

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (CHOICE EXCERPTS)

by Thomas Watson

Key passages from Watson's exposition describing God's wrath against sin and the gravity of transgression, with urgent warnings about divine judgment both temporal and eternal.

2 Chapters

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CHOICE EXCERPTS

The afflictions of the godly

How do the afflictions of the godly, differ from the afflictions of the wicked?

(1) The afflictions of the godly are but corrections; but those on the wicked are punishments. The one come from a Father; the other from a Judge.

(2) The afflictions of the godly are fruits of covenant mercy. Afflictions on the wicked are effects of God's wrath. Afflictions on the wicked are the pledge of

hell; they are like the shackling of a malefactor, which presages his execution.

(3) The afflictions of the godly make them better; but afflictions on the wicked make them worse. The godly pray more; "Out of the depths I cry to You, O Lord." Psalms 130:1. The wicked blaspheme more. "Men were scorched with great heat—and blasphemed the name of God." Revelation 16:9.

Affliction on the godly is like bruising spices—which makes them give off a most sweet and fragrant aroma. Affliction on the wicked is like pounding weeds with

a pestle—which makes them give off a foul stench.

It is a sign the affliction is sanctified, when the heart is brought to a sweet submissive frame.

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Mercy swims to us through Christ's blood!

Every link in the golden chain of salvation, is wrought and interwoven with free grace!

God's love is free. "I will love them freely." Hosea 14:4

Election is free. "He has chosen us in Him according to the good pleasure of His will." Ephesians 1:5

Justification is free. "Being justified freely by His grace." Romans 3:24

God's saving MERCY is free and spontaneous. To set up merit—is to destroy mercy. We do not deserve mercy, because of our enmity. We may force God to

punish us—but not to love us! If God would show mercy only to such as deserve it—He would show mercy to none!

Mercy is an innate propensity in God to do good to distressed sinners. Mercy proceeds primarily, and originally from God. He is called the "Father of mercies." 2 Corinthians 1:3

God's saving mercy is powerful. How powerful is that mercy—which softens a heart of stone! Mercy changed Mary Magdalene's heart, out of whom seven devils were cast. She who was an inflexible adamant—was made a weeping penitent!

God's mercy works sweetly—yet irresistibly. It allures—yet conquers! The law may terrify—but mercy mollifies. Of what sovereign power and efficacy is that mercy, which subdues the pride and enmity of the heart, and beats off those chains of sin, in which the soul is held!

God's mercy is superabundant. The Lord has treasures of mercy in store, and therefore is said to be "plenteous in mercy" (Psalms 86:5), and "rich in mercy" (Ephesians 2:4). The vial of God's wrath, only drops—but the fountain of His mercy, runs. The sun is not so full of light—as God is of mercy. His mercy is over-flowing and ever-flowing. His mercy is infinite—without bounds, and without end. "His mercy endures forever." Psalm 136. Every time we draw our breath—we suck in mercy!

We are all living monuments of God's mercy! He shows mercy to us in daily supplying us. He supplies us with health. Health is the sauce which makes life sweeter. How those who are chained to a sick-bed, would prize this mercy! God supplies us with provisions. "God who fed me all my life long." Genesis 48:15. Mercy spreads our tables, and carves for us every bit of bread we eat! We never drink, but in the golden cup of mercy!

God shows mercy in restraining us from sin. Lusts within—are worse than lions without! The greatest sign of God's anger, is to give men up to their sins. "So I gave them up to their own hearts' lust." Psalms 81:12. While the ungodly sin themselves to hell, God has laid the bridle of restraining grace upon us! As God

said to Abimelech, "I withheld you from sinning against Me." Genesis 20:6 Just so, God has withheld us from those sins which might have made us a prey to Satan, and a terror to ourselves!

God shows mercy in guiding and directing us. He guides our affairs for us; and chalks out the way He would have us to walk. "You shall guide me with Your counsel." Psalms 73:24. God leads us with the oracles of His Word, and the guidance of His Spirit. He guides our heads to keep us from error; and He guides our feet to keep us from scandal. Oh, what mercy it is—to have God

to be our guide and pilot!

God shows mercy in correcting us. He is angry—in love. He smites—that He may save. His rod is not a rod of iron to break us—but a fatherly rod to humble us. "God disciplines us for our good—that we may share in His holiness." Hebrews 12:10 In our afflictions—God will mortify some corruption, or exercise some grace.

God shows mercy in saving us. "According to His mercy, He saved us." Titus 3:5. This is the top-stone of mercy! Here mercy displays itself in all its orient colors. Mercy is mercy indeed, when God perfectly refines us from all the lees and dregs of corruption; when our bodies are made like Christ's glorious body, and our souls like the angels. Saving mercy is crowning mercy. It is not merely to be freed from hell—but enthroned in a kingdom! What rich mercy will it be—to fully

possess God, to see His smiling face, and to lay in His bosom forever! This will fill us with "a glorious, inexpressible joy!" 1 Peter 1:8. God's saving mercy, is the diamond in the ring!

Mercy more overflows in God—than sin in us. His mercy can drown great sins—as the sea covers great rocks! Christ's blood is "a fountain to cleanse them from all their sins and defilement." Zechariah 13:1. Some of the Jews who had their hands imbrued in Christ's blood—were saved by that blood! God loves to magnify His mercy, and display the trophies of free grace!

How may I know that my sins are pardoned? Whenever God removes the guilt of sin—He breaks the power of sin. "He will have compassion; He will subdue our iniquities." Micah 7:19. With pardoning love—God gives subduing grace.

If we would have saving mercy, it must be through Christ. Outside of Christ, there is no saving mercy. We read in the old law, that none might come into the holy of holies, where the mercy-seat stood—but the high-priest. This signifies that we have nothing to do with mercy—but through Christ our High-priest. That the high-priest might not come near the mercy-seat without blood, is to show that we have no right to mercy—but through the expiatory sacrifice of Christ's

blood, Leviticus 16:14. If we would have mercy, we must be in Christ. Mercy swims to us through Christ's blood!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ The queen of graces

"You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment." Matthew 22:37-38

Love to God is a holy expansion or enlargement of soul, by which it is carried with delight after God, as the chief good—"a delight in God, as our treasure."

Love is the soul of religion; it is a momentous grace. If love is lacking, there can be no true religion in the heart. All else is but pageantry—merely a devout

compliment to God.

Love ameliorates and sweetens all the duties of religion; it makes them savory food, which God delights in.

As to the excellence of this grace—love is the first and great commandment. Love is the queen of graces; it outshines all others, as the sun outshines the planets.

Love is the most durable grace. Faith and hope will shortly cease—but love will remain. Thus love carries away the garland from all other graces, as it is the most long-lived grace. Love is a bud of eternity!

Love to God must be pure and genuine. He must be loved chiefly for Himself. We must love God, not only for His benefits—but for those intrinsic excellencies with which He is crowned. We must love God—not only for the good which flows from Him—but for the good which is in Him. True love is not mercenary; he who is deeply in love with God, needs not be hired with rewards, he cannot but love God for the beauty of His holiness. Though it is not unlawful to look for benefits, we must not love God for His benefits alone—for then it is not love of God, but

self-love.

Love to God must be with all the heart. We must not love God a little—give Him a drop or two of our love; but the main stream must flow to Him.

The mind must think of God, the will must choose Him, the affections must pant after Him.

God will not have the heart divided. We must love Him with our whole heart. Though we may love the creature—yet it must be a subordinate love. Love to God must be highest, as oil swims above the water.

Love to God must be flaming. To love coldly, is the same as not to love. The spouse is said to be, "love-sick." Song of Solomon 2:5. The seraphim are so called, because of their burning love. Love turns saints into seraphim; it makes them burn in holy love to God. Many waters cannot quench this love.

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How may we know whether we love God?

He who loves God desires His presence. Lovers cannot be long asunder, they soon have their fainting fits, for lack of a sight of the object of their love. A soul deeply in love with God desires the enjoyment of Him. David was ready to faint away, when he had not a sight of God. "My soul faints for God." Psalms 84:2

He who loves God, does not love sin. "You who love the Lord—hate evil." Psalms 97:10. The love of God—and the love of sin, can no more mix together than iron and clay. Every sin loved, strikes at the being of God. He who loves God, has an antipathy against sin. He who would part two lovers is a hateful person. God and the believing soul are two lovers; sin parts between them, therefore the soul is implacably set against sin. By this try your love to God. How can he say he loves God, who loves sin—which is God's enemy?

He who loves God is not much in love with anything else. His love is very cool to worldly things. The love of the world eats out the heart of piety; it chokes holy affections, as earth puts out the fire. He who loves God—uses the world but chooses God. The world engages him—but God delights and satisfies him. He says as David, "God, my exceeding joy!" Psalms 43:4. "God is the cream of my joy!"

He who loves God cannot live without Him. Things we love, we cannot be without. A man can do without music or flowers, but not food. Just so, a soul deeply in love with God looks upon himself as undone without Him. "Hide not Your face from me, lest I be like those who go down into the pit." Psalms 143:7.

If God is our chief good—we cannot live without Him! Alas! how do they show they have no love to God—who can do well enough without Him! Let them have but food and drink, and you shall never hear them complain of the lack of God.

He who loves God will be at any pains to get Him. What pains the merchant takes, what hazards he runs—to have a rich return. Jacob loved Rachel, and he could endure the heat by day, and the frost by night—that he might enjoy her.

A soul that loves God will take any pains for the fruition of Him. "My soul follows hard after You." Psalms 63:8. The soul is much in prayer; it strives as in agony, that he may obtain Him whom his soul loves. "I will seek Him whom my soul loves." Song of Solomon 3:2.

He who loves God, prefers Him before estate. "For Whom I have suffered the loss of all things." Php 3:8. Who that loves a rich jewel—would not part with a flower for it?

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ For a drop of pleasure

"You shall not murder." Exodus 20:13

Many murder their own souls! They willfully damn themselves, and throw themselves into hell!

Who are those who murder their own souls?

They willfully murder their souls—who have no sense of God, or the world to come, and are past feeling. Tell them of God's holiness and justice—and they are not affected at all. "They made their hearts as an adamant stone." Zechariah 7:12. Sinners have adamant hearts—nothing will work upon them, neither ordinances nor judgments. They do not believe in God; they laugh

at hell. Thus they murder their own souls, and throw themselves into hell as fast as they can!

