Christ came, the world was divided into Jews and Gentiles.

The Jews and the true light with them were within an enclosure. Psalm 147.19 and 20 Between them and the Gentile world there was a partitioned wall of God's making, namely the ceremonial law. And upon that there was reared up another of man's own making, namely a rooted enmity betwixt the parties, Ephesians 2.14 and 15.

If we look abroad without the enclosure and accept these proselytes of the Gentiles, who by means of some rays of light breaking forth upon them from within the enclosure, having renounced idolatry, worshipped the true God, but did not conform to the Mosaical rites, we see nothing but dark places of the earth full of these habitations of cruelty. Psalm 74.20 Gross darkness covered the face of the Gentile world and the way of salvation was utterly unknown among them. They

were drowned in superstition and idolatry and had multiplied their idols to such a vast number that about 30,000 are reckoned to have been worshipped by those of Europe alone.

Whatever wisdom was among their philosophers, a world by that wisdom knew not God. 1 Corinthians 1.21 And all their researches in religion were but groping in the dark. Acts 17.27 If we look within the enclosure and accept a few that were groaning and waiting for the consolation of Israel, we will see a gross darkness on the face of that generation.

Though to them were committed the oracles of God, yet they were most corrupt in their doctrine. Their traditions were multiplied, but the knowledge of those things wherein the life of religion lies was lost. Masters of Israel knew not the nature and necessity of regeneration.

John 3.10 Their religion was to build on their birth privilege as children of Abraham. Matthew 2.9 To glory in their circumcision and other external ordinances. Philippians 3.2-3 And to rest in the law.

Romans 2.17 After they had by their false glosses cut it so short that they might outwardly go well nigh to the fulfilling of it. Matthew 5. Thus was darkness over the face of the world when Christ, the true light, came into it. And so is darkness over every soul till he, as the day star, arise in the heart.

The latter is an evidence of the former. What but the natural darkness of men's minds can still thus wear out the light of external revelation in a manner upon which eternal happiness depends. Men did not forget the way of preserving their lives, but how quickly they lost their knowledge of the way of salvation of their souls, which are of infinitely more weight and worth.

When patriarchs and prophets' teaching was ineffectual, it became necessary for men to be taught of God himself, who alone can open the eyes of the understanding. But then it might appear that the corruption of man's mind lay deeper than to be cured by mere external revelation. There were but very few converted by Christ's preaching.

Who spoke as never man spoke. John 12.37-38 The great cure remained to be performed by the Spirit accompanying the preaching of the apostles, who, according to the promise, John 14.12, were to do greater works. And if we look to the miracles wrought by our blessed Lord, we shall find that by applying the remedy to the soul for the cure of bodily distempers, as in the case of the man sick of the palsy, Matthew 9.2, he plainly discovered that his main errand into the world was to cure the diseases of the soul.

I find a miracle wrought upon one that was born blind performed in such a way it seems to have been designed to let the world see in it as in a glass or case and cure. John 9.6 He made clay and anointed the eyes of the blind man with clay. What could more fitly represent the blindness of men's minds than eyes closed up with earth? Isaiah 6.1 Shut their eyes.

Shut them up by anointing or casting them with mortar as a word will bear. In chapter 44.18 He has shut their eyes. The word properly signifies he has plastered their eyes, as the house in which telepathy had been was to be plastered.

Leviticus 14.42 Thus the Lord's word discovers the design of that strange work, and by it shows us that the eyes of our understanding are naturally shut. Then the blind man must go and wash off this clay in the pool of Siloam. No other water will serve this purpose.

If that pool had not represented him whom the Father sent into the world to open the blind eyes. Isaiah 42.5 I think the evangelist had not given us the interpretation of that name which he says signifies sent. John 9.7 So we may conclude that the natural darkness of our minds is such as there is no cure for, but from the blood and spirit of Jesus Christ, whose eyes solve only, can make us see.

Revelation 3.18 Evidence No. 2 Every natural man's heart and life is a mass of darkness, disorder, and confusion, how refined soever he appears in the sight of men. For we ourselves also say if the apostle Paul were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures.

Titus 3.3 And yet at the time which this text looks to, he was blameless, touching the righteousness which is in the law. Philippians 3.6 This is a plain evidence of the eye being evil. The whole body is full of darkness.

Matthew 6.23 The unrenewed part of mankind is rambling through the world like so many blind men, who will neither take a guide nor guide themselves, and therefore are falling over this and the other precipice into destruction. Some are running after their covetousness till they be pierced through with many sorrows. Some sticking in the mire of sensuality.

Others dashing themselves on the rock of pride and self-conceit. Everyone stumbling on some one stone of stumbling or other. All of them are running themselves upon the sword point of justice while they eagerly follow, whether their unmortified passions and affections lead them.

And while some are lying long in the way, others are coming up, falling headlong over them. Therefore, woe unto the blind world because of offenses. Matthew 18.7 Ains and judgments swarm in the world because it is night wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth.

All the unregenerate are utterly mistaken in the point of true happiness, for though Christianity is fixed at manner and point of principle, yet nothing less than overcoming grace can fix it in the practical judgment. All men agree in the desire of being happy, but among unrenewed men, touching the way to happiness, there are almost as many opinions as there are men. They being turned every one to his own way.

Isaiah 53.6 There like the blind sodomites about Lot's house all were seeking to find the door. Some groped one part of the wall for it, some another, but none of them could certainly say he had found it. So the natural man may stumble on any good but the chief good.

Look into thine own unregenerate heart, and there will see all turned upside down, heaven lying under and earth atop. Look into thy life. There thou mayst see how thou art playing the madman, snatching at shadows and neglecting the substance, eagerly flying after that which is not, and sliding that which is and will be forever.

Evidence number three. The natural man is always as a workman, left without light, either trifling or doing mischief. Try to catch thy heart at any time thou wilt, and thou shalt find it either weaving the spider's web or hatching cockatrice eggs.

Isaiah 59.5 Roving through the world or digging into the pit, filled with vanity or else with vileness, busy doing nothing or what is worse than nothing, a sad sign of a dark mind. Evidence number four. The natural man is void of the saving knowledge of spiritual things.

He knows not what a God he has to do with. He is unacquainted with Christ and knows not what sin is. The greatest graceless wits are blind as moles in these things.

Ay, but some such can speak of them to good purpose. So might those Israelites of the temptation, signs and miracles wish their eyes had seen. Deuteronomy 29.3 To whom nevertheless the Lord had not given a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear.

Unto that day. Verse four. Many a man that bears the name of a Christian may make Pharaoh's confession of faith.

Exodus 5.2 I know not the Lord, neither will they let go what he commands them to part with. God is with them as a prince in disguise among his subjects who meets with no better treatment from them than if he were his fellows. Psalm 50.21 Do they know Christ or see his glory and any beauty in him for which he is to be desired? If they did, they would not slight him as they do.

A view of this glory would so darken all created excellency that they would take him for and instead of all and gladly close with him as he offers himself in the gospel. John 4.10 Psalm 9.10 Matthew 13.44-46 Do they know what sin is who nurse a serpent in their bosom hold fast a seat and refuse to let it go? I own indeed that they may have a natural knowledge of those things as the unbelieving Jews had of Christ whom they saw and conversed with. But there was a spiritual glory in him perceived by believers only.

John 1.14 And in respect of that glory, the unbelieving world knew him not. Verse 10 The spiritual knowledge of them they cannot have. It is above the reach of the carnal mind.

1 Corinthians 2.14 The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God for they are foolishness unto him. Neither can he know them for they are spiritually discerned. He may indeed discourse of them but in no other way than one can talk of honey or vinegar who never tasted the sweetness of the one nor the sourness of the other.

He has some notions of spiritual truths but sees not the things themselves that are wrapped up in the words of truth. 1 Timothy 1.7 Understanding neither what they say nor what of they affirm in a word natural men fear, seek, confess they know not what. Thus you may see man's understanding naturally is overwhelmed with gross darkness and spiritual things.

Thirdly, there is in the mind of man a natural bias to evil whereby it comes to pass that whatever difficulties it finds while occupied about things truly good it acts with a great deal of ease in evil. As being in that case in its own element. Jeremiah 4.22 The carnal mind drives heavily on in the thoughts of good but furiously in the thoughts of evil.

While holiness is before it, fetters are upon it. But when once it has got over the hedge it is as a bird got out of a cage and becomes a free thinker indeed. Let us reflect a little on the apprehension and imagination of the carnal mind and we shall find incontestable evidence of this woeful bias to evil.

Evidence number one is when a man by a violent stroke on the head loses his sight there arises to him a kind of false light whereby he seems to see a thousand airy nothings. So man, being struck blind to all that is truly good for his eternal interest has the light of another sword brought into his mind. His eyes are opened, knowing evil and so are the words of the tempter verified.

Jennifer 3.5 The words of the prophet are plain they are wise to do evil but to do good they have no knowledge. Jeremiah 4.22 The mind of man has a natural dexterity to devise mischief. They are not any so simple as to want skill to contrive ways to gratify their lusts and ruin their souls though the power of everyone's hand cannot reach to put their devices in execution.

No one needs to be taught this black art but as weeds grow up of their own accord in the neglected ground so doth this wisdom which is earthly, sensual, devilish. Jane 3.15 Grow up in the minds of men by virtue of the corruption of their nature. Why should we be surprised with the product of corrupt wits their cunning devices to affront heaven to oppose and run down truth and holiness and to gratify their own and other men's lusts? They grow with the stream no wonder that they make great progress their stock is within them and increases by using of it and the works of darkness are contrived with a greater advantage that the mind is wholly destitute of spiritual light which if it were in them in any measure would so far mar the work.

1 John 3.9 Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin he does it not as by art willfully and habitually for his seed remaineth in him but, on the other hand it is as a sport to a fool to do mischief but a man of understanding hath wisdom. Proverbs 10.23 To do witty mischief nicely is a word's import is as a sport or play to a fool it comes off with him easily and why? but because he is a fool and hath not wisdom which would mar the contrivances of darkness the more natural a thing is the more easily it is done. Provenance 2. Let the corrupt mind have but the advantage of one's being employed in or present at some piece of service for God that so the device if not in itself sinful yet may become sinful by its unseasonableness it will quickly fall upon some device or expedient by its starting aside which deliberation and season could not produce.

Thus all who wist not what to do before the priest began to consult God is quickly determined when once the priest's hand was in his own heart then gave him an answer and would not allow him to wait an answer from the Lord. 1 Samuel 14.18-19 Such a devilish dexterity hath the carnal mind in devising what may most affectually divert men from their duty to God. Evidence 3. Doth not the carnal mind naturally strive to grasp spiritual things and imagination? Is it the soul were quite immersed in flesh and blood and would turn everything into its own shape? Let men who are used to the forming of the most abstracted notions look into their own souls and they will find this bias in their minds whereof the idolatry which did of old instill doth so much profiled in the world is an incontestable evidence for it plainly discovers that men naturally would have a visible deity and see what they worship and therefore they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image and so on.

Romans 1.23 The reformation of these nations blessed be the Lord for it has banished idolatry and images too out of our churches but heart reformation only can break down mental idolatry and banish the more subtle and refined image worship and representations of the deity out of the minds of men. The world in the time of its darkness was never more prone to the former than the unsanctified mind is to the latter. Hence are horrible, monstrous, and misshapen thoughts of God, Christ, the glory above and all spiritual things.

Evidence number four. What a difficult task it is to detain a carnal mind before the Lord. How averse it is to the entertaining of good thoughts and dwelling in the meditation of spiritual things.

If a person be driven at any time to think of the great concerns of the soul, it is no harder work to hold in an unruly, hungry beast than to hedge in the carnal mind that it get not away to the vanities of the world again. When God is speaking to men by His word or they are speaking to Him in prayer, doth not the mind often leave them before the Lord like so many idols that have eyes but see not and ears but hear not? The carcass is laid down before God but the world gets away the heart. Though the eyes be closed, the man sees a thousand vanities.

The mind in the meantime is like a bird got loose out of a cage, skipping from bush to bush so that in effect the man never comes to himself till he be gone from the presence of the Lord. Say not it is impossible to get the mind fixed. It is hard indeed but not impossible.

Grace from the Lord can do it. Agreeable objects will do it. Psalm 108 verse 1 A pleasant speculation will arrest the minds of the inquisitive.

The worldly man's mind is in little hazard of wavering when he is contriving business, casting up his accounts or telling his money. If he answers you not at first, he tells you he did not hear you, he was busy, his mind was fixed. Were we admitted into the presence of a king to petition for our lives, we should be in no hazard of gazing through the chamber of presence.

But here lies a case, a carnal mind being employed about any spiritual good is out of its element and therefore cannot fix. Evidence number 5 But however hard it is to keep the mind on good thoughts, it sticks its glue to what is evil and corrupt like itself. 2 Peter 2 verse 14 Having eyes full of adultery and cannot cease from sin, their eyes cannot cease from sin, so the words are construed, that is, their hearts and minds, venting by the eyes what is within, are like a furious beast which cannot be held in once it is got out of its head.

Let the corrupt imagination once be let loose on a favored object, it will be found hard work to call it back again, though both reason and will are for its retreat. For then it is in its own element, and to draw it off from its impurities is the drawing of a fish out of the water or the rending of a limb from a man. It runs like fire set to a train of powder that rests not till it can get no further.

Evidence 6 Consider how the carnal imagination supplies a want of real objects to the corrupt heart, that it may make sinners happy at least in the imaginary enjoyment of their lusts. Thus the corrupt heart feeds itself with imagination sins, the unclean person is filled with speculative impurities, having eyes full of adultery, the covetous man fills his heart with the world though he cannot get his hands full of it, the malicious person with delight acts his revenge within his own breast, the envious man within his own narrow soul beholds with satisfaction his neighbor laid low, and every lust finds a corrupt imagination a friend to it in time of need. This it does, not only when people are awake, but sometimes even when they are asleep, whereby it comes too past that those sins are acted in dreams which their hearts pant after while they are awake.

I am aware that some question the sinfulness of these things, but can it be thought that they are consistent with that holy nature and frame of spirit which was in innocent Adam and in Jesus Christ and should be in every one? It is the corruption of nature, then, that makes filthy dreamers condemn. Jude, verse 8 Solomon had experience of the exercise of grace in sleep. In a dream he prayed, in a dream he made the best choice.

Both were accepted of God. 1 King 3, 5, 15 And if a man may in his sleep do what is good and acceptable to God, why may he not also in his sleep do that which is evil and displeasing to God? The same Solomon would have men aware of this, and prescribes the best remedy against it, namely, the law upon the heart. Proverbs 6, 20, 21 When thou sleepest, says he, verse 22, it shall keep thee to wit from sinning in thy sleep, that is, from sinful dreams.

For a man is being kept from sin, not he is being kept from affliction, is the immediate proper effect of the law of God impressed upon the heart. Psalm 119, 11 And thus the whole verse is to be understood as appears from verse 23. For the commandment is the lamp and the law is light, and reproofs of instruction are the way of life.

Now, the law is the lamp and light as it guides in the way of duty, and instructing reproofs from the law are the way of life as they keep him from sin. They guide not into the way of peace, but as they lead into the way of duty, nor do they keep a man out of trouble, but as they keep him from sin. Remarkable is that particular in which Solomon instances the sentiment cleanest to keep thee from the evil woman, verse 24, which is to be joined to verse 22, enclosing the 23rd in a parenthesis as some versions have it.

These things may suffice to convince us of the natural bias of the mind to evil. Fourthly, there is in the carnal mind an opposition to spiritual truths and an aversion to them. It is as little a friend to divine truths as it is to holiness.

The truths of natural religion which do, as it were, force their entry into the minds of natural men, they hold prisoners in unrighteousness, Romans 1.18. As for the truths of revealed religion, there is an evil heart of unbelief in them which opposes their entry, and there is an armed force necessary to captivate the mind to the belief of them, 2 Corinthians 10.4.5. God has made a revelation of his mind and will to sinners, touching the way of salvation. He has given us a doctrine of his holy word, but do natural men believe it indeed? No, they do not. For he that believeth not on the Son of God believeth not God, as is plain from 1 John 5.10. They believe not the promises of the word.

They look on them in effect only as fair words, for those that receive them are thereby made partakers of the divine nature, 2 Peter 1.4. The promises are as silver cords let down from heaven to draw sinners unto God and to waft them over into the promised land, but they cast them from them. They believe not the threatenings of the word, as men travelling in deserts carry fire about with them the fried away wild beasts. So God has made his law a fiery law, Deuteronomy 33.2, hedging it about with threats of wrath.

But men are naturally more brutish than beasts themselves, and will need touched a fiery smoking mountain, though they should be thrust through with a dart. I doubt not, but most, if not all of you who are yet in the black state of nature will hear plead not guilty. But remember the carnal Jews in Christ's time were as confident as you are.

They believe Moses, John 9, 28, 29. But he confutes their confidence roundly, telling them John 5, 46. Had you believed Moses, you would have believed me.

If you believe the truths of God, you dare not reject as you do him who is truth itself. The very difficult you find in assenting to this truth discovers that unbelief which I am charging you with, has

it not proceeded so far with some at this day that it has steeled their foreheads with impudence and impiety openly to reject all revealed religion? Surely it is out of the abundance of the heart of their mouth speaketh. But though you set not your mouths against the heavens as they do, the same bitter root of unbelief is in all men by nature, and reigns in you, and will reign till overcoming grace brings your minds to the belief of the truth.

To convince you in this point, consider these three things. Evidence 1. How few are there who have been blessed with an inward illumination by the special operation of the Spirit of Christ, leading them into a view of divine truths in their spiritual and heavenly luster? 2. How have you learned the truths of religion which you pretend to believe? You have them merrily by the benefit of external revelation and by the so that you are Christians because you were not born and bred in a pagan but in a Christian country. You were strangers to the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the word in your hearts, and so you cannot have the assurance of faith with respect to the outward divine revelation made in the word.

1 Corinthians 2 10-12 Therefore you are still unbelievers. It is written in the prophets they shall all be taught of God. Every man, therefore, that has heard and has learned of the Father cometh unto me, says our Lord.

John 6 45 Now you have not come to Christ, therefore you have not been taught of God. You have not been so taught, and therefore you have not come. Ye believe not.

Behold the revelation from which the faith, even of the fundamental principles in religion, doth spring. Matthew 16 16-17 Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood is not revealed unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

If ever the Spirit of the Lord take thee in hand to work in you that faith which is the operation of God, it may be that as much time will be spent in raising the old foundation as will make you find the necessity of the working of his mighty power to enable you to believe the very foundation principles which now you think that you make no doubt of. Ephesians 119 Evidence 2 How many professors have made shipwreck of their faith, such as it was, in time of temptation and trial? See how they fall like stars from heaven when Antichrist prevails. 2 Thessalonians 2 11 12 God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned to believe not the truth.

They fall into damning delusions, because they never really believed a truth, though they themselves and others too thought they did believe it. That house is built on the sand, and that faith is but ill founded, that cannot stand, but is quite overthrown when the storm comes. 3 Consider the utter inconsistency of most men's lives with the principle of religion which they profess.

You may as soon bring East and West together as their principles and practices. Men believe that fire will burn them, and therefore they will not throw themselves into it. But the truth is, most men live as if they thought the gospel a mere fable, and the wrath of God revealed in His Word against their unrighteousness and ungodliness a mere scarecrow.

If you believe the doctrines of the Word, how is it that you are so unconcerned about the state of your souls before the Lord? How is it that you are so little concerned about this weighty of a

burden How is it that you are so about the weight of your sins before the Lord? How is it that you are so your sins before the How is it that you are so about the weight of your before the Lord? How is it that you are so about the of before the Lord? How are so about the before the Lord? How is it that you are so about the weight of your How are so about the weight of your sins before the Lord? How about the weight of before the Lord? How are so about the weight of your sins before the Lord? Lord? How error has always with a natural man this advantage against truth, namely, that there is something within him which says, O that it were true, so that the mind lies fair for assenting to it. And here is a reason of it. The true doctrine is a doctrine that is according to godliness, 1 Timothy 6.3. And the truth which is after godliness, Titus 1.1. Error is a doctrine which is according to ungodliness, for there is never an error in the mind, or an untruth vented in the world in matters of religion, but what has an affinity with one corruption of the heart or another, according to that of the apostles, 2 Thessalonians 2.12. They believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

So that truth and error being otherwise attended with equal advantages for their reception, error by this means has most ready access into the minds of men in their natural state. Wherefore, it is nothing strange that men reject the simplicity of gospel truths and institutions, and greedily embrace error and external pomp in religion, as they are so agreeable to the lusts of the heart and the vanity of the mind of the natural man. Hence also it is that so many embrace atheistical principles, for none do it but in compliance with their irregular passions, none but those whose advantage it would be that there were no God.

Lastly, man naturally is high-minded, for when the gospel comes in power to him, it is employed in casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, 2 Corinthians 10.5. Lowliness of mind is not a flower that grows in the field of nature, but is planted by the finger of God in a renewed heart and learned of the lowly Jesus. It is natural to man to think highly of himself and what is his own, for the stroke which he has got by his fallen Adam has produced a false light, whereby mole-heels about him appear like mountains, and a thousand airy beauties present themselves in his deluded fancy. Vain man would be wise, so he accounts himself, and so he would be accounted by others.

Though man be born like a wild, asses-cult Job 11.12, his way is right because it is his own, for every way of man is right in his own eyes. Proverbs 21.2. His state is good, because he knows none better. He is alive without the law.

Romans 7.9. And therefore his hope is strong and his confidence firm. It is another tower of Babel reared up against heaven, and it will not fall while the power of darkness can hold it up. The word batters it, yet it stands, while one breaches are made in it, but they are quickly repaired at another time.

It is all made to shake, but still it is kept up, till either God himself by his Spirit raises a heart to quake within the man which tumbles it down, and leaves not one stone upon another, 2 Corinthians 10.4.5, or death batter it down, and raise the foundations of it. Luke 16.23. And as a natural man thinks highly of himself, so he thinks meanly of God, whatever he pretends. Psalm 51.21. The thought is that I was altogether such in one as thyself.

The doctrine of the gospel and the mystery of Christ are foolishness to him, and in his practice he treats them as such. 1 Corinthians 1.18 and 2.14. He brings a word and the works of God and the government of the world before the bar of his carnal reason, and there they are presumptuously censured and condemned. Hosea 14.9. Sometimes the ordinary restraint of providence is taken off, and Satan is permitted to stir up the carnal mind, and in that case it is like an ant's nest, uncovered and disturbed.

Doubts, denials, and hellish reasonings crowd in it, and cannot be laid by all the arguments brought against them, till power from on high subdueth the mind, and still the mutiny of the corrupt principles. Thus much of the corruption of the understanding, which although the half be not told, may discover to you the absolute necessity of regenerating grace. Call the understanding now I chabod, for the glory is departed from it.

Consider this, you that are yet in a state of nature, and grown out your case before the Lord, that the sun of righteousness may arise upon you, before you be shut up in everlasting darkness. What avails your worldly wisdom? What do your attainments in religion avail, while your understanding lies wrapped up in its natural darkness and confusion, utterly void of the light of life? Whatever be the natural man's gifts or attainments, we must as in the case of the leper, Leviticus 13.44, pronounce him utterly unclean, as plague is in his head. But that is not all, it is in his heart too.

His will is corrupted, as I shall soon show. Of the Corruption of the Will 2. The will, that commanding faculty, which sometimes was faithful and ruled with God, is now turned traitor and rules with and for the devil. God planted it in man, wholly a right seed, but now it is turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine.

It was originally placed in due subordination to the will of God, as was shown before, but now it is gone wholly aside. However, some magnify the power of free will, a view of the spirituality of the law, to which acts of moral discipline in no wise answer, and a deep insight into the corruption of nature given by the inward operation of the spirit, convincing of sin, righteousness, and judgment, would make men find an absolute need of the power of free grace, to remove the bands of wickedness from off their free will. To open up this plague of the heart, I offer these following things to be considered.

1. There is in the unrenewed will an utter inability for what is truly good and acceptable in the sight of God. The natural man's will is in Satan's fetters, hemmed in within the circle of evil, and cannot move beyond it any more than a dead man can raise himself out of the grave. Ephesians 2.1. We don't deny him a power to choose, pursue, and act what, as to the matter, is good.

But though he can will what is good and right, he can will nothing right and well. John 15.5. Without me, i.e. separate from me as a branch from the stalk, as both the word and context carry it, he can do nothing, to wit, nothing truly and spiritually good. His very choice and desire of spiritual things is carnal and selfish.

John 6.26. He seeth me, because he did eat of the loaves, and were filled. He not only comes not to Christ, but he cannot come. Verse 44.

And what he can do acceptable to God, who believeth not on him, whom the Father hath sent? To evidence this inability for good in the unregenerate, consider these two things. Evidence 1. How

often does a light so shine before men's eyes, that they cannot but see the good which they should choose, and the evil which they should refuse, and yet their hearts have no more power to comply with that light, than if they were arrested by some invisible hand? They see what is right, yet they follow and cannot but follow what is wrong. Their consciences tell them the right way, and approve of it too, yet their will cannot be brought up to it.

Their corruption so chains them, that they cannot embrace it, so that they sigh and go backward notwithstanding their light. If it be not thus, how is it that the word and way of holiness meet with such entertainment in the world? How is it that clear arguments and reason on the side of piety in a holy life, which seem to have weight even with the carnal mind, do not bring men over to that side? Although the existence of a heaven and hell were but a may-be, if were sufficient to determine the will to the choice of holiness, were it capable of being determined thereto by mere reason. But men, knowing the judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

Romans 1.32. And how is it that those who magnify the power of free will do not confirm their opinion before the world by an ocular demonstration in a practice as far above others in holiness as the opinion of their natural ability is above that of others? Or is it maintained only for the protection of lusts, which men may hold fast as long as they please, and when they have no more use for them, throw them off in a moment and leap out of Delilah's lap into Abraham's bosom? Whatever use some make of that principle, it does of itself and in its own nature cast a broad shadow for a shelter to wickedness of heart and life. It may be observed that the generality of the hearers of the gospel of all denominations are plagued with it. For it is a root of bitterness natural to all men, from whence springs so much fearlessness about the soul's eternal state, so many delays and off-puts in that waiting manner, whereby much work is laid up for a deathbed by some, while others are ruined by a legal walk in unacquaintedness with the life of faith, in the making use of Christ for sanctification, all flowing from the persuasion of sufficient natural abilities.

So agreeable is it to corrupt nature. Evidence No. 2. Let those who, by the power of the spirit of bondage, have had the law open before them in its spirituality for their conviction, speak and tell if they found themselves able to incline their hearts towards it in that case, nay, whether the more the light shone into their souls, they did not find their hearts more and more unable to comply with it.

There are some who have been brought unto the place of the breaking forth, who are yet in the devil's camp, who from their experience can tell that light let into the mind cannot give life to the will, to enable it to comply therewith, and could give their testimony here if they would, but take Paul's testimony concerning it, who in his unconverted state was far from believing his utter inability for good, but learned it by experience. Romans 7.8-13. I own, the natural man may have a kind of love to the letter of the law, but here lies the stress of the matter. He looks on the holy law in a carnal dress, and so while he hugs the creature of his own fancy, he thinks that he has the law, but in very deed he is without the law.

For as yet he sees it not in his spirituality, if he did, he would find it the very reverse of his own nature, and what his will could not fall in with, till changed by the power of grace. Secondly, there is in the unrenewed will an averseness to good. Sin is the natural man's element, he is unwilling to part with it as fissure to come out of the water into dry land.

He not only cannot come to Christ, but he will not come, John 5.40. He is polluted and hates to be washed, Jeremiah 13.27. Will thou not be made clean? When shall it once be? He is sick, yet utterly averse to the remedy. He loves his disease, so that he loathes the physician. He is a captive, a prisoner, and a slave, but he loves his conqueror, his jailer and master.

He is fond of his fetters, prison and drudgery, and has no liking to his liberty. For evidence of this averseness to good in the will of man, I will instance in some particulars evidence number one, the untowardness of children. Do we not see them naturally lovers of sinful liberty? How unwilling are they to be hedged in? How averse to restraint? The world can bear witness that they are as bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke, and more, that it is far easier to bring young bullocks tamely to bear the yoke than to bring young children under discipline and make them tamely submit to be restrained in sinful liberty.

Everybody may see in this as in a glass that man is naturally wild and willful, according to Zophar's observation, Job 11.12, that man is born like a wild ass's colt. What can be said more? He is like a colt, the colt of an ass, the colt of a wild ass. Compare Jeremiah 2.24, a wild ass used to the wilderness, that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure, in her occasion who can turn her away.

Evidence number two. What pain and difficulty do men often find in bringing their hearts to religious duties? And what a task is it to the carnal heart to abide at them! It is a pain to it to leave the world, but little to come before God. It is not easy to borrow time from the many things to spend it upon the one thing needful.

Men often go to God in duties with their faces towards the world, and when their bodies are on the mount of ordinances, their hearts will be found at the foot of the hill going after their covetousness. Ezekiel 33.31. They are soon wearied of well-doing, for holy duties are not agreeable to their corrupt nature. Take notice of them at their worldly business, set them down with their carnal company, or let them be sucked in the breasts of lust.

Time seems to them to fly and dry furiously, so that it is gone ere they are aware. But how heavily does a pass while a prayer, a sermon, or a Sabbath lasts? The Lord's day is the longest day of all the week with many. Therefore they must sleep longer that morning, and go sooner to bed that night, than ordinarily they do, that the day may be made of a tolerable length.

For their hearts say within them, When will the Sabbath be gone? Amos 8.5. The hours of worship are the longest hours of that day. Hence when duty is over, they are like men eased of a burden. And when the sermon is ended, many have neither the grace nor the good manners to stay till the blessing be pronounced.

But like the beasts, their head is away as soon as a man puts his hand to loose them. And why? Because while they are in ordinances, they are as Doag detained before the Lord. 1 Samuel 22.7. Evidence 3 Consider how the will of the natural man rebels against the light.

Job 24.13. Light sometimes enters in, because he is not able to keep it out. But he loves darkness rather than light. Sometimes by the force of truth, the outer door of the understanding is broken up, but the inner door of the will remains fast bolted.

Then lusts arise against light. Corruption and conscience encounter and fight is in the field of battle, till corruption get in the upper hand. Conscience is forced to turn its back.

