WRITINGS OF JOHN FLAVEL

by John Flavel

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by John Flavel, compiled for study and devotional reading.

173 Chapters

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Chapter 1

01.00.0. A Display of Christ

A Display of Christ by

John Flavel

01.00.1. Biography

John Flavel (1628-1691) The minister of Dartmouth

During the Plague of London, in 1665, a few Christian friends were gathered for prayer in a private house in Convent Garden; but, as it was an unlawful assembly, the soldiers broke in with drawn swords and arrested the worshippers. They were committed to Newgate prison, where the pestilence was raging; and an old minister from the country, Mr. Richard Flavel, and his wife, caught the infection, and were released only to die. Their eldest son was also at this time a minister. Although he did not become a musician or a poet, as his mother had hoped, this nobler vocation was his destiny. As a minister and author, he transmitted the joyful sound of the gospel through the dark reigns of Charles and James the Second; and of all who sang songs in that night, few found listeners so eager and grateful as John Flavel. In 1656, when he was about twenty-six years of age, the people of Dartmouth, in Devon, chose him as their minister. Going amongst them on their own invitation, and in all the freshness of his affections, he and the inhabitants became ardently attached to one another. With his fund of striking incidents, with his faculty of happy illustration, with a temperament in which cheerfulness and solemnity were remarkably blended, and with a style of address in which friendly encouragement alternated with grave remonstrance and melting pathos, except among the worst reprobates, his ministry was boundlessly popular. And when he went from home, his plain and arresting discourses were so often the means of awakening or converting careless hearers, that he was induced to extend his labors far beyond the bounds of his own large parish. The period, however, was brief during which he was allowed to ply such a free and unfettered ministry. Ejected by the Act of Uniformity, for some time he endeavored to keep together and instruct the members of his flock; but spies and penal laws made their meetings difficult and dangerous. At last the Oxford Act was promulgated, and according to its terms, Mr. Flavel could no longer reside in Dartmouth. On the day of his departure, the inhabitants accompanied him as far as the churchyard of Townstall, where, amidst prayers and tears, they parted. Nevertheless, his heart was still with his beloved people. He took up his abode as near them as the letter of the law allowed; and, sometimes in Dartmouth itself, sometimes in a quiet apartment in a neighboring village, and sometimes in a wood or other sheltered spot in the open air, he contrived to meet a detachment of them almost every Sabbath day. At last King James's Indulgence permitted the open resumption of his ministry. A commodious meeting-house was built, and there, for the remaining years of his life, he continued to warn, exhort, and comfort all who came, with a fervor of which the tradition has not yet died out in Devon. His prayers were wonderful. Much of his retirement was spent in devotional exercises; and in the great congregation he was sometimes seized with such agonies of earnestness, or carried away in such a rapture of praise and thanksgiving, that it seemed as if the tabernacle of clay must perish amidst the excessive emotion. At last, towards the end of June, 1691, he presided at a meeting of the Nonconformist ministers of Devonshire. The object was to bring about a union of Presbyterians and Independents. The preliminary resolutions passed unanimously, and "Mr. Flavel closed the work of the day with prayer and praise, in which his spirit was carried out with wonderful

enlargement and affection." On the 26th, he wrote to a London minister an account of this auspicious meeting, and appeared remarkably cheerful and happy. But that evening, he was taken with the palsy, and soon died. No period of English history has been so fruitful in religious literature as the half-century between the commencement of the Parliamentary War and the glorious Revolution; or we might say, the period included in the publishing career of Richard Baxter. But amidst that enormous authorship there are few books which retain so much attraction for modern readers as some of Flavel's practical treatises, such as On Keeping the Heart. For their enduring popularity, they are, no doubt, in some degree indebted to their kind, affable, and earnest tone; but still more, we presume, is due to the skill and felicity with which matters of the greatest moment are expounded. With a view to be useful, the writer's great anxiety was to be understood, and he sought out the words and the modes of representation which might suit the sailors of Dartmouth and Plymouth, and the farmers of Devon and Dorset. His books abound in anecdote, and they are rich in those homely metaphors and ingenious comparisons which are an effective ingredient in popular oratory. Above all, they command the reader's attention, by the importance of the themes which they handle; they secure his confidence, by their unaffected seriousness and deep sincerity; and they win his heart, by the evangelical warmth and personal kindness with which they are all aglow.