They willfully murder their own souls—who resign themselves to their lusts, let what will, come of it. "Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more." Ephesians 4:19. Let ministers speak to them about their sins, let conscience speak, let afflictions speak—they will have their lusts, even though they go to hell for them! Do not these murder their own souls? Many say in their hearts, "let our sins damn us—just so that they but please us!" Herod will have his incestuous lusts—though it costs him his soul. For a drop of pleasure—men will drink a sea of wrath! These massacre and damn their own souls!

"A wicked man's iniquities entrap him; he is entangled in the ropes of his own sin. He will be lost because of his great stupidity." Proverbs 5:22-23

Oh! take heed of murdering your own souls!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ She is a common sewer!

"You shall not commit adultery." Exodus 20:14 This commandment is set up as a hedge to keep out impurity; and those who break this hedge—a serpent shall bite them! The fountain of this sin is lust. God is a pure, holy being, and has an infinite antipathy against all impurity. We must take heed of running on the rock of impurity, and so making shipwreck of our chastity. The meaning of the commandment is not only that we should not stain our bodies with immorality—but that we should keep our souls pure. To have a chaste body—but an unclean soul, is like a beautiful face with a cancerous heart. "Be holy, for I am holy." 1 Peter 1:16.

There is a mental adultery. "Whoever looks on a woman to lust after her, has committed adultery with her already in his heart." Matthew 5:28. As a man may die of an inward bleeding—so he may be damned for the inward boilings of lust, if it is not mortified. That I may deter you from the sin of adultery, let me show you the great evil of it.

(1) Adultery is a thievish sin. It is the highest sort of theft. The adulterer steals from his neighbor, that which is more than his goods and estate; he steals away his wife from him!

(2) Adultery debases a person. It makes him resemble the beasts; therefore the adulterer is described like a horse neighing. "Everyone neighed after his neighbor's wife." Jeremiah 5:8. It is worse than brutish; for some creatures which are void of reason—yet by the instinct of nature, observe some decorum and chastity. The turtle-dove is a chaste creature, and keeps to its mate. And the stork, wherever he flies, comes into no nest but his own. Naturalists write that if a stork, leaving his own mate, joins with any other, all the rest of the storks fall upon it, and pull its feathers from it. Adultery is worse than brutish, it degrades a person of his honor.

(3) Adultery pollutes. The devil is called an unclean spirit. Luke 11:24. The adulterer is the devil's first-born; he is unclean; he is a moving quagmire. He is all over ulcerated with sin; his eyes sparkle with lust; his mouth foams out filth; his heart burns like mount Etna, in unclean desires. He is so filthy, that if he dies in this sin, all the flames of hell will never purge away his immorality! And, as for the adulteress, who can paint her black enough? The Scripture calls her a deep ditch. Proverbs 23:27. She is a common sewer! The body of a harlot is a walking dung-hill, and her soul a lesser hell!

(4) Adultery is destructive to the body. "Afterward you will groan in anguish when disease consumes your body." Proverbs 5:11. Immorality turns the body into a hospital, it brings foul diseases, and eats the beauty of the face. As the flame wastes the candle, so the fire of lust consumes the body. The adulterer hastens his own death. "So she seduced him with her pretty speech. With her flattery she enticed him. He followed her at once, like an ox going to the slaughter or like a trapped stag, awaiting the arrow that would pierce its heart. He was like a bird flying into a snare, little knowing it would cost him his life!" Proverbs 7:21-23.

(5.) Adultery is a drain upon the purse; it wastes not the body only—but the estate. "Keeping you from the immoral woman, from the smooth tongue of the wayward wife. Do not lust in your heart after her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyes, for the prostitute reduces you to a loaf of bread, and the adulteress preys upon your very life!" Proverbs 6:24-26. Whores are the devil's horse-leeches, sponges that suck in money. The prodigal son spent his inheritance, when he fell among harlots. Luke 15:30. The concubine of King Edward III, when he was dying, got all she could from him, and even plucked the rings off his fingers.

(6) Adultery destroys reputation. "But the man who commits adultery is an utter fool, for he destroys his own soul. Wounds and constant disgrace are his lot. His shame will never be erased!" Proverbs 6:32-33. Wounds of reputation—no physician can heal. When the adulterer dies, his shame lives. When his body rots underground, his name rots above ground. His bastard children are living monuments of his shame.

(7) Adultery impairs the mind. It steals away the understanding; it stupefies the heart. "Whoredom and wine take away the heart." Hosea 4:11. It eats all purity out of the heart. Solomon besotted himself with women, and they enticed him to idolatry.

(8) Adultery incurs temporal judgments. The Mosaic law made the penalty for adultery, to be death. "The adulterer and adulteress shall surely be put to death;" and the usual death was stoning. Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:24. The Salons commanded people guilty of this sin, to

be burnt. The Romans caused their heads to be stricken off. Like a scorpion—this sin carries a sting in its tail. "For jealousy arouses a husband's fury, and he will show no mercy when he takes revenge!" Proverbs 6:34. The adulterer is often killed in the act of his sin. "Lust's practice is to make a joyful entrance—but she leaves in misery." I have read of two in London, who, having defiled themselves with adultery, were immediately struck dead with lightening from heaven. If all who are now guilty of this sin were to be punished in this manner, it would rain fire again, as on Sodom.

(9) Adultery, without repentance, damns the soul. "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor homosexual offenders . . . will inherit the kingdom of God!" 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. The fire of lust, brings to the fire of hell. "God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral!" Hebrews 13:4. Though men may neglect to judge them—yet God will judge them! He will judge them assuredly; they shall not escape the hand of justice; and He will punish them severely. The harlot's breasts keeps from Abraham's bosom! "The delight lasts a moment—the torment an eternity!" Who for a cup of pleasure—would drink a sea of wrath! "Her guests are in the depths of hell." Proverbs 9:18. The harlot is perfumed with powders, and lovely to look on—but poisonous and damnable to the soul! "She has cast down many wounded, yes, many strong men have been slain by her." Proverbs 7:26.

(10) The adulterer does all he can, to destroy the soul of another—and so kills two at once! He is worse than the thief; for, suppose a thief robs a man, yes, and also takes away his life—the man's soul may be happy; he may go to heaven as well as if he had died in his bed. But he who commits adultery, endangers the soul of another, and does all he can, to deprive her of salvation. What a fearful thing it is—to be an instrument to draw another to hell!

(11) The adulterer is abhorred of God. "The mouth of an adulteress is a deep pit; he who is abhorred by the Lord, will fall into it." Proverbs 22:14. What can be worse than to be abhorred by God? God may be angry with His own children; but for God to abhor a man—is the highest degree of hatred! The immoral person stands upon the threshold of hell; and when death gives him a push—he tumbles in!

All this should sound a warning in our ears, and call us off from the pursuit of so damnable a sin as immorality. Hear what the Scriptures say: "Her house is the way to hell." Proverbs 7:27.

I shall give some directions, by way of antidote, to keep from the infection of this sin.

(1) Do not come into the company of a whorish woman; avoid her house, as a seaman does a rock. "Run from her! Don't go near the door of her house!" Proverbs 5:8. He who would not have the plague, must not come near infected houses; every whore-house has the plague in it. Not to avoid the occasion of sin, and yet pray, "Lead us not into temptation," is, as if one should put his finger into the candle, and yet pray that it may not be burnt!

(2) Look to your eyes. Much sin comes in by the eye. "Having eyes full of adultery." 2 Peter 2:14. The eye tempts the imagination, and the imagination works upon the heart. A lustful amorous eye, may usher in sin. Eve first saw the tree of knowledge—and then she took. Genesis 3:6. First she looked—and then she loved. The eye often sets the heart on fire; therefore Job laid a law upon his eyes. "I made a covenant with my eyes—not to look with lust upon a young woman." Job 31:1.

(3) Look to your lips. Take heed of any unclean word which may enkindle unclean thoughts in yourselves or others. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." 1 Corinthians 15:33. Impure discourse, is the bellows to blow up the fire of lust. Much evil is conveyed to the heart by the tongue. "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth!" Psalms 141:3.

(4) Look in a special manner to your heart. "Guard your heart with all diligence." Proverbs 4:23. Every person has a tempter in his own bosom! "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, adultery, all other sexual immorality." Matthew 15:19. Thinking of sin, makes way for the act of sin. Suppress the first risings of sin in your heart. As the serpent, when danger is near—guards his head, so keep your heart, which is the spring from whence all lustful motions proceed.

(5) Look to your attire. We read of the attire of a harlot. Proverbs 7:10. A wanton dress is a provocation to lust. A painted face, and half-naked breasts, are allurements to immorality. Where the sign is hung out—people will go in and taste the liquor. Jerome says, "those who by their lascivious attire endeavor to draw others to lust, though no evil follows—are tempters—and shall be punished, because they offered the poison to others, even though they would not drink."

(6) Take heed of evil company. Sin is a very contagious disease; one person tempts another to sin, and hardens him in it. There are three cords which draw men to immorality:

the inclination of the heart,

the persuasion of evil company, and

the embraces of the harlot. This threefold cord is not easily broken. "A fire was kindled in their company." Psalms 106:18. The fire of lust is kindled in bad company.

(7) Beware of going to theaters and plays. A playhouse is often a preface to a whorehouse. "Plays furnish the seeds of wickedness." We are bid to avoid all appearance of evil; and are not plays the appearance of evil? Such sights are there, which are not fit to be beheld with chaste eyes. A learned divine observes, that many have on their death-beds confessed, with tears, that the pollution of their bodies has been occasioned by going to plays.

(8) Take heed of mixed dancing. "Dances are instruments of lust and wantonness." From dancing, people come to dalliance with another, and from dalliance to immorality. "There is," says Calvin, "for the most part, some unchaste behavior in dancing." Dances draw the heart to immorality—by wanton gestures, by unchaste touches, and by lustful looks. Chrysostom inveighed against mixed dancing in his time. "We read," he says, "of a marriage feast—but of dancing there—we read not." Matthew 25:7. Many have been ensnared by dancing. "Dancing is not the conduct of a chaste woman—but of the adulteress," says Ambrose. Chrysostom says, "Where dancing is, there the devil is!"

(9) Take heed of lascivious books and pictures, which provoke to lust. As the reading of the Scripture stirs up love to God, so reading vile books stirs up the mind to wickedness. To lascivious books I may add lascivious pictures, which bewitch the eye, and are incendiaries to lust! They secretly convey poison to the heart.