Convictions are murdered, and truth is made in hell prisoner, so that it cannot create any more disturbance. While the word is preached or read, or the rod of God is upon the natural man, sometimes convictions are darted in on him, and his spirit is wounded in greater or lesser measure. But those convictions not being able to make him fall, he runs away with the arrow sticking in his conscience, and at length, one way or another, gets them out and makes himself whole again.

Thus while the light shines, men naturally averse to it, willfully shut their eyes, till God is provoked to blind them judicially, and they become proof against His word and providences too. So go where they will, they can sit at ease. There is never a word from heaven to them that goeth deeper into their own ears.

Hosea 4.17 Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone. EVIDENCE NUMBER FOUR Let us observe the resistance made by elect souls, when the Spirit of the Lord is at work to bring them from the power of Satan unto God. Zion's king gets no subjects but by the stroke of sword, in a day of his power.

Psalms 110.2,3 None come to him, but such as are drawn by divine hand. John 6.44 When the Lord comes to the soul, he finds a strong man, keeping the house in a deep peace and security there, while the soul is fast asleep in the devil's arms. But the prey must be taken from the mighty, and the captive delivered.

Therefore the Lord awakens the sinner, opens his eyes, and strikes him with terror, while the clouds are black above his head, and the sword of vengeance is held to his breast. Now he is at no small pains to put a fair face on a black heart, to shake off his fears, to make head against them, and to divert himself from thinking on the unpleasant and ungrateful subject of the soul's case. If he cannot so rid himself from them, carnal reason is called in to help, and urges that there is no ground for so great fear.

All may be well enough yet, and if it be ill with him, it will be ill with many. When the sinner is beat from this, and sees no advantage in going to hell with company, he resolves to leave his sins, but cannot think of breaking off so soon. There is time enough, and he will do it afterwards.

Conscience says, Today, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. But he cries, Tomorrow, Lord, tomorrow, Lord, and just now, Lord, till that now is never like to come. Thus many times he comes from his prayers and confessions with nothing but a breastful of sharper convictions.

For the heart does not always cast up the sweet morsel as soon as confession is made with the mouth, Judges 10, 10-16. And when conscience obliges him to part with some lusts, others are kept as right eyes and right hands. And there are rueful looks after those that are put away, as it was with the Israelites, who with bitter hearts remembered the fish they did eat in Egypt freely.

Numbers 11, verse 5. Nay, when he is so pressed that he must need say before the Lord that he is content to part with all his idols, the heart will be given the tongue to lie. In a word, the soul in this case will shift from one thing to another like a fish from the hook in its jaws, till it can do no more, and power come to make it yield as a wild ass in her mouth, Jeremiah 2, 24. Thirdly, there is in the will of man a natural proneness to evil, a woeful bent toward sin.

Men naturally are bent to backsliding from God, Hosea 2, 7. They hang, as the word is, toward backsliding, even as a hanging wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly in an instant. Set holiness and life upon the one side, sin and death upon the other, and leave the unrenewed will to itself, it will choose sin and reject holiness. This is no more to be doubted than that water poured on the side of a hill will run downward and not upward, or that a flame will ascend and not descend.

Evidence number one. Is not the way of evil the first way which the children of men go? Do not their inclinations plainly appear on the wrong side, while yet they have no cunning to hide them? In the first opening of our eyes in the world, we look a squint hellward, not heavenward. As soon as it appears that we are rational creatures, it appears that we are sinful creatures.

Psalms 58, verse 3. The wicked are restrained from the womb, they go astray, as soon as they are born. Proverbs 22, 15. Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

Folly is bound in the heart, it is woven in our very nature. The knot will not unloose, it must be broken asunder by strokes. Words will not do it, the rod must be taken to drive it away, and if it be not driven far away, the heart in it will meet in it again.

Not that the rod of itself will do this, the sad experience of many parents testifies to the contrary, and Solomon himself tells you, Proverbs 27, 22. Though thou shouldst bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him. It is so bound in his heart.

But the rod is an ordinance of God, appointed for that end, which, like the word, is made effectual by the spirits accompanying his own ordinance. This, by the way, shows that parents in administering correction to their children have need first of all to correct their own irregular passions, and look upon it as a matter of awful solemnity, setting about it with much dependence on the Lord, and following it with prayer for the blessing, if they would have it effectual. Evidence No.

2 How easily are men led aside to sin, the children who are not persuaded to good or otherwise simple ones, easily wrought upon, those whom the word cannot draw to holiness are led by Satan at his pleasure. Profane Esau, that cunning man, Genesis 25, 27, was as easily cheated of the blessing as if he had been a fool or an idiot. The more natural a thing is, the more easy it is.

So Christ's yoke is easy to the saints insofar as they are partakers of the divine nature, and sin is easy to the unrenewed man. But to learn to do good is as difficult as for the Ethiopian to change his skin, because the will naturally hangs towards evil and is averse to good. A child can cause a round thing to run when he cannot move a square thing of the same weight, for the roundness makes it fit for motion, though it goes with a touch.

Even so men find the heart easily carried towards sin, while it is as a dead weight in the way of holiness. We must seek for the reason of this from the natural set and disposition of the heart, whereby it is pruned and bent to evil. Where men's will naturally but in equal balance to good and evil, the one might be embraced with as little difficulty as the other, but experience testifies it is not so.

In the sacred history of the Israelites, especially in the book of Judges, how often do we find them forsaking Jehovah the mighty God and doting upon the idols of the nations about them. But did

ever any one of these nations grow fond of Israel's God and forsake their own idols? No, no, though man is naturally given to changes, this is but from evil to evil, not from evil to good. Jeremiah 2, 10 and 11.

Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. Surely the will of man stands not in equal balance, but has a cast to the wrong side. Evidence number three.

Consider how men go on still in the way of sin, till they meet with a stop of that from another hand than their own. Isaiah 57, 17 I hid me, and he went on forwardly in the way of his heart. If God withdraw his restraining hand and lay the reins on the sinner's neck, he is under no doubt what way to choose.

For observe it, the way of sin is the way of his heart. His heart naturally lies that way. It hath a natural propensity to sin.

As long as God suffers them, they walk in their own way. Acts 14, 16 The natural man is so fixed in his woeful choice that there needs no more to show he is off from God's way than to say he is upon his own. Evidence number four.

Whatsoever good impressions are made on him, they do not last. Though his heart be firm as a stone, yea, harder than another millstone, and point of receiving them, it is otherwise unstable as water, and cannot keep them. It works against the receiving of them, and when they are made, it works them off and returns to its natural bias.

Hosea 6, 4 Your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away. The morning cloud promises a hearty shower, but when the sun arises, it vanishes. The sun beats upon the early dew, and it evaporates, so the husbandman's expectation is disappointed.

Such is the goodness of the natural man. Some sharp affliction or piercing conviction obliges him in some sort to turn from his evil course, but his will will not be renewed. Religion is still against the grain with him, and therefore this goes off again.

Psalms 78, 34-37 Though a stone thrown up into the air may abide there a little while, yet its natural heaviness will bring it down again, so do unrenewed men return to the wallowing in the mire, because though they washed themselves, yet their swineish nature was not changed. It is hard to cause wet wood to take fire, hard to make it keep fire, but it is harder than either of these to make the unrenewed will attain goodness, which is a plain evidence of the natural bent of the will to evil. Evidence 5 Do the saints serve the Lord now as they were wont to serve sin in their unconverted state? Very far from it.

Romans 6, 20 When you were the servants of sin, you were free from righteousness. Sin got all, and admitted no partner. But now when they are the servants of Christ, are they free from sin? Nay, they are still with them.

From some deeds of the old man show him that he is but dying in them, and hence their hearts often misgive them and slip aside into evil, when they would do good. Romans 7, 21 They need to watch and keep their hearts with all diligence, and their sad experience teaches them that he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool. Proverbs 28, 26 If it be thus in the green tree, how must it be in

the dry? 4 There is a natural contrariety, direct opposition, and enmity in the will of man to God himself and his holy will.

Romans 8, 7 The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. The will was once God's deputy in the soul, set to command therefore him, but now it is set up against him. If you would have the picture of it in its natural state, the very reverse of the will of God represents it.

If to fruit hanging before one's eyes be but forbidden, there is sufficient to draw the heart after it. Let me instance in the sin of profane swearing and cursing, to which some are so abandoned that they take pride in it, belching out horrid oaths and curses, as if hell opened with the opening of their mouths, or larding their speeches with minced oaths, and all this without any manner of provocation, though even that would not excuse them. Pray tell me, number one, what profit is there here? A thief gets something in his hand for his pains, a drunkard gets a bellyful, but what do you get? Others serve the devil for pay, but you are volunteers that expect no reward but your work itself, an affronting of heaven, and if you repent not, you will get your reward in full tell.

When you go to hell, your work will follow you. The drunkard shall not have a drop of water to cool his tongue there, nor will the covetous man's wealth follow him into the other world. You may drive on your old trade there.

Eternity will be long enough to give you your heart's fill of it. Number two. What pleasure is there here, but what flows from your trampling on the holy law? Which of your senses doth swearing and cursing gratify? If it gratify your ears, it can only be the noise it makes against the heavens.

Though you had a mind to give up yourselves to all manner of profanity and sensuality, there is so little pleasure can be strained out of these sins, that we must neither conclude your love for them in this case as a love to them for themselves, a devilish unhired love without any prospect of profit or pleasure from them otherwise. If any shall say, These are monsters of men, be it so, yet alas, a world as fruitful as such monsters, there to be found almost everywhere, allow me to say, they must be admitted as the mouth of the whole unregenerate world against heaven. Roman 3.14. Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.

Verse 19. Now we know that what thing soever the law saith, saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. I have a charge against every unregenerate man and woman, young and old, to be verified by the testimonies of the scriptures of truth, and the testimony of their own consciences, namely, that whether they be professors or profanes, and they are not born again, they are heart enemies to God, to the Son of God, to the Spirit of God, and to the law of God.

Fear this, ye careless souls, that live at ease in your natural state. First, you are enemies to God in your mind, Colossians 1.21. You are not as yet reconciled to him. The natural enmity is not as yet slain, though perhaps it lies hid, and you do not perceive it.

1. You are enemies to the very Being of God, Psalm 14.1. The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. The proud man would that none were above himself, the rebel, there were no king, and the unrenewed man, who has a massive pride in rebellion, that there were no God. He saith it in his heart, he wishes it were so, though he is ashamed and afraid to speak it out.

2. That all natural men are such fools appears from the apostles quoting a part of this psalm, that every mouth may be stopped, Romans 3.10-19. I own, indeed, that while the natural man looks upon God as the Creator and Preserver of the world, because he loves his own self, therefore his heart rises not against the Being of his benefactor. But his enmity will quickly appear, when he looks on God as a rector and judge of the world, binding him under the pain of the curse to exact holiness, and girding him with the cords of death because of his sin. Listen in this case to the voice of the heart, and thou wilt find it to be no God.

2. You are enemies to the nature of God, Job 21.14. They say unto God, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. Men set up to themselves an idol of their own fancy instead of God, and then fall down and worship it. They love him no other way than Jacob loved Leah, while he took her for Rachel.

Every natural man is an enemy to God, if he is revealed in his word. The infinitely holy, just, powerful, and true Being is not the God whom he loves, but the God whom he loathes. In fact, men naturally are haters of God.

Romans 1 verse 30. If they could, they certainly would make him otherwise than what he is. For consider, it is a certain truth that whatsoever is in God is God.

Therefore his attributes or perfections are not anything really distinct from himself. If God's attributes be not God himself, he is a compound being, and so not the first being, to say which is blasphemous. For the parts compounding are before the compound itself.

But he is Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. Now upon this I would for your conviction propose to your conscience a few queries. 1. How stand your hearts affected towards the infinite purity and holiness of God? Conscience will give an answer to this, while the tongue will not speak out.

2. If ye be not partakers of his holiness, ye cannot be reconciled to it. The pagans, finding they could not be like God in holiness, made their gods like themselves in filthiness, and thereby discovered what sort of a God that natural man would have. God is holy.

Can an unholy creature love his unspotted holiness? Nay, it is a righteous only that can give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. God is light. Can creatures of darkness rejoice in it? Nay, every one that doth evil hateth light.

John 3.20 For what communion hath light with darkness? 2 Corinthians 6.14 2. How stand your hearts affected with the justice of God? There is not a man who is wedded to his lusts, as all the unregenerate are, but would be content with the blood of his body to blot that letter out of the name of God. Can the malefactor love his condemning judge, or an unjustified sinner, a just God? No, he cannot. Luke 7.47 To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

Hence as men cannot get the doctrine of his justice blotted out of the Bible, it is such an eyesore to them that they strive to blot it out of their minds. They ruin themselves by presuming on his mercy, while they are not careful to get a righteousness wherein they may stand before his justice. But saying their heart the Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil.

Zephaniah 1.12 3. How stand you affected to the omniscience and omnipresence of God? Men naturally would rather have a blind idol than the all-seeing God. Therefore they do what they can, as Adam did, to hide themselves from the presence of the Lord.

03 - The Corruption of the Will, Mind and...

I'm reading from the book, *Human Nature in its Fourfold State*, by Thomas Boston, *The Corruption of the Will*. They no more love the all-seeing and everywhere present God than the thief loves to have the judge witness to his evildoes. If it could be carried by votes, God would be voted out of the world and closed up in heaven.

For the language of the carnal heart is, The Lord seeth us not, the Lord hath forsaken the earth, Ezekiel 8, 12. 4. How stand ye affected to the truth and veracity of God? There are but few in the world who can heartily subscribe to this sentence of the Apostle Roman 3, 4, Let God be true, but every man a liar. Nay, truly there are many who, in effect, hope that God will not be true to his word.

There are thousands who hear the gospel, that hope to be saved, and think all safe with them for eternity, who never had any experience of the new birth, nor do it all concern themselves in the question, whether they are born again or not, a question that is light to wear out from among us at this day. Our Lord's words are plain and peremptory, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. What are such hopes then, but real hopes that God, with profoundest reverence be it spoken, will recall his word, and that Christ will prove a false prophet? What else means the sinner who, when he hears the words of the curse, blesses himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart? Deuteronomy 29, 19.

Lastly, how stand ye affected to the power of God? None but new creatures will love him for and on a fair view thereof, though others may slavishly fear him upon the account of it. There is not a natural man but would contribute to the utmost of his power to the building of another tower of Babel to him it in. On these grounds, I declare every unrenewed man an enemy to God.

Secondly, you are enemies to the Son of God, that enmity to Christ is in your hearts, which would have made you join the husbandmen who killed the heir, and cast him out of the vineyard, if you had been beset with their temptations, and no more restrained than they were. Am I a dog, you will say, that I should so treat my sweet Saviour? So did Hazel ask in another case, but when he had the temptation, he was a dog to do it. Many call Christ their sweet Saviour, whose consciences can bear witness that they never suck so much sweetness from him as from their sweet lusts, which are ten times sweeter to them than their Saviour.

He is no other way sweet to them than as they abuse his death and sufferings for the peaceable enjoyment of their lusts, that they may live as they please in the world, and when they die be kept out of hell. Alas, it is but a mistaken Christ that is sweet to you, whose souls loathe that Christ, who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. It is with you as it was with the carnal Jews who delighted in him, while they mistook his errand into the world, fancying that he would be a temporal deliverer to them.

Malachi 3.1 But when he sat as a refiner and purifier of silver, verses 2 and 3, and rejected them as reprobate silver, who thought to have had no small honour in the kingdom of the Messiah, his

doctrine gulled their consciences, and they had no rest till he imbrued their hands in his blood. To open your eyes in this point, which are so averse to believe, I will lay before you the enmity of your hearts against Christ and all his offices. First, every unregenerate man is an enemy to Christ in his prophetic office.

He is appointed of the Father the great prophet and teacher, but not upon the call of the world, who in their natural state would have unanimously voted against him. Therefore, when he came, he was condemned as a seducer and blasphemer. For evidence of this enmity, I will instance two things.

Evidence number one. Consider the entertainment which he meets with when he comes to teach souls inwardly by his spirit. Men do what they can to stop their ears, like that deaf adder, that they may not hear his voice.

They always resist the Holy Ghost, they desire not the knowledge of his ways, and therefore bid him depart from them. The old calumny is often raised upon him on that occasion. John 10 20.

He is mad, why hear ye him? So exercise raised by the spirit of bondage is accounted by many nothing else but distraction and melancholy fits. Men thus blaspheming the Lord's word because they themselves are beside themselves, and cannot judge of those matters. Evidence number two.

Consider the entertainment with which he meets when he comes to teach men outwardly by his word. Number one. His written word, the Bible, is slighted.

Christ has left it to us as a book of our instruction to show us what way we must steer our course if we would go to Emmanuel's land. It is a lamp to light us through a dark world to eternal light. And he hath then joined us to with that diligence wherewith men dig into mines for silver and gold.

John 5 39. But ah, how is this sacred treasure profaned by many! They ridicule that holy word by which they must be judged at the last day, and will rather lose their souls in their jest, dressing up the conceits of their wanton wits and scripture phrases, in which they act as mad a part as one would dig into a mine, and to procure metal to melt and pour down his own in his neighbour's throat. Many exhaust their spirits in reading romances, and their minds pursue them as a flame doth the dry stubble, while they have no heart for, nor relish to, the holy word, and therefore seldom take a Bible in their hands.

What is agreeable to the vanity of their minds is pleasant in taking, but what recommends holiness to their unholy hearts makes their spirits dull and flat. What pleasure they find in reading a profane ballad or storybook, to whom the Bible is tasteless as a white of an egg. Many lay by their Bibles with their Sabbath-day clothes, and whatever use they have for their clothes they have none for their Bibles till the return of the Sabbath.

Alas, the dust or the finery about your Bibles is a witness now, and will at the last day be a witness of the enmity of your hearts against Christ as a prophet. Besides all this, among those who usually read the scripture, how few are those who read it as a word of the Lord to their souls, and keep up communion with him in it. They do not make his statutes their counselors, nor doth their particular case send them to their Bibles.

They are strangers to the solid comfort of the scriptures, and when they are dejected, it is something else in the word that revives them, as Ahab was cured by a solid fit by the securing of Naboth vineyard for him. 2. Christ's Word Preaches to Spies The entertainment which most of the world, to whom it has come, have always given it, is that which is mentioned in Matthew 22.5. They made light of it, and for its sake they are despised whom he employs to preach it. Whatever other face men put upon their contempt of the ministry, John 15.20.21, their servant is not greater than the Lord.

If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they have kept my say, they will keep yours also. But only things will they do unto you for my name's sake.

That Levi was the son of the hated seems not to have been without a mystery, which the world in all ages hath unriddled. But though the earth and vessels wherein God hath put the treasure be turned with many into vessels wherein there is no pleasure, yet why is the treasure itself slighted? But slighted it is, and that with the witness is day. Lord, who hath believed our report? To whom shall we speak? Men can, without remorse, make to themselves silent sabbath one after another.

And alas, when they come to ordinances, for the most part it is but to appear, or as the word is, to be seen before the Lord, and to tread his courts, namely, as a company of beasts would do if they were driven into them. Isaiah 1.12. So little reverence and awe of God appears on their spirits. Many stand like brazen walls before the word, in whose corrupt conversation the preaching of the word makes no breach.

Nay, not a few are growing worse and worse under precept upon precept. And the result of all is, they go and fall backward, and are broken and snared and taken. Isaiah 28.13 What tears of blood are sufficient to lament that the gospel, the grace of God, is thus received in vain? We are but the voice of one crying.

A speaker is in heaven, and speaks to you from heaven by men. Why do you refuse him that speaketh? Hebrews 12.25 God has made our master heir of all things, and we are sent to court a spouse for him. There is none so worthy as he, none more unworthy than they to whom this match is proposed.

But the prince of darkness is preferred before the prince of peace. A dismal darkness overclouded the world by Adam's fall more terrible than if the sun, moon, and stars had been forever wrapped up in the blackness of darkness. And there we should have eternally lain, had not this grace of the gospel as the shining sun appeared to dispel it.

Titus 2.11 But yet we fly like night owls from it, and like the wild beasts lay ourselves down in our dens when the sun arises, we are struck blind with the light thereof. And as creatures of darkness love darkness rather than light, such is the enmity of the hearts of men against Christ in his prophetic office. 2. The natural man is an enemy to Christ in his priestly office.

He is appointed of the Father a priest forever, that by his alone sacrifice and intercession sinners may have peace with and access to God. But Christ crucified is a stumbling block and foolishness to the unrenewed part of mankind to whom he is preached. 1 Corinthians 1.23 They are not for him as a new and living way, nor is he by the voice of the world and high priest over the house of God.

Corrupt nature goes quite another way to work. Evidence 1. None of Adam's children naturally inclined to receive the blessing in borrowed robes, but would always according to the spider's motto owe all to themselves, and so climb up to heaven on the thread spun out of their own bowels. For they desire to be under the law, Galatians 4.21 And go about to establish their own righteousness.

Romans 10.3 Man naturally looks on God as the great master, and himself as his servant, that must work and win heaven as his wages. Hence when conscience is awakened, he thinks that, to the end he may be saved, he must answer to the demands of the law, serve God as well as he can, and pray for mercy wherein he comes short. Thus many come to duties, they never come out of them to Jesus Christ.

Evidence 2. As men naturally think highly of their duties, that seem to them to be well done, so they look for acceptance with God according as their work is done, not according to the share they have in the blood of Christ. Wherefore have we fasted, say they? And thou seest not. They value themselves on their performances and attainments, yea, their very opinions in religion.

Philippians 3.4-7 Taken to themselves what they rob from Christ, the great high priest. Evidence 3. The natural man, going to God in duties, will always be found either to go without a mediator, or with more than only one mediator, Jesus Christ. Nature is blind, and therefore vengeous.

It sets men a-going immediately to God without Christ, to rush into his presence and put their petitions in his hand without being introduced by the secretary of heaven, or putting their requests into his hand. So fixed is his disposition in the unrenewed heart, that when many hearers of the gospel are conversed with upon the point of their hopes of salvation, the name of Christ will scarcely be heard from their mouths. Ask them how they think to obtain the pardon of sin, they will tell you they beg and look for mercy, because God is a merciful God, and that is all they have to confide in.

Others look for mercy for Christ's sake, but how do they know that Christ will take their plea in hand? Why, as the papists have their mediators with the mediators, so have they. They know he cannot but do it, for they pray, confess, mourn, and have great desires and the like, and so have something of their own to commend them unto him. They were never made poor in spirit, and brought empty-handed to Christ, to lay the stress of all on his atoning blood.

Thirdly, the natural man is an enemy to Christ in his kingly office. The Father hath appointed a mediator, King and Zion, Psalm 2 verse 6, all to whom the gospel comes are commanded on their highest peril to kiss the Son, and submit themselves unto him, verse 12. But the natural voice of mankind is away with him, as you may see, verses 2 and 3, they will not have him to reign over them, Luke 19, 14.

Evidence number one, the workings of corrupt nature to rust the government out of his hands. No sooner was he born, but being born a king, Herod persecuted him, Matthew 2. And when he was crucified, they set up over his head his accusation written, This is Jesus, the King of the Jews, Matthew 27, 37. Though his kingdom be a spiritual kingdom, and not of this world, yet they cannot allow him a kingdom within a kingdom, which acknowledges no other head or supreme but the royal mediator.

They make bold with his royal prerogatives, changing his laws, institutions, and ordinances, modeling his worship according to the devices of their own hearts, introducing new offices and officers into his kingdom, not to be found in the book of the manner of his kingdom. Disposing of the external government thereof as may best suit their carnal designs. Such is the enmity of the hearts of men against Zion's king.

Evidence number two, how unwilling are men naturally to submit unto and be hedged in by the laws and disciplines of his kingdom. As a king, he is a lawgiver, Isaiah 33, 22, and has appointed an external government, discipline, and censors to control the unruly and to keep his professed subjects in order, to be exercised by officers of his own appointment. Matthew 18, 17, and 18, 1 Corinthians 12, 28, 1 Timothy 5, 17, Hebrew 13, 17.

But these are the great eyesores of the carnal world, who love sinful liberty, and therefore cry out, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us, Psalm 2, verse 3. Hence this work is found to be, in a special manner, a striving against a stream of corrupt nature, which for the most part puts such a face on the church as if there were no king in Israel, every one doing that which is right in his own eyes. Evidence number three, however natural men may be brought to feign submission to the king of saints, yet lusts always retain the throne and dominion in their hearts, and they are serving diverse lusts and pleasures, Titus 3, 3. None but these in whom Christ is formed do really put the crown on his head, and receive the kingdom of Christ within them. His crown is the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals.

Who are they whom the power of grace has not subdued, that will allow him to set up and put down in their souls as he will? Nay, as for others, any lord shall sooner get the rule over them than the lord of glory. They kindly entertain his enemies, but will never absolutely resign themselves to his government, till conquered in a day of power. Thus you may see that the natural man is an enemy to Jesus Christ and all his offices.

But oh, how hard is it to convince men on this point! They are very loath to take it up, and in a special manner the enmity of the heart against Christ and his priestly office seems to be hid from the view of most of the hearers of the gospel. There appears to be a peculiar malignity and corrupt nature against that office of his. It may be observed that the Sassanians, those enemies of our blessed Lord, allow him to be properly a prophet and a king, but deny him to be properly a priest.

This is agreeable enough to the corruption of our nature. For under the covenant of works the Lord was known as a prophet or teacher, and also as a king or ruler, but not at all as a priest. So man knows nothing of the mystery of Christ as a way to the Father till it be revealed to him, and when it is revealed, the will rises up against it.

For corrupt nature lies cross to the mystery of Christ, and the great contrivance of salvation through the crucified Saviour revealed in the gospel. For clearing of which weighty truth, let these four things be considered first. The souls falling in with the grand scheme of salvation by Jesus Christ, and setting the matters of salvation on that footing before the Lord, is declared by the scriptures of truth to be an undoubted mark of a real saint, who is happy here, and shall be happy hereafter.

Matthew 11 6 Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me. 1 Corinthians 1 23 and 24 But we preach Christ crucified unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness, but

unto them which are called both Jews and Greeks Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Philippians 3 3 For we are the circumcision which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

Now how could this be, if nature could comply with that grand device? 2 Corrupt nature is a very reverse of the gospel In the gospel God proposes Jesus Christ as a great means of reuniting man to himself. He has named him as a mediator, one in whom he is well pleased, and will have none but him. Matthew 17 5 But nature will have none of him.

Psalm 81 11 God appointed the place of meeting for the reconciliation, namely the flesh of Christ. Accordingly God was in Christ. 2 Corinthians 5 19 As a tabernacle of meeting, to make up the peace with sinners.

But natural men, although they should die forever, will not come to Christ. John 5 40 You will not come to me that ye might have life. In the way of the gospel the sinner must stand before the Lord in an imputed righteousness.

But corrupt nature is for an inherent righteousness. And therefore, so far as natural men follow after righteousness, they follow after the law of righteousness. Romans 9 31 32 And not after the Lord our righteousness.

Nature is always for building up itself, and has some ground for boasting. But the great design of the gospel is to exalt grace, to depress nature, and exclude boasting. Romans 3 27 The sum of our natural religion is to do good from and for ourselves.

John 5 44 The sum of the gospel religion is to deny ourselves, and to do good from and for Christ. Philippians 1 21 Thirdly, everything in nature is against believing in Jesus Christ. What beauty can a blind man discern in a crucified Saviour, for which he is to be desired? How can the will naturally impotent, yea, and averse to good, make choice of him? Well, may the soul then say to him in the day of the spiritual siege, as a Jebusite said to David in another case, Except thou take away the blind in the lane, thou shalt not come in hither.

2 Samuel 5 6 The way of nature is to go into oneself for all, according to the fundamental maxim of unsanctified morality, that a man should trust in himself, which according to the doctrine of faith is mere foolishness, for so it is determined. Proverbs 18 26 He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool. Now faith is a soul's going out of itself for all, and this nature, on the other hand, determines to be foolishness.

1 Corinthians 1 18 23 Wherefore there is need of the working of mighty power to cause sinners to believe. Ephesians 1 19 Isaiah 53 1 We see the promises of welcome to sinners in the gospel covenant are ample, large, and free, clogged with no conditions. Isaiah 55 1 Revelation 22 17 If they cannot believe his bare word, he has given them his oath upon it.

Ezekiel 33 11 And for their greater assurance he is the next seals to a sworn covenant, namely the holy sacraments, so that no more could be demanded of the most faithless person in the world to make us believe him than the Lord hath condescended to give us to make us believe himself. This plainly speaks nature to be against believing, and those who flee to Christ for a refuge to have need of a strong consolation. Hebrews 6 18 To balance their strong doubts and propensity to unbelief.

Further also it may be observed how in the words sent to a secure, graceless generation their objections are answered beforehand, and words of grace are heaped one upon another, as you may read Isaiah 55 7 and 9 Joel 2 13 Why? Because the Lord knows that when these secure sinners are thoroughly awakened, doubts, fears, and carnal reasonings against believing will be getting into their hearts as thick as dust in a house raised by sweeping a dry floor. Lastly, corrupt nature is bent toward the way of the law or covenant of works, and every natural man so far as he sets himself to seek after salvation is engaged in that way, and will not quit it till beat from it by divine power. Now the way of salvation by works and that of free grace in Jesus Christ are inconsistent.

Romans 11 6 And if by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace, otherwise work is no more work. Galatians 3 12 And the law is not of faith, but the man that doth them shall live in them.

Wherefore, if the will of man naturally inclined to the way of salvation by the law, it lies cross to the gospel plan. And that such is the natural bent of our hearts will appear if the following things be considered. 1 The law was Adam's covenant, and he knew no other.

And he was the head and representative of all mankind, that were brought into it with him, and left under it by him, though without strength to perform the condition thereof. Hence this covenant is interwoven with our nature, and though we have lost our father's strength, yet we will still incline to the way he was set upon, is our head and representative in that covenant, that is, by doing to live. This is our natural religion, and the principle which men naturally take for granted.

Matthew 19 16 What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life? 2 Consider the opposition that has always been made in the world against the doctrine of free grace in Jesus Christ, by men setting up the way of works, thereby discovering the natural tendency of the heart. It is manifest that the great design of the gospel plan is to exalt the free grace of God in Jesus Christ. Romans 4 16 Therefore it is of faith that it might be by grace.