01.00.2. Contents

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01.01. Chapter 1

Chapter 1 The Excellency of the Subject "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." 1 Corinthians 2:2 THE former verse contains an apology for the plain and familiar manner of the apostle’s preaching, which was "not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom:" he studied not to gratify their curiosity with rhetorical strains, or philosophical niceties; for he says, "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

"I determined not to know." The meaning is not, that he despised or contemned all other knowledge; but so far only as it might stand in competition with, or opposition to the knowledge of Jesus Christ. As if he had said, "It is my stated, settled judgment; not a hasty, inconsiderate censure, but the result of my most serious inquiries. After I have well weighed the case, viewed it exactly on every side, balanced all advantages and disadvantages, pondered all things that are fit to come into consideration about it; this is the issue and final determination, that all other knowledge, how profitable, how pleasant soever, is not worthy to be named in comparison with the knowledge of Jesus Christ. This, therefore, I resolve to make the scope and end of my ministry, and the end regulates the means; such pedantic toys and airy notions as injudicious ears affect, would rather obstruct than promote my grand design among you; therefore, wholly waving that way, I applied myself to a plain, popular, unaffected dialect, fitted rather to pierce the heart and convince the conscience, than to please the fancy.

"I determined not to know any thing,’-to study nothing myself, to teach nothing to you, but ’Jesus Christ.’ Christ shall be the center to which all the lines of my ministry shall be drawn. I have spoken and written of many other subjects in my sermons and epistles, but it is all as consequent upon preaching and making known Jesus Christ: of all the subjects in the world, this is the sweetest; if there be any thing, on this side of heaven, worthy our time and studies, this is it." Thus he magnifies his doctrine, from the excellency of its subject, accounting all other doctrines but airy things, compared with this.

"Jesus Christ and him crucified." This topic he singled out from all the rest of the excellent truths of Christ, on which to spend the main strength of his ministry: Christ as crucified: and the rather, because hereby he would obviate the vulgar prejudice raised against him upon the account of his cross; for Christ crucified was "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness." 1 Corinthians 1:23. This also best suited his end, to draw them on to Christ; as Christ above all other subjects, so Christ crucified above all things in Christ. The manner in which he discoursed on this transcendent subject to them, is also remarkable; he not only preached Christ crucified, but be preached him assiduously and plainly. He preached Christ frequently; "and whenever he preached of Christ crucified, he preached him in a crucified style." This is the sum of the words; to let them know that his spirit was intent upon this subject, as if be neither knew nor cared to speak of any other. All his sermons were so full of Christ, that his hearers might have thought he was acquainted with no other doctrine. Hence, No doctrine is more excellent, or necessary to be preached and studied, than Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

All other knowledge, how much soever it be magnified in the world, is, and ought to be, esteemed but dross, in comparison with the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Php 3:8. "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Colossians 2:3. Eudoxus was so affected with the glory of the sun, that he thought he was born only to behold it: much more should a Christian judge himself born only to behold and delight in the glory of the Lord Jesus.

I. Consider the excellency of the knowledge of Christ in itself.

It is tile very marrow and kernel of all The Scriptures; the scope and center of all divine revelations, The ceremonial law is full of Christ, and all the Gospel is full of Christ: the blessed lines of both Testaments meet in him; and how they both harmonize, and sweetly concenter in Jesus Christ, it is the chief scope of the excellent epistle to the Hebrews to unfold; for we may call that epistle the sweet harmony of both Testaments. This argues the unspeakable excellency of this doctrine, the knowledge whereof must needs, therefore, be a key to unlock the greatest part of the sacred Scriptures. For it is in the understanding of Scripture, much as in the knowledge of logic and philosophy: if a scholar once come to understand the foundation-principle, upon which, as upon its hinge, the controversy turns, the true knowledge of that principle shall carry him through the whole controversy, and furnish him with a solution to every argument. Even so the right knowledge of Jesus Christ, like a clue, leads you through the whole labyrinth of the Scriptures. The knowledge of Jesus Christ is a fundamental knowledge; and foundations are most useful, though least seen.