(10) Take heed of excess in diet. When gluttony and drunkenness lead the van, immorality and wantonness bring up the rear. "Wine inflames lust." "Sodom's sins were pride, laziness, and

gluttony." Ezekiel 16:49. The foulest weeds grow out of the fattest soil. Immorality proceeds from excess. "When I had fed them to the full, everyone neighed after his neighbor's wife." Jeremiah 5:8. Get the "golden bridle of temperance." God allows the refreshment of nature, and what may fit us the better for his service; but beware of surfeit. Excess in temporal things—clouds the mind, chokes good affections, and provokes lust. "I discipline my body and bring it under strict control." 1 Corinthians 9:27. The flesh pampered—is liable to immorality.

(11) Take heed of idleness. When a man is idle, he is ready to receive any temptation. The devil sows most of his seeds of temptation in fallow ground. Idleness is the cause of sodomy and immorality. "Sodom's sins were pride, laziness, and gluttony." Ezekiel 16:49. When David was idle on the top of his house, he espied Bathsheba, and committed adultery with her. 2 Samuel 11:4. Jerome gave his friend counsel to be always well employed in God's vineyard, that when the devil came, he might have no leisure to listen to temptation.

(12) To avoid fornication and adultery, let every man have a chaste, entire love to his own wife. Ezekiel's wife was the desire of his eyes. Ezekiel 24:16. When Solomon had dissuaded from immoral women, he prescribed a remedy against it. "Rejoice with the wife of your youth." Proverbs 5:18. It is not having a wife—but loving a wife—which makes a man live chastely. He who loves his wife, whom Solomon calls his fountain, will not go abroad to drink of muddy, poisoned waters. Pure marital love is a gift of God, and comes from heaven; but, like the vestal fire, it must be nourished, so that it does not go out. He who does not love his wife, is the likeliest person to embrace the bosom of a harlot.

(13) Labor to get the fear of God into your hearts. "By the fear of the Lord, men depart from evil." Proverbs 16:6. As the embankment keeps out the water, so the fear of the Lord keeps out immorality. Such as lack the fear of God, lack the bridle which should check them from sin! How did Joseph keep from his mistress' temptation? The fear of God pulled him back! "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God!" Genesis 39:9. Bernard calls holy fear, "the door-keeper of the soul." As a nobleman's porter stands at the door, and keeps out vagrants, so the fear of God stands and keeps out all sinful temptations from entering.

(14) Take delight in the Word of God. "How sweet are Your words unto my taste." Psalms 119:103. Chrysostom compares God's Word to a garden. If we walk in this garden, and suck sweetness from the flowers of the promises, we shall never care to pluck the "forbidden fruit." "Let the Scriptures be my pure pleasure," says Augustine. The reason why people seek after unchaste, sinful pleasures—is because they have nothing better. Caesar riding through a city, and seeing the women play with dogs and parrots, said, "Surely, they have no children." So those who sport with harlots, have no better pleasures. He who has once tasted Christ in a promise, is ravished with delight; and he would scorn a temptation to sin! Job said, that the Word was his "appointed food." Job 23:12. No wonder then, that he made a "covenant with his eyes."

(15) If you would abstain from adultery, use serious consideration.

[1] Consider that God sees you in the act of sin! He sees all your curtain wickedness. He is totus oculus—"all eye." The clouds are no canopy, the night is no curtain—to hide you from God's eye! Whenever you sin—your Judge looks on! "I have seen your detestable acts—your adulteries and your neighings." Jeremiah 13:27. "They have committed adultery with their neighbors' wives. I

know it and am a witness to it! declares the Lord." Jeremiah 29:23.

[2] Consider that few who are entangled in the sin of adultery, ever recover from the snare. "None that go to her return again." Proverbs 2:19. This made some of the ancients conclude that adultery was an unpardonable sin; but it is not so. David repented. Mary Magdalene was a weeping penitent; upon her amorous eyes which sparkled with lust, she sought to be revenged, by washing Christ's feet with her tears! Some, therefore have recovered from this snare. "None that go to her return," that is, "very few." It is rare to hear of any who are enchanted and bewitched with the sin of immorality, who recover from it. "I find more bitter than death the woman who is a snare, whose heart is a trap and whose hands are chains. The man who pleases God will escape her, but the sinner she will ensnare." Ecclesiastes 7:26. Her "heart is a trap," that is, she is subtle to deceive those who come to her; and "her hands are chains," that is her embraces are powerful to hold and entangle her lovers. This consideration should make all fearful of this sin. Soft pleasures, harden the heart.

[3] Consider what Scripture says, which may lay a barricade in the way to this sin. "I will be a swift witness against the adulterers." Malachi 3:5. It is good when God is a witness "for us", when He witnesses to our sincerity, as He did to Job's; but it is sad to have God as a "witness against us." "I," says God, "will be a swift witness against the adulterer." And who shall disprove God's witness? He is both witness and judge! "God will surely judge people who are immoral and those who commit adultery." Hebrews 13:4.

[4] Consider the sad farewell, which the sin of adultery leaves. It leaves a hell in the conscience. "The lips of an immoral woman are as sweet as honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil. But the result is as bitter as poison, sharp as a double-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps lead straight to hell." Proverbs 5:3-5. The goddess Diana was so artfully drawn, that she seemed to smile upon those who came into her temple—but frown on those who went out. So the harlot smiles on her lovers as they come to her—but at last, they come to the frown and the sting! "Until an arrow pierces his liver." Proverbs 7:23. "Her end is bitter." When a man has been virtuous, the labor is gone—but the comfort remains; but when he has been wicked and immoral, the pleasure is gone—but the sting remains. "He gains momentary pleasure—but after that, eternal torment," says Jerome. When the senses have been feasted with unchaste pleasures, the soul is left to pay the reckoning. Stolen waters are sweet; but, as poison, though sweet in the mouth, it torments the conscience. Sin always ends in tragedy! Sad is that which Fincelius reports of a priest in Flanders, who enticed a young girl to immorality. When she objected how vile a sin it was, he told her that by authority from the Pope, he could commit any sin; so at last he drew her to his wicked purpose. But when they had been together a while, in came the devil, and took away the harlot from the priest's side, and, notwithstanding all her crying out, carried her away! If the devil should come and carry away all who are guilty of immorality in this nation—I fear more would be carried away, than would be left behind!

(16) Pray against this sin. Luther gave a lady this advice, that when any lust began to rise in her heart, she should go to prayer. Prayer is the best armor against sin; it quenches the wild fire of lust. If prayer will "cast out the devil," it will certainly cast out those lusts which come from the devil.

O let us labor for soul purity! To keep the soul pure—have recourse to the blood of Christ, which is the "fountain open, to cleanse from sin and impurity." Zechariah 13:1. A soul steeped in the briny

tears of repentance, and bathed in the blood of Christ—is made pure! Say, "Lord, my soul is defiled! I pollute all I touch! O purge me with hyssop—let Christ's blood sprinkle me, let the Holy Spirit anoint me. O make me pure, that I may be taken to heaven—where I shall be as holy as You would have me to be—and as happy as I can desire to be!"

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You may smite another—and never touch him!

The tongue which at first was made to be an organ of God's praise—has now become an instrument of unrighteousness. God has set two natural fences to

keep in the tongue—the teeth and lips.

"Not slanderers." 1 Timothy 3:11

In the Greek it is, "not devils." The same word signifies both a slanderer and a devil. Some think it is no great matter, to misrepresent and slander others; but it is to act the part of a devil. This is a great sin; and I wish I could say it is not common.

The heathen, by the light of nature, abhorred the sin of slandering. Diogenes used to say, "Of all wild beasts, a slanderer is the worst." Antonius made a law, that if a person could not prove the crime he reported another to be guilty of, he should be put to death.

The Scripture calls slandering, smiting with the tongue. "Come, and let us smite him with the tongue." Jeremiah 18:18 You may smite another—and never touch him!

The scorpion carries his poison in his tail; the slanderer carries his poison in his tongue!

Job calls slander "the scourge of the tongue." As a rod scourges the back, so the slanderer's tongue scourges the name.

Eminence is commonly blasted by slander.

Holiness itself is no shield from slander. The lamb's innocence will not preserve it from the wolf. Christ, the most innocent upon earth, was reported to be "a glutton and a drunkard." Matthew 11:19

"The tongue inflicts greater wounds than the sword."

No physician can heal the wounds of the tongue!

To pretend friendship to a man, and slander him, is most odious.

We must not only not raise a false report—but refuse to hear it. He who raises a slander—carries the devil in his tongue! He who receives a slander—carries the

devil in his ear!

You may kill a man in his name as well as in his person. Some are reluctant to take away their neighbor's goods; but better take their wares out of their shop—than take away their good name! This is a sin for which no reparation can be made; a blot in a man's name, being like a blot on white paper, which can never be gotten out.

Surely God will punish this sin. If idle words shall be accounted for, shall not unjust slanders? Oh therefore, take heed of this sin!

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It pulls down the plumes of his pride!

The true Christian cannot keep God's law perfectly. "There is certainly no righteous man on the earth who does good and never sins." Ecclesiastes 7:20. There

is in the best actions of a godly man—that which is damnable—if God should weigh him in the balance of justice. Alas! He cannot pray without wandering, nor believe without doubting. "For the desire to do what is good is with me, but there is no ability to do it." Romans 7:18. Paul, though a saint of the first magnitude, was better at desiring than at performing.

The regenerate have a desire to obey God perfectly; but they lack strength; their obedience is weak and sickly. The mark they are to shoot at, is perfection of holiness. But though they take a right aim, and do what they can—they come short of the mark!

A Christian, while serving God, is like the rower who plies the oar, and rows hard—but is hindered, for a gust of wind carries him back again! So says Paul,

"For I do not do the good that I want to do, but I practice the evil that I do not want to do." Romans 7:19 "I am driven back by temptation!"

God permits this inability in His people—to humble us. Man is a self-exalting creature; and if he has but anything of worth, he is ready to be puffed up! But

when he comes to see his deficiencies and failings, and how far short he comes of that holiness and perfection which God requires—it pulls down the plumes of his pride, and lays them in the dust! He weeps over his inability! He blushes over his leprous spots! He says with Job, "I abhor myself in dust and ashes!"

God allows this inability be upon us—that we may have recourse to Christ—to obtain pardon for our defects, and to sprinkle our best duties with His blood. When a man sees that he owes perfect obedience to the law—but has nothing to pay, it makes him flee to Christ, to answer for him all the demands of the law, and set him free in the court of Divine justice.

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Jesus Christ went into the

furnace of His Father's wrath

"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows." Galatians 6:7

God's wrath is just. The wicked shall drink a sea of wrath—but not one drop of injustice!

God is justified in condemning sinners at the last day. They deserve wrath, and it is no injustice to give them that which they deserve. If a malefactor deserves death, the judge does him no wrong in condemning him.