Ephesians 1 6 Ephesians 2 7 9 All gospel truths center in Christ, so that to learn the truth is to learn Christ. Ephesians 4 20 And to be truly taught it, is to be taught as the truth is in Jesus. 21 All dispensations of grace and favor from heaven, whether to nations or particular persons, has still had something about them proclaiming the freedom of grace, is in the very first separation made by the divine favor.

Cain, the elder brother, is rejected, and Abel, the younger, accepted. This shines through the whole history of the Bible. But, as true as it is, this has been the point principally opposed by corrupt nature.

One may well say that of all heirs in religion, since Christ, the seed of the woman, was preached, this of works, in opposition to free grace in him, was the first that lived, and it is likely will be the last that dies. There have been vast numbers of heirs, which sprang up one after another, whereof at length the world became ashamed and weary, so that they died away. But this has continued from Cain, the first author of this heresy, unto this day, and never wanted some that clave to it, even in times of greatest light.

I do not without ground call Cain the author of it, who, when Abel brought a sacrifice of atonement, a bloody offering from the firstlings of his flock, like the publican smiting on his breast, and saying, God, be merciful to me, a sinner, advanced with his thank-offering of the fruit of the ground, Genesis 4, 3 and 4, like the proud Pharisee with his, God, I thank thee, and so on. For what was the cause of Cain's wrath, and of his murdering Abel? Was it not that he was accepted of God for his work, Genesis 4, 4 and 5? And wherefore slew he him, because his own works were evil, and his brothers righteous, 1 John 3, 12, that is, done in faith, and accepted, when his were done without faith, and therefore rejected, as the apostle teaches, Hebrews 11, 4. So he wrote his indignation against justification and acceptance with God through faith, and opposition to works, and the blood of his brother, to convey it down to posterity. And since that time the unbloody sacrifices often swam in the blood of those that rejected it.

The promise made to Abraham, of the seed in which all nations should be blessed, was so overclouded among his posterity in Egypt, that the generality of them saw no need of that way of obtaining the blessing, till God himself confuted their error by a fiery law from Mount Sinai, which was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come, Galatians 3, 19. I need not insist on telling you how Moses and the prophets had still much to do to lead the people off the conceit of their own righteousness. The ninth chapter of Deuteronomy is entirely spent on that purpose.

They were very gross in that point in our Savior's time, in the time of the apostles, when the doctrine of free grace was most clearly preached. That error lifted up its head in the face of clearest light. Witness the epistles to the Romans and Galatians, and since that time it has not been wanting.

Pulperly be in the common sink of former heresies, and the hardened life of that delusion. And finally it may be observed, that always as the church declined from her purity otherwise, the doctrine of free grace was obscured proportionably. 3. Such is the natural propensity of man's heart to the way of the law, in opposition to Christ, that, as the tainted vessel turns a taste of the purest liquor put into it, so the natural man turns the very gospel into law, and transforms the covenant of grace into a covenant of works.

The ceremonial law was to the Jews a real gospel, which held blood, death, and translation of guilt before their eyes, continually, is the only way of salvation. Yet their very table, i.e. their altar with the several ordinances pertaining thereto, Malachi 1.12, was a snare unto them, Romans 2.9. While they used it to make up the defects in their obedience to the moral law, and claimed to it so as to reject him whom the altar and sacrifices pointed them to, as a substance of all, even as Hagar, whose duty was only to serve, was by their father brought into her mistress's bed, not without a mystery in the purpose of God, for these are the two covenants, Galatians 4.24. This is the doctrine of the gospel corrupted by papists and other enemies to the doctrine of free grace. And indeed, however natural men's heads may be set right in this point, as surely as they are out of Christ, their faith, repentance, and obedience, such as they are, are placed by them in the room of Christ and his righteousness, and so trusted to, as if by these they fulfilled a new law.

4. Grace is a difficulty in Adam's son, so they are parting with the law as a covenant of works. None part with it in that respect, but those whom the power of the Spirit of grace separates from it. The law is our first husband, and gifts every one's virgin love.

When Christ comes to the soul, he finds it married to the law, so that it neither can nor will be married to another, till it be obliged to part with the first husband, as the Apostle teaches, Romans 7.1-4. Now that you may see what sort of a parting this is, consider first, it is a death, Romans 7.4, Galatians 2.19. Entreaties will not prevail with the soul here. It saith to the first husband, as Ruth to Naomi, The Lord do so to me, and more also have fought but death part thee and me. And here sinners are true to their word, they die to the law, ere they be married to Christ.

Death is hard to every body, but what difficulty do you imagine must a loving wife on her deathbed find in parting with her husband, the husband of her youth, and with the dear children she has brought forth to him? The law is that husband. All the duties performed by the natural man are these children. What a struggle as for life will be in the heart ere they be parted.

I may have occasion to touch upon this afterwards. In the meantime, take the Apostle's short but pithy description of it, Romans 10.3. For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. They go about to establish their own righteousness, like an eager disputant in school seeking to establish the point in question, or like a tormentor extorting a confession from one upon the rack.

They go about to establish it, to make it stand. Their righteousness is like a house built on the sand. It cannot stand, but they would have it to stand.

It falls, they set it up again, but still it tumbles down on them. Yet they cease not to go about to make it stand. But wherefore all this pains about a tottering righteousness, because such as it is, it is their own? What sets them against Christ's righteousness? Why, that would make them free grace-debtors for all.

And this is what the proud heart can by no means submit to. Here lies the stress of the matter, Psalm 10.4. The wicked through the pride of his countenance will not seek to read it without the supplement. That is, in other terms, he cannot dig, and to beg he is ashamed.

Such is the struggle ere the soul die to the law. But what speaks yet more of this woeful disposition of the heart, nature oft times gets the mastery of the disease, insomuch that the soul which was like to have died to the law, while convictions were sharp and piercing, fatally recovers of the happy and promising sickness. And what is natural, and cleaves more closely than ever to the law, is even a wife brought back from the gates of death would cleave to her husband.

This is the issue of the exercises of many about their soul's case. They are indeed brought to follow duties more closely, but they are as far from Christ as ever, if not further. Secondly, it is a violent death, Romans 7.4. You are become dead to the law, being killed, slain, or put to death as the word bears.

The law itself has a great hand in this. The husband gives the wound, Galatians 2.19. I through the law am dead to the law. The soul that dies this death is like a loving wife matched with a rigorous husband.

She does what she can to please him, yet he is never pleased, but tosses, harasses, and beats her till she breaks her heart, and death sets her free, as will afterwards more fully appear. Thus it is made evident that men's hearts are naturally bent to the way of the law, and lie crossed to the

gospel method. And the second article of the charge against you that are unregenerate is verified, namely, that you are enemies to the Son of God.

Thirdly, you are enemies to the Spirit of God. He is the Spirit of holiness. The natural man is unholy, and loves to be so, and therefore resists the Holy Ghost, Acts 7.51. The work of the Spirit is to convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment, John 16.8. But oh, how do men strive to ward off these convictions as much as they would ward off threatening the loss of a right eye or a right hand.

If the Spirit of the Lord darts them in, so that they cannot avoid them, the heart says, in effect, as they have to Elijah, whom he hated and feared, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And indeed they treat him as an enemy, doing their utmost to stifle convictions, and to murder these harbingers that come to prepare the Lord's way into the soul. Some field their hands with business, to put their convictions out of their heads, as Cain, who said about building a city. Some put them off with delays and fair promises, as Felix did.

Some will sport them away in company, and some sleep them away. The Holy Spirit is a spirit of sanctification, whose work it is to subdue lusts, and burn up corruption. How then can a natural man, whose lusts are to him as his limbs, yea, as his life, fail of being an enemy to him? Fourthly, you are enemies to the law of God.

Though the natural man desires to be under the law, as a covenant of works, choosing that way of salvation, in opposition to the mystery of Christ, yet, as it is a rule of life to him, requiring universal holiness, and forbidding all manner of impurity, he is an enemy to it. It is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, can be. Romans 8, 7. For, number one, there is no unrenewed man who is not wedded to some one lust or another, which his heart can by no means part with.

Now that he cannot bring up his inclinations to the holy law, he would fain have the law brought down to his inclinations, a plain evidence of the enmity of the heart against it. Therefore, to delight in the law of God after the inward man is proposed in the word as a mark of a gracious soul. Romans 7, 22.

Psalm 1, verse 2. It is from this natural enmity of the heart against the law that all the pharisaical glosses upon it have arisen, whereby the commandment, which is in itself exceeding broad, has been made very narrow, to the intent it might be the more agreeable to the natural disposition of the heart. Number two. The law laid home on a natural conscience, and its spirituality irritates corruption.

The nearer it comes, nature rises a higher against it. In that case, it is as oil to the fire, which, instead of quenching it, makes it flame the more. When the commandment came, sin revived, says the apostle Romans 7, 9. What reason can be assigned for this but the natural enmity of the heart against the holy law? Unmortified corruption, the more it is opposed, the more it rages.

Let us conclude, then, that the unregenerate are heart enemies to God, his Son, his Spirit, and his law, that there is a natural contrariety, opposition, and enmity in will of man to God himself and his holy will. Fifthly. There is in the will of man contumacy against the Lord.

Man's will is naturally willful in an evil course. He will have his will, though it should ruin him. It is with him as with the Leviathan.

Job 41, 29. Darts are counted as stubble. He laugheth at the shaking of a spear.

The Lord calls to him by his word, says to him as Paul to the jailer, when he was about to kill himself, Do thyself no harm, sinners, why will you die? Ezekiel 18, 31. But they will not hearken. Everyone turneth to his course as a horse rushes into the battle.

Jeremiah 8, 6. We have a promise of life in form of a command. Proverbs 4, 4. Keep my commandments and live. It speaks impenitent sinners to be self-destroyers, willful self-murderers.

They transgress the command of living, as if one's servant should willfully starve himself to death, or greedily drink a cup of poison, which his master commands him to forbear. Even so do they. They will not live, they will die.

Proverbs 8, 36. All they that hate me love death. Oh, what a heart is this! It is a stony heart.

Ezekiel 36, 26. Hard and inflexible as a stone, mercies melt it not, judgments break it not, yet it will break ere it bow. It is an insensible heart, though there be upon the sinner a weight of sin, which makes the earth to stagger.

Although there is a weight of that wrath on him, which makes the devils to tremble, yet he goes lightly under the burden. He feels not the weight any more than a stone would, till the Spirit of the Lord quicken him so far as to make him feel it. Lastly, the unrenewed will is wholly perverse, in reference to man's chief and highest end.

The natural man's chief end is not God, but himself. The being of man is merely relative, dependent, borrowed. He has neither being nor goodness originally from himself, but all he has is from God, is a first cause and spring of all perfection, natural or moral.

Dependence is woven into his very nature, so that if God were totally to withdraw from him, he would dwindle into a mere nothing. Seeing then, whatever man is, he is of him. Surely in whatever he is, he should be to him, as the waters which came from the sea do of course return there again.

Thus man was created directly looking to God as his chief end, but falling into sin, he fell off from God and turned into himself, and like a traitor usurping the throne, he gathers in the rents of the crown to himself. This infers a total apostasy and universal corruption in man. For where the chief and last end is changed, there could be no goodness there.

This is the case of all men in their natural state. Psalm 14, 2 and 3. The Lord looked down to see if there were any that did seek God. They are all gone aside to wit from God.

They seek not God, but themselves. Though many fair shreds of morality are to be found amongst them, yet there is none that doeth good, no, not one. For though some of them in appearance run well, yet they are still off the way, they never aim at the right mark.

They are lovers of their own selves. 2 Timothy 3, 2. More than God. Verse 4. Wherefore Jesus Christ, having come into the world to bring men back to God again, came to bring them out of themselves in the first place.

Matthew 16, 24. The godly groan under the remains of this woeful disposition of the heart. They acknowledge it, and set themselves against it in its subtle and dangerous insinuations.

The unregenerate, though most insensible of it, are under the power thereof. And whithersoever they turn themselves, they cannot move beyond the circle of self. They seek for themselves, they act for themselves.

Their natural, civil, and religious actions, from whatever springs they come, all run into and meet in the dead sea of self. Most men are so far from making God their chief end in their natural and civil actions, that in these manners God is not in all their thoughts. Their eating and drinking and such like natural actions are for themselves, their own pleasure or necessity, without any higher end.

Zechariah 7, 6. Did ye not eat for yourselves? They have no eye to the glory of God in these things. They do not eat and drink to keep up their bodies for the Lord's service. They do them not because God has said, Thou shalt not kill.

Neither do those drops of sweetness which God has put into the creature raise up their souls towards that ocean of delights that is in the Creator. Though they be a sign hung out at heaven's door, to tell men of the fullness of goodness that is in God himself. Acts 14, 17.

But it is self and not God that is sought in them by natural men. And what are the unrenewed man's civil actions, such as buying, selling, working and so on, but fruit to himself? Hosea 10, 1. So marrying and giving in marriage are reckoned amongst the sins of the old world. Matthew 24, 38.

For they had no eye to God their end to please him, but all they had in view was to please themselves. Genesis 6, 3. Finally, self is natural men's highest end in their religious actions. They perform duties for a name, Matthew 6, 1 and 2. Or some other worldly interest, John 6, 26.

Or if they be more refined, it is their peace, and at most their salvation from hell and wrath, or their own eternal happiness that is their chief and highest end. Matthew 19, 16 to 22. Their eyes are held that they see not the glory of God.

They seek God indeed, but not for himself, but for themselves. They seek him not at all, but for their own welfare. So their whole life is woven into one web of practical blasphemy, making God the means and self their end, yea, their chief end.

Thus I have given you a rude draft of man's will and his natural state, drawn by Scripture and men's own experience. Call it no more Naomi, but Marah, for bitter it is, and a root of bitterness. Call it no more free will, but slavish lust.

Free to evil, but free from good, till regenerating grace unloose the bands of wickedness. Now, since all must be wrong and nothing can be right, where the understanding and will are so corrupt, I shall briefly dispatch what remains as following, of course, on the corruption of these prime faculties of the soul. The corruption of the affections.

Section 3. The affections are corrupted. The unrenewed man's affections are wholly disordered and distempered. There is the unruly horse that either will not receive or violently runs away with the rider.

So man's heart naturally is a mother of abominations. Marks 7.21 and 22. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness,

and so on.

The natural man's affections are wretchedly misplaced. He is a spiritual monster. His heart is where his feet should be, fixed on the earth.

His heels are lifted up against heaven, which his heart should be set on. Acts 9.5. His face is towards hell, his back towards heaven. And therefore God calls him to turn.

He loves what he should hate and hates what he should love. Joys in what he ought to mourn for and mourns for what he should rejoice in. Glories in his shame and is ashamed of his glory.

Abhors what he should desire and desires what he should abhor. Proverbs 2.13 and 15. The Jews hit the point indeed, as Caiaphas did in another case, when they cried out against the apostles as men that turned the world upside down.

Acts 17.6. For that is the work which the gospel has to do in the world, where sin has put all things so out of order that heaven lies under and earth above. If the unrenewed man's affections be set on lawful objects, then they are either excessive or defective. Lawful enjoyments of the world have sometimes too little, but mostly too much of them.

Either they get not their due, or if they do, it is a measure pressed down and running over. Spiritual things have always too little of them. In a word, they are never right, only evil.

Now here is a threefold court against heaven and holiness, not easily to be broken. A blind mind, a perverse will, and disorderly, distempered affections. The mind swelled with self-conceit says the man should not stoop.

The will opposite to the will of God says he will not. And the corrupt affections rising against the Lord in defense of the corrupt will says he shall not. Thus a poor creature stands out against God and goodness till a day of power come in which he is made a new creature.

THE CORRUPTION OF THE CONSCIENCE The conscience is corrupt and defiled, Titus 1.15. It is an evil eye that feels one's conversation with much darkness and confusion. Being naturally unable to do its office till the Lord, by letting in new light to the soul, awaken the conscience, it remains sleepy and inactive. Conscience can never do its work, but according to the light it has to work by.

Wherefore, seeing the natural man cannot spiritually discern spiritual things, 1 Corinthians 2.14. The conscience naturally is quite useless in that point, being cast into such a deep sleep that nothing but saving and illumination from the Lord can set it on work in that manner. The light of the natural conscience in good and evil, sin and duty, is very defective. Therefore, though it may check for grosser sins, yet, as to the more subtle workings of sin, it cannot check them, because it discerns them not.

Thus, conscience will fly in the face of many, if at any time they be drunk, swear, neglect prayer, or be guilty of any gross sin, who otherwise have a profound peace, though they live in the sin of unbelief, and are strangers to spiritual worship and the life of faith. Natural light, being but faint and languishing in many things, which it does reach, conscience in that case shoots like a stitch in one side, which quickly goes off. Its incitements to duty and checks for and struggles against sin are

very remiss, which the natural man easily gets over.

But because there is a false light in the dark mind, the natural conscience following the same will call evil good and good evil, Isaiah 5.20. So it is often found, like a mad and furious horse, which violently runs down himself, his rider, and all that come in his way, John 16.2. Whosoever killeth you will think that he doth God's service. When the natural conscience is awakened by the spirit of conviction, it will indeed rage and roar, and put the whole man in a dreadful consternation. Awfully summon all the powers of the soul to help in the straight.

Make the stiff heart to tremble and the knees to bow. Set the eyes a-weeping, the tongue a-confessing, and obliged a man to cast out the goods into the sea, which it apprehends are likely to sink the ship of the soul, though the heart still goes after them. Yet it is an evil conscience, which naturally leads to despair, and will do it effectually, as in Judas' case, unless either lusts prevail over it, till all it asleep, as in the case of Felix, Acts 24.25, or the blood of Christ prevail over it, sprinkling and purging it from dead works, as in the case of all true converts, Hebrews 9.14 and 10.22. Corruption of the memory.

Even the memory bears evident marks of this corruption. What is good and worthy to be remembered, as it makes but slender impressions, so that impression easily wears off. The memory as a leaking vessel lets it slip, Hebrews 2.1. As a sieve that is full when in the water lets all go when it is taken out, so is a memory with respect to spiritual things.

But how does it retain what ought to be forgotten? Not a thing so bear in themselves upon it, that though men would fain have them out of mind, yet they stick there like glue. However forgetful men are in other things, it is hard to forget an injury. So the memory often furnishes new fuel to old lusts, makes men in old age react the sins of their youth, while it presents them again to the mind with delight, which thereupon licks up the former vomit.

This is like a riddle that lets through the pure grain and keeps a refuse, thus far of the corruption of the soul. Corruption of the body. The body itself also is partaker of this corruption and defilement, so far as it is capable thereof.

Wherefore the scripture calls it sinful flesh, Romans 8, 3. We may take this up in two things. First, the natural temper, or rather distemper of the bodies of Adam's children, as it is an effect of original sin, so it has a tendency naturally to sin, incites to sin, leads the soul into snares, yea, is itself a snare to the soul. The body is a furious beast of such metal, that if it be not beat down, kept under, and brought into subjection, it will cast the soul into much sin and misery, 1 Corinthians 9, 27.

There is vileness in the body, Philippians 3, 21, which as to the saints will never be removed, until it be melted down in the grave and cast into a new form at the resurrection, to come forth a spiritual body, and will never be carried off from the bodies of those who are not partakers of the resurrection to life. 2. It serves the soul in many sins. Its members are instruments or weapons of unrighteousness, whereby men fight against God, Romans 6, 13.

The eyes and ears are open doors by which impure emotions and sinful desires enter into the soul. The tongue is a world of iniquity, James 3, 6. An unruly evil, full of deadly poison, verse 8. By it the impure heart vents a great deal of its filthiness. The throat is an open sepulcher, Romans 3,

13.

The feet run the devil's errands, verse 15. The belly is made a god, Philippians 3, 19. Not only by drunkards and riotous livers, but by every natural man, Zechariah 12, 6. So the body naturally is an agent for the devil, and a magazine of armor against the To conclude, man by nature is wholly corrupted.

From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in him. As in a dunghill, every part contributes to the corruption of the whole. So the natural man, while in that state, grows still worse and worse.

The soul is made worse by the body, and the body by the soul, and every faculty of the soul serves to corrupt another more and more. Thus much for the second general head. How man's nature was corrupted.

Thirdly, I shall show how man's nature comes to be thus corrupted. The heathens perceived that man's nature was corrupted, but how sin had entered they could not tell. But the scripture is very plain in that point, Romans 5, 12-19.

By one man's sin entered into the world. By one man's disobedience many were made sinners. Adam's sin corrupted man's nature and leavened the whole lump of mankind.

We putrefied in Adam as our root. The root was poisoned, and so the branches were envenomed. The vine turned into the vine of Sodom, and the grapes became grapes of Gaul.

Adam by his sin became not only guilty, but corrupt, and so transmits guilt and corruption to his posterity, Genesis 5-3, Job 14-4. By his sin he stripped himself of his original righteousness and corrupted himself. We were in him representatively, being represented by him as our moral head in the covenant of works.

We were in him seminally, as our natural head, hence we fell in him. And by his disobedience were made sinners, as Levi in the loins of Abraham paid tithes, Hebrews 7, 9 and 10. His first sin is imputed to us.

Therefore justly are we left under the want of his original righteousness, which being given to him as a common person, he cast off by his sin, and this is necessarily followed in him and us by the corruption of the whole nature. Righteousness and corruption being two contraries, one of which must needs always be in man, is the subject capable thereof. In Adam, our common father, being corrupt, we are so too.

For who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Although it is sufficient to prove the righteousness of this dispensation, that it is from the Lord, who doth all things well, yet to silence the murmurings of proud nature, let these few things further be considered. Number one. In the covenant wherein Adam represented us, eternal happiness was promised to him in his posterity, upon condition of his, that is Adam's, perfect obedience as a representative of all mankind.

Whereas if there had been no covenant, they could not have pleaded eternal life upon their most perfect obedience, but might have been, after all, reduced to nothing. Notwithstanding, by natural justice, they would have been liable to God's eternal wrath in case of sin. Who in that case would

not have consented to that representation? Number two.

Adam had a power to stand, given him being made upright. He was as capable of standing for himself in all his posterity as any after him could be for themselves. This trial of mankind in their head would soon have been over, and the crown won for them all had he stood, whereas had his posterity been independent of him, and everyone left to act for himself, the trial would have been continually carrying on as men came into the world.

Number three. He had the strongest natural affection to engage him, being our common father. Number four.

His own stock was in the ship, his all lay at stake, as well as ours. He had no separate interest from ours, but if he forgot ours, he must necessarily forget his own. Number five.

If he had stood, he should have had the light of his mind, the righteousness of his will, and holiness of his affections with entire purity transmitted unto us. We could not have fallen. The crown of glory by his obedience would have been forever secured to him and his.

This is evident from the nature of a federal representation, and no reason can be given why, seeing we are lost by Adam's sin, we should not have been saved by his obedience. On the other hand, it is reasonable that he falling, we should with him bear the loss. Lastly, such as quarrel with this dispensation must renounce their part in Christ, for we are no otherwise made sinners by Adam, than we are made righteous by Christ, from whom we have both imputed and inherent righteousness.

We no more made choice of the second Adam for our head and representative in the second covenant than we did of the first Adam in the first covenant. Let none wonder that such a horrible change could be brought on by one sin of our first parents, for thereby they turned away from God as their chief end, which necessarily infers a universal deprivation. Their sin was a complication of evil's, a total apostasy from God, a violation of the whole law.

By it they broke all the ten commands at once. 1. They chose new gods. They made their belly their god by their sensuality, self their god by their ambition, yea, and the devil their god by believing him and disbelieving their maker.

2. Though they received, yet they observed not the ordinance of God about the forbidden fruit. They contemned that ordinance so plainly enjoined them, and would knees carve out to themselves how to serve the Lord. 3. They took the name of the Lord their god in vain, despising his attributes, his justice, truth, power, and so on.

They grossly profaned the sacramental tree, abused his word by not giving credit to it, abused that creature of his which they should not have touched, and violently misconstrued his providence as if God by forbidding them that tree had been standing in the way of their happiness. Therefore he suffered him not to escape his righteous judgment. 4. They remembered not the Sabbath to keep it holy, but put themselves out of a condition to serve God aright in his own day.

Neither kept they that state of holy rest wherein God had put them. 5. They cast off their relative duties. Eve forgets herself, and acts without the advice of her husband, to the ruin of both.

Adam, instead of admonishing her to repent, yields to the temptation, and confirms her in her wickedness. They forget all duty to their posterity. 6. They honored not their Father in heaven, and therefore their days were not long in the land which the Lord their God gave them.

6. They ruined themselves in all their posterity. 7. Gave themselves up to luxury and sensuality. 8. Took away what was not their own against the express will of the great Owner.

9. They bore false witness and lied against the Lord before angels, devils, and one another, any fact giving out that they were hardly dealt by, and that heaven grudged their happiness. 10. They were discontent with their lot, and coveted in evil covetousness to their house, which ruined both them and theirs.

This was the image of God on man defaced all at once. DOCTRINE OF THE CORRUPTION OF NATURE APPLIED Use one for information. Is man's nature wholly corrupted? Then first.

No wonder that the grave opens its devouring mouth for us as soon as the womb has cast us forth, and that the cradle is turned into a coffin to receive the corrupt lump. For we are all in a spiritual sense dead born, yea and filthy. Psalm 14.3. Noisome, rank, and stinking as a corrupt thing is a word in port.

Then let us not complain of the miseries we are exposed to at our entrance into the world, nor of the continuance of them while we are in it. Here is a venom that has poisoned all the springs of earthly enjoyments we have to drink of. It is a corruption of man's nature that brings forth all the miseries of human life in churches, states, and families, and in men's souls and bodies.

Secondly, behold, here is in a glass a spring of all the wickedness, profanity, and formality which is in the world, the source of all the disorders in thy own heart and life. Everything acts like itself, agreeable to its own nature, and so corrupt man acts corruptly. You need not wonder at the sinfulness of your own heart and life, nor at the sinfulness and perverseness of others.

If a man be crooked he cannot but halt, and if the clock be set wrong, how can it point the hour aright? Thirdly, see here why sin is so pleasant, and religion such a burden to carnal spirits. Sin is natural, holiness not so. Oxen cannot feed in the sea, nor fishes in the fruitful fields.

A swine brought into a palace would soon get away again, to wallow in the mire, and corrupt nature tends ever to impurity. Lastly, learn from this the nature and necessity of regeneration. First, this discovers the nature of regeneration in these two things.

Number one, it is not a partial but a total change, though imperfect in this life. Thy whole nature is corrupted, therefore the cure must go through every part. Regeneration makes not only a new head for knowledge, but a new heart and new affections for holiness.

All things become new. Second Corinthians 5, 17. If one having received many wounds should be cured of them all, save one only, he might bleed to death by that one as well as by a thousand.

So if the change go not through the whole man, it is not. Number two, it is not a change made by human industry, but by the mighty power of the Spirit of God. A man must be born of the Spirit.

John 3, 5. Accidental diseases may be cured by men, but those which are natural not without a miracle. John 9, 32. The change brought upon men by good education are forced upon them by a

natural conscience.

Though it may pass among men for a saving change, yet it is not so, for our nature is corrupt, and none but the God of nature can change it. Though a gardener, by engrafting a pear branch into an apple tree, may make the apple tree bear pears, yet the art of man cannot change the nature of the apple tree. So a man may pin a new life to his old heart, but he can never change the heart.

Secondly, this also shows a necessity of regeneration. It is absolutely necessary in order to salvation. John 3, 3. Except a man be born again, he cannot save the kingdom of God.

No unclean thing can enter the new Jerusalem, but thou art wholly unclean while in thy natural state. If every member of thy body were disjointed, each joint must be loosened before the members can be set right again. This is the case of thy soul, as thou hast heard.

Therefore thou must be born again, otherwise thou shalt never see heaven, unless it be afar off, as the rich man in hell did. Deceive not thyself. No mercy of God, no blood of Christ, will bring thee to heaven in thy unregenerate state.

For God will never open a fountain of mercy to wash away his own holiness and truth, nor to Christ shed his precious blood, to blot out the truths of God, or to overturn God's measures about the salvation of sinners. Heaven, what would you do there who are not born again? You who are in no way fitted for Christ ahead. That would be a strange sight, a holy head, and members wholly corrupt, a head full of treasures of grace, and members wherein is nothing but treasures of wickedness, a head obedient to the death, and heels kicking against heaven.

You are no better adapted for the society above than beasts are for converse with men. Thou art a hater of true holiness, and that the first sight of a saint there would his cry out, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? Nay, the unrenewed man, if it were possible, he could go to heaven in that state, would go to it no otherwise. Then now he comes to the duties of holiness, that is, leaving his heart behind him.

Use number two for Lamentation Well, may we lament thy case, O natural man, for it is the saddest case one can be in out of hell. It is time to lament for thee, for thou art dead already, dead while thou livest. Thou carriest about with thee a dead soul and a living body.

And because thou art dead, thou canst not lament thine own case. Thou art loath them in the sight of God, for thou art altogether corrupt. Thou hast no good in thee.

Thy soul is a mass of darkness, rebellion, and vileness before the Lord. Thou thinkest, perhaps, that thou hast a good heart to God, good inclinations and good desires, but God knows there is nothing good in thee. Every imagination of thine heart is only evil continually.

Thou canst do no good, thou canst do nothing but sin. For first, thou art the servant of sin. Romans 6, 17, Therefore free from righteousness.

Verse 20 Whatever righteousness be, poor soul, thou art free from it. Thou dost not, thou canst not meddle with it. Thou art under the dominion of sin, a dominion wherein righteousness can have no place.

Thou art a child and servant of the devil, though thou be neither wizard nor witch, seeing thou art yet in a state of nature. John 8, 44 Ye are of your father the devil. And to prevent any mistake, consider that sin and Satan have two sorts of servants.

First, there are some employed, as it were, in coarser work. Those bear the devil's mark on their foreheads, having no form of godliness, but are profane, grossly ignorant, mere moralists, not so much as performing the external duties of religion, but living in the view of the world as sons of earth, only attending to earthly things. Philippians 3, 19 Number two, there are some employed in a more refined sort of service to sin, who carry the devil's mark in their right hand, which they can and do hide from the eyes of the world.

These are close hypocrites, who sacrifice as much to the corrupt mind as the others to the flesh. Ephesians 2, 3 These are ruined by a more indiscernible trade of sin. Pride, unbelief, self-seeking, and the like swarm in and prey upon their corrupted, wholly corrupted souls.