It is fundamental to all graces; they all begin in knowledge. "The new man is renewed in knowledge." Colossians 3:10. As the old, so the new creation begins in light; the opening of the eyes is the first work of the Spirit: and as the beginnings of grace, so all its growth depends upon this increasing knowledge; "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour." 2 Peter 3:18. See how these two, grace and knowledge, keep equal pace in the soul of a Christian; in what degree the one increases, the other increases also.

It is fundamental to all duties. The duties, as well as the graces of all Christians, are all founded in the knowledge of Christ. Must a Christian believe? that he can never do without the knowledge of Christ: faith is so much dependent on his knowledge, that it is denominated by it, "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many," Isaiah 53:11; and hence, John 6:40, seeing and believing are made the, same thing. Would a man exercise hope in God? that he can never do without the knowledge of Christ, for he is the author of that hope, 1 Peter 1:3; he is also its object, Hebrews 6:19, its groundwork and support. Colossians 1:27. And as you cannot believe or hope, so neither can you pray acceptably without a competent degree of this knowledge. The very heathen could say, "Men must not speak of God without light." The true way of conversing with, and enjoying God in prayer, is by acting faith on him through a Mediator. Oh, then, how indispensable is the knowledge of Christ to all who address themselves to God in any duty!

It is fundamental to all comforts: all the comforts of believers are streams from this fountain. Jesus Christ is the very object of a believer’s joy; "We rejoice in Christ Jesus." Php 3:3. Take away the knowledge of Christ, and Christians would be the most sad and melancholy beings in the world: again, let Christ but manifest himself, and dart the beams of his light into their souls, it will make them kiss the stake, sing in the flames, and shout in the pangs of death, as men that divide the spoil. This knowledge is fundamental to the eternal happiness of souls: as we can perform no duty, enjoy no comfort, so neither can we be saved without it, "This is life eternal, that they might know

thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." John 17:3. And if it be life eternal to know Christ, then it is eternal damnation to be ignorant of Christ: as Christ is the door that opens heaven, so knowledge is the key that opens Christ. The excellent gifts and renowned parts of the moral heathen, though they purchased to them great esteem and honor among men, yet left them in a state of perdition, because of this great defect, that they were ignorant of Christ. 1 Corinthians 1:21. The knowledge of Christ is profound and large: all other sciences are but shadows; this is a boundless bottomless ocean; no creature hath a line long enough to fathom the depth of it; there is height, length, depth. and breadth ascribed to it, Ephesians 3:18; yea, it passeth knowledge. There is a manifold wisdom of God in Christ. Ephesians 3:10. It is indeed simple, pure, and unmixed with any thing but itself, yet it is manifold in degrees, kinds, and administrations.. Though something of Christ be unfolded in one age, and something in another, yet eternity itself cannot fully unfold him. I see something, said Luther, which blessed Augustine saw not; and those that come after me, will see that which I see not. It is in the studying of Christ, as in the planting of a new-discovered country; at first men sit down by the sea-side, upon the skirts and borders of the land, and there they dwell; but by degrees they search further and further into the heart of the country. Ah, the best of us are yet but upon the borders of this vast continent! The study of Jesus Christ is the most noble subject that ever a soul spent itself upon. The angels study this doctrine, and stoop down to look into this deep abyss. What are the truths discovered in Christ, but the very secrets that from eternity lay ’hid in the bosom of God? Ephesians 3:8-9. God’s heart is opened to men in Christ, John 1:18; this makes the Gospel such a glorious dispensation, because Christ is so gloriously revealed therein, 2 Corinthians 3:9; and the studying of Christ in the Gospel, stamps such a heavenly glory upon the contemplating soul. 2 Corinthians 3:18.

It is the most sweet and comfortable knowledge. To be studying Jesus Christ, what is it but to be digging among all the veins and springs of comfort? and the deeper you dig, the more do these springs flow upon you. How are hearts enraptured with the discoveries of Christ in the Gospel! what ecstasies, meltings, transports, do gracious souls meet there!

II. Let us compare this knowledge with all other knowledge.

All other knowledge is natural, but this wholly supernatural, "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Matthew 11:27. The wisest heathen could never make a discovery of Christ by their deepest searches into nature; the most eagle-eyed philosophers were but children in knowledge, compared with the most illiterate Christians. Other knowledge is unattainable by many. All helps and means in the world would never enable some Christians to attain the learned arts and languages; the brightest parts are most excellent in these; but here is the mystery and excellency of the knowledge of Christ, that men of most blunt, dull, and contemptible parts attain, through the teaching of the Spirit, to this knowledge, in which the more acute and ingenious are utterly blind: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Matthew 11:25. "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the, wise." 1 Corinthians 1:26-27.