See what a great evil sin is—which exposes a person to God's wrath forever! You may know what an evil sin is, by the wrath and curse it brings! When you see a man brought to the gallows, you conclude he is guilty of some heinous crime, which brings such a punishment. So when a man lies under the fierce anger of God's wrath, and roars out in flames—you must say, "How horrid an evil sin is!" Those who now see no evil in sin—will see how vile it is—in the looking-glass of hell-torments!

See here, that which may check a sinner's mirth. He is now brisk and frolicsome; he "sings idle songs to the sound of the harp." Amos 6:5. "But know that for all these things, God will bring you to judgment!" Ecclesiastes 11:9. Let him remember that the wrath and curse of God hang over him, which will shortly, if he does not repent—be executed upon him!

The sword of God's justice hangs over a sinner, and when the slender thread of life is cut asunder—it falls upon him! For a drop of pleasure—he must drink a

sea of wrath! His momentary pleasure cannot be so sweet—as God's eternal wrath is bitter! Better lack the devil's honey—than be stung with the eternal wrath of God!

"None considers in his heart." See the stupidity of sinners! Though the fierce wrath of God is ready to fall upon them—they have no concern! Though a beast has no shame, it has fear—it is afraid of fire. But sinners are worse than brutish—for they do not fear the "fire of hell"—until they are in it! When they shall feel the vials of God's wrath dropping, they will cry out as Dives, "Oh! I am tormented in this flame!" Luke 16:24.

"Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come." 1 Thessalonians 1:10 Christ is the only screen to stand between us and the wrath of God; He felt God's wrath—that those who believe in Him should never feel it.

Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace was a type of God's wrath, and that furnace did not singe the garments of the three Hebrew children, nor did they have "the smell of fire upon them." Daniel 3:27. Jesus Christ went into the furnace of His Father's wrath—and the smell of the fire of hell shall never pass upon those who believe in Him!

To you who have a well-grounded hope that you shall not feel this wrath, which you have deserved—let me exhort you to be very thankful to God, who has given His Son to save you from this tremendous wrath. The Lamb of God was scorched in the fire of God's wrath for you! Christ felt the wrath which He did not deserve—that you might escape the wrath which you have deserved!

Pliny observes, that there is nothing better to quench fire, than blood. Christ's blood has quenched the fire of God's wrath for you! "Upon me be your curse," said Rebekah to Jacob. Just so, Christ said to God's justice, "Upon Me be the curse—that My elect may inherit the blessing!"

Be patient under all the afflictions which you endure. Affliction is sharp—but it is not wrath, it is not hell. Who would not willingly drink the cup of affliction—who knows he shall never drink in the cup of damnation! Who would

not be willing to bear the wrath of man—who knows he shall never feel the wrath of God!

Christian, though you may feel God's rod—you shall never feel God's bloody axe! Augustine once said, "Strike, Lord, where You will—so long as my sin pardoned." You should say, "Afflict me, Lord, as You will in this life—seeing I

shall escape the wrath to come!"

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ The knife which killed her husband!

The Lord's Supper is the looking-glass in which we see Him whom our souls love; it is the chariot by which we are carried up to Christ. God has appointed the Lord's Supper to cheer and revive our sad hearts. When we look on our sins—we have cause to mourn; but when we see Christ's blood shed for our sins—we rejoice!

In the Lord's Supper our spiritual needs are supplied, our strength is renewed; there we meet with Christ—and He says to us, "All I have is yours! My love is

yours, to pity you! My mercy is yours, to save you!" Christ's blood is the key which opens heaven—else we had all been shut out!

The end of the Lord's Supper, is to work in us an endeared love to Christ. When Christ bleeds for us, well may we say, "Behold how He loved us!" That is a heart of stone—which Christ's love will not melt!

Another end of the Lord's Supper is the mortifying of corruption. To see Christ crucified for us—is a means to crucify sin in us. How can a wife endure to see the knife which killed her husband! How can we endure those sins—which made Christ veil His glory and shed His blood! Sin has rent the white robe of Christ's flesh, and dyed it of a crimson color. The thoughts of this should make us seek to be avenged on our sins!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ Lord, dig the earth out of my heart!

"You shall not covet." Exodus 20:17

Observe the holiness and perfection of God's law, which forbids the first motions and risings of sin in the heart. The laws of men take hold of actions; but the law of God goes further—it forbids not only sinful actions—but sinful desires. These lusts and desires after the forbidden fruit are sinful.

The world is an idol. It is lawful to use the world, yes, and to desire so much of it as may keep us from the temptation of poverty; and as may enable us to honor God with works of mercy. But the danger is—when the world gets into the heart! Water is useful for the sailing of the ship; the danger is—when the water gets into the ship.

What is it to covet? It is an insatiable desire of getting the world; or an inordinate love of the world.

(1) A man may be said to be given to covetousness, when his thoughts are wholly taken up with the world. A godly man's thoughts are in heaven; he is thinking of Christ's love and eternal recompense. "When I awake I am still with You," that is, in divine contemplation. Psalms 139:18. A covetous man's thoughts are in the world; his mind is wholly taken up with it; he can think of nothing but his shop or farm. The imagination is a mint-house, and most of the thoughts in a covetous man's mind are worldly. He is always plotting and projecting about worldly things. "Their

mind is on earthly things." Php 3:19

(2) A man may be said to be given to covetousness, when he takes more pains for getting earth than for getting heaven. He will take many a weary step for the world; but will take no pains for Christ or heaven. A covetous man, having had a relish of the world, pursues after it, and never ceases until he has got it; but he neglects the things of eternity. He hunts for the world—but he only wishes for heaven.

(3) A man may be said to be given to covetousness, when all his discourse is about the world. "He who is of the earth, speaks of the earth." John 3:31. It is a sign of godliness to be speaking of heaven, to have the tongue tuned to the language of Canaan. "The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious;" he speaks as if he had been already in heaven. So it is a sign of a man given to covetousness to speak always of secular things, of his wares and business. A covetous man's breath, like a dying man's, smells strong of the earth. As it was said to Peter, "Your speech betrays you;" so a covetous man's speech betrays him. He is like the fish in the gospel, which had a piece of money in its mouth. Matthew 17:27. "The words are the looking-glass of the heart," they show what is within. "The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks." Luke 6:45.

(4) A man is given to covetousness when he so sets his heart upon worldly things, that for the love of them, he will part with heaven. For the "wedge of gold," he will part with the "pearl of great price." When Christ said to the young man in the gospel, "Sell all, and come and follow Me", "He went away sorrowful." Matthew 19:22. He would rather part with Christ than with his earthly possessions. Cardinal Bourbon said, he would forego his part in paradise, if he might keep his cardinalship in Paris. When they will rather part with Christ and a good conscience than with their estate, it is a clear case that they are possessed with the demon of covetousness! "Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world." 2 Timothy 4:10

(5) A man is given to covetousness, when he overloads himself with worldly business. When a man does not have time for his soul, he is under the power of covetousness.

(6) He is given to covetousness whose heart is so set upon the world, that, to get it, he cares not what unlawful means he uses. He will have the world by fair means or foul; he will wrong and defraud, and raise his estate upon the ruins of another. Pope Sylvester II sold his soul to the devil for a popedom.

The DANGER of covetousness. "Take heed and beware of covetousness!" Luke 12:15. It is a direct breach of the tenth commandment. It is a moral vice, it infects and pollutes the whole soul.

(1) Covetousness is a SUBTLE sin. It is a sin that many cannot so well discern in themselves. This sin can dress itself in the attire of virtue. It is called the "cloak of covetousness." 1 Thessalonians 2:5. It is a sin which wears a cloak, it cloaks itself under the name of frugality and good taste. It has many pleas and excuses for itself; more than any other sin—such as providing for one's family.

(2) Covetousness is a DANGEROUS sin. It checks all that is good. It is an enemy to grace; it damps holy affections, as the earth puts out the fire. The hedgehog, in the fable, came to the cony-burrows, in stormy weather, and desired harbor; but when once he had got admission, he set

up his prickles, and never ceased until he had thrust the poor conies out of their burrows! Just so, covetousness, by fair pretenses, winds itself into the heart; but as soon as you have let it in, it will never leave until it has choked all good beginnings, and thrust all piety out of your hearts. "Covetousness hinders the efficacy of the Word preached."

In the parable of the sower, the thorns, which Christ expounded to be the cares of this life—choked the good seed. Matthew 13:22. Many sermons lie dead and buried in earthly hearts. We preach to men to get their hearts in heaven; but where covetousness is predominant, it chains them to earth, and makes them like the woman which Satan had bent down for eighteen years, so that she was unable to stand up straight. Luke 13:11. You may as well bid an elephant fly in the air—as a covetous man live by faith. We preach to men to give freely to Christ's poor; but covetousness makes them like the man in the gospel, who had "a withered hand." Mark 3:1. They have a withered hand, and cannot stretch it out to the poor. It is impossible to be earthly-minded and charitably-minded. Covetousness obstructs the efficacy of the Word, and makes it prove abortive. Those whose hearts are rooted in the earth, will be so far from profiting by the Word, that they will be ready rather to deride it. The Pharisees, who were covetous, "derided Him." Luke 16:14.

(3) Covetousness is a MOTHER sin. It is a radical vice. "The love of money is the root of all evil." 1 Timothy 6:10. "O accursed lust for gold! what crimes do you not urge upon the human heart!" Virgil. He who has an earthly itch, a greedy desire of getting the world, has in him the root of all sin. Covetousness is a mother sin. Covetousness breaks the first commandment; "You shall have no other gods but one." The covetous man has more gods than one; Mammon is his God. He has a god of gold, therefore he is called an idolater. Colossians 3:5. The mammonist covets his neighbor's house and goods, and endeavors to get them into his own hands. Thus you see how vile a sin covetousness is!

(4) Covetousness is a DISHONORABLE sin to religion. For men to say their hopes are above—while their hearts are below; to profess to be above the stars—while they "lick the dust" of the serpent; to be born of God—while they are buried in the earth; how dishonorable is this to religion! The lapwing, which wears a little coronet on its head, and yet feeds on dung, is an emblem of such as profess to be crowned kings and priests unto God, and yet feed immoderately on earthly dunghill comforts. The higher grace is, the less earthly should Christians be; as the higher the sun is, the shorter is the shadow.

(5) Covetousness is a DAMNING sin. It exposes us to God's abhorrence. "The covetous, whom the Lord abhors." Psalms 10:3. A king abhors to see his statue abused, so God abhors to see man, made in His image, having the heart of a beast. Who would live in such a sin—as makes him abhorred of God? Whom God abhors He curses, and His curse blasts wherever it comes!