Both are servants of the same house, the latter as far as a farmer from righteousness. Secondly, How is it possible that thou shouldst be able to do any good, thou whose nature is wholly corrupt? Can fruit grow where there is no root? Or can there be an effect without a cause? Can a fig tree bear olive berries, either of vine figs? If thy nature be wholly corrupt, as indeed it is, all thou dost is certainly so too, for no effect can exceed the virtue of its cause. Can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit? Matthew 7, 18 Ah, what a miserable spectacle is he that can do nothing but sin! Thou art the man, whoever thou art, that art yet in thy natural state.

Hero, sinner, what is thy case? First, innumerable sins compass thee about, mountains of guilt are lying upon thee, floods of impurities overwhelm thee, living lusts of all sorts roll up and down in the dead sea of thy soul, where no good can breathe, because of the corruption there. Thy lips are unclean, the opening of thy mouth is as the opening of an unripe grape, full of stench and rottenness, Romans 3, 13. Thy throat is an open sepulchre, thy natural actions are sin, for when ye did eat and when ye did drink, did ye not eat for yourselves and drink for yourselves? Zechariah 7, 6 The civil actions are sin, Proverbs 21, 4. The ploughing of the wicked is sin, thy religious actions are sin, Proverbs 15, 8. The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord, the thoughts and imaginations of thy heart are only evil continually.

A deed may be soon done, a word soon spoken, a thought swiftly pathed through the heart, but each of these is an item in thy accounts. O sad reckoning, as many thoughts, words, and actions, so many sins! The longer thou livest, thy accounts swell the more. Should a tear be dropped for every sin, thy head behaved to be waters, and thine eyes a fountain of tears, for nothing but sin comes from thee.

Thy heart frames nothing but evil imaginations. There is nothing in thy life but what is framed by thine heart, and therefore there is nothing in thine heart or life but evil. Secondly, O thy religion, if thou hast any, is lost labour, as to acceptance with God, or any saving effect on thyself.

Art thou yet in thy natural state? Truly, then, thy duties are sins, as was just now hinted. Would not the best wine be loathsome in a vessel wherein there is no pleasure? So is the religion of an unregenerate man. Under the law of the garment which the flesh of the sacrifice was carried in, though it touched other things, did not make them holy.

But he that was unclean, touching anything, whether common or sacred, made it unclean. Even so, thy duties cannot make thy corrupt soul holy, though they in themselves be good. But thy corrupt heart defiles them and makes them unclean.

Haggai 2 12-14 Thou wast wont to divide thy works into two sorts, some good, some evil. But thou must count again, and put them all under one head. For God writes on them all, only evil.

This is lamentable. It will be no wonder to see those begging harvest, who fold their hands in sleep and seed time. But to be labouring with others in the spring, and yet have nothing to reap when the harvest comes, is a very sad case, and will be the case of all professors living and dying in their natural state.

Lastly, thou canst not help thyself. What canst thou do to take away thy sin, who art wholly corrupt? Nothing truly but sin. If a natural man begin to relent, drop a tear for his sin and reform, presently the corrupt nature apprehends at least a merit of fitness.

He has done much himself, he thinks, and God cannot but do more for him on that account. In the meantime he does nothing but sin. So that the fitness of the merit is, that the leper be put out of the camp, the dead soul buried out of sight, and the corrupt lump cast into the pit.

How canst thou think to recover thyself by anything which thou canst do? Will mud and filth wash out filthiness? Wilt thou purge out sin by sinning? Job took a potsherd to scrape himself, because his hands were as full of boils as his body. This is the case of thy corrupt soul, not to be recovered but by Jesus Christ, whose strength was dried up like a potsherd. Psalm 22 15 Thou art poor indeed, extremely miserable and poor.

Revelation 3 17 Thou hast no shelter but a refuge of lies, no garment for thy soul but filthy rags, nothing to nourish it but husks that cannot satisfy. And more than this, thou didst get such a bruise in the loins of Adam as is not yet cured, that thou art without strength. Romans 5 6 Unable to do or work for thyself.

Nay, more than all this, thou canst not so much as think aright, but art lying, helpless as an infant exposed in the open field. Ezekiel 15 5 You three, I exhort you to believe this sad truth. Alas, it is evident that it is very little believed in the world.

Few are concerned to get their corrupt conversation changed, but few are by far to get their nature changed. Most men know not what they are, nor what spirit they are of. They are as the eye, which seeing many things never sees itself.

But until you know every one the plague of his own heart, there is no hope of your recovery. Why will you not believe it? You have plain Scripture testimony for it, but you are loath to entertain such an ill opinion of yourselves. Alas, this is the nature of your disease.

Revelation 3 17 Thou knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. Lord, open their eyes to see it, before they die of it, and in hell lift up their eyes and see what they will not see now. I shall shut up this weighty point of the corruption of man's nature with a few words as to another doctrine from the text.

Doctrine God takes special notice of our natural corruption or the sin of our nature. This he testifies in two ways. By his word, as in the text, God saw that every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually.

See Psalm 14, 2 and 3. By his works, God marks his particular notice of it and displeasure with it, as in many of his works, so especially in these two. First, in the death of the infant children of men. Many miseries they have been exposed to.

They were drowned in a deluge, consumed in Sodom by fire and brimstone. They have been slayed with a sword, dashed against the stones, and are still dying ordinary deaths. What is the true cause of this? And what ground does a holy God thus pursue them? Is it the sin of their parents? That may be the occasion of the Lord's raising the process against them, but it must be their own sin.

It is the ground of the sentence passing on them. For the soul that sinneth, it shall die, says God. Is it their own actual sin? They have none.

But as men do with toads and serpents which they kill at first sight, before they have done any hurt, because of their venomous nature, so it is in this case. Secondly, in the birth of the elect children of God. When the Lord is about to change their nature, he makes the sin of their nature be heavy on their spirits.

When he means to let out their corruption, the lance goes deep into their souls, reaching to the root of sin, Romans 7, 7 and 9. The flesh or corruption of nature is pierced, being crucified, as well as the affections and lusts, Galatians 5, 24. Let us then have a special eye upon the corruption and sin of our nature. God sees it, O that we saw it too, and that sin were ever before us.

What avails it to notice other sins, while this mother sin is not noticed? Turn your eyes inward to the sin of your nature. It is to be feared that many have this work to begin yet. They have shut the door, while the grand thief is yet in the house undiscovered.

This is a weighty point, and in handling of it I shall notice these four heads. Number one, men's overlooking their natural sin. I shall, for conviction, point out some evidences of men's overlooking the sin of their nature, which yet the Lord takes particular notice of.

Men's looking on themselves with such confidence as if there were no hazard of gross sins. Many would take it very heinously to get such a caution as Christ gave his apostles, Luke 21, 34. Take heed of surfeiting and drunkenness.

If any should suppose them to break out in gross abominations, each would be ready to say, Am I a dog? It would raise the pride of their hearts, but not their fear and trembling, because they know not the corruption of their nature. Number two, lack of tenderness towards those that fall. Many, in that case, cast off all bowels of Christian compassion, for they do not consider themselves lest they also be tempted, Galatians 6, 1. Men's passions are often highest against the faults of others.

When sin sleeps soundly in their own breasts, even good David, when he was at his worst, was most violent against the faults of others. While his conscience was asleep under his guilt in the matter of Uriah, the Spirit of the Lord takes notice that his anger was greatly kindled against a man in the parable, 2 Samuel 12, 5. And on good grounds it is thought it was at the same time that he

treated the Ammonites so cruelly as is related in verse 31, putting them under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and making them pass through the brick kiln. Grace makes men zealous against sin in others as well as in themselves, but eyes turned inward to the corruption of nature clothe them with pity and compassion, and fill them with thankfulness to the Lord, that they themselves were not the persons left to be such specimens of human frailty.

3 There are not a few who, if they be kept from afflictions and worldly things, and from gross outbreakings in their conversation, know not what it is to have a sad heart. If they meet with a cross which their proud hearts cannot stoop to bear, they are ready to say, O to be gone! But the corruption of their nature never makes them long for heaven. Lusts, scandalously breaking out at a time, will mar their peace.

But the sin of their nature never makes them have a heavy heart. Delaying of repentance, in hopes to set about it afterwards. Many have their own appointed time for repentance and reformation, as if they were such complete masters over their loss, that they can allow them to gather more strength, and yet overcome them.

They take up resolutions to amend without an eye to Jesus Christ, union with Him, and strength from Him, a plain evidence that they are strangers to themselves. So they are left to themselves, and their flourishing resolutions wither. For as they see not the necessity, so they get not the benefit of the dew from heaven to water them.

5 Men's venturing freely on temptations, and promising liberally in their own strength. They cast themselves fearlessly into temptation, in confidence of their coming off fairly. But were they sensible of the corruption of their nature, they would be cautious of entering on the devil's ground, as one gird about with bags of gunpowder, would be unwilling to walk where sparks of fire are flying, lest they should be blown up.

Self-jealousy well becomes Christian's. Lord is it I, these that know the deceit of their bow, will not be very confident that they shall hit the mark. 6 Unacquaintedness with heart plagues.

The knowledge of the plagues of the heart is a rare qualification. There are indeed some of them written in such great characters, that he who runs may read them. But there are others more subtle, which few discern.

How few are there, to whom the bias of the heart to unbelief is a burden. Nay, they perceive it not. Many have had sharp convictions of other sins, that were never to this day convinced of their unbelief.

Though that is a sin, especially aimed at an authorial conviction. John 16, 8 and 9 He will reprove the world of sin. Because they believe not on me.

A disposition to establish our own righteousness is a weed that naturally grows in every man's heart. But few sweat at the plucking of it up. It lurks undiscovered.

The bias of the heart to the way of the covenant of works is a hidden plague of the heart to many. All the difficulty they find is in getting up their hearts to duties. They find no difficulty in getting their hearts off them and over them to Jesus Christ.

How hard is it to bring men off from their own righteousness. Yea, it is very hard to convince them of their leaning to it all. Lastly, pride and self-conceit.

The view of the corruption of nature would be very humbling and oblige him that has it to reckon himself the chief of sinners. Under the greatest attainments and enlargements, it would be a ballast to his heart and hide pride from his eyes. The want of thorough humiliation, piercing to the sins of one's nature, is a ruin of many professors.

For digging deep makes great difference betwixt wise and foolish builders, Luke 6, 48 and 49. ORIGINAL SIN SPECIALLY NOTICED Section 2 I will lay before you a few things in which you should have a special eye to original sin. Number 1 Have a special eye to it in your application to Jesus Christ.

Do you find any need of Christ? Which sends you to him as a physician of souls? O forget not your disease when you are with the physician. They never yet knew well their errand to Christ that went not to him for the sin of their nature, for his blood, to take away the guilt of it, and his spirit, to break the power of it. Though in the bitterness of your souls you should lay before him a catalogue of your sins, of omission and commission, which might reach from earth to heaven, yet if original sin were lacking in it, assure yourselves that you have forgotten the best part of the errand which a poor sinner has to the physician of souls.

What would it have veiled the people of Jericho to have set before Elisha all the vessels in their city full of the water that was not, if they had not let him forth to the spring to cast in salt there? 2 Kings 2 19-21 The application is easy. Number 2 Have a special eye to it in your repentance, whether initiative or progressive, in your first repentance and in the renewal of your repentance afterwards. Though a man be sick, there is no fear of death if the sickness strike not to his heart, and there is as little fear of the death of sin as long as the sin of our nature is not touched.

But if you would repent, indeed, let the streams lead you up to the fountain, and mourn over your corrupt nature as a cause of all sin in heart, lip, and life. Psalm 51 4-5 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

Number 3 Have a special eye upon it in your mortification. Galatians 5 24 These that are Christ's have crucified the flesh. It is the root of bitterness that must be struck at, which the acts of mortification must be laid to, else we labor in vain.

In vain do men go about to purge the streams, while they are at no pains about the muddy fountain. It is vain religion to attempt to make the life truly good, while the corruption of nature retains its ancient vigor, and the power of it is not broken. Lastly, you are to eye it in your daily walk.

He that would walk aright must have his eye upward to Jesus Christ, and another inward to the corruption of his own nature. It is not enough that we look about us, we must look within us. There the wall is weakest.

There our greatest enemy lies, and there are grounds for daily watching and mourning.

04 - Taking Notice of the Sin of Our Nature

Human Nature in its Fourfold State by Thomas Boston This is Tape 4, or Download 4, narrated May 8, 2004 Why Original Sin is to be Specially Noticed, Section 3 I shall offer some reasons why we should especially notice the sin of our nature. Because of all sins it is the most expensive and diffusive. It goes through the whole man and spoils all.

Other sins mar particular parts of the image of God, but this doth at once deface the whole. A disease affecting any particular member of the body is dangerous, but that which affects the whole is worse. The corruption of nature is a poison of the old serpent, cast into the fountain of action, and infects every action and every breathing of the soul.

2. It is the cause of all particular lusts and actual sins in our hearts and lives. It is the spawn which the great Leviathan has left in the souls of men, from whence comes all the fry of actual sins and abominations. Mark 7.21 Out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, and so on.

It is a bitter fountain, particular lusts are but rivulets running from it, which bring forth into the life a part only, and not the whole of what is within. The fountain is always above the streams, and where the water is good, it is best in the fountain, where it is bad, it is the worst there. The corruption of nature, being that which defiles all, itself must needs be the most abominable thing.

3. It is virtually all sin, for it is the seed of all sins, which want but the occasion to set up their heads, being in the corruption of nature, as the effect and the virtue of its cause. Hence it is called a body of death. Romans 7.24 It is consisting of the several members belonging to such a body of sins.

Colossians 2.11 Whose life lies in spiritual death. It is a cursing ground, fit to bring forth all manner of noxious weeds. As a whole nest of venomous creatures must needs be more dreadful than any few of them that come creeping forth, so the sin of thy nature, that mother of abominations, must be worse than any particular lusts that appear stirring in thy heart and life.

Never did every sin appear in the conversation of the vilest wretch that ever lived, but look thou into thy corrupt nature, and there thou mayest see all and every sin, and the seed and root thereof. There is a fullness of all unrighteousness there. Romans 1.29 There is atheism, idolatry, blasphemy, murder, adultery, and whatsoever is vile.

Possibly none of these appear to thee in thy heart, but there is more in that unfathomable depths of wickedness than thou knowest. Thy corrupt heart is like an ant's nest, on which, while the stone lieth, none of them appear, but take off the stone and stir them up. But with the point of a straw you will see what a swarm is there, and how lively they are.

Just such a sight with thy heart afford thee, did the Lord but withdraw the restraint he has upon it, and suffer Satan to stir it up by temptation. 4. The sin of our nature is, of all sins, the most fixed and abiding. Sinful actions, though the guilt and stain of them may remain, yet in themselves pass away.

The drunkard is not always at his cups, nor the unclean person always acting lewdness, but the corruption of nature is an abiding sin. It remains with men in his full power by night and by day, at all times fixed, as with bands of iron or brass, till their nature be changed by converting grace. And it remains even with the godly, until the death of the body, though not in its reigning power.

Pride, envy, covetousness, and the like are not always stirring in thee, but the proud, envious, carnal nature is still with thee, even as the clock that is wrong is not always striking wrong, but the wrong set continues with it without intermission. 5. It is a reigning sin. Romans 6.12 Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof.

There are these three things which you may observe in the corrupt heart. 1. There is a corrupt nature, the corrupt set of the heart, whereby men are unapt for all good and fitted for all evil. This the apostle calls here sin which reigns.

2. There are particular lusts or dispositions of our corrupt nature, which the apostle calls the lusts thereof, such as pride, covetousness, and so on. 3. There is one among these, which is like Saul among the people, higher by far than the rest, namely the sin which doth so easily beset us. Hebrews 12.1 This we usually call the predominant sin, because it doth, as it were, reign over other particular lusts, so that other lusts must yield to it.

These three are like a river which divides itself into many streams, whereof one is greater than the rest. The corruption of nature is a riverhead that has many particular lusts in which it runs, but it chiefly disburdens itself into what is commonly called one's predominant sin. Now all of these, being fed by the sin of our nature, it is evident that it is the reigning sin which never loses its superiority over particular lusts, which live and die with it and by it.

But the same channel, so particular predominance may be changed, as lust in youth may be succeeded by covetousness in old age. Now what doth it avail to reform and other things while the reigning sin remains in its full power? What, though some particular lusts be broken, if sin, the sin of our nature, keep the throne, it will set up another in its stead. As when a water-course is stopped in one place, if the fountain is not dammed up, it will stream forth another way.

Thus some cast off their prodigality, but covetousness comes up in its stead. Some cast away their profanity, and the corruption of nature sends not its mainstream that way, as before, but it runs in another channel, namely in that of illegal disposition, self-righteousness, or the like. So the people are ruined by their not contemplating the sin of their nature.

Lastly, it is a hereditary evil. Psalm 51 5 In sin did my mother conceive me. Particular lusts are not so, but in the virtue of their cause.

A prodigal father may have a frugal son, but this disease is necessarily propagated in nature, and therefore hardest to cure. Surely then the word should be given out against this sin as against the King of Israel, 1 Kings 22 31. Fight neither with small nor great, save only with this.

For this sin, being broken, all other sins are broken with it. And while it stands entire, there is no victory. How to get a view of the corruption of nature? Section 4 That you may get a view of the corruption of your nature, I would recommend to you three things.

1. Study to know the spirituality and extent of the law of God, for that is a glass wherein you may see yourselves. 2. Observe your heart at all times, but especially under temptation. Temptation is a fire that brings up the scum of the vile heart.

Carefully mark the first risings of corruption. Lastly, go to God through Jesus Christ for illumination by His Spirit. Lay out your soul before the Lord as willing to know the vileness of your nature.

Say unto Him, That which I know not, teach thou me, and be willing to take in light from the word. Believe, and you shall see. It is by the word the Spirit teaches, but without the Spirit's teaching, all other teaching will be to little purpose.

Though the gospel were to shine about you like the sun at noonday, and its great truth ever so plainly preached, you will never see yourselves aright until the Spirit of the Lord lighteth candle within your breast. The fullness and glory of Christ, and the corruption and vileness of our nature, are never rightly learned but where the Spirit of Christ is a teacher. To shut up this weighty point, let the consideration of what has been said come in Christ to you all.

You that are brought out of your natural state of corruption, unto Christ be humble. Still coming to Christ, and improving your union with Him, to the further weakening of your natural corruption. Is your nature changed? The day was you could not stir.

Now you are cured, but remember the cure is not yet perfected. You still go halting. Though it were better with you than it is, the remembrance of what you were by nature should keep you low.

You that are yet in your natural state, take this with you. Believe the corruption of your nature, and let Christ and His grace be precious in your eyes. O that you would at length be serious about the state of your souls.

What do you intend to do? You must die. You must appear before the judgment seat of God. Will you lie down and sleep another night at ease in this case? Do it not.

For before another day you may be summoned before God's dreadful tribunal in the grave clothes of your corrupt state, and your vile souls cast into the pit of destruction as a corrupt lump, to be forever buried out of God's sight. For I testify unto you all, there is no peace with God, no pardon, no heaven for you in your natural state. There is but a step between you and eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord.

If the brittle thread of your life, which may be broken with a touch, ere you are aware, be broken while you are in this state, you are ruined forever without remedy. But come speedily to Jesus Christ. He has cleansed as vile souls as yours, and He will yet cleanse the blood that He has not cleansed.

Joel 3.21 Thus far of the sinfulness of man's natural state. Head number two. The misery of man's natural state.

We were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. Ephesians 2.3 Having shown you the sinfulness of man's natural state, I come now to lay before you the misery of it. A sinful state cannot but be a miserable state.

If sin go before, wrath follows of course. Corruption and destruction are so knit together that the Holy Ghost calls destruction even eternal destruction. Corruption.

Galatians 6.8 He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, that is, everlasting destruction, as is clear from its being opposed to life everlasting in the following clause. The Apostle, having shown the Ephesians their real state by nature, that they were dead in sins and trespasses, altogether corrupts, tells them in the words of the text, their relative state, namely, that the pit was dug for them, while in that state of corruption, being dead in sins, they were by nature children of wrath, even as others. In the words we have four things.

1. The misery of a natural state. It is a state of wrath, as well as a state of sin. We were, says the Apostle, children of wrath, bound over and liable to the wrath of God, under wrath in some measure, and in wrath bound over to more, even the full measure of it, in hell, where the floods of it go over the prisoners forever.

Thus Saul in his wrath, adjudging David to die, 1 Samuel 20, verse 31, and David in his wrath, passing sentence of death against a man in a parable, 2 Samuel 12, 5, says each of them, of his supposed criminal, he shall surely die, or as the words in the first language are, he is a son of death. So the natural man is a child of wrath, a son of death. He is a malefactor, dead, in law, lying in chains of guilt, a criminal held fast in his fetters till the day of execution, which will not fail to come unless a pardon be obtained from his God, who is his judge and opponent too.

By that means, indeed, children of wrath may become children of the kingdom. The phrase in the text, however common in the Holy Language, is very significant. And as it is evident that the Apostle calling natural men the children of disobedience, verse 2, means more than that they were disobedient children, for such may the Lord's own children be.

So to be children of wrath is more than simply to be liable to or under wrath. Jesus Christ was liable to and under wrath, but I doubt whether we have any warrant to say he was a child of wrath. The phrase seems to intimate that men are, whatever they are in their natural state, under the wrath of God, that they are wholly under wrath.

Wrath is, as it were, woven into their very nature and mixes itself with the whole of the man, who is, if I may so speak, a very lump of wrath, a child of hell, as the iron in the fire is all fire. For men naturally are children of wrath, come forth, so to speak, out of the womb of wrath, as Jonah's gourd was the son of a knight, which, we render, came up in a knight, Jonah 4.10, as if it had come out of the womb of the knight. As we read of the womb of the morning, Psalm 1.10, verse 3, And so the birth, following the womb which it came, was soon gone.

Thus sparks of fire are called sons of the burning coal, Job 5.7, in the margin of Isaiah 21.10. O my threshing, and the corn, or son, of my floor, threshed in the floor of wrath, and, as it were, brought forth by it. Thus a natural man is a child of wrath, that comes into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones. Psalm 119, verse 18, For though Judas was the only son of perdition among the apostles, yet all men by nature are of the same family.

2. Here is a rise of this misery. Men have it by nature. They owe it to their nature, not to their substance or essence.

For that neither is nor was sin, and therefore cannot make them children of wrath. Though for sin it may be under wrath, not to their nature is qualified at man's creation by his Maker, but to their nature is vitiated and corrupted by the fall, to the vicious quality or corruption of their nature is before notice, which is their principle of action, and, ceasing from action, the only principle in an unregenerate state. Now by this nature men are children of wrath, as in time of pestilential infection one draws in death with a disease, then raging.

Wherefore, seeing from our first being as children of Adam, we are corrupt children, shaped in iniquity, conceived in sin. We are also from that moment children of wrath. 3. The universality of this misery.

All are by nature children of wrath. We, says the apostle, even as others, Jews as well as Gentiles, those that are now by grace the children of God, were by nature in no better case than those that are still in their natural state. Lastly, here is a glorious and happy change intimated.

We were children of wrath, but are not so now. Grace has brought us out of that fearful state. This the apostle says of himself and other believers, and thus it well becomes a people of God to be often standing on the shore and looking back to the red sea of the state of wrath which they were weltering in, even as others.

4. Man's natural state is a state of wrath. DOCTRINE The state of nature is a state of wrath. Everyone in a natural, unregenerate state is in a state of wrath.

We are born children of wrath, and continue so until we be born again. Nay, as soon as we are children of Adam, we are children of wrath. I shall usher in what I have to say on this point with a few observations, touching the universality of this state of wrath, which may serve to prepare the way for the word into your consciences.

Wrath has gone as wide as ever sin went. When angels sinned, the wrath of God broke in upon them as a flood. God spare not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell.

2 Peter 2, 4 It was thereby demonstrated that no natural excellency in the creature can shield it from the wrath of God, if once it become a sinful creature. The finest and nicest piece of the workmanship of heaven, if once the Creator's image be defaced upon it by sin, God can and will dash in pieces in His wrath, unless that affection be made to justice, and that image be restored, neither of which the sinner himself can do. Adam sinned, and the whole lump of mankind was leavened and bound over to the fiery oven of God's wrath.

From the text you may learn, number one, that ignorance of that state cannot free men from it. The Gentiles that knew not God were by nature children of wrath, even as others. A man's house may be on fire, his wife and children perishing in the flames, while he knows nothing of it, and therefore is not concerned about it.

Such is your case, O ye that are ignorant of these things. Wrath is silently sinking into your souls while you are blessing yourselves, saying, We shall have peace. You need not a more certain token that you are children of wrath than that you never saw yourselves such.

You cannot be the children of God that never yet saw yourselves the children of the devil. You cannot be in the way to heaven that never saw yourselves by nature in the high road to hell. You

are grossly ignorant of your state by nature, and so ignorant of God and of Christ in your need of him.

And though you look on your ignorance as a covert from wrath, yet take it out of the mouth of God himself that it will ruin you if it be not removed. Isaiah 27 11 It is a people of no understanding, therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them. Thessalonians 1 8 Hosea 4 6 2 No outward privileges can exempt men from the state of wrath.

For the Jews, the children of the kingdom, God's peculiar people, were children of wrath even as others. Though ye be church members, partakers of all church privileges, though ye be descendants of godly parents of great and honorable families, be what ye will, ye are by nature heirs of hell, children of wrath. 3 No profession, no attainments in a profession of religion, do or can exempt a man from the state of wrath.

Paul was one of the strictest sect of the Jewish religion. Acts 26 5 Yet a child of wrath even as others till he was converted. The close hypocrite and the profane are alike as to their state, however different their conversation be, and they will be alike in the fatal end.

Psalms 125 5 As for such as turn aside into their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity. 4 Young ones that are but setting out into the world have not that to do to make themselves children of wrath. By following the graceless multitude, they are children of wrath by nature, so it is done already.

They were born heirs of hell, and they will indeed make themselves more so if they do not, while they are young, flee from that wrath to which they are born, by fleeing to Jesus Christ. Lastly, whatever men are now by grace, they are even as others by nature. This may be a sad meditation to them that have been at ease from their youth and have had no changes.

Now these things being premised, I shall in the first place show what the state of wrath is, next confirm the doctrine, and then apply it. 1 I am to show what the state of wrath is, but who can fully describe the wrath of an angry God? None can do it, yet so much of it may be discovered as may serve to convince men of the absolute necessity of fleeing to Jesus Christ out of that state of wrath. Anger in men is a passion and commotion of the spirit for an injury received, with a desire to resent the same.

When it comes to a height and is fixed in one spirit, it is called wrath. Now there are no passions in God, properly speaking. They are inconsistent with this absolute unchangeableness and independency.

Therefore Paul and Barnabas, to remove the mistake of the Lyconians who thought they were gods, tell them they were men of like passions with themselves. Acts 14, 15 Wrath, when it is attributed to God, must not be considered in respect to the affection of wrath, but the effects thereof. Wrath is a fire in the bowels of man, tormenting the man himself, but there is no perturbation in God.

His wrath does not in the least mar that infinite repose and happiness which he has in himself. It is a most pure undisturbed act of his will, producing dreadful effects against the sinner. It is little which we know of the infinite God, but condescending to our weakness, he is pleased to speak of himself to us after the manner of men.

Let us therefore notice man's wrath, but remove everything in our consideration of the wrath of God that implies imperfection, and so we may attain to some view of it, however scanty. By this means we are led to take up the wrath of God against the natural man in these three particulars first. There is wrath in the heart of God against him.

The Lord approves him not, but is displeased with him. Every natural man lies under the displeasure of God, and that is heavier than mountains of brass. Although he be pleased with himself, and others be pleased with him too, yet God looks down on him displeased.

His person is under God's displeasure. Thou hatest all workers of iniquity. A godly man's sin is displeasing to God, yet his person is still accepted in the beloved.

But God is angry with the wicked every day. There is a fire of wrath burns continually against him in the heart of God. They are as dogs and swine, most abominable creatures in the sight of God.

Though their natural state be gilded over with a shining profession, yet they are abhorred by God. They are to him as smoke in his nose, and lukewarm water to be spewed out of his mouth. Secondly, he is displeased with all they do.

It is impossible for them to please him, being unbelievers. He hates their persons, and so has no pleasure in, but is displeased with their best works. He that sacrifices a lamb is as if he cut off a dog's neck, and so on.

Their duty as done by them is an abomination to the Lord. And as men turn their back on those with whom they are angry, so the Lord's refusing communion with the natural man in his duties is a plain indication of this wrath. Secondly, there is wrath in the word of God against him.

When wrath is in the heart, it seeks a vent by the lips. So God fights against the natural man with the sword of his mouth. The Lord's word never speaks good of him, but always curses and condemns him.

Hence it is that when he is awakened, the word read or preached often increases his horror. First, it condemns all his actions, together with his corrupt nature. There is nothing he does, but the law declares it to be sin.

It is a rule of perfect obedience from which he always in all things declines, and so it rejects everything he does as sinful. Secondly, it pronounces his doom and denounces God's curse against him. Galatians 3.10 For as many are of the works of the law are under the curse, for it is written, Cursed is everyone that continueeth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

Be he never so well in the world, it pronounces a woe from heaven against him. Isaiah 3.11 The Bible is a quiver filled with arrows of wrath against him, ready to be poured in on his soul. God's threatenings in his word hang over his head as a black cloud ready to shower down on him every moment.

The word is indeed the saint's security against wrath, but it binds the natural man's sin and wrath together as a certain pledge of his ruin if he continues in that state. So the conscience being awakened and perceiving this tie made by the law, the man is filled with tears in his soul. Thirdly,

there is wrath in the hand of God against the natural man.

He is under heavy strokes of wrath already and is liable to more. First, there is wrath on his body. It is a piece of cursed clay which wrath is sinking into by virtue of the threatening of the first covenant.

Genesis 2.17 In the days thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. There is never a disease, gripe, nor stitch, that affects him, but it comes on him with the sting of God's indignation in it. They are all cords of death sent before to bind the prisoner.

Secondly, there is wrath upon his soul. He can have no communion with God. He is foolish and shall not stand in God's sight.

Psalms 5.5 When Adam sinned, God turned him out of paradise. The natural men are as Adam left them, banished from the gracious presence of the Lord and can have no access to him in that state. There is war between heaven and them, and so all commerce is cut off.

They are without God in the world. Ephesians 2.12 The sun has gone down on them, and there is not the least glimpse of favor towards them from heaven. Number 2 Hence the soul is left to pine away in its iniquity.

The natural darkness of their minds, the averseness to good in their wills, the disorder of their affections, and distemper of their consciences, and all their natural plagues are left upon them in a penal way, and being so left, increase daily. God casts a portion of worldly goods to them, more or less, as a bone is thrown to a dog, but alas, his wrath against them appears in that they get no grace. The physician of souls comes by them and goes by them and cures others on each side of them while they are consuming away in their iniquity and ripening daily for utter destruction.

Number 3 They lie open to fearful additional plagues on their souls, even in this life. First, sometimes they meet with deadening strokes, silent blows from the hand of an angry God. Arrows of wrath enter into their souls without noise.

Isaiah 6.10 Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and so on. God strives with them for a while, and convictions enter their consciences, but they rebel against the light, and by a secret judgment they receive a blow on the head. So that from that time they do as it were live and rot above ground.

Their hearts are dead, and their affections withered, their consciences stupefied, and their whole souls blasted. Cast forth as a branch and withered. John 15.16 They are plagued with judicial blindness.

They shut their eyes against the light, and they are given over to the devil, the God of this world, to be blinded more. 2 Corinthians 4.4 Yea, God sends them strong delusions that they should believe a lie. 2 Thessalonians 2.11 Even conscience, like a false light on the shore, leads them upon rocks by which they are broken in pieces.

They harden themselves against God, and He leads them to Satan in their own hearts, whereby they are hardened more and more. They are often given up unto vile affections. Romans 1.26 The reins are laid on their necks, and they left to run into all excess, as their furious lusts draw them.

Secondly, sometimes they meet with sharp, fiery strokes, whereby their souls become like Mount Sinai, where nothing is seen but fire and smoke, nothing heard but the thunder of God's wrath, and the voice of the trumpet of a broken law waxing louder and louder, which makes them, like Paschur, Jeremiah 20.4, a terror to themselves. God takes the filthy garments of their sins, which they were wont to sleep in securely, overlays them with brimstone, and sets them on fire about their ears, so they have a hell within them. Thirdly, there is wrath on the natural man's enjoyments.

Whatever it be wanting in his house, there is one thing that is never wanting there. Proverbs 3.33 The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked. Wrath is on all that he has, on the bread that he eats, the water he drinks, the clothes which he wears, his basket and store cursed.

Deuteronomy 28.17 Some things fall wrong with him, and that comes to pass by virtue of this wrath. Other things go according to his wish, and there is wrath in that too, for it is a snare to his soul. Proverbs 1.32 The prosperity of fools shall destroy them.

This wrath turns his blessing into curses. Malachi 2.2 I will curse your blessings, yea, I have cursed them already. The holy law is a killing letter to him.

2 Corinthians 3.6 The ministry of the gospel is favor of death unto death. 2.16 In the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, he eateth and drinketh damnation to himself. 1 Corinthians 11.29 Nay, more than all that, Christ himself is to him a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.

1 Peter 2.8 Thus wrath follows the natural man as his shadow does his body. 4 He is under the power of Satan. Acts 26.18 The devil has overcome him, so he is by conquest his lawful captive.

Isaiah 49.24 The natural man is condemned already. John 3.18 And therefore under the heavy hand of him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil. 5 He keeps his prisoners in the prison of a natural state, bound hand and foot, laden with divers lusts, his chains wherewithal he holds them fast.

Thou needest not, as many do, call on the devil to take thee, for he has a fast hold of thee already, as a child of wrath. Lastly, the natural man has no security for a moment's safety from the wrath of God coming on him to the uttermost. The curse of the law denounced against him has already tied him to the stake, so that the arrows of justice may pierce his soul, and in him may meet all the miseries and plagues that flow from the avenging wrath of God.

See how he is set as a mark to the arrows of wrath. Psalm 7.11-13 God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will wet his sword.

He hath bent his bow and made it ready. He is also prepared for him the instruments of the death. Doth he lie down to sleep? There is not a promise that he knows of or can know to secure him that he shall not be in hell ere he awake.

Justice pursues and cries for vengeance on the sinner. The law casts the fireballs of its curses continually upon him. Wasted and long-tired patience is that which keeps in his life.

He walks amidst enemies armed against him. His name may be Magor Mithabib, i.e., terror roundabout. Jeremiah 20-3 Angels, devil, men, beasts, stones, heaven and earth are in readiness on a word of command from the Lord to ruin him.

Thus a natural man lives, but he must die too, and death is a dreadful messenger to him. It comes upon him armed with wrath and put three sad charges in his hand. 1. Death charges him to bid an eternal farewell to all things in this world, to leave it and haste away to another world.

Ah, what a dreadful charge must this be to a child of wrath! He can have no comfort from heaven, for God is his enemy. As for the things of the world and the enjoyment of his lusts, which were the only springs of his comfort, these are in a moment dried up to him forever. 2. He is not ready for another world.

He was not thinking of removing so soon, or if he was, yet he has no portion secured him in another world but that which he was born to, and was increasing all his days, namely a treasure of wrath. But go he must, his clay God the world must be parted with, and what has he more? There was never a glimmering of light or favor from heaven to his soul. The wrath which hung in the threatening as a cloud like a man's hand is darkening the whole heaven above him.

If he look unto the earth from whence all his light was wont to come, behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish, and he shall be driven to darkness. Isaiah 8.22 2. Death charges soul and body to part till the great day. His soul is required of him.

Luke 12.20 Oh, what a miserable party must this be to a child of wrath! Care was indeed taken to provide for the body things necessary for this life, but alas, there is nothing laid up for another life, nothing to be a seed of a glorious resurrection. As it lived, so it must die, and rise again. Sinful flesh fueled for the fire of God's wrath.

As for the soul, he was never solicitous to provide for it. It lay in the body, dead to God and all things truly good, and so must be carried out into the pit, in the grave clothes of its natural state. For now that death comes, the companions of sin must part.

3. Death charges the soul to appear before the tribunal of God, while the body lies to be carried to the grave. Ecclesiastes 12.7 The spirit shall return unto God who gave it. Hebrews 9.27 It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.

Well were it for the sinful soul, if it might be buried together with the body, but that cannot be. It must go and receive its sentence, and shall be shut up in the prison of hell, while the cursed body lies imprisoned in the grave, till the day of the general judgment. When the end of the world, as appointed of God, has come, the trumpet shall sound, and the dead arise.

And shall the weary earth, at the command of the judge, cast forth the bodies, the cursed bodies of those that lived and died in their natural state. To see death and hell, shall deliver up their dead. Revelation 20.13 Their miserable bodies and souls shall be reunited, and they summoned before the tribunal of Christ.

Then shall they receive that fearful sentence, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. Matthew 25.41 Whereupon they shall go away into everlasting punishment. Verse 46 They shall be eternally shut up in hell, never to get the least drop of comfort, nor the smallest alleviation of their torment.

There they will be punished with the punishment of loss, being excommunicated forever from the presence of God as angels and saints. All means of grace, all hopes of delivery, will be forever cut

off from their eyes. They shall not have a drop of water to cool their tongues.

Luke 16.24-25 They will be punished with the punishment of sins. They must not only depart from God, but depart into fire, into everlasting fire. There the worm that shall gnaw at them will never die.

The fire that shall scorch them shall never be quenched. God will through eternity hold them up with one hand, and pour the full vials of wrath into them with the other. This is that state of wrath natural men live in, being under much of the wrath of God and liable to more.

But for a further view of it, let us consider the qualities of that wrath. Number one. It is irresistible.

There is no standing before it. Who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry? Psalm 76.7 Can the worm or the moth defend themselves against him that decides to crush them? As little can the worm man stand before an angry God. Foolish men indeed practically bid a defiance to heaven.

But the Lord often, even in this world, opens such sluices of wrath upon them, as all their might cannot stop. They are carried away thereby as with a flood. Hence much more will it be so in hell.

Number two. It is insupportable. What a man cannot resist, he will try to endure.

But who shall dwell with devouring fire? Who shall dwell with everlasting burnings? God's wrath is a weight that will sink men into the lowest hell. It is a burden which no man can stand under. A wounded spirit who can bear Proverbs 18.14 Number three.

It is unavoidable to such as go on impenitently and die in their sinful course. He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed in that without remedy. Proverbs 29.1 We may now flee from it, indeed by fleeing to Jesus Christ.

But such as flee from Christ will never be able to avoid it. Whither can man flee from an avenging God? Where will they find a shelter? The hills will not hear them. The mountains will be deaf to their loudest supplications when they cry to them to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb.

Number four. It is powerful and fierce wrath. Who knoweth the power of thine anger? Even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.

Psalm 90.11 We are apt to fear the wrath of man more than we ought. But no man can apprehend the wrath of God to be more dreadful than it really is. The power of it can never be known to the utmost.

For it is infinite, and, properly speaking, has no utmost. How fierce however it be, either on earth or in hell, God can still carry it further. Everything in God is most perfect in His kind, and therefore no wrath is so fierce as this.

O sinner, how won't thou be able to endure that wrath which will tear thee in pieces? Psalm 51.22 And grind thee to powder. Luke 20.18 The history of the two she-bears that tear the children of Bethel is an awful one. 2 Kings 2.23-24 But the united force of the rage of lions, leopards, and she-bears bereaved of their whelps is not sufficient to give us even a faint view of the power of the wrath of God.

Hosea 13.7-8 Therefore I will be unto them as a lion, as a leopard by the way, will I observe them. I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the call of their heart, and so on. 5. It is penetrating and piercing wrath.

It is burning wrath and fiery indignation. There is no pain more exquisite than that which is caused by fire, and no fire so piercing as the fire of God's indignation that burns unto the lowest hell. Deuteronomy 32.22 The arrows of men's wrath can pierce flesh, blood, and bones, but cannot reach the soul.

But the wrath of God will sink into the soul and so pierce a man in the most tender part, like as when a person is thunderstruck, oftentimes there is not a wound to be seen in the skin, yet life is gone and the bones are melted, as it were. So God's wrath can penetrate into and melt a man's soul within him, when his earthly comforts stand about him entire and untouched, as in Belshazzar's case. Daniel 5.6 6. It is constant wrath, running parallel with a man's continuance in an unregenerate state, constantly attending him from the womb to the grave.

There are a few days so dark, but the sun sometimes looks out from under the clouds, but the wrath of God is an abiding cloud on the objects of it. John 3.36 The wrath of God abideth on him that believeth not. 7. It is eternal.

O miserable soul, if thou flee not from this wrath unto Jesus Christ, though thy misery had a beginning, yet it will never have an end. Should devouring death wholly swallow thee up and forever hold thee fast in the grave, it would be kind, but thy body must be reunited to thy immortal soul, and live again, and never die, that thou mayest be ever dying in the hands of the living God. Cold death will quench the flame of man's wrath against us, if nothing else do.

But God's wrath, when it is come on the sinner, millions of ages, will still be the wrath to come. Matthew 3.7 1 Thessalonians 1.10 As the water of a river is still coming, how much soever of it is past. While God is, he will pursue the quarrel.

2. Lastly, however dreadful it is, and though it be eternal, yet it is most just wrath, it is a clear fire without the leaf smoke of injustice. 3. The sea of wrath, raging with the greatest fury against the sinner, is clear as crystal. The judge of all the earth can do no wrong.

He knows no transports of passion, for they are inconsistent with the perfection of his nature. 4. Is God unrighteous, who taketh vengeance? I speak as a man. God forbid, for then how shall God judge the world? 5. The doctrine of the state of wrath, confirmed and vindicated.

Head 2. I shall confirm the doctrine. Consider, 1. How peremptory the threatening of the first covenant is. In the days thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.

Genesis 2.17 Hereby sin and punishment being connected, the veracity of God's ascertains is the execution of the threatening. Now all men, being by nature under this covenant, the breach of it lays them under the curse. 2. The justice of God requires that a child of sin be a child of wrath, that the law being broken, the sanction thereof should take place.

God as man's ruler and judge cannot but do right. Genesis 18.25 Now it is a righteous thing with God to recompense sin with wrath. 2 Thessalonians 1.6 He is of pure eyes, and to behold evil.

Habakkuk 1.13 And he hates all the workers of iniquity. Psalm 5.6 3. The whores of a natural conscience prove this. Conscience in the breasts of men tells them that they are sinners and therefore liable to the wrath of God.

4. Let men at any time soberly commune with themselves, and they will find that they have the witness in themselves, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death. Romans 1.32 4. The pains of the new birth, the work of the Spirit on elect souls in order to their conversion, demonstrate this. Hereby their natural sinfulness and misery is liable to the wrath of God, or plainly taught them, filling their hearts with fear for that wrath, as it is the Spirit's work to convince of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

John 16.8 This testimony must needs be true, for the Spirit of truth cannot witness an untruth. But true believers, being freed from the state of wrath, receive not the spirit of bondage again to fear, but receive the spirit of adoption. Romans 8.15 Therefore, if fears of that nature do arise after the soul's union with Christ, they come from the saint's own spirit, or from a worse.

Lastly, the sufferings of Christ plainly prove this doctrine. Wherefore was the Son of God a son under wrath, but because the children of men were children of wrath. He suffered the wrath of God, not for himself, but for those that were liable to it in their own persons.

Nay, this not only shows us to have been liable to wrath, but also that wrath must have a vent in the punishment of sin. If this was done in the green tree, what would become of the dry? What a miserable case must a sinner be in that is out of Christ, that is, not vitally united to Christ and partakers not of his spirit. God, who spared not his own Son, surely will not spare such an one.

But the unregenerate man who has no great value for the honor of God will be apt to rise up against his judge and in his own heart condemn his procedure. Nevertheless, a judge, being infinitely just, a sentence must be righteous. Therefore, to stout thy mouth, O proud sinner, and to still thy clamor against thy righteous judge, consider first.

Thou art a sinner by nature, and it is highly reasonable that guilt and wrath be as old as sin. Why should not God begin to vindicate his honor as soon as vile worms attempt to impair it? Why shall not a serpent bite a thief as soon as he leaps over the hedge? Why should not the threatening take hold of the sinner as soon as he casts away the command? The poisonous nature of the serpent affords a man sufficient ground to kill it as soon as ever he can reach it. And by this time thou mayest be convinced that thy nature is a very compound of enmity against God.

Secondly, thou is not only enmity against God in thy nature, but hast discovered it by actual sins, which are in his eyes acts of hostility. Thou hast brought forth thy lusts into the field of battle against thy sovereign Lord. And because thou art such a criminal, thy condemnation is just.

For besides the sin of thy nature, thou hast done that against heaven, which if thou hadst done against man, thy life must have gone for it. And shall not wrath from heaven overtake thee? Number one. Thou art guilty of high treason and rebellion against the King of heaven.

The thought and wish of thy heart, which he knows as well as the language of thy mouth, has been, Know God. Psalm 14, 1. Thou hast rejected his government, blown the trumpet, and set up the standard of rebellion against him, being one of those that say, We will not have this man to reign over us. Luke 19, 14.

Thou hast driven against and quenched his spirit, practically disowned his laws, proclaimed by his messengers, stopped thine ears at their voice, and sent them away mourning for thy pride. Thou hast conspired with his grand enemy, the devil. Although thou art a servant of the King of glory, daily receiving of his favors and living on his bounty, thou art holding a correspondence and hast contracted a friendship with his greatest enemy, and art acting for him against thy Lord.

For the lust of the devil ye will do. John 8, 44. Number 2. You are a murderer before the Lord.

You have laid the stumbling block of your iniquity before the blind world and have ruined the souls of others by your sinful course. Though you do not see it now, the time may come when you shall see the blood of your relations, neighbors, acquaintances, and others upon your head. Matthew 18, 7. Woe unto the world because of offenses.

Woe to that man by whom the offense cometh. Yea, you are a self-murderer before God. Proverbs 8, 36.

He that sins against me wrongs his own soul. All that hate me love death. Ezekiel 18, 31.

Why will you die? The laws of men go as far as they can against the self-murderer, denying his body a burial place with others and confiscating his goods. What wonder is it that the law of God is so severe against soul murderers. Is it strange that they who will needs depart from God? Now, cost what it will, should be forced to depart from Him at last into everlasting fire.

But what is yet more criminal? You are guilty of the murder of the Son of God, for the Lord will reckon you amongst those that pierced Him. Revelation 1, 7. You have rejected Him as the Jews did, and by your rejecting Him you have justified their deed. They indeed did not acknowledge Him to be the Son of God, but you do.

What they did against Him was in His state of humiliation, but you have acted against Him in a state of exaltation. These things will aggravate your condemnation. What wonder, then, if the voice of the Lamb changed to the roaring of the lion against the traitor and murderer? Objection.

But some will say, Is there not a vast disproportion between our sin and that wrath you talk of? I answer, No. God punishes no more than the sinner deserves. To rectify your mistake in this matter, consider, number one, the vast rewards which God has annexed to obedience.

His word is no more full of fiery wrath against sin than it is of gracious rewards to the obedience it requires. If heaven be in the promises, it is altogether equal that hell be in the threatenings. If death were not in the balance with life, eternal misery with eternal happiness where were the proportion? Moreover, sin deserves a misery, but our best works do not deserve the happiness, yet both are set before us, sin and misery, holiness, and happiness.

What reason is there, then, to complain? Number two, How severe soever the threatenings be, yet all have enough to do to reach the end of the law. Fear him, says our Lord, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell. Yea, I say unto you, fear him.

Luke 12, 5 This bespeaks our dread of divine power and majesty, yet how few fear him indeed. The Lord knows the hearts of sinners to be exceedingly intent upon fulfilling their lusts. They cleave so fondly to these fulsome breasts that a small force does not suffice to draw them away

from them.

They that travel through deserts where they are in a hazard from wild beasts have need to carry fire along with them, and they have need of a hard wedge that hath knotty timber to cleave. So a holy law must be fenced with dreadful wrath and a world lying in wickedness. But who are they that complain of that wrath as too great, but those to whom it is too little to draw them off from their sinful courses? It was a man who pretended to fear his Lord because he was an austere man, that kept his pound laid up in a napkin, and so he was condemned out of his own mouth.

Luke 19, 20-22 Thou art that man, even thou whose objection I am answering. How can the wrath which you are under and liable to be too great when as yet it is not sufficient to awaken you to flee from it? Is it time to relax the penalties of the law when men are trampling the commands of it underfoot? 3. Consider how God dealt with his own son when he spared him not. Romans 8, 32 The wrath of God seized on his soul and body both, and brought him into the dust of death.

That his sufferings were not eternal flowed from the quality of the sufferer who was infinite, and therefore able to bear at once the whole load of wrath. And upon that account his sufferings were infinite in value. But as the sufferings of a mere creature cannot be infinite in value, they must be protracted to an eternity.

And what confidence can a rebel subject have to quarrel on his part with the punishment executed on the king's son? 4. The sinner does against God what he can. Behold, you have done evil things that you have done no more and worth thanks to him who restrained you to the chain which the wolf was kept in by, not to yourself. No wonder that God shows his power on the sinner who puts forth his power against God as far as it will reach.

The unregenerate man puts no period to his sinful course and would put no bounds to it either if he were not restrained by divine power for wise ends. Therefore, it is just that he be forever under wrath. 5. It is infinite majesty which sin strikes against and so it is in some sort an infinite evil.

Sin rises in its demerit according to the quality of the party offended. If a man wound his neighbor, his goods must go for it. But if he wound his prince, his life must go for that.

The infinity of God makes infinite wrath a just demerit of sin. God is infinitely displeased with sin and when he acts, he must act like himself and show his displeasure by proportionable means. Lastly, those that shall lie forever under this wrath will be eternally sinning and therefore must eternally suffer, not only in respect of divine judicial procedure, but because sin is its own punishment in the same manner as holy obedience is its own reward.

The doctrine of the misery of man's natural state applied. Use one of information. Is our state by nature a state of wrath? Then, number one, surely we are not born innocent.

Those chains of wrath which by nature are upon us show us to be born criminals. The swaddling bands wherewith infants are bound, hand and foot, as soon as they are born, may put us in the minds of the cords of wrath with which they are held prisoners as children of wrath. Number two, what desperate madness is it for sinners to go on in their sinful course? What is it but to heap coals of fire on thine own head, to lay more and more fuel to the fire of wrath, to treasure up unto thyself wrath against a day of wrath? You may have no reason to complain as long as you are out of hell.

Wherefore, doth a living man complain, Lamentation 3 39. If one who has forfeited his life be banished from his country and exposed to many hardships, he may well bear all patiently seeing his life is spared. Do you murmur because you are under pain and sickness? Nay, bless God, you are not there where the worm never dies.

Dost thou grudge that thou art not in so good a condition in the world as some of your neighbors are? Be thankful, rather, that you are not in the case of the damned. Is your substance gone from you? Wonder that the fire of God's wrath has not consumed you. Kiss the rod, O sinner, and acknowledge mercy, for God punishes us less than our iniquities deserve.

Ezra 9.13 4. Here is a memorandum both for poor and rich. The poorest of the poor and the and the poor and the and the and the and the poor and the and the poor and the poor and the poor and the poor as 1915, will pervert judgment for you. Nay, know for certain that however miserable you are here, you shall be eternally miserable hereafter, if you live and die in your natural state.

2. Many that have enough in the world have far more than they know of. You have, it may be, O unregenerate man, in a state, a good portion, a large stock, left you by your father. However, you hadst improved it, and the sun of prosperity shines upon you, so that you can say with thee, Saw, Genesis 33 9, I have enough.

But know you have more than all that an inheritance was you do not think of, thou art a child of wrath and heir of hell. That is an heritage which will abide with thee amidst all the changes in the world, as long as you continue in an unregenerate state. When you shall leave your substance to others, this shall go along with you into another world.

It is no wonder a slaughter-ox is fed to the full, and is not toiled as others are. Job 21 30, The wicked is reserved to the day of destruction, and they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath. Well then, rejoice, let your heart cheer thee, walk in the ways of your heart and in the sight of your eyes, live above reproofs and warnings from the word of God.

Show yourself a man of fine spirit by casting off all fear of God, mock its seriousness, live like yourself a child of wrath and heir of hell. But know you that for all these things God will bring you into judgment, Ecclesiastes 11 9. Assure yourself your breaking shall come suddenly at an instant, Isaiah 30 13. For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of a fool, Ecclesiastes 7 6. The fair blaze and the great noise which they make is quickly gone, so shall your mirth be.

Then that wrath that is now silently sinking into your soul shall make a fearful hissing. 3. Woe to him that, like Moab, has been at ease from his youth, Jeremiah 48 11. And ever saw the black cloud of wrath hanging over his head.

There are many who have no changes, therefore they fear not God. Psalm 55 19. They have lived in a good belief, as they call it all their days.

That is, they never had power to believe in any report of their soul's state. Many have come by their religion too easily, and as it came lightly to them, so it will go from them when the trial comes. Do you think men flee from wrath in a morning dream? Or will they flee from the wrath they never saw pursuing them? 6. Think it not strange if you see one in great distress about his soul condition, who is wont to be as jovial and as little concerned for salvation as any of his neighbors.

Can anyone get a right view of himself as in a state of wrath, and not be pierced with sorrows, tears, and anxiety? When a weight quite above a man's strength lies upon him, and he is alone, he can neither stir hand nor foot. But when one comes to lift it off him, he will struggle to get off from under it. Thunderclaps of wrath from the word of God conveyed to the soul by the Spirit of the Lord will surely keep a man awake.

Lastly, it is no wonder that wrath comes upon churches and nations and upon us in this land, and that infants and children yet unborn smart under it. Most of the society are yet children of wrath. Few are fleeing from it or taking the way to prevent it, but people of all ranks are helping it on.

The Jews rejected Christ, and their children have been smarting under wrath these sixteen hundred years. God grant that the bad entertainment given to Christ in his gospel by this generation be not pursued with wrath on the succeeding one. Use Number Two of Exhortation Here first I shall drop a word to those who are yet in an unregenerate state, two, to those that are brought out of it, three, to all indifferently.

To you that are in an unregenerate state, I would sound the alarm and warn you to see yourselves while there is yet hope. O you children of wrath, take no rest in this dismal state, but fly to Christ, the only refuge. Haste and make your escape there.

The state of wrath is too hot a climate for you to live in. Micah 2.10 Arise ye and depart, for this is not your rest. O sinner, do you know where you are? Do you not see the danger? The curse has entered into your soul.

Wrath is your covering. The heavens are growing blacker and blacker above your head. The earth is weary of you.

The pit is opening her mouth for you. And should the threat of your life be cut this moment, you are henceforth passed all hope forever. Sirs if we saw you putting a cup of poison to your mouth, we should fly to you and snatch it out of your hands.

If we saw the house on fire about you while you were fast asleep in it, we would run to you and drag you out of it. But alas, you are ten thousand times in a greater hazard, yet we can do no more to tell you your danger, invite, exhort, and beseech you to look to yourselves and lament your stupidity and obstinacy when we cannot prevail with you to take warning. If there were no hope of your recovery, we should be silent and would not torment you before the time.

But though you be lost and undone, there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. Wherefore I cry unto you in the name of the Lord and in the words of the prophet Zechariah 9.12. Turn ye to the strong hold, you prisoners of hope. Flee to Jesus Christ out of this your natural state.

Motive 1 While you were in this state, you must stand or fall according to the law or covenant of works. If you understood this aright, it would strike through your hearts as a thousand darts. One had better be a slave to the Turks, condemned to the galleys, or under Egyptian bondage and be under the covenant of works now.

All mankind were brought under it in Adam, as we heard before. And you in your unregenerate state are still where Adam left you. It is true there is another covenant brought in, but what is that to you who are not brought into it? You must needs be under one of the two covenants, either

under the law or under grace.

That you are not under grace, the dominion of sin over you manifestly evinces. Therefore you are under the law. Romans 6.14 Do you think God has laid aside the first covenant in Matthew 5.17 and 18, Galatians 3.10? No he will magnify the law and make it honorable.

It is broken indeed on your part, but it is absurd to think that therefore your obligation is dissolved. Nay, you must stand and fall by it till you can produce your discharge from God himself, who is a party in that covenant. In this you cannot pretend to, seeing that you are not in Christ.

Now to give you a view of your misery in this respect, consider these following things. 1. Hereby you are bound over to death in virtue of the threatening of death in the covenant, Genesis 2.17. The condition being broken, you fall under the penalty, so it concludes you under wrath. 2. There is no salvation for you under this covenant but on a condition impossible to be performed by you.

The justice of God must be satisfied for the wrong which you have already done. God has written his truth in characters of the blood of his own Song of Solomon. 3. Yea, and you must perfectly obey the law for the time to come, so saith the law, Galatians 3.12. The man that doth them shall live in them.

Come then, O sinner, see if you can make a ladder whereby you may reach the throne of God. Stretch forth your arms and try if you can fly on the wings of the wind. Catch hold of the clouds and peer through these visible heavens, and either climb over or break through the jasper walls of the city above.

These things you may as well do, as be able to reach heaven in your natural state or under this covenant. 3. There is no pardon under this covenant. Pardon is the benefit of another covenant which you have nothing to do, Acts 13.39. By him all that believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.

4. As for you, you are in the hand of a merciless creditor, who will take you by the throat, saying, Pay what you owe, and cast you into prison there to remain till you have paid the utmost farthing. Unless you be wise as to get a surety in time, who is able to answer for all your debt and get up your discharge? This Jesus Christ alone can do. You abide under this covenant and plead mercy, but what is your plea founded on? 5. There is not one promise of mercy or pardon in that covenant.

Do you plead mercy for mercy's sake? Justice will step in between it and thee, and plead God's covenant, threatening which he cannot deny. 4. There is no place for repentance in this covenant, so that the sinner can be helped by it. For as soon as ever you sin, the law lays its curse on you, which is a dead weight you can by no means throw off.

5. No, not though your head were waters, and your eyes a fountain of tears, to weep day and night for your sin. That is, what the law cannot do, in that it was weak through the flesh, Romans 8.3. You are another profane Esau that has sold your blessing, and therefore there is no place for repentance, though you seek it carefully with tears while under that covenant. 5. There is no acceptance of the will for the deed under this covenant, which was not made for good will, but good words.

The mistake in this point ruins many. They are not in Christ, but stand under the first covenant, and yet they plead this privilege. 6. This is just like a man's having made a feast for those of his own family, and when they sit down a table, another man's servant, that has run away from his master, presumptuously comes forward and sits down among them.

Would not the master of the feast give such a stranger that check? 7. Friend, how came thou in here? And since he is none of his family, command him to be gone quickly. Though a master accept the good will of his own child for the deed, can a hired servant expect that privilege? 6. You have nothing to do with Christ while under that covenant. By the law of God, a woman cannot be married to two husbands at once.

Either death or divorce must dissolve the first marriage, or she can marry another. So we must first be dead to the law, or we can be married to Christ, Romans 7.4. 7. The law is a first husband. Jesus Christ, who raises the dead, marries a widow that was heartbroken and slain by the first husband.

8. But while the soul is in the house with the first husband, it cannot plead a marriage relation to Christ, nor the benefits of a marriage covenant, which it has not yet entered into. Galatians 5.4. 9. Christ is become of no effect to you, whosoever of you are justified by the law, you are fallen from grace. 10.

Peace, pardon, and such like benefits, all are benefits of the covenant of grace. You must not think to stand off from Christ and the marriage covenant with him, and yet plead these benefits. Any more than one man's wife can plead the benefit of a contract of marriage passed between another man and his wife.

11. Lastly, see the bill of exclusion passed in the court of heaven against all under the covenant of works. Galatians 4.30. 12.

The son of a bondwoman shall not be heir. Compare verse 24. 13.

Heirs of wrath must not be heirs of glory. Whom the first covenant has power to exclude out of heaven, the second covenant cannot bring into it. Objection.

14. Then it is impossible for us to be saved. Answer.

15. It is so while you are in that state. But if you would be out of that dreadful condition, hasten out of that state.

If a murderer be under sentence of death, so long as he lives within the kingdom, the laws will reach his life. But if he can make his escape and get over the sea into the dominions of another prince, our laws cannot reach him there. This is what we would have you to do.

Flee out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son, out of the dominion of the law into the dominion of grace, and all the curses of the law or covenant of works shall never be able to reach you. Motive 2. O you children of wrath, your state is wretched, for you have lost God, and that is an unspeakable loss. You are without God in the world.