Covetousness brings men to eternal ruin, and shuts them out of heaven. "This you know, that no covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." Ephesians 5:5. What could a covetous man do in heaven? God can no more converse with him—than a king can converse with a swine! "Those who will be rich fall into a snare, and many hurtful lusts, which drown men in perdition." 1 Timothy 6:9. A covetous man is like a bee that gets into a barrel of honey, and there drowns itself. As a ferry-man, to increase his fare, takes in too many passengers, that he sinks his boat; so a covetous man takes in so much gold to increase his

estate, that he drowns himself in perdition! I have read of some inhabitants near Athens, who, living in a very dry and barren island, took much pains to draw a river to the island to water it and make it fruitful; but when they had opened the passages, and brought the river to it, the water broke in with such force, that it drowned the land, and all the people in it. This is an emblem of a covetous man, who labors to draw riches to him, and at last they come in such abundance, that they drown him in perdition! How many, to build up an estate, pull down their souls! Oh, then, flee from covetousness!

The CURE for covetousness.

(1) Faith. "This is the victory that overcomes the world—even our faith." 1 John 5:4. The root of covetousness is distrust of God's providence. Faith believes that God will provide; that He who feeds the birds will feed His children; that He who clothes the lilies will clothe His lambs; and thus faith overcomes the world. Faith is the cure of care. It not only purifies the heart—but satisfies it; it makes God our portion, and in Him we have enough. Faith, by a divine chemistry, extracts comfort out of God. A little, with God—is sweet. Thus faith is a remedy against covetousness; it overcomes, not only the fear of the world—but the love of the world.

(2) The second remedy is, judicious considerations. Ah, what poor things, are these earthly things—that we should covet them! We covet that which will not satisfy us. "He who loves silver, shall not be satisfied with silver." Ecclesiastes 5:10. Solomon had put all the creatures in a scale, and distilled out their essence, and behold—"All was vanity!" Ecclesiastes 2:11. A man with dropsy—"the more water he drinks, the more he craves." Just so, the more a covetous man has of the world, the more he thirsts. Worldly things cannot remove trouble of mind. When King Saul was perplexed in conscience, his crown jewels could not comfort him. 1 Samuel 28:15.

The things of the world can no more ease a troubled spirit—than a gold cap can cure the headache! The things of the world cannot continue with you. The creature has a little honey in its mouth—but it has wings to fly away. Earthly things either leave us—or we leave them! What poor things are they to covet!

(3) The third remedy for covetousness is to covet spiritual things more. Covet grace, for it is the best blessing, it is the seed of God. Covet heaven, which is the region of perfect happiness—the most pleasant climate. If we covet heaven more—we shall covet earth less! To those who stand on the top of the Alps, the great cities of Campania seem but as small villages; so if our hearts were more fixed upon the Jerusalem above, all worldly things would disappear, would diminish, and be as nothing in our eyes. We read of an angel coming down from heaven, and setting his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the earth. Revelation 10:2. Had we been in heaven, and viewed its superlative glory, how would we, with holy scorn, trample with one foot upon the earth and with the other foot upon the sea! O covet after heavenly things! There is the tree of life, the mountains of spices, the rivers of pleasure, the honeycomb of God's love dropping, the delights of angels, and the flower of joy, fully ripe and blown. There is the pure air to breathe in; no fogs or vapors of sin arise to infect that air—but the Sun of Righteousness enlightens the whole horizon continually with His glorious beams. O let your thoughts and delights be always taken up with the city of pearls, the paradise of God! Were our hearts raised by the power of the Holy Spirit up to heaven, we would not be much absorbed with earthly things.

(4) The best remedy for covetousness is contentment. Be content! "In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being content—whether well-fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need." Php 4:12. The best way to be contented, is to believe that condition to be best, which God by His providence carves out to you. If He had seen fit for us to have more—we would have had it. Perhaps we could not manage a great estate. It is hard to carry a full cup without spilling—and a full estate without sinning! Great estates may be snares! There is no better antidote against coveting that which is another's—than being content with that which is our own.

(5) Pray for a heavenly mind. "Lord, let the loadstone of Your Spirit draw my heart upward. Lord, dig the earth out of my heart! Teach me how to possess the world, and not love it; how to hold it in my hand, and not let it get into my heart!"

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How did those swine run!

"Then they may come to their senses and escape the Devil's trap, having been captured by him to do his will." 2 Timothy 2:26.

Men naturally are enslaved to Satan. Satan is called the prince of this world, John 14:30; and the god of this world, 2 Corinthians 4:4; because he has power to command and enslave his dupes. Though he shall one day be a fellow prisoner in chains—yet now he insults and tyrannizes over the souls of men. Sinners

are under his rule, he exercises a jurisdiction over them. He fills men's heads with error—and their hearts with malice. "Why has Satan filled your heart?" Acts 5:3. A sinner's heart is the devil's mansion house. "I will return into my house." Matthew 12:44

Satan is a comprehensive tyrant.

He rules men's minds, he blinds them with ignorance. "The God of this world has blinded the minds of those who believe not." 2 Corinthians 4:4.

He rules their memories. They remember that which is evil, and forget that which is good. Their memories are like a strainer, which lets go all the pure—and retains only the dregs.

He rules their wills. Though he cannot force the will, he draws it. "You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father—you will do." John 8:44. He has control over their hearts, and they willingly obey him. His strong temptations draw men to evil—more than all the promises of God can draw them to good.

This is the state of every man by nature—the devil has him in his power! A sinner grinds in the devil's mill! He is at the command of Satan—as the donkey is at the command of the driver.

How did those swine run—when the devil entered into them! "They entered the swine. And suddenly the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and perished in the water!" Matthew 8:32

It is a dreadful and dismal case, to be under the power and tyranny of Satan! He wholly possesses them. If people should see their pets bewitched and possessed by the devil, they would be much

troubled; and yet, though their souls are possessed by Satan, they are not sensible of it! What can be worse, than for men to be in bondage to the devil, and him hurry them on in their lusts—to perdition! Yet they are willingly enslaved to Satan! They love their gawler!

What an infinite mercy it is—when God brings poor souls out of this house of bondage, when He gives them a deliverance from the prince of darkness.

As David rescued a lamb out of the lion's mouth—so Christ rescues souls out of the mouth of the roaring lion! Oh, what a mercy it is—to be turned "from the power of Satan, unto God," Acts 26:18, to be brought out of the house of bondage, from being Satan's captives—to be made subjects of the Prince of Peace!

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Why must there be a hell?

"The wicked shall be turned into hell." Psalms 9:17

"How can you escape the damnation of hell?" Matthew 23:33

God has built hell built on purpose, for the damned to lie in.

See the dreadfulfulness of that place! Hell is the epitome of misery! Besides "the punishment of loss," which is the exclusion of the soul from the gloried sight of God, which some think is the worst part of hell—there will be "the punishment of sense."

In hell there will be a plurality of torments: There will be the "chains of darkness." 2 Peter 2:4. There will be the "never-dying worm." Mark 9:48. This is the worm of conscience. There will be the "lake of fire." Revelation 20:15. Other fire is but 'painted fire'—compared to this.

This house of hell is haunted with devils! Matthew 25:41. Anselm says, "I had rather endure all torments, than see the devil with bodily eyes." Such as go to hell, must not only be forced to behold the devil—but must be shut up with this lion in his den! They must keep the devil company! This red dragon is full of spite—and will spit fire in men's faces!

The torments of hell abide forever! "The smoke of their torment ascends up forever and ever." Revelation 14:2. Time cannot finish hell. Tears cannot quench hell. Mark 9:44. The wicked will always live in the fire of hell—but never be consumed. After they have lain millions of years in hell, their punishment is as far from ending, as it was at the beginning! If all the earth and sea were sand, and every thousandth year a bird should come, and take away one grain—it would be a long time before that vast heap would be removed! Yet, if after all that time the damned might come out of hell—there would be some hope; but this word FOREVER breaks the heart!

If anyone should ask, where is hell? I wish he may never know experimentally. "Let us not so much," says Chrysostom, "labor to know where hell is—as how to escape it."

Why must there be a hell? Because there must be a place for the execution of divine justice. Earthly monarchs have their prison for criminals—and shall not God have His? Sinners are criminals, they have offended God. It would not be consistent with His holiness and justice—to have His laws infringed, and not inflict penalties.

How does it seem to comport with God's justice—to punish a sin committed in a moment—with eternal torment?

1. Because there is an eternity of sin in man's nature. They will continue to sin in hell. "Men gnawed their tongues in agony and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they

had done." Revelation 16:10-11

2. Because sin is "committed against an infinite majesty," and therefore the sin itself is infinite, and proportionally the punishment must be infinite.

3. Because a finite creature cannot satisfy infinite wrath, he must be eternally paying what he can never pay.

"Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath!" 1 Thessalonians 1:10 What infinite cause have they to bless God—who are delivered from hell! Jesus Christ suffered the torments of hell in His soul—that believers should not suffer them. Oh, how should we bless God to be preserved from the wrath to come!

It may cause more thankfulness in us, to realize that most people go to hell when they die. To be of the number of those few who are delivered from hell—is matter of infinite thankfulness. "Wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it." Matthew 7:13-14

"Divide the world," says one, "into thirty-one parts, nineteen parts of it are Jews and Turks, and seven parts are heathen; so that there are but five parts of professing Christians—and among these, so many deceived Papists on the one hand, and so many formal Protestants on the other—that we may conclude that the major part of the world goes to hell.

Scripture compares the wicked to "the mire in the streets." Isaiah 10:6. Few precious jewels are in the street—but you cannot go a step without meeting with mire! The wicked are as common as the dirt in the street! The devil has most of the harvest—and God has only a few gleanings. Oh, then, such as are delivered from hell, have infinite cause to admire and bless God. How should the vessels of mercy run over with thankfulness! When most others are carried as prisoners to hell—they are delivered from the wrath to come!

How shall I know if I am delivered from hell?

(1) Those whom Christ saves from hell—He saves from sin. "He shall save His people from their sins." Matthew 1:21. Has God delivered you from the power of corruption, from pride, malice, and lust? If He has delivered you from the hell of sin, He has delivered you from the hell of torment.

(2) If you prize, trust and love Christ—you are delivered from hell and damnation. "There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." Romans 8:1. If you are in Christ, He has put the garment of His righteousness over you—and hell-fire can never singe it!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ A bundle of ridiculous ceremonies!