Ephesians 2.12. Whatever you may call yours, you cannot call God yours. If we look to the earth, perhaps you can tell us that land, that house, or that herd of cattle is yours. But let us look upward

to heaven.

Is that God, that grace, that glory yours? Truly you have neither part nor lot in this manner. When Nebuchadnezzar talks of cities and kingdoms, O how big does he speak! Great Babylon that I have built, my power, my majesty! But he tells a poor tale when he comes to speak of God, saying, Your God, Daniel 2.47 and 4.30. Alas, sinner, whatever you have, God is gone from you. O the misery of a godless soul! Have you lost God? Then first, the sap and substance of all you have in the world is gone.

The godless man have what he will is one that has not. Matthew 25.29 I defy the unregenerate man to attain to soul satisfaction whatever he possesses since God is not his God. All his days he eats in darkness.

In every condition there is a secret dissatisfaction that haunts his heart like a ghost. The soul wants something, though perhaps it knows not what. And so it will always be till the soul return to God, the fountain of satisfaction.

2. Thou canst do nothing of purpose for thyself, for God is gone, his soul is departed from you. Jeremiah 6.8 Like a leg out of joint hanging by, whereof a man has no use, is a word there used doth bear. Losing God you have lost the fountain of good, and so all grace, all goodness, all the saving influences of a spirit.

What can you do then? What fruit can you bring forth, more than a branch cut off from the stalk? John 15.5 You art become unprofitable. Romans 3.12 The filthy rotten thing fit only for the dunghill.

3. Death has come up into your windows, yea, and has settled on your face.

For God, in whose favor is life, Psalm 30 verse 5, is gone from you, and so the life of your soul is departed. What a loathsome lump is your body when the soul is gone! Far more loathsome is the soul in this case. You are dead while you live.

Do not deny it, seeing your speech is gone. Your eyes close in all spiritual motion, and you ceased. Your true friends who see your case lament, because you are gone into the land of silence.

4. You have not a steady friend among all the creatures of God. For now that you have lost a master's favor, all the family is set against you. Conscience is thine enemy.

The word never speaks good of you. God's people loathe you, so far as they see what you are. Psalm 15, 4 The beasts and stones of the field are banded together against you.

Job 5, 23, Hosea 2, 18 Your meat, drink, and clothes grudge to be serviceable to the wretch that has lost God, and abuses him to his dishonor. The earth groans under you. Yea, the whole creation groaneth and travelleth in pain together because of you, and such as you are.

Romans 8, 22 Heaven will have nothing to do with you, for there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth. Revelation 21, 27 Only hell from beneath is moved for you, to meet you at your coming. Isaiah 14, 9 Lastly, your hell is begun already.

What makes hell but exclusion from the presence of God? Depart from me, you cursed. You are gone from God already with the curse upon you. That which is now your choice shall be your

punishment at length if you turn not.

As a gracious state is a state of glory in the bud, so a graceless state is hell in the bud, which if it continue will come at length to perfection. Now I shall drop a few words to the saints. First, remember that at that time, namely, when you were in your natural state, you were without Christ, having no hope and without God in the world.

Call to mind a state you were in formerly, and review the misery of it. There are five memorandums, which I may thence give in to the whole assembly of the saints, who are no more children of wrath, but heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, though as yet in their minority. Number one, remember that in the day our Lord first took you by the hand, you were in no better condition than others.

What moved him to take you when he passed by your neighbors? He found you children of wrath, even as others, but he did not leave you. He came into the common prison, where you lay in your fetters, even as others. And from among the multitude of condemned malefactors, he picked you out, commanded your fetters to be taken off, put a pardon in your hand, and brought you into the glorious liberty of the children of God, while he left others in the devil's fetters.

Number two, remember there was nothing in you to engage him to love you, in the day he first appeared for your deliverance. You were children of wrath, even as others, fit for hell, and altogether unfit for heaven. Yet the king brought you into the palace.

The king's son made love to you, a condemned criminal, and espoused you to himself on the day in which you might have been led forth to execution. Even so, father foresaw it seeing good in thy sight. Matthew 11, 26 Number three, remember you were fitter to be loathed than loved in that day.

Wonder that when he saw you in your blood, he looked not at you with abhorrence and passed by. Wonder that ever such a time could be a time of love. Ezekiel 16, 8 Number four, remember you were decked with borrowed feathers.

It is his comeliness which is upon you. Verse 14, it was he that took off your prison garments and clothed you with robes of righteousness, garments of salvation, garments wherewith you are arrayed as the lilies, which toil not, neither do they spin. He took the chains from off your arms, the rope from about your neck, put you in such a dress as you might be fit for the court of heaven, even to eat at the king's table.

Number five, remember your falsest day as Pharaoh's butler, who had forgotten Joseph. Mind how you have forgotten and how unkindly you have treated him, who remembered you in your lowest state. Is this your kindness to your friend? In the day of your deliverance did you think you could thus have requited him, your lord? Secondly, pity the children of wrath, a world that lies in wickedness.

Can you be concerned for them, you who were once in the same condition? You have got ashore, indeed, but your companions are yet in hazard of perishing, and will not you afford them all possible help for their deliverance, what they are you sometimes were? This may draw pity from you and engage you to use all means for their recovery. See Titus 3, 1-3. Thirdly, admire your matchless love which brought you out of the state of wrath.

Christ's love was active love. He brought thy soul from the pit of corruption. It was no easy work to purchase the life of the condemned sinner, but he gave his life for thy life.

He gave his precious blood that quenched the flame of wrath which otherwise would have consumed you. Men get the best view of the stars from the bottom of a deep pit. From this pit of misery into which you were cast by the fall of the first Adam, you may get the best view of the Son of Righteousness in all his dimensions.

He is the second Adam who took you out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay. How broad were the skirts of that love which covered such a multitude of sins! Behold the length of it, reaching from everlasting to everlasting. Psalm 103, 17.

The depth of it, going so low as to deliver you from the lowest hell. Psalm 86, 13. The height of it, raising you up to sit in heavenly places.

Ephesians 2, 6. Fourthly, be humble, carry low cells, walk softly all your years. Be not proud of your gifts, graces, privileges, or attainments, but remember you were children of wrath even as others. The peacock walks slowly, hangs down his starry feathers while he looks to his black feet.

Look ye to the hole of the pit whence you were digged, and walk humbly as it becomes free graces, debtors. Lastly, be holy for your Lord. Every wife is obliged to be dutiful to her husband, but double ties lie upon her who is taken from a prison or a dunghill.

If your Lord has delivered you from wrath, you ought on that very account to be holy his, to act for him, to suffer for him, and to do whatever he calls you to. The saints have no reason to complain of their lot in the world, whatever it be. Well may they bear the cross for him by whom the curse was borne away from them.

Well may they bear the wrath of men in his cause who has freed them from the wrath of God, and cheerfully go to a fire for him by whom hell fire is quenched as to them. Soul and body and all that you have in the world were sometimes under wrath. He has removed that wrath.

Shall not all these be at his service? That thy soul is not overwhelmed with the wrath of God is owing purely to Jesus Christ, and shall it not then be a temple for his Spirit? That your heart is not filled with horror and despair is owing to him only. To whom then should it be devoted but to him alone? That thine eyes are not blinded with the smoke of the pit, thy hands are not fettered with chains of darkness, thy tongue is not broiling in the fire of hell, and thy feet are not standing in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, is owing purely to Jesus Christ. And shall not these eyes be employed for him, these hands act for him, this tongue speak for him, and these feet speedily run his errands? To him who believes that he was a child of wrath, even as others, but is now delivered by the blessed Jesus, nothing will appear too much to do or suffer for his Deliverer when he was a fair call to it.

Section 3 To Conclude with the Word to All Let no man think lightly of sin, which lays the sinner open to the wrath of God. Let not the sin of our nature, which wreathes the yoke of God's wrath so early about our necks, seem a small thing in our eyes. Fear the Lord because of his dreadful wrath.

Tremble at the thoughts of sin against which God has such fiery indignation. Look on his wrath and stand in awe and sin not. Do you think this is to press you to slavish fear? If it were so, one had better be a slave to God with a trembling heart than a free man to the devil, with a seared conscience and a heart of adamant.

But it is not so. You may love him and thus fear him too, yet you ought to do it, though you were saints of the first magnitude. Although you have passed the gulf of wrath being in Jesus Christ, yet it is but reasonable that your heart should shiver when you look back to it.

Your sin still deserves wrath, even as the sins of others, and it would be terrible to be in a fiery furnace, although by a miracle we were so fenced against it, is that it could not harm us.

05 - Man's Utter Inability to Come to Christ

Reading from the book *Human Nature in its Fourfold State* by Thomas Boston, *Man's Utter Inability to Recover Himself*. For when we were without strength, and due time Christ died for the ungodly, Romans 5 6. No man can come to me except the Father which has sent me draw him, John 6 44. We have now had a view of the total corruption of man's nature, and that load of wrath which lies on him, that gulf of misery which he is plunged into in his natural state.

But there is one part of his misery that deserves particular consideration, namely, his utter inability to recover himself, the knowledge of which is necessary for the due humiliation of a sinner. What I design here is only to propose a few things in which to convince the unregenerate man of this his inability, that he may see an absolute need of Christ, and of the power of his grace. As a man that has fallen into a pit cannot be supposed to help himself out of it but by one of two ways, either by doing all himself alone, or taking hold of, and improving the help offered him by others, so an unconverted man cannot be supposed to help himself out of his natural state, but either in the way of the law or covenant of works, by doing all himself without Christ, or else in the way of the gospel or covenant of grace, by exerting his own strength to lay hold upon, and to make use of the help offered him by his Savior.

But alas, the unconverted man is dead in the pit, and cannot help himself either of these ways. Not the first way, for the first text tells us that when our Lord came to help us, we were without strength, unable to recover ourselves. We were ungodly, therefore under a burden of guilt and wrath, yet without strength, unable to stand under it, and unable to throw it off or get from under it, so that all mankind had undoubtedly perished had not Christ died for the ungodly, and brought help to them who could never have recovered themselves.

And when Christ comes and offers help to sinners, cannot they take it? Cannot they improve help when it comes to their hands? No, the second text tells us they cannot. No man can come unto me, and so on. That is, believe in me, John 6 35, except the Father draw him.

This is a drawing which enables them to come, who till then could not come, and therefore could not help themselves by improving the help offered. It is a drawing which is always effectual, for it can be no less than hearing and learning of the Father, which whoever partakes of comes to Christ, verse 25. Therefore it is not drawing in the way of mere moral suasion, which may be, yea, and always is, ineffectual, but it is drawing by mighty power, Ephesians 1 19, absolutely necessary for them that have no power in themselves to come and to take hold of the offered help.

Hearken then, O unregenerate man, and be convinced, that as thou art in a most miserable state by nature, so thou art utterly unable to recover thyself anyway. Thou art ruined. In what way wilt thou go to recover thyself? Which of the two ways wilt thou choose? Wilt thou try it alone, or wilt thou make use of help? Wilt thou fall on the way of works, or on the way of the gospel? I know very well that thou wilt not so much as try the way of the gospel, till once thou hast found the recovery impracticable in the way of the law.

Therefore we shall begin where corrupt nature teaches men to begin, in the way of the law of works. Sinner, I would have thee to believe that thy working will never effect it. Work and do thy best, thou shalt never be able to work thyself out of the state of corruption and wrath.

Thou must have Christ, else thou wilt perish eternally. It is only Christ in you can be the hope of glory. But if thou wilt needs try it, then I must lay before thee from the unalterable word of the living God two things which thou must do for thyself.

If thou canst do them, it must be yielded that thou art able to recover thyself, but if not, then thou canst do nothing this way for thy recovery. First, if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments, Matthew 19, 17. That is, if thou wilt by doing enter into life, then perfectly keep the ten commands, for the drift of these words is to beat down the pride of the man's heart, and to let him see an absolute need of a savior from the impossibility of keeping the law.

The answer is given suitable to the address our Lord checks him for his compliment. Good master, verse 16, telling him there is none good but one that is God, verse 17. As if he had said, you think yourself a good man and me another, but where goodness is spoken of, men and angels may veil their faces before the good God.

As to his question, wherein he discovered his legal disposition, Christ does not answer him saying, Believe and thou shalt be saved. That would not have been so seasonable in the case of one who thought he could do well enough for himself, if he but knew what good thing he should do. But suitable to the humor the man was in, he bids him keep the commandments, keep them nicely and accurately as those that watch malefactors in prison, lest any of them escape and their life go for theirs.

See then, O unregenerate man, what thou canst do in this matter, for if thou wilt recover thyself in this way, thou must perfectly keep the commandments of God. Number one, thy obedience must be perfect in respect of the principle of it. That is, thy soul, the principle of action, must be perfectly pure and altogether without sin.

For the law requires all moral perfection, not only actual but habitual, and so condemns original sin, impurity of nature as well as of actions. Now if thou canst bring this to pass, thou shalt be able to answer that question of Solomon, so as never one of Adam's posterity could yet answer it. Who can say, I have made my heart clean? Proverbs 20 verse 9. But if thou canst not, the very want of this perfection is sin, and so lays thee open to the curse and cuts thee off from life.

Yea, it makes all thine actions, even thy best actions, sinful. For who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Job 14 4. And dost thou think by sin to help thyself out of sin and misery? Number two, thy obedience must be perfect in all its parts. It must be as broad as the whole law of God.

If thou lackest one thing, thou art undone. For the law of God denounces a curse on him that continues not in everything written therein. Galatians 3 10.

Thou must give internal and external obedience to the whole law. Keep all the commands in heart and life. If thou breakest any one of them, that will ensure thy ruin.

A vain thought or idle word will still shut thee up under the curse. Number three, it must be perfect in respect of degrees, as was the obedience of Adam while he stood in his innocence. This the law

requires and will accept of no less.

Matthew 22 37. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. If one degree of that love required by the law be wanting, if each part of thy obedience be not brought up to the greatest height commanded, the want is a breach of the law, and so leaves thee still under the curse.

A man may bring as many buckets of water to a house that is on fire as he is able to carry, and yet it may be consumed, and will be so if he bring not as many as will quench the fire. Even so, although thou shouldest do what thou art able in keeping the commands, if thou fail in the least degree of obedience which the law enjoins, thou art certainly ruined for ever, unless thou take hold of Christ, renouncing all thy righteousness as filthy rags. Romans 10 5, Galatians 3 10.

Lastly, it must be perpetual, as the man Christ's obedience was, who always did the things which pleased the Father. For the tenor of the law is, Cursed is he that continueth not in all things written in the law to do them. Hence, though Adam's obedience was for a while absolutely perfect, yet because at length he tripped in one point in eating the forbidden fruit, he fell under the curse of the law.

If a man were to live a dutiful subject to his friends till the close of his days, and then conspire against him, he must die for his treason. Even so, though thou shouldest all the time of thy life live in perfect obedience to the law of God, and yet at the hour of death only entertain a vain thought to pronounce an idle word, that idle word or vain thought would blot out all the former righteousness, and ruin thee, namely in this way in which thou art seeking to recover thyself. Now such is the obedience which thou must perform, if thou wouldst recover thyself in the way of the law.

But though thou shouldst thus obey, the law stakes thee down in a state of wrath till another demand of it be satisfied, namely, secondly, thou must pay what thou ow'st. It is undeniable thou art a sinner, and whatever thou mayst be in time to come, justice must be satisfied for thy sins already committed. The honor of the law must be maintained for thy suffering and denounced wrath.

It may be thou hast changed thy course of life, or art now resolved to do it, and to set about keeping of the commands of God. But what hast thou done, or what wilt thou do with the old debt? Your obedience to God, though it were perfect, is a debt due to him for the time wherein it is performed, and can no more satisfy for former sins than a tenant's paying the current year's rent, can satisfy the landlord for all arrears. Can the paying of new debts acquit a man from old accounts? Nay, deceive not yourselves, ye will find these laid up in store with God, and sealed up among his treasures, Deuteronomy 32.34. It remains then that either thou must bear that wrath, to which for thy sins thou art liable, according to the law, or else thou must acknowledge that thou canst not bear it, and thereupon have recourse to the surety, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me now ask thee, art thou able to satisfy the justice of God? Canst thou pay thy own debt? Surely not, for as he is the infinite God, whom thou hast offended, the punishment being suited to the quality of the offense must be infinite. But thy punishment or sufferings for sin cannot be infinite in value, for thou art a finite creature, therefore they must be infinite in duration or continuance, that is, they must be eternal. And so all thy sufferings in this world are but an earnest of what thou must suffer in the world to come.

Now sinner, if thou canst answer these demands thou mayst recover thyself in the way of the law. But art thou not conscious of thy inability to do any of these things, much more to do them all? Yet if thou do not all, thou dost nothing. Turn then, to what course of life thou wilt, thou art still in a state of wrath.

Screw up thy obedience to the greatest height thou canst. Suffer what God lays upon thee, yea, add, if thou wilt, to the burden, and walk under all without the least impatience. Yet all this will not satisfy the demands of the law, therefore thou art still a ruined creature.

Alas, sinner, what art thou doing, whilst thou strivest to help thyself, but dost not receive and unite with Jesus Christ? Thou art laboring in the fire, wearying thyself for very vanity, laboring to enter into heaven by the door which Adam sinned so boldly, as neither he nor any of his lost posterity can ever enter by it. Dost thou not see the flaming sword of justice keeping thee off from the tree of life? Dost thou not hear the law denouncing a curse on thee for all thou art doing, even for thy obedience, thy prayers, thy tears, thy reformation of life, and so on? Because being under the law's dominion, thy best works are not so good as it requires them to be. Believe it, sirs, if ye live and die out of Christ, without being actually united to him as the second Adam, the life-giving Spirit, and without coming under the covert of his atoning blood, though ye should do the utmost that any man on earth can do, in keeping the commands of God, ye can never see the face of God in peace.

If ye should from this moment bid an eternal farewell to this world's joys, and all the affairs thereof, and henceforth busy yourselves with nothing but the salvation of your souls, if ye should go into some wilderness, live upon the grass of the field, and be companions to dragons and owls, if ye should retire to some dark cavern of the earth, and weep there for your sins, until ye have wept yourselves blind, yea, wept out all the moisture of your body, if ye should confess with your tongue, until it cleave to the roof of your mouth, pray till your knees grow hard as horns, fast, till your body become a skeleton, and after all this give it to be burnt, the word is gone out of the Lord's mouth in righteousness, and cannot return, that ye shall perish forever, notwithstanding all this, is not being in Christ. John 14 6 No man cometh unto the Father, but by me. Acts 4 12 Neither is there salvation in any other.

Mark 16 16 He that believeth not, shall be damned. Objection. But God is a merciful God, and He knows that we are not able to answer to these demands.

We hope therefore to be saved, if we do as well as we can, and keep the commands as well as we are able. Answer. 1 Though thou art able to do many things, thou art not able to do one thing right.

Thou canst do nothing acceptable to God, being out of Christ. John 15 5 Without me ye can do nothing. An unrenewed man as thou art can do nothing but sin, as we have already proved.

Thy best actions are sin, and so they increase thy debt to justice. How can it be expected they should lessen it? 2 Though God should offer to save men, upon condition that they did all they could do, in obedience to His commands, yet we have reason to think that those who should attempt it would never be saved. For where is a man that does as well as he can? Who sees not many false steps he has made, which he might have avoided? There are so many things to be done, so many temptations to carry us out of the road of duty, and our nature is so very apt to be set on fire of hell, that we must surely fail, even in some point, that is within the compass of our

natural abilities.

3 Though thou shouldst do all that thou art able to do, in vain dost thou hope to be saved in that way. What word of God is this hope of thine founded on? It is neither founded on law nor gospel. Therefore it is but a delusion.

It is not founded on the gospel, for the gospel leads a soul out of itself to Jesus Christ for all, and it establishes the law, Roman 3.31. 4 Whereas this hope of yours cannot be established but on the ruins of the law, which God will magnify and make honorable. Hence it appears that it is not founded on the law neither. 5 When God set Adam a-working for happiness to himself and his posterity, perfect obedience was a condition required of him, and the curse was denounced in the case of disobedience.

The law being broken by him, he and his posterity were subjected to the penalty, for sin committed, and withal still bound to perfect obedience. For it is absurd to think that man's sinning and suffering for sin should free him from his duty of obedience to his Creator. When Christ came in the room of the elect to purchase their salvation, the terms were the same.

Just as had the elect under arrest, if he his desires to deliver them, the terms are known. He must satisfy for their sin by suffering the punishment due to it. He must do what they cannot do, to wit, obey the law perfectly, and so fulfill all righteousness.

Accordingly all this he did, and so became the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. Romans 10.4 And dost thou think that God will obey to these terms as to thee, when his own Son got no abatement of them? Expect it not, though thou shouldst beg it with tears of blood. For if they prevail, they must prevail against the truth, justice, and honor of God.

Galatians 3.10 Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. Romans 10.12 And the law is not a faith, but the man that doeth them shall live in them. It is true that God is merciful, but cannot he be merciful unless he save you in a way that is neither consistent with his law nor his gospel? Has not his goodness and mercy sufficiently appeared in sending the Son of his love to do what the law could not do, and that it was weak through the flesh? He has provided help for them that cannot help themselves.

But thou, insensible of thine own weakness, will need think to recover thyself by thine own works, while thou art no more able to do it than to remove mountains of brass out of their place. Wherefore I conclude that thou art utterly unable to recover thyself in the way of works or by the law. O that thou wouldst conclude the same concerning thyself! Section 2 Let us try next what the sinner can do to recover himself in the way of the gospel.

It may be, thou thinkest, that thou canst not do all by thyself alone, yet Jesus Christ, offering thee help, thou canst of thyself embrace it, and use it for thy recovery. But, O sinner, be convinced of thine absolute need of the grace of Christ, for truly there is help offered, but thou canst not accept it. There is a rope cast out to draw shipwrecked sinners to land, but alas! they have no hands to catch hold of it.

They are like infants exposed in the open field that must starve, though their food be lying by them, unless one put it in their mouths. To convince natural men of this, let it be considered first, that although Christ is offered in the gospel, yet they cannot believe in Him. Saving faith is the faith of

God's elect, the special gift of God to them wrought in them by His Spirit.

Salvation is offered to them that will believe in Christ, but how can you believe? John 5.44. It is offered to those that will come to Christ, but no man can come unto Him except a Father draw him. It is offered to them that will look to Him as lifted on the pole of the gospel. Isaiah 45.22. But the natural man is spiritually blind.

Revelation 3.17. And as to the things of the Spirit of God, he cannot know them, for they are spiritually discerned. 1 Corinthians 2.14. Nay, whosoever will, he is welcome, let him come. Revelation 22.17. But there must be a day of power on the sinner before he can be willing.

Psalm 110.3. Secondly, man naturally has nothing wherewithal to improve for his recovery, the help brought in by the gospel. He is cast away in a state of wrath and is bound hand and foot, so that he cannot lay hold of the cords of love thrown out to him in the gospel. The most cunning artificer cannot work without tools, neither can the most skillful musician play well on an instrument that is out of tune.

How can one believe? How can he repent whose understanding is darkness? Ephesians 5.8. Whose heart is a stony heart, inflexible, insensible? Ezekiel 36.26. Whose affection is wholly disordered and distempered? Who is averse to good and bent to evil? The arms of natural abilities are too short to reach supernatural help, hence those who most excel in them are often most estranged from spiritual things. Matthew 11.25. Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent. 3. Man cannot work a saving change on himself, but so changed he must be, else he can neither believe nor repent, nor ever see heaven.

No action can be without a suitable principle. Believing, repenting, and the like are the product of the new nature, and can never be produced by the old corrupt nature. Now what can a natural man do in this matter? He must be regenerate, begotten again unto a lively hope.

But if the child cannot be active in his own generation, so a man cannot be active but passive only in his own regeneration. The heart is shut against Christ. Man cannot open it.

Only God can do it by His grace. Acts 16.14. He is dead in sin. He must be quickened, raised out of his grave.

Who can do this but God Himself? Ephesians 2.1-5. Nay, he must be created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Ephesians 2.10. These are works of omnipotency, and can be done by no less a power. Fourthly, man in his depraved state is under an utter inability to do anything truly good as was cleared before at large.

How then can he obey the gospel? His nature is a very reverse of the gospel. How can he of himself fall in with that plan of salvation and accept the offered remedy? The corruption of man's nature infallibly includes his utter inability to recover himself in any way, and who so is convinced of the one must needs admit the other, for they stand and fall together. Were all the purchase of Christ offered to the unregenerate man, for one good thought he cannot command it.

2 Corinthians 3.5. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves. Were it offered on condition of a good word, yet how can he, ye, being evil, speak good things? Matthew 12.35. Nay, were it left to yourselves to choose what is easiest, Christ Himself tells you, John 15.5.

Without Me ye can do nothing. Lastly, the natural man cannot but resist the Lord's offering to help him, yet that resistance is infallibly overcome in the elect by converting grace.

Can the stony heart but choose to resist a stroke? There is not only an inability, but an enmity, an obstinacy in man's will by nature. God knows, O natural man, whether thou know'st it or not, that thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass. Isaiah 48.4. And cannot be overcome but by him who hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.

Hence, commonly speaking, there is such hard work in converting of a sinner. Sometimes he seems to be caught in the net of the gospel, yet quickly he slips away again. The hook catches hold of him, but he struggles till getting free of it he goes away with a bleeding wound.

When good hopes are conceived of him by those that travel in birth for the forming of Christ in him, there is oft times nothing brought forth but wind. The deceitful heart makes many a shift to avoid a Saviour and cheat the man of eternal happiness. Thus a natural man lies sunk in a state of sin and wrath, utterly unable to recover himself.

Objection No. 1. If we be under an utter inability to do anything, how can God require us to do it? Answer. God making man upright, Ecclesiastes 7.29, gave him a power to do everything that he should require of him.

This power man lost by his own fault. We were bound to serve God, and do whatever he commanded us, as being his creatures, and also we were under the superadded tie of a covenant for that purpose. Now we, having by our own fault disabled ourselves, shall God lose his right of requiring our task, because we have thrown away the strength he gave us whereby to perform it? Does a creditor know right to require payment of his money, because a debtor has squandered it away and is not able to pay him? Truly, if God can require no more of us than we are able to do, we need no more to save us from wrath, but to make ourselves unable for every duty, and to incapacitate ourselves for serving God any manner of way, as profane men frequently do.

And so the deeper a man is plunged in sin, he will be the more secure from wrath. For where God can require no duty of us, we do not sin in omitting it, and where there is no sin, there can be no wrath. As to what may be urged by the unhumiliated soul against the putting our stock in Adam's hand, the righteousness of that dispensation was cleared before.

But, moreover, the unrenewed man is daily throwing away the very remains of natural abilities, that rational light and strength which are to be found amongst the ruins of mankind. Nay, further, he will not believe his own utter inability to help himself, so that out of his own mouth he must be condemned. Even those who make their natural impotency to good a covert to their sloth, do with others delay the work of turning to God from time to time, and under convictions make large promises of reformation, which afterwards they never regard, and delay their repentance to a death-bed, as if they could help themselves in a moment, which shows them to be far from a due sense of their natural inability, whatever they pretend.

Now if God can require of men the duty they are not able to do, He can in justice punish them for their not doing it, notwithstanding their inability. If He has power to exact a debt of obedience, He also has power to cast the insolvent debtor into prison for his not paying it. Further, though unregenerate men have no gracious abilities, yet they want not natural abilities, which

nevertheless they will not improve.

There are many things that they can do which they do not. They will not do them, and therefore their damnation will be just, nay, all their inability to do good is voluntary. They will not come to Christ, John 5.40. They will not repent, they will die, Ezekiel 18.51. So they will be justly condemned, because they will neither turn to God nor come to Christ, but love their chains better than their liberty, and darkness rather than light, John 3.19. OBJECTION NUMBER TWO Why do you then preach Christ to us, call us to come to Him, to believe, repent, and use a means of salvation? Answer, because it is your duty so to do.

It is your duty to accept of Christ as He is offered in the gospel, to repent of your sins, and to be holy in all manner of conversation. These things are commanded you of God, and His command, not your ability, is a measure of your duty. Moreover, these calls and exhortations are the means that God is pleased to make use of for converting His elect, and working grace in their hearts.

To them faith cometh by hearing, Romans 10.17, while they are as unable to help themselves as the rest of mankind are. Upon the very grounds may we, at the command of God, who raises the dead, go to their graves, and cry in His name, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light, Ephesians 5.14. And seeing the elect are not to be known and distinguished from others before a conversion, as the sun shines on the blind man's face, and the rain falls on the rocks as well as on the fruitful plains, so we preach Christ to all, and shoot the arrow at a venture which God Himself directs, as He sees meet. Moreover, these calls and exhortations are not altogether in vain, even to those who are not converted by them.

Such persons may be convinced, though they be not converted, although they be not sanctified by these means, yet they may be restrained by them from running into that excess of wickedness which otherwise they would arrive at. The means of grace serves, as it were, to embalm many dead souls which are never quickened by them, though they do not restore them to life, yet they keep them from smelling so rank as otherwise they would do. Finally, though you cannot recover yourselves nor take hold of the saving help offered to you in the gospel, yet even by the power of nature you may use the outward and ordinary means in which Christ communicates the benefits of redemption to ruined sinners who are utterly unable to recover themselves out of the state of sin and wrath.

You may and can, if you please, do many things that would set you on a fair way for help from the Lord Jesus Christ. You may go so far on as not to be far from the kingdom of God, as the discreet scribe had done, Mark 12, 34. Though it should seem he was destitute of supernatural abilities, though you cannot cure yourselves, yet you may come to the pool, where many such diseased persons as you are have been cured, though you have none to put you into it, yet you may lie at the sight of it.

Who knows what the Lord may return and leave a blessing behind him, as in the case of the impotent man recorded in John 5, 5-8. I hope Satan does not chain you to your houses nor stake you down in your fields on the Lord's day, but you are at liberty and can wait at the posts of wisdom's doors, if you will. When you come thither, he does not beat drums at your ears that you cannot hear what is said.

There is no force upon you obliging you to apply all you hear to others. You may apply to yourselves what belongs to your state and condition. When you go home, you are not fettered in your houses, where perhaps no religious discourse is to be heard, but you may retire to some separate place, where you can meditate and exercise your consciences with pertinent questions upon what you have heard.

You are not possessed with a dumb devil that you cannot get your mouths opened in prayer to God. You are not so driven out of your beds to your worldly business and from your worldly business to your beds again, but you might, if you would, make some prayer to God upon the case of your perishing souls. You may examine yourselves as to the state of your souls and the solemn manners in the presence of God.

You may discern that you have no grace and that you are lost and undone without it, and you may cry unto God for it. These things are within the compass of natural abilities and may be practiced where there is no grace. It must aggravate your guilt that you will not be at so much pains about the state and case of your precious souls.

If you do not what you can, you will be condemned not only for your want of grace, but for your despising it. Objection 3. But all this is needless, and we are utterly unable to help ourselves out of the state of sin and wrath. Answer.

Give not place to that delusion which puts us under what God has joined, namely the use of means in the sense of our own impotency. If ever did the Spirit of God graciously influence your souls, you will become thoroughly sensible of your absolute inability and yet enter upon a vigorous use of means. You will do for yourselves as if you were to do all, and yet overlook all you do as if you had done nothing.

Will you do nothing for yourselves because you cannot do all? Lay down no such impious conclusion against your own souls. Do what you can, and it may be, while you are doing what you can for yourselves, God will do for you what you cannot. Understand what thou readest, said Philip to the eunuch.

How can I, said he, except some man should guide me? Acts 8 30 31. He could not understand the scripture he read, yet he could read it. He did what he could.

He read, and while he was reading, God sent an interpreter. The Israelites were in a great strait at the Red Sea, and how could they help themselves when on the one hand were mountains, and on the other the enemy's garrison, when Pharaoh and his host were behind them in the Red Sea before them? What could they do? Speak unto the children of Israel, said the Lord to Moses, that they go forward. Exodus 14 15.

For what end should they go forward? Can they make a passage to themselves through the sea? No, but let them go forward, saith the Lord, though they cannot turn sea to dry land, yet they can go forward to the shore. So they did. And when they did what they could, God did for them what they could not do.

Question. Is God promised to convert and save them who in the use of means do what they can towards their own relief? Answer. We may not speak wickedly for God.

Natural men, being strangers to the covenant of promise, Ephesians 2 12, have no such promise made to them. Nevertheless, they do not act rationally unless they exert the powers they have and do what they can. For number one, it is possible this course may succeed with them.

If you do what you can, it may be God will do for you what you cannot do for yourselves. This is sufficient to determine a man in a matter of the utmost importance, such as this is actually 22. Pray God, if perhaps the thought of my heart may be forgiven me, Joel 2 14, who knoweth if he will return? If success may be, the trial should be.

If in a wreck of sea all the sailors and passengers betake themselves each to a broken board for safety, and one of them should see all the rest perish, notwithstanding their utmost endeavors to save themselves, yet the very possibility of escaping by that means would determine that one still do his best with this board. Why then do not you reason with yourselves as the four leopards did who sat at the gate of Samaria, 2 Kings 7 3 and 4? Why do you not say, If we sit still, not doing what we can, we die? Let us put it to a trial. If we be saved, we shall live.

If not, we shall but die. 2 It is probable this course may succeed. God is good and merciful.

He loves to surprise men with his grace, and is often found of them that sought him not. Isaiah 65 1 If you do this, you are so far in the road of your duty, and you are using the means which the Lord is wont to bless for men's spiritual recovery. You lay yourselves in the way of the great physician, and so it is probable you may be healed.

2 Lydia went with others to the place where the Lord was wont to be made, and the Lord opened her heart. Acts 16 13 and 14 1 You plow and sow, though nobody can tell you for certain that you will get so much as your seed again. You use means for the recovery of your health, though you are not sure they will succeed.

In these cases probability determines you, and why not in this also? 2 Importunity, we see, does very much with men. Therefore pray, meditate, desire help of God, be much at the throne of grace, supplicating for grace, and do not faint. 3 Though God regard you not, who in your present state are but one mass of sin, universally depraved and vitiated in all the powers of your soul, yet he may regard prayer, meditation, and the like means of his own appointment, and he may bless them to you.

4 Wherefore, if you will not do what you can, you are not only dead, but you declare yourselves unworthy of eternal life. 5 To conclude, let the saints admire the freedom and power of grace, which came to them in their helpless condition, made their chains fall off, the iron gate to open to them, raised the fallen creatures and brought them out of the state of sin and wrath, wherein they would have laid and perished, had not they been mercifully visited. 6 Let the natural man be sensible of his utter inability to recover himself.

Know that thou art without strength, and cannot come to Christ till thou be drawn. Thou art lost, and canst not help thyself. 7 This may shake the foundation of thy hopes, who never saw of thy absolute need of Christ and his grace, but thinkest to shift for thyself by thy civility, morality, drowsy wishes and duties, and by faith and repentance, which is sprung out of thy natural powers, without the power and efficacy of the grace of Christ.

8 O be convinced of thy absolute need of Christ and his overcoming grace. Believe thy utter inability to recover thyself, that so thou mayst be humble, shaken out of thy self-confidence, and lie down in dust and ashes, droning out thy miserable case before the Lord. 9 A proper sense of thy natural impotency, and impotency of depraved human nature, would be a step towards a delivery.

From the book Human Nature in its Fourfold State by Thomas Boston Human Nature in its Fourfold State by Thomas Boston State Number Three The State of Grace or Begun Recovery Head Number One On Regeneration Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. 1 Peter 1.23 We proceed now to the state of grace, the state of begun recovery of human nature, into which all that shall partake of eternal happiness are translated, sooner or later, while in this world. It is the result of a gracious change made upon those who shall inherit eternal life, which change may be taken up in these two particulars.

Number One In opposition to their natural real state, the state of corruption, there is a change made upon them in regeneration, whereby their nature is changed. Number Two In opposition to their natural relative state, the state of wrath, there is a change made upon them in their union with the Lord Jesus Christ, by which they are placed beyond the reach of condemnation. These therefore, namely, regeneration and union with Christ, are designed to handle as the great and comprehensive changes on a sinner, bringing him into the state of grace.

The first of these we have in the text, together with the outward and ordinary means by which it is brought about. The apostle here, to excite the saints to the study of holiness and particularly of brotherly love, puts them in mind of their spiritual originals. He tells them that they were born again in that of incorruptible seed, the word of God.

This shows them to be brethren, partakers of the same new nature, which is a root from which holiness and particularly brotherly love springs. We are once born sinners, we must be born again that we may be saints. The simple word signifies to be begotten, and so it may be read in Matthew 11, 11, to be conceived, Matthew 1, 20, and to be born, Matthew 2, 1. Accordingly, the compound word used in the text may be taken in its full latitude, the last idea presupposing the two former.

So regeneration is the supernatural real change on the whole man, fitly compared to natural or corporeal generation, as will afterwards appear. The ordinary means of regeneration, called the seed, whereof the new creature is formed, is not corruptible seed. As such, indeed, our bodies are generated.

But the spiritual seed of which the new creature is generated is incorruptible, namely, the word of God which liveth and abideth forever. The sound of the word of God passes, even as other sounds do. But the word lasts, lives, abides, in respect of its everlasting effects on all upon whom it operates.

The word which by the gospel is preached unto you, verse 25, impregnated by the Spirit of God, is a means of regeneration, and by it are dead sinners raised to life. DOCTRINE O men, in the state of grace are born again. O gracious persons, namely, such as are in a state of favor with God, and endowed with gracious qualities and dispositions, are regenerate persons.

In discoursing on the subject I shall show what regeneration is, next, why it is so called, and then apply the doctrine of the nature of regeneration. 1. For the better understanding of the nature of regeneration, take this along with you, in the first place, that as there are false conceptions in nature, so there are also in grace. By these many are deluded, mistaking some partial changes made upon them for this great and thorough change.

To remove such mistakes, let these few things be considered. 1. Many call the church their mother, whom God will not own to be his children. 2. My mother's children, that is, false brethren, were angry with me.

All that are baptized are not born again. Simon was baptized, yet still in the gulf of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity, Acts 8, 13-23. 3. Where Christianity is a religion of the country, many are called by the name of Christ, who have no more of him than the name.

4. And no wonder, for the devil has his goats among Christ's sheep, in those places where but few professed the Christian religion, 1 John 2.19. They went out from us, but they were not of us. 2. Good education is not regeneration. Education may chain up men's lusts, but cannot change their hearts.

A wolf is still a ravenous beast, though it be in chains. Joash was very devout during the life of his good tutor Jehoiada, but afterwards he quickly showed what spirit he was of by his sudden apostasy. 2 Chronicles 24 2-18.

Good example is of a mighty influence to change the outward man, but that change often goes off when a man changes his company, of which the world affords many sad instances. 3. A turning from open profanity to civility and sobriety falls short of this saving change. Some are for a while very loose, especially in their younger years, but at length they reform and leave their profane courses.

Here is a change, yet only such as may be found in men utterly void of the grace of God, and whose righteousness is so far from exceeding, that it does not come up to the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. 4. One may engage in all the outward duties of religion, and yet not be born again. Though lead be cast into various shapes, it remains still but a base metal.

Men may escape the pollutions of the world, and yet but be dogs and swine. 2 Peter 2 20-22. All the external acts of religion are within the compass of natural abilities.

5. Yea, hypocrites may have the counterfeit of all the graces of the Spirit. For we read of true holiness, Ephesians 4 23, in faith unfeigned, 1 Timothy 1 5, which shows us that there is a counterfeit holiness in a feigned faith. 5. Men may advance to a great deal of strictness in their own way of religion, and yet be strangers to the new birth.

Acts 26 verse 5. After the most straightest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee. Nature has its own unsanctified strictness in religion. The Pharisees had so much of it that they looked on Christ as little better than a mere libertine.

6. A man whose conscience has been awakened, and who lives under the felt influence of the covenant of works, what will he not do that is within the compass of natural abilities? It is a truth, though it came out of a hellish mouth, that skin for skin all that a man hath will he give for his life.

Job 2 4. 6. A person may have sharp soul exercises and pangs, and yet die in the birth. Many have been in pain, that have but, as it were, brought forth wind.

There may be sore pangs and throes of conscience, which turn to nothing at last. Pharaoh and Simon Magus had such convictions as made them desire the prayers of others for them. Judas repented himself, and under tears of conscience gave back his ill-gotten pieces of silver.

All is not gold that glitters. Trees may blossom fairly in the spring, on which no fruit is to be found in the harvest. And some have sharp soul exercises, which are nothing but four tastes of hell.

7. The new birth, however, in appearance, hopefully begun, may be marred two ways. First, some, like Zarah, Genesis 38, 28, and 29, are brought to the birth, but go back again. They have sharp convictions for a while, but these go off, and they become as careless about their salvation, and as profane as ever, and usually worse than ever.

Their last state is worse than their first, Matthew 12, 45. They get awakening grace, but not converting grace, and that goes off by degrees as the light of the declining day, till it issue in midnight darkness. Secondly, some, like Ishmael, come forth too soon.

They are born before the time of the promise, Genesis 16, 2. Compare Galatians 4, 22, and so on. They take up with a mere law work, and stay not till the time of the promise of the gospel. They snatch at consolation, not waiting till it be given them, and foolishly draw their comfort from the law that wounded them.

They apply the healing plaster to themselves, before their wound be sufficiently searched. The law that rigorous husbands severely beats them, and throws in curses and vengeance upon their souls. Then they fall to reforming, praying, mourning, promising, and vowing, till this ghost be laid, which done, they fall asleep again in the arms of the law.

But they are never shaken out of themselves in their own righteousness, nor brought forward to Jesus Christ. Lastly, there may be a wonderful moving of the affections and souls that are not at all touched with regenerating grace. Where there is no grace, there may notwithstanding be a flood of tears as in Esau, who found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

Hebrews 12, 17. There may be great flashes of joy as in the hearers of the word, represented in the parable by the stony ground, who anon with joy receive it. Matthew 13, 20.

There may also be great desires after good things, and great delight in them too, as in those hypocrites described in Isaiah 58, 2. Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways. They take delight in approaching to God. See how high they may sometimes stand, who yet fall away.

Hebrews 6, 4-6. They may be enlightened, taste of the heavenly gift, be partakers of the Holy Ghost, taste the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come. Common operations of the divine spirit, like a land flood, make a strange turning of things upside down.

But when they are over, all runs again in the ordinary channel. All these things may be where the sanctifying spirit of Christ never rests upon the soul, but the stony heart still remains. And in that case, these affections cannot but wither, because they have no root.

But regeneration is a real thorough change, whereby the man is made a new creature. 2 Corinthians 5, 17. The Lord God makes a creature a new creature, as the goldsmith melts down the vessel of dishonor and makes it a vessel of honor.

Man is, in respect of his spiritual state, altogether disjointed by the fall. Every faculty of the soul is, as it were, dislocated. In regeneration, the Lord loosens every joint and sets it right again.

Now this change made in regeneration is, number one, a change of qualities or dispositions. It is not a change of the substance, but of the qualities of the soul. Vicious qualities are removed, and the contrary dispositions are brought in in their room.

The old man is put off, Ephesians 4, 22. The new man put on, verse 22. Man lost none of the rational faculties of the soul by sin.

He had an understanding still, but it was darkened. He had still a will, but it was contrary to the will of God. So in regeneration, there is not a new substance created, but new qualities are infused.

Light instead of darkness. Righteousness instead of unrighteousness. Number two.

It is a supernatural change. He that is born again is born of the Spirit, John 3, verse 5. Great changes may be made by the power of nature, especially when assisted by external revelation. Nature may be so elevated by the common influences of the Spirit that a person may thereby be turned into another man, as Saul was for Samuel 10, 6, who yet never became a new man.

But in regeneration, nature itself is changed, and we become partakers of the divine nature, and this must needs be a supernatural change. How can we, that are dead in trespasses and sins, renew ourselves more than a dead man can raise himself out of his grave? Who but the sanctifying Spirit of Christ can form Christ in the soul, changing it into the same image? Who but the Spirit of sanctification can give the new heart? Well, may we say, when we see a man thus changed, this is the finger of God. Number three.

It is a change into the likeness of God, 2 Corinthians 3, 18. We, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image. Everything that generates, generates its like.

The child bears the image of the parent, and they that are born of God bear God's image. Man, aspiring to be as God, made himself like the devil. In his natural state he resembles the devil, as the child doth his father, John 8, 44.

You are of your father the devil. But when this happy change comes, that image of Satan is defaced, and the image of God is restored. Christ himself, who is the brightness of his Father's glory, is a pattern after which the new creature is made, Romans 8, 29.

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. Hence he is said to be formed in the regenerate, Galatians 4, 19. Number four.

It is a universal change. All things become new, 2 Corinthians 5, 17. It is a blessed leaven that leavens the whole lump, the whole spirit, the soul, and body.

Original sin infects the whole man, and regenerating grace, which is to solve, goes as far as a sore. This fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, goodness of the mind, goodness of the will,

goodness of the affections, goodness of the whole man. He gets not only a new head, to know religion, or a new tongue to talk of it, but a new heart to love and embrace it in the whole of his conversation.

When the Lord opens this loose of grace on the soul's new birthday, the waters run through the whole man to purify and make him fruitful. In those natural changes spoken of before, they are, as it were, pieces of new cloth put into an old garment, a new life sold to an old heart. But the gracious change is a thorough change, a change both of heart and life.

Number five. Yet though every part of the man is renewed, there is no part of him perfectly renewed. As an infant has all the parts of a man, but none of them come to a perfect growth, so regeneration brings a perfection of parts to be brought forward in the gradual advances of sanctification.

1 Peter 2 verse 2. As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby. Although in regeneration there is heavenly light let into the mind, yet there is still some darkness there. Though the will is renewed, it is not perfectly renewed.

There is still some of the old inclination to sin remaining, and thus it will be till that which is in part be done away in the light of glory come. Adam was created at his full stature, but they that are born must have their time to grow up. So those that are born again come forth into the new world of grace as newborn babes.

Adam being created upright was at the same time perfectly righteous without the least mixture of sinful imperfection. Lastly, nevertheless, it is a lasting change which never goes off. The seed is incorruptible, says the text, and so is the creature that is formed of it.

The life given in regeneration, whatever decays it may fall under, can never be utterly lost. His seed remaineth in him who is born of God. 1 John 3 verse 9. Though the branches should be cut down, the root shall abide in the earth, and being watered with the dew of heaven shall sprout again, for the root of the righteous shall not be moved.

Proverbs 12 verse 3. But to come to particulars first, in regeneration the mind is savingly enlightened. There is a light let into the understanding, so that they who were sometimes darkness are now light in the Lord. Ephesians 5 verse 8. The beams of the light of life make their way into the dark dungeon of the heart.

Then the night is over, and the morning light has come, which will shine more and more unto the perfect day. Now the man is illuminated. 1 In the knowledge of God.

He has far other thoughts of God than he ever had before. Hosea 2 verse 20. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord.

The Spirit of the Lord brings him back to this question, What is God? and catechizes him anew upon that grand point, so that he is made to say, I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee. Job 42 verse 5. The spotless purity of God, his exact justice, his all-sufficiency, and other glorious perfections revealed in his word, are by this new light discovered to the soul with a plainness and certainty, that doth as far exceed the knowledge which it had of these things before. His ocular demonstration exceeds common report, for now he sees what he

only heard of before.

2 He is enlightened in the knowledge of sin. He has different thoughts of it than he was wont to have. Formerly his sight could not pierce through the cover Satan laid over it, but now the Spirit of God removes it, wipes off the paint and varnish, so he sees it in its natural colors as a worst of evils, exceedingly sinful.

Romans 7 verse 13. Oh, what deformed monsters do formerly beloved lusts appear! Were they right eyes, he would pluck them out. Were they right hands, he would consent to their being cut off.

He sees how offensive sin is to God, how destructive it is to the soul, and calls himself a fool for fighting so long against the Lord, and harboring that destroyer as a bosom friend. 3 He is instructed in the knowledge of himself. Regenerating grace brings a prodigal to himself, Luke 15 verse 17, and makes men full of eyes within, knowing every one the plague of his own heart.

The mind being savingly enlightened, the man sees how desperately corrupt his nature is, what enmity against God and His holy law has long lodged there, so that his soul loathes itself. No opus sepulcher, no puddle so vile and loathsome in his eyes as himself, Ezekiel 36 verse 31. Then shall you remember your own evil ways and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight.

He is no worse than he was before, but the sun is shining, and so those pollutions are seen, which he could not discern, when there was no dawning in him, as the word is, Isaiah 8 verse 20. Well, as yet there was no breaking of the day of grace with him. 4 He is enlightened in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, 1 Corinthians 1, 23 and 24.

But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness, but unto them which are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. The truth is, unregenerate men, though capable of preaching Christ, have not properly speaking the knowledge of him, but only an opinion, a good opinion of him, as one has of many controverted points of doctrine, wherein he is far from certainty. As when you meet with a stranger on the road, who behaves himself discreetly, you conceive a good opinion of him, and therefore willingly converse with him.

But yet you will not commit your money to him, because, though you have a good opinion of the man, he is a stranger to you. You do not know him. So may they think well of Christ, but they will never commit themselves to him, seeing they know him not.

But saving illumination carries a soul beyond opinion to the certain knowledge of Christ and his excellency. 1 Thessalonians 1, 5. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. The light of grace thus discovers the suitableness of the mystery of Christ to the divine perfections and to the sinner's case.

Hence a regenerate admire the glorious plan of salvation through Christ crucified, lay their whole weight upon it, and heartily acquiesce therein. For whatever he be to others, he is to them Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God. But unrenewed men, not seeing this, are offended in him.

They will not venture their souls in that bottom, but betake themselves to the broken boards of their own righteousness. The same light convincingly discovers a superlative worth, a transcendent glory and excellency in Christ, which darken all created excellencies, as the rising sun makes the stars hide their heads. It engages a merchantman to sell all that he hath to buy the one pearl of great price, Matthew 13, 45 and 46, makes a soul heartily content to take Christ for all and instead of all.

And a skillful merchant, to whom one offers a pearl of great price for all his petty wares, dares not venture on the bargain. For though he thinks that one pearl may be more worth than all he has, yet he is not sure of it. But when a jeweler comes to him and assures him it is worth double all his wares, he then greedily embraces the bargain and cheerfully parts with all he has for that pearl.

Finally, this illumination in the knowledge of Christ convincingly discovers to men a fullness in him sufficient for the supply of all their wants, enough to satisfy the boundless desires of an immortal soul. And they are persuaded that such fullness is in him, and that, in order to be communicated, they depend upon it as a certain truth. And therefore their souls take up their eternal rest in him.

5. The man is instructed in the knowledge of the vanity of the world. Psalm 119, 96 I have seen an end of all perfection. Regenerating grace elevates a soul, translates it into the spiritual world, from whence this earth cannot but appear a little, yea, a very little thing, even as heaven appeared before, while a soul was grovelling in the earth.

Grace brings a man into a new world, where this world is reputed but a stage of vanity, and howling wilderness, a valley of tears. God has hung this sign of vanity at the door of all created enjoyments. Yet how do men throng into the house, calling and looking for somewhat that is satisfying, even after it has been a thousand times told them that there is no such thing in it? It is not to be got there.

Isaiah 57, 10 Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way, yet sayest thou not, There is no hope. Why are men so foolish? The truth of the matter lies here. They do not see by the light of grace.

They do not spiritually discern the sight of vanity. They have often indeed made a rational discovery of it, but can that truly wean the heart from the world? Nay, no more than painted fire can burn off the prisoner's bands. But the light of grace is the light of life, powerful and efficacious.

Lastly, to sum up all in one word, in regeneration the mind is enlightened in the knowledge of spiritual things. 1 John 2, 20 Ye have an unction from the Holy One, that is, from Jesus Christ. Revelation 3, 18 It is an allusion to the sanctuary, whence the holy oil was brought to anoint the priests.

And ye know all things necessary to salvation. Though men be not but learned, if they are born again, they are spirit-learned. For all such are taught of God.

John 6, 45 The Spirit of regeneration teaches them what they knew not before, and what they knew by the ear only, He teaches them over again as by the eye. The light of grace is an overcoming light, determining men to assent to divine truths on the mere testimony of God. It is no easy thing for the mind of man to acquiesce in divine revelation.

Many pretend great respect to the Scriptures, whom nevertheless the clear Scripture testimony will not divorce from their preconceived opinions. But this illumination will make men's minds run as willing captives after Christ's chariot wills, which they are ready to allow to drive over and cast down their imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. 2 Corinthians 10, 5 It will bring them to receive the kingdom of God as a little child.

Mark 10, 15 Who thinks he has sufficient ground to believe anything if his father do but say it is so? Secondly, the will is renewed. The Lord takes away the stony heart and gives a heart of flesh, Ezekiel 36, 26. And so a stone raises up children to Abraham.

Regenerating grace is powerful and efficacious and gives the will a new turn. It does not indeed force it, but sweetly yet powerfully draws it, so that his people are willing in the day of his power. Psalm 110, 3 There is heavenly oratory in the mediator's lips to persuade sinners.

Psalm 45, 2 Grace is poured into thy lips. There are cords of a man and bands of love in his hands to draw them after him. Hosea 11, 4 Love makes a net for elect souls, which will infallibly catch them and bring them to land.

The cords of Christ's love are strong cords, and they need to be so. For every sinner is heavier than a mountain of brass. And Satan, together with the heart itself, draws the contrary way.

But love is as strong as death. And the Lord's love to the soul he died for is the strongest love, which acts so powerfully that it must come off victorious. The will is cured of its utter inability to will what is good.

While the opening of the prison to them that are bound is proclaimed in the gospel, the Spirit of God comes and opens the prison door, goes to the prisoner, and by the power of his grace makes his chains fall off, breaks the bonds of iniquity wherewith he was held in sin, so that he could neither will nor do anything truly good, brings him forth into a large place, working in him both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Philippians 2, 13 Then it is that the soul that was fixed to the earth can move heavenward. The withered hand is restored and can be stretched out.

Number 2 There is wrought in the will a fixed aversion to evil. In regeneration, a man gets a new spirit put within him. Ezekiel 36, 26 And that spirit lusts against the flesh.

Galatians 5, 17 The sweet morsel of sin so greedily swallowed down, he now loathes, and would fain be rid of it. Even as willingly as one who had drunk a cup of poison would throw it up again. When the spring is stopped, the mud lies in the well unmoved.

But when once the spring is cleared, the water springing up will work away the mud by degrees. Even so, while a man continues in an unregenerous state, sin lies at ease in the heart. But as soon as the Lord strikes a rocky heart with the rod of his strength in the day of conversion, grace is in him, a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

John 4, 14 Working away natural corruption and gradually purifying the heart. Acts 15, 9 The renewed will rises up against sin, strikes at the root thereof and the branches too. Lusts are now grievous, and the soul endeavors to starve them.

The corrupt nature is the source of all evil, and therefore the soul will be often laying it before the great physician. Oh, what sorrow, shame, and self-loathing feel the heart in the days that grace makes its triumphant entrance into it. For now the madman has come to himself, and the remembrance of his follies cannot but cut him to the heart.

Lastly, the will is endowed with an inclination bent in propensity to good. In its depraved state it lay quiet another way, being prone and bent to evil only. But now, by the operation of the omnipotent, all-conquering arm, it is drawn from evil to good and gets another turn.

As a former was natural, so this is natural too, in regard to the new nature given in regeneration, which has its holy lustings as well as the corrupt nature has its sinful lustings. Galatians 5, 17 The will, as renewed, inclines and points towards God and godliness. When God made man, his will, in respect of its intention, was directed towards God as his chief end.

In respect of its choice, it pointed towards that which God willed. When man unmade himself, his will was framed to the very reverse hereof. He made himself his chief end and his own will his law.

But when man is made new in regeneration, grace rectifies this disorder in some measure, though not perfectly, because we are but renewed in part while in this world. It brings back the sinner out of himself to God as his chief end. Psalm 73, 25 Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.

Philippians 1, 21 For to me to live is Christ. It makes him to deny himself in whatever way he turns to point habitually towards God, who is the center of the gracious soul, its home, its dwelling place in all generations. Psalm 90, 1 By regenerating grace, the will is brought into a conformity to the will of God.

It is conformed to his preceptive will, being endowed with holy inclinations, agreeable to every one of his commands. The whole law is impressed on the gracious soul. Every part of it is written on the renewed heart.

Although remaining corruption makes such blots in the writing that oft times a man himself cannot read it, yet he that wrote it can read it at all times. It is never quite blotted out, nor can be. What he has written, he has written, and it shall stand.

For this is a covenant. I will put my laws into their mind and write them in their hearts. Hebrews 13, 10 It is a covenant of salt, a perpetual covenant.

It is also conformed to his providential will, so that the man would no more be master of his own process, nor carve out his lot for himself. He learns to say from his heart, The will of the Lord be done. He shall choose our inheritance for us.

Thus the will is disposed to fall in with those things which in its depraved state it could never be reconciled to. Particularly, number one, the soul is reconciled to the covenant of peace. The Lord God proposes a covenant of peace to sinners.

A covenant which he himself has framed and registered in the Bible. But they are not pleased with it. Nay, an unregenerate heart cannot be pleased with it.

Were it put into their hands to frame it according to their minds, it would blot many things out of it which God has put in, and put in many things which God has kept out. But the renewed heart is entirely satisfied with the covenant. 2 Samuel 23, 5 He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered, and all things ensured.

This is all my salvation and all my desire. Though the covenant could not be brought down to their depraved will, their will is by grace brought up to the covenant. They are well pleased with it.

There is nothing in it which they would have out, nor is anything left out of which they would have in. Number two, The will is disposed to receive Christ Jesus the Lord. The soul is content to submit to him.

Regenerating grace undermines and brings down the towering imaginations of the heart raised up against this rightful Lord. It breaks the iron sinew which kept the sinner from bowing to him, and disposes him to be no more stiff-necked but to yield. He is willing to have on the yoke of Christ's commands to take up the cross and to follow him.

He is content to take Christ on any terms. Psalm 110, verse 3 Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power. The mind being savingly enlightened and the will renewed, the sinner is thereby determined and enabled to answer the gospel call.

So the chief work in regeneration is done. The fort of the heart is taken. There is room made for the Lord Jesus Christ in most parts of the soul, the inner door of the will being now open to him, as well as the outer door of the understanding.

In one word, Christ is passively received into the heart. He is come into the soul by his quickening spirit, whereby spiritual life is given to the man who in himself was dead in sin. His first vital act we may conceive to be an active receiving of Jesus Christ, discerned in his glorious excellencies, that is, a believing on him, a closing with him, as discerned, offered, and exhibited in the word of his grace, the glorious gospel, the immediate effect of which is union with him.

John 1, 12 and 13 To as many as received him, to them gave he power or privilege to become the sons of God, even to them who believe on his name, which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. Ephesians 3, 17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. Christ having taken the heart by storm and triumphantly entered into it in regeneration, the soul by faith yields itself to him as it is expressed.

2 Chronicles 30 verse 8 Thus this glorious king, who came into the heart by his spirit, dwells in it by faith. The soul being drawn runs and being effectually called comes. Thirdly, in regeneration there is a happy change made on the affections.

They are both rectified and regulated. Number one, this change rectifies the affections, placing them on suitable objects. 2 Thessalonians 3, 5 The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God.

The regenerate man's desires are rectified. They are set on God himself and the things above. He who before cried with the world, who will show us any good, has changed his note and says, Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance upon us.

Psalm 4, 6 Before he saw no beauty in Christ, for which he was to be desired. But now he is all desires. He is altogether lovely.

Song of Solomon 5, 16 The mainstream of his desires has turned to run towards God. For there is the one thing he desires. Psalm 27, 4 He desires to be holy as well as to be happy, and rather to be gracious than great.

His hopes which were before low and staked down to things on earth are now raised and set on the glory which is to be revealed. He entertains the hope of eternal life, founded on the word of promise, Titus 1, 2, which hope he has as an anchor of the soul, fixing the heart under trials. Hebrews 6, 19 It puts him upon purifying himself, even as God is pure.

John 3, 3 For he is begotten again unto a lively hope. 1 Peter 1, 3 His love is raised and set on God himself. On his holy law.

Psalm 119, 97 Psalm 18, 1 Though it strike against his most beloved lust, he says the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good. Romans 7, 12 He loves the ordinances of God. Psalm 84, 1 How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! Being passed from death unto life, he loves the brethren.

1 John 3, 14 The people of God, as they are called. 1 Peter 2, 10 He loves God for himself, and what is God's for his sake? Yea, as being a child of God, he loves his own enemies. His heavenly Father is compassionate and benevolent.