"Flee from idolatry!" 1 Corinthians 10:14

It is idolatry, not only to worship a false god—but to worship the true God in a false manner.

See the goodness of God to our nation, in delivering us from popery, which is Romish idolatry—and causing the light of His truth to break forth gloriously among us. In former times, England was overspread with idolatry. We had . . .

purgatory,

indulgences,

the idolatrous mass,

prayers to saints and angels,

and image-worship.

What is the popish religion, but a bundle of ridiculous ceremonies! Their candles, beads, crucifixes; what are these but Satan's policy, to dress up a carnal worship, fitted to carnal minds! Oh! what cause have we to bless God for delivering us from popery! It was a mercy to be delivered from the Spanish invasion; but it is a far greater mercy to be delivered from the popish religion!

"What have I to do any more with idols?" Hosea 14:8

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The Ten Commandments (choice contd)

The Ten Commandments (choice excerpts) cont'd The sweetest friend—but
the most dreadful enemy!

What does every sin deserve?

God's wrath and curse, both in this life, and in that which is to come.

"Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels!"
Matthew 25:41.

God's wrath is irresistible. "Who knows the power of Your anger?" Psalms 90:2. Sinners may oppose God's ways—but not His wrath. Shall the briars contend with the fire? Shall finite contend with infinite? "Have you an arm like God?" Job 40:9.

God's wrath is dreadful. We are apt to have slight thoughts of God's wrath; but it is very tremendous and dismal, as if scalding lead should be dropped into one's eyes. The Hebrew word for wrath signifies heat. To show that the wrath of God is hot, therefore it is compared to fire in the text. Fire, when in its rage, is dreadful. So the wrath of God is like fire, it is most dreadful. Other fire is but painted fire, compared to this. What will it be, when God shall "stir up all His wrath!" Psalms 78:38.

Solomon says, "The king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion." Proverbs 19:12. What then is God's wrath? When God musters up all His forces, and sets Himself in battalia against a sinner—how can his heart endure? "Will your courage endure or your hands be strong in the day I deal with you?" Ezekiel 22:14. Who is able

to lie under mountains of wrath? God is the sweetest friend—but the most dreadful enemy!

The wrath of God shall seize upon every part of a sinner. The wrath of God shall seize upon the BODY of a reprobate. The body, which was so tender that it could not bear heat or cold, shall be tormented in the wine press of God's wrath! Those eyes which before could behold amorous objects, shall be tormented with the sight of devils! Those ears, which before were delighted with music, shall be tormented with the hideous shrieks of the damned!

The wrath of God shall seize upon the SOUL of a reprobate. Ordinary fire cannot touch the soul. God's wrath burns the soul. The memory will be tormented to remember what means of grace have been abused. The conscience will be tormented with self-accusations. The sinner will accuse himself for presumptuous sins, for mispending his precious hours, and for resisting the Holy Spirit.

The wrath of God is without intermission. Hell is an abiding place—but no resting place; there is not a minute's rest. Our earthly pains have some abatement; but the torments of the damned have no intermission; he who feels God's wrath never says, "I am at ease."

The wrath of God is eternal. So says the text. "Eternal fire!" No tears can quench the flame of God's anger; no, though we could shed rivers of tears. In all pains of this life, men hope for cessation; but the wrath of God is always feeding upon the sinner. The terror of natural fire is, that it consumes what it burns; but what makes the fire of God's wrath dreadful is, that it does not consume what it burns. The sinner will forever be in the furnace! After innumerable millions of years, the wrath of God is as far from ending—as it was at the beginning. If all the earth and sea were sand, and every thousand years a little bird should come, and take away a grain of sand, it would be a long while

before that vast heap of sand were emptied; but if, after all that time, the damned might come out of hell—there would be some hope; but this word "FOREVER" breaks the heart!

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He is worse than dead!

"You were dead in your transgressions and sins." Ephesians 2:1

An unregenerate man cannot perfectly obey all God's commands. He may as well touch the stars, or walk across the ocean—as yield exact obedience to the law.

He is spiritually DEAD. How can he, being dead, keep the commandments of God perfectly? A dead man is not fit for action. A sinner has the symptoms of death upon him. He has no sense; he has no sense of the evil of sin, of God's holiness and veracity; therefore he is said to be without feeling. Ephesians 4:19. He has no strength. Romans 5:6. What strength has a dead man? A natural man has no strength to deny himself, or to resist temptation. He is dead!

He is not only dead—but he is worse than dead! A dead man does no hurt. A natural man not only cannot keep the law through weakness—but he breaks it through willfulness! He is BORN in sin, and LIVES in sin. Psalms 51:5. "He drinks iniquity like water." Job 15:16. All the imaginations of his thoughts are evil—and only evil. Genesis 6:5.

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Ministers are murderers!

"You shall not murder." Exodus 20:13

Soul-murder is the greatest murder of all. The soul is said to be murdered, when it is deprived of its eternal happiness, and is forever in torment. How many are soul-murderers!

Soul-murderers are those who corrupt others by bad example.

Soul-murderers are those who entice others to sin.

Ministers are murderers—who either starve, or poison, or infect souls. They may poison people with error. The basilisk poisons herbs and flowers by breathing on them; so the breath of heretical ministers poisons souls. Error is as damnable as vice!

"When I say to a wicked man, 'You will surely die,' and you do not warn him or speak out to dissuade him from his evil ways in order to save his life, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I

will hold you accountable for his blood." Ezekiel 3:18.

There are many ministers who infect their people with their bad life; they preach one thing—and live another. They are murderers, and the blood of souls will cry against them at the last day! How sad will it be for those who have not only their own sins—but the blood of others to answer for!

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Sinful nature refined and cultivated

"You shall have no other gods before Me." Exodus 20:3

What is it to have other gods besides the true God? I fear upon search, we have more idolaters among us than we are aware of.

If we trust in our MORALITY, we make it a god. Many trust to this. None can charge them with gross sin. Morality is but sinful nature refined and cultivated. A man may be outwardly washed—and not inwardly changed. His life may be moral—and yet there may be some reigning sin in his heart! The Pharisee could say, "I am no adulterer" (Luke 18:11); but he could not say, "I am not proud." To trust to one's morality, is to trust to a spider's web.

"All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away!" Isaiah 64:6

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ A lackey to every base lust!

"I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out of the land of Egypt—out of the house of bondage." Exodus 20:2

Sin is the true bondage—it enslaves the soul. Sin is the enslaver; it is called a law—because it has a binding power over a man (Romans 7:23). It is said to reign—because it exercises a tyrannical power (Romans 6:12). And men are said to be the servants of sin, because they are so enslaved by it. Romans 6:17.

Israel was not so enslaved in the iron furnace—as the sinner is by sin. They are worse slaves and vassals—who are under the power of sin, than those are who

are under the power of earthly tyrants.

Other slaves have only tyrants ruling over their bodies; but the sinner has his soul tyrannized over. That princely part, the soul, which sways the scepter of reason, and was once crowned with perfect knowledge and holiness; is now enslaved, and made a lackey to every base lust!

Other slaves have some pity shown them: the tyrant gives them food, and lets them have hours for their rest. But sin is a merciless tyrant, it will let men have no rest. How does a man wear himself out in the service of sin—waste his body,

break his sleep, distract his mind! A wicked man does sin's drudgery-work every day!

Other slaves are forced against their will. Israel groaned under slavery (Exodus 2:23); but sinners are willing to be slaves of sin! They love their chains! They will not take their freedom; they "glory in their shame." Php 3:19. They wear their sins, not as their fetters—but their ornaments! They

rejoice in iniquity. Jeremiah 11:15.

Sin's slaves are brought to damnation. Other slaves lie in the iron furnace: sin's slaves lie in the fiery furnace! What freedom of will has a sinner—when he can do nothing but what sin commands him? He is enslaved.

But God takes His elect out of the house of bondage! He beats off the chains and fetters of sin; He rescues them from their slavery; He makes them free, by bringing them into "the glorious liberty of the children of God." Romans 8:21. The law of love now rules, not the law of sin. Though the life of sin is prolonged;

yet not the dominion of sin! The saints are made spiritual kings, to rule and conquer their corruptions. It is matter of the highest praise and thanksgiving, to be taken out of the house of bondage, to be freed from enslaving lusts, and made kings to reign in glory forever!

"I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out of the land of Egypt—out of the house of bondage." Exodus 20:2

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God's flail

God's children may sometimes be under sore afflictions. They have no charter of exemption from trouble, in this life. While the wicked are kept in sugar, the godly are often kept in brine.

And, indeed, how could God's power be seen in bringing them out of trouble—if He did not sometimes bring them into it? How could God wipe away the tears from their eyes in heaven—if on earth they shed none?

Doubtless, God sees there is need that His children should be sometimes in the house of bondage. "If need be, you are in heaviness." 1 Peter 1:6. The body sometimes needs a bitter portion—more than a sweet one.

"You refined us like silver. You brought us into prison and laid burdens on our backs." Psalms 66:10-11

Why does God bring His people into an afflicted state?

God gives affliction—to purge our corruption. The eye, though a tender part—yet when infected, we put sharp medicines into it, to purge out the disease. Just so, though the people of God are dear to Him as the apple of His eye—yet, when corruption begins to grow in them, He will apply the sharp medicine of affliction—to purge out the disease.

Affliction is God's flail to thresh off our husks.

Affliction is a means God uses to purge out sloth, luxury, pride, and love of the world.

God's furnace is not to consume—but to refine.

God gives us more affliction—that we may have less sin!

God also gives affliction to increase our graces. Grace thrives most in the iron furnace. Grace in the saints is often as fire hidden in the embers; affliction is the bellows to blow it up into a flame!

The more the diamond is cut—the more it sparkles. The more God afflicts us—the more our graces cast a sparkling luster!

The stones which are cut out for a building, are first hewn and squared. The godly are called "living stones." 1 Peter 2:5. God hews and polishes them by affliction, that they may be fit for the heavenly building.

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Let us examine our ways

"Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord." Lamentations 3:40

By self-examination, a man may see how matters stand between God and his soul. It is a spiritual inquisition—a heart-anatomy.

Self-examination is difficult, because it is an inward work—it lies with the heart. External acts of devotion are easy. To lift up the eye, to bow the knee, to read over a few prayers—is as easy as for the Papists to count over a few rosary beads! But to examine a man's self, to take the heart in pieces, to make a Scripture-trial of our hearts, is not easy. It is easy to spy the faults of others—but it is hard to find out our own faults! Self-examination is difficult, with regard to self-love. As ignorance blinds, so self-love flatters! To a man looking upon himself in the flattering looking-glass of self-love—his virtues

appear greater than they are—and his sins less!

Self-examination is needful, because without it we may easily have a cheat put upon us. "The heart is deceitful above all things." Jeremiah 17:9. "The heart is a great impostor."

Self-examination is needful, because of the secret corruption in the heart—which will not be found out, without searching. There are in the heart, "hidden pollutions." It is with a Christian, as with Joseph's brethren, who, when the steward accused them of having the cup, were ready to swear they had it not; but upon search it was found in one of their sacks. Little does a Christian think what pride, atheism, immorality is in his heart—until he searches it! If there is therefore, such hidden wickedness, like a spring running under ground, we had need examine ourselves, that finding out our secret sin, we may be humbled and repent.

Hidden sins, if not searched out, defile the soul. If corn lies long in the chaff, the chaff defiles the corn. Just so, sins long hidden defile our duties.

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If a damned spirit should come from hell

"I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment!" Abraham replied, "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them." "No, father Abraham," he said, "but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent." He said to him, "If they do not listen to Moses and the

Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead!" Luke 16:27-31

If an angel should come to you out of heaven, and preach of the excellency of the glorified state, and the joys of heaven, and that in the most moving manner—if the Word preached does not persuade, neither would you be wrought upon, by such an oration from heaven!

If a damned spirit should come from hell, and preach to you in flames, and tell you what a place hell is, and roar out the torments of the damned—it might make you tremble—but it would not convert you—if the preaching of the Word

will not do it!

If the Word preached is not effectual to men's conversion—it will be effectual to their condemnation. The Word will be effectual one way or other; if it does not make your hearts better, it will make your chains heavier! Dreadful is their case—who go loaded with sermons to hell!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ A panacea The Scripture is a golden epistle, written by the Holy Spirit—and sent to us from heaven!

The Scripture is a spiritual looking-glass, to dress our souls by. It shows us heart-sins, vain thoughts, unbelief, etc. It not only shows us our spots—but

washes them away!

The Scripture is an armory, out of which we may fetch spiritual artillery to fight against Satan. When our Savior was tempted by the devil, he fetched armor and weapons from Scripture; "it is written!"

The Scripture is a panacea, or universal medicine for the soul; it gives a recipe to cure deadness of heart, Psalms 119:50; pride, 1 Peter 5:5; and infidelity, John 3:36. It is a garden of remedies, where we may gather an herb or antidote, to expel the poison of sin.

The Scripture is "the only standard of conduct"—the rule and platform by which we are to square our lives. It contains in it all things needful to salvation; what

duties we are to do, and what sins we are to avoid.

"When Your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight." Jeremiah 15:16. All true solid comfort is fetched out of the Word. The Word is a spiritual garden, and the promises are the fragrant flowers or spices in this garden. How should we delight to walk among these beds of spices!

The Scripture is a sovereign elixir, or comfort, in an hour of distress. "Your promise revives me; it comforts me in all my troubles." Psalms 119:50.

If we would have the Scripture effectual, let us labor not only to have the light of it in our heads; but its power in our hearts!

"I have hidden Your Word in my heart, that I might not sin against You." Psalms 119:11. The Word, locked up in the heart—is a preservative against sin. As one would carry an antidote with him when he comes near an infected place—so David carried the Word in his heart as a sacred

antidote to preserve him from
the infection of sin.

When we read the holy Scriptures—let us look up to God for a blessing. Let us pray that God would not only give us His Word as a rule of holiness—but His grace as a principle of holiness! It is said, that the alchemist can draw oil out of iron. God's Spirit can produce grace in the most obdurate heart!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ The devil for its father

Consider what evil there is in sin. It is the "accursed thing." Joshua 7:11. It is compared to a plague-sore. 1 Kings 8:38. Without repentance sin tends to final

damnation. "The moment of sin passes, the guilt remains." Sin unrepented of, ends in tragedy.

Sin has . . .

the devil for its father,
shame for its companion, and
death and damnation for its wages!

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Repenting tears

True repentance works a change in the life. Though repentance begins at the heart, it does not end there—but goes into the life. It begins at the heart. If the

spring is corrupt—no pure stream can run from it.

What a change did it make in Mary Magdalene! She who before kissed her lovers with wanton embraces—now kisses Christ's feet! She who used to braid her

hair, and dress it with costly jewels, now makes it a towel to wipe Christ's feet! She whose eyes used to sparkle with lust, and with impure glances to entice

her lovers—now become fountains of tears to wash her Savior's feet! She whose tongue that used to speak vainly and loosely—now is an instrument set in tune to praise God. When her head was a fountain to weep for sin—Christ's side was a fountain to wash away sin!

There is much sweetness in repenting tears. "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy." John 16:20. Christ turns the water of tears—into wine!

The true penitent breaks off from all sin. One disease may kill—as well as more. One sin lived in—may damn as well as more. The real penitent breaks off secret, gainful, habitual sins; he takes the sacrificing knife of mortification—and runs it through the heart of his dearest lusts!

If you break off your sins—God will become a friend to you! All that is in God shall be yours! His power shall be yours—to help you! His wisdom shall be yours—to counsel you! His Spirit shall be yours—to sanctify you! His promises shall be yours—to comfort you! His mercy shall be yours—to

save you!

Though repentance seems at first to be thorny and bitter—yet from this thorn, a Christian gathers grapes! These considerations may open a vein of godly sorrow in our souls—that we may both weep for sin, and turn from it.

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You shall do no hurt to yourself

"You shall not murder." Exodus 20:13

You shall do no hurt to yourself. One may be indirectly guilty of self-murder, by intemperance or excess in diet.

Glutting shortens life.

More perish by drink—than by the sword.

Many dig their grave with their teeth.

Too much oil chokes the lamp.

The cup kills more than the cannon.

Excessive drinking causes untimely death.

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God writes down no ciphers in the book of life!

"Six days you shall labor." Exodus 20:9

God would not have any live without working. True religion gives no warrant for idleness. "For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: 'If a man will not work, he shall not eat.' We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat." 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12. A Christian must not only mind heaven—but his vocation. While the pilot has his eye to the star, he has his hand to the helm. Without labor, the pillars of a commonwealth will dissolve, and the earth, like the sluggard's field, will be overrun with briars. Proverbs 24:31. Adam in innocence, though monarch of the world, must not be idle—but must dress and till the ground. Genesis 2:15. Piety does not exclude industry. Standing water putrefies.

Inanimate creatures are in motion. The sun goes its circuit, the fountain runs, and the fire sparkles.

Animate creatures work. Solomon sends us to the ant to learn labor. Proverbs 6:6; Proverbs 30:25. The bee is the emblem of industry; some of the bees trim the honey, others work the wax, others frame the honeycomb, others lie sentinel at the door of the hive to keep out the drone. And shall not man much more labor?

That law in paradise was never repealed. "In the sweat of your face shall you eat bread." Genesis 3:19. Such professors are to be excluded, who talk of living by faith—but live without working; they are like the lilies which "toil not, neither do they spin." Matthew 6:28. It is a speech of holy and

learned Mr. Perkins, "Let a man be endowed with excellent gifts, and hear the Word with reverence, and receive the sacrament—yet if he does not work—all is but hypocrisy." What is an idle person good for? What benefit is a ship which lies always on the shore? What benefit is armor which hangs up and rusts?

To live without working, exposes a person to temptation. Melanchthon calls idleness "the Devil's bath," because he bathes himself with delight in an idle soul. Satan sows most of his seed of temptation, in idle people. Idleness is the nurse of vice! An idle person stands for a cipher in the world; God writes down no ciphers in the book of life!

An idle person can give no good account of his time. Time is a talent to trade with. The slothful person "hides his talent in the earth;" he does no good; his time is not lived—but lost! An idle person lives unprofitably, he cumpers the ground. God calls the slothful servant "wicked." "You wicked and slothful servant." Matthew 25:26.

Draco, whose laws were written in blood, deprived those of their life, who would not work for their living. In Hetruria, they caused such idle people to be banished. Idle people live in the breach of the commandment, "Six days shall you labor." Let them take heed they are not banished from heaven! A man may as well go to hell for not working—as for not believing!

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Creation and Redemption

Great was the work of creation—but greater was the work of redemption. The glory of the redemption was greater than the glory of the creation. Great wisdom was seen in making us—but more miraculous wisdom in saving us. Great power was seen in bringing us out of nothing—but greater power in helping us when we were worse than nothing. It cost more to redeem than to create us. In creation it was but speaking a word; in redeeming there was shedding of blood! Creation was the work of God's fingers, Psalms 8:3, redemption was the work of His arm. Luke 1:51. In creation, God gave us ourselves; in the redemption, He gave us Himself. By creation, we have life in Adam; by redemption, we have life in Christ. By creation, we had a right to earth; by redemption, we have a title to a heavenly kingdom.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ The devil has two false mirrors

The devil has two false mirrors, which he sets before men's eyes. The one is a little mirror, in which the sin appears so small that it can hardly be seen; which the devil sets before men's eyes when they are going to commit sin. You who say that your sin is small—when God shall open the eye of your conscience, you will see it to be great, and worthy of damnation!

The other is a large magnifying glass, wherein sin appears so big that it cannot be forgiven; which the devil sets before men's eyes after they have sinned.

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We take God's name in vain

"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, who takes His name in vain." Exodus 20:7

The thing here insisted on is, that great care must be had, that the holy and reverend name of God is not profaned by us, or taken in vain. When we speak

slightly of God or His works, He interprets it as a contempt, and taking His name in vain.

We take God's name in vain, when we use God's name in idle discourse. God is not to be spoken of, but with a holy awe upon our hearts. How many are

guilty here! Though they have God in their mouths—they have the devil in their hearts. It is a wonder that fire does not come out from the Lord to consume them, as it did Nadab and Abihu!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ The incense which perfumes our holy things

"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, who takes His name in vain." Exodus 20:7

We take God's name in vain, when we worship Him with our lips—but not with our hearts. God calls for the heart, "My son, give Me your heart." Proverbs 23:26. The heart is the chief thing in religion; it draws the will and affections after it. The heart is the incense which perfumes our holy things. The heart is the altar which sanctifies the offering. When we seem to worship God—but withdraw our heart from Him, we take His name in vain. "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me. They worship Me in vain." Matthew 15:8-9

Hypocrites take God's name in vain—their religion is a lie; they seem to honor God—but they do not love Him; their hearts go after their lusts. "They set their heart on their iniquity." Hosea 4:8. Their eyes are lifted up to heaven—but their hearts are rooted in the earth!

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Why so?