He maketh his Son to rise on the evil end, on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. Therefore he is in like manner disposed. Matthew 5, 44, 45 His hatred is turned against sin in himself and others.

I hate the work of them that turn aside. It shall not cleave to me. He groans under the body of it, and longs for deliverance.

Romans 7, 24 O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? His joys and delights are in God the Lord, in the light of his countenance, in his law, and in his people, because they are like him. Sin is what he chiefly fears. It is a fountain of sorrow to him now, though formerly a spring of pleasure.

06 - Meditations on -- A Bridle to Curb Sin

Human Nature in its Fourfold State by Thomas Boston on this date of May 24th, 2004. We are moving to the section of the book called, How the Branches are Taken out of the Natural Stock and Engrafted into the Supernatural Stock. Section 4. I am to show how the branches are cut off from the natural stock, the first atom engrafted into the tree vine of Lord Jesus Christ.

Thanks to the husbandman not to the branch it is cut off from its natural stock, and grafted into a new one. The sinner in his coming off from the first stock is passive, and neither can nor will come off from it of his own accord, but clings to it till almighty power make him to fall off. John 6.44 No man can come unto me except the Father which is sent me draw him.

In chapter 5.40 You will not come to me that you might have life. The engrafted branches are God's husbandry. 1 Corinthians 3.9 The planting of the Lord.

Isaiah 61.3 The ordinary means he makes use of in this work is the ministry of the word. 1 Corinthians 3.9 We are laborers together with God, but the efficacy thereof is holy from him, whatever the minister's parts or piety be. Verse 7 Neither is he that planteth anything, neither is he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase.

The apostles preached to the Jews, yet the body of that people remained in infidelity. Romans 10.16 Who hath believed our report? Yea, Christ himself, who spoke as never man spake, says concerning the success of his own ministry, I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for naught. Isaiah 49.4 The branches may be hacked by the preaching of the word, but the stroke will never go through till it be carried home by the omnipotent arm.

However God's ordinary way is, by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. 1 Corinthians 1.21 The cutting off of the branch from the natural stock is performed by the pruning knife of the law in the hand of the Spirit of God. Galatians 2.19 For I through the law am dead to the law.

It is by the bond of the covenant of works, as I said before, that we are knit to our natural stock. Therefore as a wife unwilling to be put away pleads and hangs by the marriage tie, so do men by the covenant of works. They hold by it, like a man who held a ship with his hands, and when one hand was cut off held it with the other, and when both were cut off held it with his teeth.

This will appear from a distinct view of the Lord's works on men and bringing them off from the old stock, which now I offer in the following particulars first. When the Spirit of the Lord comes to deal with a person to bring him to Christ, he finds him in Laodicea's case, in a sound sleep of security, dreaming of heaven in the favor of God, though full of sin against the Holy One of Israel. Revelation 3.17 Thou knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.

Therefore he darts in some beams of light into the dark soul and lets a man see that he has lost a man, if he turn not over a new leaf, and betake himself to a new course of life. Thus by the Spirit of

the Lord, acting as a spirit of bondage, there is a criminal court erected in the man's breast, where he is arraigned, accused and condemned for breaking the law of God, convinced of sin and judgment. John 16.8 And now he can no longer sleep securely in his former course of life.

This is the first stroke which the branch gets in order to cutting off. Secondly, hereupon the man forsakes his former profane courses, his lying, swearing, Sabbath-breaking, stealing, and such like practices, though they be dear to him as right eyes, he will rather quit them than ruin his soul. The ship is like to sink, and therefore he throws his goods overboard, that he himself may not perish.

Now he begins to bless himself in his heart, and look joyfully on the evidences for heaven, thinking himself a better servant to God than many others. Luke 18.11 God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, and so on. But he soon gets another stroke with the acts of the law, showing him that it is only he that does what is written in the law that can be saved by it, and that his negative holiness is too scanty a covering from the storm of God's wrath.

Thus, although his sins of commission only were heavy on him before, his sins of omission now crowd into his thoughts, attended with a train of law curses and vengeance. In each of the ten commands discharges thunder claps of wrath against him for his omitting required duties. Thirdly, upon this he turns to a positively holy course of life.

He not only is not profane, but he performs religious duties. He prays, seeks the knowledge of the principles of religion, strictly observes the Lord's Day, and, like Herod, does many things and hears sermons gladly. In one word, there is a great conformity in his outward conversation to the letter of both tables of the law.

There is a mighty change upon the man, which his neighbors cannot miss taking notice of. Hence he is cheerfully admitted by the godly into their society as a praying person, and can confer with them about religious matters. He ain't about soul exercises, which some are not acquainted with, and their good opinion of him confirms his good opinion of himself.

This step in religion is fatal to many, who never get beyond it. But here the Lord gives the elect branch a further stroke. Conscience flies in the man's face for some wrong steps in his conversation, the neglect of some duty, or commission of some sin, which is a blot in his conversation.

And then the flaming sword of the law appears again over his head, and a curse rings in his ears, for he that continueth not in all things written in the law to do them. Galatians 3.10 Fourthly, on this account he is obliged to seek another Saul for his sore. He goes to God, confesses his sin, seeks the pardon of it, promises to watch against it for the time to come.

His soul finds ease, and thinks he may very well take it. See, in the Scripture it says, If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. 1 John 1.9 Now considering that he grasps at a privilege, which is theirs only, who are grafted into Christ, and under the covenant of grace, in which the branches yet growing on the old stalk cannot plead.

And here sometimes there are formal and express vows made against such and such sins, and binding to such and such duties. Thus many go on all their days knowing no other religion than to perform duties, and to confess and pray for pardon of that wherein they fell, promising themselves eternal happiness, though they are utter strangers to Christ. Here many elect ones have been cast

down wounded, and many reprobates have been slain, while the wounds of neither of them have been deep enough to cut them off from their natural stalk.

But the Spirit of the Lord gives a yet deeper stroke to the branch which is to be cut off, showing him that as yet he is but an outsized saint, and discovering to him the filthy lusts lodged in his heart, which he took no notice of before. Romans 7.9 When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. Then he sees his heart a dunghill of hellish lusts, filled with covetousness, pride, malice, filthiness, and the like.

Now as soon as the door of the chambers of his imagery is thus opened to him, and he sees what they do there in the dark, his outside religion is blown up as insufficient, and he learns a new lesson in religion, namely, that he is not a Jew which is one outwardly. Romans 2.28 Fifthly, upon this he goes further, even to inside religion, sets to work more vigorously than ever, mourns over the evils of his heart, and strives to bear down the weeds which he finds growing in that neglected garden. He labors to curb his pride and passion, and to banish speculative impurities, prays more fervently, hears attentively, and strives to get his heart affected in every religious duty he performs, and thus he comes to think himself not only an outside, but an inside Christian.

Wonder not at this, for there is nothing in it beyond the power of nature, or what one may attain to under a vigorous influence of the covenant of works. Therefore another yet deeper stroke is given. The law charges home on the man's conscience that he was a transgressor from the womb, that he came into the world a guilty creature, and that in the time of his ignorance, and even since his eyes were opened, he has been guilty of many actual sins, either altogether overlooked by him, or not sufficiently mourned over.

For spiritual sores, not healed by the blood of Christ, but skinned over some other way, are easily irritated, and soon break out again. Therefore the law takes them by the throat, saying, Pay what thou ow'st. Sixthly, then the sinner says in his heart, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

And so falls to work to pacify an offended God, and to atone for those sins. He renews his repentance, such as it is, and spares patiently the afflictions laid upon him. Yea, he afflicts himself, denies himself the use of his lawful comfort, sighs deeply, mourns bitterly, cries with tears for a pardon, till he has wrought up his heart to a conceit of having obtained it.

Having thus done penance for what is past, he resolves to be a good servant to God, and to hold on an outward and inward obedience for the time to come. But the stroke must go nearer the heart, yet ere the branch fall off. The Lord discovers to him in the glass of the law how he sins in all he does, even when he does the best he can, and therefore the dreadful sound returns to his ears.

Galatians 3.10 Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, and so on. When you fasted and mourned, says the Lord, did you at all fast unto me? Even to me? Will muddy water make clean clothes? Will you satisfy for one sin with another? Did not your thoughts wander in such a duty? Were not your affections flat in another? Did not your heart give a lustful look to such an idol? And did it not rise in a fit of impatience under such an affliction? Should I accept this of your hands? Cursed be the deceiver which sacrificeth to the Lord a corrupt thing. Malachi 1.13-14 And thus he becomes so far broke off that he sees he is not able to satisfy the demands of the law.

Seventhly, hence like a broken man who finds he is not able to pay all his debt, he goes about to compound with his creditor. And being in pursuit of ease and comfort, he does what he can to fulfill the law. And wherein he fails, he looks that God will accept the will for the deed.

Thus doing his duty, and having a will to do better, he cheats himself into a persuasion of the goodness of his state, and hereby thousands are ruined. But the elect get another stroke, which loosens their hold in this case. The doctrine of the law is borne in on their consciences, demonstrating to them that exact and perfect obedience is required by it, under pain of the curse, and that it is a doing and not the wishing to do which will avail.

Wishing to do better will not answer the law's demands, and therefore the curse sounds again. Cursed is everyone that continueth not to do them, that is, actually to do them. In vain is wishing, then, easily.

Being broken off from all hopes of compounding with the law, he falls a borrowing. He sees that all he can do to obey the law, and all his desires to be and to do better, will not save his soul. Therefore he goes to Christ, entreating that his righteousness may make up what is wanting in his own, and cover all the defects of his doings and sufferings.

So God, for Christ's sake, may accept them, and thereupon be reconciled. Thus doing what he can to fulfill the law, and looking to Christ to make up all his defects, he comes at length to sleep in a sound skin again. Many persons are ruined this way.

This is the error of the Galatians, which Paul in his epistle to them disputes against. But the Spirit of God breaks off the sinner from this hold also, by bringing home to his conscience that great truth in Galatians 3.12. A garment pierced up of sundry sorts of righteousness is not a garment meet for the court of heaven. Thus a man is like one in a dream, who thought he was eating, but being awakened by a stroke.

Behold, his soul is faint, his heart sinks in him like a stone, while he finds that he can neither bear his burden himself alone, nor can he get help under it. Ninthly, what can he do whom us needs pay, and yet has not enough of his own to bring him out of debt, nor can borrow so much, and to beg he is ashamed? What can such an one do, I say, but sell himself as a man under the law, that was waxen poor, Leviticus 25.47? Therefore the sinner beat off from so many holds, attempts to make a bargain with Christ, and to sell himself to the Son of God, if I may so speak, solemnly promising and vowing that he will be a servant to Christ as long as he lives, if he will save his soul. Here the sinner often makes a personal covenant with Christ, resigning himself to him on these terms, yea, and takes a sacrament to make the bargain sure.

Hereupon the man's great care is how to obey Christ, keep his commands, and so fulfill his bargains. In this the soul finds a false, unsound peace for a while, till the Spirit of the Lord gives another stroke to cut off the man from this refuge of lies. Likewise, and that happens in this manner, when he fails of the duties he engaged to perform and falls again into the sin he covenanted against, it is powerfully carried home on his conscience that his covenant is broken.

So all his comfort goes and tears a fresh seed on his soul as one that has broken covenant with Christ. Commonly the man, to help himself, renews his covenant, but breaks it again as before. And how is it possible it should be otherwise, seeing he is still upon the old stock, thus the work of

many all their days is to their souls is nothing but a making and breaking such covenants over and over again.

Objection. Some persons will say, Who liveth and sinneth not? Who is there that felleth not of the duties he is engaged to? If you reject his way as unsound, who then can be saved? Answer. True believers will be saved, namely, all who do by faith take hold of God's covenant.

But this kind of covenant is men's own covenant devised of their own heart, not God's covenant revealed in the gospel of his grace. And the making of it is nothing else but the making of a covenant of works with Christ, confounding the law and the gospel, a covenant he will never subscribe to, though we should sign it with our heart's blood. Romans 4, 14-16 For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect.

Therefore it is of faith that it might be by grace to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed. Chapter 11, 6 And if by grace, and it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, and it is no more grace, otherwise work is no more work.

God's covenant is everlasting, once in, never out of it again, and the mercies of it are sure mercies. Isaiah 55, 3 But that covenant of yours is a tottering covenant, never sure, but broken every day. It is a mere servile covenant, giving Christ service for salvation.

But God's covenant is a filial covenant, in which the sinner takes Christ, and is salvation freely offered, and so becomes the Son. John 1, 12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God. And being become a son, he serves his Father, not that the inheritance may become his, but because it is his through Jesus Christ.

See Galatians 4, 24 And downward. To enter into that spurious covenant is to buy from Christ with money. But to take hold of God's covenant is to buy of him without money and without price.

Isaiah 55, 1 That is to say, to beg of him. In that covenant men work for life. In God's covenant they come to Christ for life, and work from life.

When a person under that covenant fails in his duty, all is gone. The covenant must be made over again. But under God's covenant, although the man fail in his duty, and for his failure, falls under the discipline of the covenant, and lies under the weight of it, till such time as he has recourse anew to the blood of Christ for pardon, and renew his repentance, yet all that he trusted to for life and salvation, namely the righteousness of Christ, still stands entire, and the covenant remains firm.

See Romans 7, 24-25, 8 Verse 1 Now though some men spend their lives in making and breaking such covenants of their own, the terror on the breaking of them wearing weaker and weaker by degrees, till at last it creates them little or no unevenness, yet the man in whom the good work is carried on, till it be accomplished in cutting him off from the old stock, finds these covenants to be as rotten cords broken at every touch, and the terror of God being thereupon redoubled on his spirit, and the waters at every turn getting in unto his very soul, he is obliged to cease from catching hold of such covenants, and to seek help some other way. Tenthly, therefore the man comes at length to beg at Christ's door for mercy, but yet he is a proud beggar standing on his personal worth. For as the papists have mediators to plead for them with the one only mediator, so the branches of the old stock have always something to produce, which they think may commend

them to Christ, and engage him to take their cause in hand.

They cannot think of coming to the spiritual market without money in their hand. They are like persons who have once had an estate of their own, but are reduced to extreme poverty and forced to beg. When they come to beg, they still remember their former character, and though they have lost their substance, yet they retain much of their former spirit.

Therefore they cannot think that they ought to be treated as ordinary beggars, but deserve a particular regard, and if that be not given them, their spirits rise against him to whom they address themselves for supply. Thus God gives the unhumiliated sinner many common mercies, and shuts him not up in a pit according to his deserving, but all this is nothing in his eyes. He must be set down at the children's table, otherwise he reckons himself hardly dealt with and wronged.

For he is not yet brought so low as to think God may be justified when he speaks against him, and clear from all iniquity when he judges him according to his real demerit. Psalm 51, 4 He thinks, perhaps, that even before he was enlightened he was better than many others. He considers his reformation of life, his repentance, the grief and tears which his sin has cost him, his earnest desires after Christ, his prayers and wrestlings for mercy, and uses all these now as bribes for mercy, laying no small weight upon him in his addresses to the throne of grace.

But here the Spirit of the Lord shoots a sheaf of arrows into the man's heart, whereby his confidence in these things is sunk and destroyed. And instead of thinking himself better than many, he is made to see himself worse than any. The naughtiness of his reformation of life is discovered.

His repentance appears to him no better than the repentance of Judas. His tears, like ethos, and his desires after Christ to be selfish and loathsome, like those who sought Christ because of the loaves John 6, 26. His answer from God seems now to be, Away, proud beggar, how shall I put thee among the children? He seems to look sternly on him for his lighting of Jesus Christ by unbelief, which is a sin he scarce discerned before.

But now at length he beholds it in its crimson colors, and is pierced to the heart as with a thousand darts, while he sees how he has been going on blindly, sinning against the remedy of sin, and in the whole course of his life trampling on the blood of the Son of God. And now he is in his own eyes a miserable object of law of vengeance, yea, in gospel vengeance too. Eleventhly.

The man being thus far humbled will no more plead he is worthy for whom Christ should do this thing, but on the contrary looks on himself as unworthy of Christ, and unworthy of the favor of God. We may compare him in this case to the young man who followed Christ, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body, who when the young man laid hold of him left the linen cloth and fled from them naked. Mark 14, 51 and 52.

Even so the man had been following Christ in the thin and cold garment of his own personal worthiness. But by it, even by it, which he so much trusted to, the law catches hold of him to make him prisoner, and then he is fain to leave it and flees away naked, yet not to Christ, but from him. If ye now tell him he is welcome to Christ, if he will come to him, he is apt to say, Can such a vile and unworthy wretch as I be welcome to the Holy Jesus? If a plaster be applied to his wounded soul, it will not stick.

He says, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. Luke 5, 8. No man need speak to him of his repentance, for his comfort he can quickly espy such faults in it as make it not, nor of his tears, for he is assured they have never come into the Lord's bottle. He disputes himself away from Christ and concludes now that he has been such a slighter of Christ, and is such an unholy and vile creature, that he cannot, he will not, he ought not come to Christ, and that he must either be in a better case, or else he will never believe.

Hence he now makes his strongest efforts to amend what was amiss in his way before. He prays more earnestly than ever, mourns more bitterly, strives against sin and heart and life more vigorously, and watches more diligently, if by any means he may at length be fit to come to Christ. One would think the man is well humbled now, but all a devilish pride lurks under the veil of this seeming humility, like a kindly branch of the old stalk.

He adheres still, and will not submit to the righteousness of God. He will not come to the market of free grace without money. He is bid into the marriage of the king's son, where the bridegroom himself furnishes all the guests with wedding garments, stripping them of their own, but he will not come because he wants a wedding garment, although he is very busy in making one ready.

This is sad work, and therefore he must have a deeper stroke, yet else he is ruined. This stroke is given him with the acts of the law in its irritating power, thus the law girding the soul with cords of death, and holding it in with the rigorous commands of obedience, under the pain of the curse, and God in his holy and wise conduct withdrawing his restraining grace. Corruption is irritated, lusts become violent, and the more they are striven against, the more they rage like a furious horse checked with the bit.

Then corruptions set up their heads, which he never saw in himself before. Here oftentimes atheism, blasphemy, and in one word horrible things concerning God, terrible thoughts concerning the faith arise in the breast, so that his heart is a very hell within him. Thus while he is sweeping the house of his heart, not yet watered with gospel grace, those corruptions which lay quiet before in neglected corners fly up and down in it like dust.

He is one who is mending a dam, and while he is repairing breaches in it, and strengthening every part of it, a mighty flood comes down, overturns his works, and drives all away before it, as while what was newly laid is what was laid before. Romans 7, 8-13 This is a stroke which goes to the heart, and by it his hope of making himself more fit to come to Christ is cut off. Lastly, now the time is come when the man between hope and despair resolves to go to Christ as he is, and therefore like a dying man stretching himself just before his breath goes out, he rallies the broken forces of his soul, tries to believe, and in some sort lays hold on Jesus Christ.

And now the branch hangs on the old stalk by one single tack of a natural faith, produced by the natural vigor of one's own spirit under a most pressing necessity. Psalm 78, 34 and 35 When he slew them, then they sought him, and they returned and inquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their Rock, and the High God their Redeemer.

Hosea 8 verse 2 Israel shall cry unto me, My God, we know thee. But the Lord never failing to perfect his work, fetches yet another stroke, whereby the branch falls quite off. The Spirit of God convincingly discovers to the sinner his utter inability to do anything that is good, and so he dies.

Romans 7 verse 9 That voice powerfully strikes through his soul. How can ye believe? John 5 44 Thou canst no more believe than thou canst reach up thy hand to heaven, and bring Christ down from thence. Thus at length he sees that he can neither help himself by working nor by believing, and having no more to hang by on the old stock, he therefore falls off.

While he is distressed thus, seeing himself like to be swept away with the flood of God's wrath, and yet unable so much as to stretch forth a hand to lay hold of a twig of the tree of life, growing on the bank of the river, he is taken up, and engrafted in the true vine, the Lord Jesus Christ, giving him the spirit of faith. By what has been said upon his head, I design not to rack or distress tender consciences, for though there are but few such at this day, yet God forbid I should offend any of Christ's little ones. But alas, a dead sleep has fallen upon this generation.

They will not be awakened. Let us go ever so near to the quick. Therefore I fear that there is another sort of awakening abiding this sermon-proof generation, which shall make the ears of them that hear it tingle.

However, I would not have this to be looked upon as a sovereign God-stinted method of breaking off sinners from the old stock. But this I assert as a certain truth, that all who are in Christ have been broken off from all these several confidences, and that they who have never been broken off from them are yet in their natural stock. Nevertheless, if the house be pulled down, and the old foundation raised, it is much the same, whether it was taken down stone by stone, or whether it was undermined, and all fell down together.

Now it is that the branch is engrafted in Jesus Christ. And as the law in the hand of the Spirit of God was the instrument to cut off the branch from the natural stock, so the gospel in the hand of the Holy Spirit is the instrument used for engrafting it in the supernatural stock, 1 John 1.3. That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us. And truly our fellowship is with the Father and with the Son, Jesus Christ.

The gospel is a silver cord let down from heaven to draw perishing sinners to land. And though the preaching of the law prepares a way of the Lord, yet it is in the word of the gospel that Christ and the sinner meet. Now as in the natural grafting, the branch being taken up is put into the stock, and being put into it becomes one with it, so that they are united.

Even so, in the spiritual engrafting, Christ apprehends the sinner, and the sinner being apprehended of Christ apprehends him, and so they become one. Philippians 3 verse 12. First Christ apprehends the sinner by a spirit, and draws him to himself.

1 Corinthians 12.13 For by one spirit we are all baptized into one body. The same spirit which is in the mediator himself, he communicates to his elect in due time, never to depart from them, but to abide in them as a principle of life. Thus he takes hold of them by his own spirit, put into them, and so the withered branch gets life.

The soul is now in the hands of the Lord of life, and possessed by the spirit of life. How can it then but live? The man gets a ravishing sight of Christ's excellency in the glass of the gospel. He sees him a full, suitable, and willing Savior, and gives a heart to take him for, and instead of all.

The spirit of faith furnishes him with feet to come to Christ, and hands to receive him. What by nature he could not do, by grace he can, the Holy Spirit working in him the work of faith with

power. Secondly, the sinner thus apprehended apprehends Christ by faith, and is one with the blessed stock.

Ephesians 3.17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. The soul that before tried many ways of escape, but all in vain, now looks with the eye of faith, which proves a healing look. Is Aaron's rod laid up, and the tabernacle butted and brought forth buds? Numbers 17.8 So the dead branch, apprehended by the Lord of life, put in two, and bound up with the glorious quickening stock.

By the spirit of life buds forth an actual believing on Jesus Christ, whereby this union is completed. We, having the same spirit of faith, believe 2 Corinthians 4.13 Does the stock and the graft are united? Christ and the Christian are married, faith being the soul's consent to the spiritual marriage covenant, which as it is proposed in the gospel to mankind, centers indefinitely. So it is demonstrated, attested, and brought home to the man in particular by the Holy Spirit.

And so he being joined to the Lord is one spirit with him. Hereby a believer lives in and for Christ, and Christ lives in and for the believer. Galatians 2.20 I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.

Hosea 3.3 Thou shalt not be for another man, so will I also be for thee. The bonds then of this blessed union are the spirit on Christ's part and faith on the believer's part. Now both the souls and bodies of believers are united to Christ.

He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit. 1 Corinthians 6 verse 17 The very bodies of believers have this honor put upon them that they are the temple of the Holy Ghost. Verse 19 And the members of Christ.

Verse 15 When they sleep in the dust, they sleep in Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 4.14 And it is in virtue of this union they shall be raised up out of the dust again. Romans 8.11 He shall quicken your mortal bodies by a spirit that dwelleth in you.

In token of this mystical union, the church of believers is called by the name of her head and husband. 1 Corinthians 12 12 For as by the body is one and hath many members, so also is Christ. Application From what is said, we may draw the following inferences.

1. The preaching of the law is most necessary. He that would engraft must needs use a pruning knife. Sinners have many shifts to keep them from Christ, many things by which they keep their hold of the natural stock.

Therefore they have need to be closely pursued and hunted out of their skulking holes and refuges of lies. 2. Yet it is the gospel that crowns the work. The law makes nothing perfect.

The law lays open the wound, but it is the gospel that heals. The law strips a man, wounds him, and leaves him half dead. The gospel binds up his wounds, pouring in wine and oil to heal them.

By the law we are broken off, but it is by the gospel we are taken up and implanted in Christ. 3. If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his. Romans 8.9 We are told of a monster in nature, having two bodies, differently animated, as appeared from contrary affections at one time and at the same time.

But so united that they were served with the selfsame legs. Even so, however men may cleave to Christ, call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel, Isaiah 48.2, and may be bound up as branches in him, John 15.2, by the outward ties of sacraments. Yet if the spirit that dwells in Christ dwells not in them, they are not one with him.

There is a great difference between adhesion and engrafting. The ivy clasps and twists itself about the oak, but it is not one with it, for it still grows on its own root. So to allude to Isaiah 4.1, many professors take hold of Christ, and eat their own bread, and wear their own apparel, only they are called by his name.

They stay themselves upon him, but grow upon their own root. They take him to support their hopes, but their delights are elsewhere. 4. The union between Christ and his mystical members is firm and indissoluble.

Were it so that the believer only apprehended Christ, and Christ apprehended not him, we could promise little on the stability of such a union. It might quickly be dissolved. But as the believer apprehends Christ by faith, so Christ apprehends him by his spirit, and none shall pluck him out of his hand.

Did the child only keep hold of the nurse, it might at length weary, and let go its hold, and so fall away. But if she have her arms about the child, it is in no hazard of falling away, even though it be not actually holding by her. So whatever sinful intermissions may happen in the exercise of faith, yet the union remains sure by reason of the constant indwelling of the spirit.

Blessed Jesus, all the saints are in thy hand. Deuteronomy 33.3 It is observed by some that the word Abba is the same whether you read it forward or backward. Whatever the believer's case be, the Lord is still to him Abba, Father.

Lastly, they have an unsure hold of Christ, whom he has not apprehended by his spirit. There are many half-marriages here, where the soul apprehends Christ, but is not apprehended of him. Hence many fall away, and never rise again.

They let go their hold of Christ, and when that is gone, all is gone. These are the branches in Christ that bear not fruit, which the husbandman taketh away. John 15.2 Question.

How can that be? Answer. These branches are set in a stock by a profession, or an unsound hypocritical faith. They are bound up with it in the external use of the sacraments, but the stock, and they are never knit.

Therefore they cannot bear fruit. And they need not be cut off, nor broken off. They are by the husbandman only taken away, or as the word primarily signifies, lifted up, and so taken away, because there is nothing to hold them.

They are indeed bound up with the stock, but were never united to it. Question. How shall I know if I am apprehended of Christ? Answer.

You may be satisfied in this inquiry, if you consider and apply these two things. First. When Christ apprehends a man by his spirit, he is so drawn that he comes away to Christ with his whole heart.

For true believing is believing with all the heart. Acts 8.37 Our Lord's followers are like those who followed Saul at first, men whose hearts God has touched. 1 Samuel 10.26 When the Spirit pours in overcoming grace, they pour out their hearts like water before Him.

They flow unto Him like a river. Isaiah verse 2 All nations shall flow unto it, namely to the mountains of the Lord's house. It denotes not only the abundance of converts, but the disposition of their souls in coming to Christ.

They come heartily and freely as drawn with lovingkindness. Jeremiah 31.3 Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power. Psalm 110.3 That is, free, ready, openhearted, giving themselves to thee as freewill offerings.

When the bridegroom has the bride's heart, it is a right marriage. But some give their hand to Christ who gave Him not their heart. They that are only driven to Christ by terror will surely leave Him again when that terror is gone.

Terror may break a heart of stone, but the pieces into which it is broken still continue to be stone. Terror cannot soften it into a heart of flesh. Yet terror may begin to work which love crowns.

The strong wind, the earthquake, and the fire going before, the still small voice in which the Lord is may come after them. When the blessed Jesus is seeking sinners to match with Him, they are bold and perverse. They will not speak with Him till He has wounded them, made them captives, and bound them with the cords of death.

When this is done, then it is that He makes love to them and wins their hearts. The Lord tells us, Hosea 2, 16-20, that His chosen Israel shall be married unto Himself. But how will the bride's consent be won? Why, in the first place, He will bring her into the wilderness as He did to people when He brought them out of Egypt.

Verse 14 There she will be hardly dealt with, scorched with thirst, and bitten of serpents. And then He will speak comfortably to her. Or, as the expression is, He will speak unto her heart.

The sinner is first driven, and then drawn to Christ. It is with the soul as with Noah's dove. She was forced back again to the ark, because she could find nothing else to rest upon.

But when she returned, she would have rested on the outside of it, if Noah had not put forth his hand and pulled her in. Genesis 8, 9 The Lord sends the avenger of blood in pursuit of the criminal, who with a sad heart leaves his own city, and with tears in his eyes parts with his old acquaintances, because he dare not stay with them, and he flees for his life to the city of refuge. This is not all his choice.

It is forced work. Necessity has no law. But when he comes to the gates and sees the beauty of the place, the excellency and loveliness of it charm him, and then he enters it with a heart in good will, saying, This is my rest, and here I will stay.

And, as one said in another case, I had perished unless I had perished. Secondly, when Christ apprehends a soul, the heart is disengaged from and turned against sin, as in cutting off the branch from the old stalk, the great idol self is brought down. The man is powerfully taught to deny himself.

So in the apprehending of the sinner by the Spirit, that union is dissolved which was between a man and his lusts, while he was in the flesh, as the apostle expresses it. Romans 7 5 His heart is loosened from them, though formerly as dear to him as the members of his body, as his eyes, legs, or arms, and instead of taking pleasure in them as before, he longs to be rid of them. When the Lord Jesus comes to a soul in the day of converting grace, he finds it like Jerusalem in the day of her nativity, Ezekiel 16 4, with his navel not cut, drawn as fulsome nourishment and satisfaction from his lusts.

But he cuts off this communication, that he may set the soul on the breasts of his own consolations, and give it rest in himself. And thus the Lord wounds the head and heart of sin, and a soul comes to him, saying, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no prophet. Jeremiah 16 19 I have been reading from section 3 of Thomas Boston's Human Nature in this fourfold state.

A more complete version is found through the Chapel Library in Pensacola, Florida. I am moving forward now to head number 4.

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