"You shall have no other gods before Me." Exodus 20:3

What is it to have other gods besides the true God? I fear upon search, we have more idolaters among us than we are aware of.

To LOVE anything more than God, is to make it a god.

If we love our estate more than God, we make it a god. The young man in the gospel loved his gold better than his Savior; the world lay nearer his heart than Christ. Matthew 19:22. "This gold with its glitter blinds the eyes." The covetous man is called an idolater. Ephesians 5:5. Why so? Because he loves his estate more than God, and so makes it his god. Though he does not bow down to an idol, if he worships the engraved image in his coins, he is an idolater.

That which has most of the heart, we make a god of.

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Man makes a god of the dust of the earth!

"You shall have no other gods before Me." Exodus 20:3

What is it to have other gods besides the true God? I fear upon search, we have more idolaters among us than we are aware of.

If we trust in our RICHES, we make riches our God. We may take comfort in riches—but not put confidence in them. It is a foolish thing to trust in them. They are deceitful riches, and it is foolish to trust to that which will deceive us. They have no solid consistency, they are like golden dreams, which leave the soul empty when it awakens, or comes to itself.

They are not what they promise! They promise to satisfy our desires—and they increase them! They promise to stay with us—and they take wings.

They are hurtful. "I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owner." Ecclesiastes 5:13. It is foolish to trust to that which will hurt oneself. Who would take hold of the edge of a razor?

Riches are often fuel for pride and lust. Ezekiel 28:5; Jeremiah 5:7.

It is folly to trust in our riches; but how many do, and make money their god! God made man of the dust of the earth, and man makes a god of the dust of the earth! Money is his creator, redeemer, comforter. Money is his creator, for

if he has money—he thinks he is made. Money is his redeemer, for if he is in danger, he trusts to his money to redeem him. Money is his comforter, for if he is sad, money is the golden harp to drive away the evil spirit. Thus by trusting to money, we make it a god.

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He deifies himself!

"You shall have no other gods before Me." Exodus 20:3

What is it to have other gods besides the true God? I fear upon search, we have more idolaters among us than we are aware of.

If we trust in our WISDOM, we make it a god. "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom." Jeremiah 9:23. Boasting is the height of confidence. Many a man makes an idol of his wit and abilities—he deifies himself! But how often does God take the wise in their own craftiness! "He catches those who think they are wise in their own cleverness, so that their cunning schemes are thwarted." Job 5:13

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ Our lives should be walking Bibles!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ A thousand prayers and praises

"Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams." 1 Samuel 15:22

A thousand prayers and praises do not honor God so much—as the mortifying of one lust!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

God must have the cream!

"You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength."
Deuteronomy 6:5

The nature of love consists in delighting in an object. Love to God, is a holy fire kindled in the affections, whereby a Christian is carried out strongly after God

as the supreme good.

The summary of our duty to God, is love. Love is the soul of religion, and that which constitutes a genuine Christian. Love is the queen of graces; it shines and sparkles in God's eye!

Scripture knowledge always precedes love. The Spirit shines upon the understanding, and reveals the beauties of wisdom, holiness, and mercy in God. These are the magnet to entice and draw out love to God. Those who do not know God, cannot love Him.

If it is a sincere love, we love God "with all our heart." God will have the whole heart. We must not divide our love between Him, and sin. The true mother would not have the child divided, nor will God have the heart divided; it must be the whole heart.

We must love God for Himself, for His own intrinsic excellencies. We must love Him for His loveliness. "It is a harlot's love to love the portion, more than

the person." Hypocrites love God because He gives them corn and wine. The sincere Christian loves God for Himself; for those shining perfections which are in Him.

We must love God "with all our strength", in the Hebrew text, "with all our vehemency." We must love God—as much as we are able. Christians should be like seraphim, burning in holy love. We can never love God as much as He deserves. Even the angels in heaven cannot love God as much as He deserves.

Love to God must be active in its sphere. Love is an industrious affection! It sets—the head studying for God, the hands working, the feet running in the ways of His commandments. It is called "the labor of love." 1 Thessalonians 1:3. Mary Magdalene loved Christ—and poured her ointments on Him. We think we never do enough, for the person whom we love.

Love to God must be superlative. God is the essence of beauty—a whole paradise of delight. He must have a priority in our love. Our love to God must be above all other things—as the oil swims above the water. We must love God above estate and relations. We may give the creature the milk of our love—but God must have the cream! The spouse keeps the juice of her pomegranates, for Christ. Song of Solomon 8:2.

Our love to God must be constant. Love must be like the motion of the pulse, which beats as long as there is life. "Many waters cannot quench love." Song of Solomon 8:7.

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Satan's masterpiece, his dragnet

Why is it, that men do not obey God?

The not obeying God, is for lack of faith. "Who has believed our report?" Isaiah 53:1 : Did men believe—that sin were so bitter, and that hell followed at

its heels—would they go on in sin? Did they believe there was such a reward for the righteous, and that godliness was great gain—would they not pursue it?

But they are atheists, and do not fully believe these things; hence it is that they do not obey God.

Satan's masterpiece, his dragnet by which he drags millions to hell, is to keep them in unbelief! He knows, if he can but keep them from believing the truth—he is sure to keep them from obeying it.

The not obeying God, is also for lack of self-denial. God commands one thing, and men's lusts command another; and they will rather die, than deny their lusts. If lust cannot be denied—God cannot be obeyed.

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As the bee sucks sweetness from the flower—so faith sucks all its strength and comfort from Christ.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ The golden key which opens heaven!

Prayer is the golden key which opens heaven!

The tree of promise will not drop its fruit, unless shaken by the hand of prayer.

All the benefits of Christ's redemption, are handed over to us by prayer.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

If they had it in their power

To malign holiness is diabolical. It is a sin to lack grace, it is worse to hate it! Some have an antipathy against God because of His purity. "Rid us of the Holy One of Israel!" Isaiah 30:11. Sinners, if it lay in their power, would not only unthrone God—but annihilate Him! If they had it in their power—God would no longer be God. Thus sin is boiled up to a great height.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ The frozen snake

Those sins are of greater magnitude, which are mixed with ingratitude. Of all things—God cannot endure to have His kindness slighted. His mercy is seen in relieving men so long, in wooing them by His Spirit and ministers to be reconciled, in crowning them with so many temporal blessings. And to abuse all this love—when God has been filling up the measure of his mercy, for men to fill up the measure of their sins—is high ingratitude, and makes their sins of a deeper crimson!

Some are worse for God's mercy. "The vulture," says Aelian, "draws sickness—from perfumes." So the sinner contracts evil—from the sweet perfumes of God's mercy. Mr. Parry, being condemned to die, Queen Elizabeth sent him her pardon. And after he was pardoned—he conspired and plotted the queen's death! Just so, some deal with God—He bestows mercy, and they plot treason against Him. "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." Isaiah 1:2. In the fable, the frozen snake, after being warmed, stung him who gave it warmth! Certainly, sins against God's mercy,

are more heinous.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ An idle person

An idle person tempts the devil to tempt him! The devil hires such as stand idle, and puts them to his work.

"Escape the Devil's trap, having been captured by him to do his will." 2 Timothy 2:26

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ When He does not punish!

"Happy is the man whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty." Job 5:17

The godly have some good in them—therefore the devil afflicts them; and some evil in them—therefore God afflicts them.

The holiness of the saints will not excuse them from sufferings. Christ was the holy one of God—yet He was in the iron furnace. His spouse is "a lily among thorns." Song of Solomon 2:2

Affliction is not always the sign of God's anger. We are apt to judge and censure those who are in an afflicted state. When the barbarians saw the viper on Paul's hand, they said, "No doubt this man is a murderer!" Acts 28:4. So, when we see the viper of affliction fasten upon the godly, we are apt to censure them, as greater sinners than others. But this rash censuring is for lack of wisdom.

God's afflicting is so far from evidencing His hatred, that His not afflicting is an evidence of His hatred. "I will not punish your daughters when they commit

whoredom." Hosea 4:14. God punishes most—when He does not punish! His hand is heaviest—when it seems to be lightest. The judge will not burn him in

the hand—whom he intends to execute at the stake!

"Ephraim is attached to idols; leave him alone!" Hosea 4:17

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God sanctifies all our afflictions

God sanctifies all our afflictions. They shall not be destructive punishments—but medicines! They shall corrode and eat out the venom of sin;

they shall polish and refine our grace. The more the diamond is cut—the more it sparkles.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ Your Husband

"Your Maker is your Husband." Isaiah 54:5

God is our husband. He esteems us as precious to Him, as the apple of His eye! Zechariah 2:8. He imparts His secrets to us! (Psalms 25:14) He bestows a kingdom upon us for our dowry! (Luke 12:3)

God calls His people, the "dearly beloved of my soul." (Jeremiah 12:7) He rejoices over them with joy. (Zephaniah 3:17) They are His refined silver (Zechariah 13:9); His jewels (Malachi 3:17); His

royal diadem (Isaiah 62:3). He gives them the cream and flower of His love. He not only opens His hand and fills them—but opens His heart and fills them.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

He would only have this flower

It is nothing but your love, which God desires.

The Lord might have demanded your children to be offered in sacrifice; He might have bid you cut and lance yourselves, or lie in hell awhile! But He only

desires your love—He would only have this flower.

Is it a hard request, to love God? Was ever any debt easier paid, than this? Is it any labor for the wife to love her husband? Love is delightful.

What is there in our love—that God should desire it? Why would a king desire the love of a woman who is in debt and diseased? God does not need our love. There are angels enough in heaven to adore and love Him. What is God the better for our love? It adds not the least cubit to His essential blessedness. He does not need our love, and yet He seeks it.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ My own special treasure!

Obedience is the beauty of a Christian. Obedience makes us precious to God—His favorites. "Now if you will obey Me and keep my covenant—you will be My own special treasure!" Exodus 19:5. You shall be My portion, My jewels, the apple of My eye. "You are honored, and I love you." Isaiah 43:4.

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It mellows and ripens them

Our obedience to God must be free and cheerful—or it is penance, not sacrifice. "If you are willing and obedient." Isaiah 1:19. Though we serve God with weakness, it must be with willingness.

Hypocrites obey God grudgingly, and against their will; they do good, but not willingly. Cain brought his sacrifice—but not his heart. It is a true rule—whatever the heart does not do, is not done.

Willingness is the soul of obedience. God sometimes accepts of willingness without the work—but never of the work without willingness. Cheerfulness shows that there is love in the duty. And love is to our services, what the sun is to fruit—it mellows and ripens them, and makes them come off with a better relish.

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