Other knowledge, though you should attain the highest degree of it, would never bring you to heaven, the principal thing, namely Christ, being wanting. Other knowledge is also defective, in the

purity of its nature: the learned heathens grew vain in their imaginations, Romans 1:21; and in its efficacy and influence on the heart and life: they held the truth in unrighteousness: their lusts were stronger than their light, Romans 1:18. But this knowledge has most powerful influences, changing souls into its own image, 2 Corinthians 3:18, and so proves a saving knowledge unto men. 1 Timothy 2:4.

INFERENCE. The sufficiency of the doctrine of Christ, to make men wise unto salvation. Paul desired to know nothing else; and, indeed, nothing else is of absolute necessity to be known. A little of this knowledge, if saving and effectual upon thy heart, will do the soul more service than all the vain speculation and profound parts in which others so much glory. Poor Christian, be not dejected, because thou seest thyself outstript and excelled by so many in other parts of knowledge; if thou know Jesus Christ, thou knowest enough to comfort and save thy soul. Many learned philosophers are now in hell, and many illiterate Christians in heaven.

If there be such excellency in the knowledge of Christ, let it humble all, both saints and sinners, that we have no more of this clear and effectual knowledge in us, notwithstanding the excellent advantages we have had for it. Sinners, concerning you I may sigh, and say with the apostle, "Some have not the knowledge of Christ; I speak this to your shame." 1 Corinthians 15:34. This, oh! this is the condemnation. And even for you that are enlightened in this knowledge, how little do you know of Jesus Christ, in comparison of what you might have known of him! What a shame is it, that you should need to be taught the very first truths, "when for the time you might have been teachers of others!" Hebrews 5:12-14. "That your ministers cannot speak unto you as spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." 1 Corinthians 3:1-2. Oh, how much time is spent in other studies, in frivolous reading, vain discourse, worldly employments! how little in the search and study of Jesus Christ!

How sad is their condition that have a knowledge of Christ, and yet as to themselves it had been better they had never had it! Many there be that content themselves with a merely speculative, ineffectual, knowledge of him: of such the apostle says, "It had been better for them not to have known." 2 Peter 2:21. It serves only to aggravate their sin and misery; for though it be not enough to save them, yet it puts some weak restraints upon sin, which their impetuous lusts breaking down, they are thereby exposed to a greater damnation. This may inform us by what rule to judge both ministers and doctrine. Certainly that is the highest commendation of a minister, to be "an able minister of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit." 2 Corinthians 3:6. He is the best preacher, that can in the most lively and powerful manner display Jesus Christ before the people, evidently setting him forth as crucified among them; and that is the best sermon which is most full of Christ, not of rhetorical art. I know that a holy dialect well becometh Christ’s ministers; they should not be rude and careless in language or method; but surely the excellency of a sermon lies not in that, but in the plainest exhibition and liveliest application of Jesus Christ.

Let all that mind the honor of religion, or the peace and comfort of their own souls, wholly apply themselves to the study of Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Wherefore spend we ourselves upon other studies, when all excellency, sweetness, and desirableness is centered in this one? Jesus Christ is fairer than the children of men, the chiefest among ten thousands, "as the apple-tree among the trees of the wood." Song of Solomon 2:3. Those things which singly most delight the souls of men, are all found conjoined in Christ. Oh what a blessed Christ is this! whom to know is

eternal life. From the knowledge of Jesus Christ do bud forth all the fruits of comfort, and that for all seasons and conditions. Hence he is represented by "the tree of life, which bears twelve manner of fruits, and yields its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations." Revelation 22:2. In him souls have all necessaries for food and medicine; and all varieties of fruits,-twelve manner of fruits; a distinct sweetness in each and every attribute, promise, ordinance. In him are these fruits at all times, fruits every month; winter fruits as well, as summer fruits. Oh then study Christ, study to know him more extensively. There are many excellent things in Christ, which the most eagle-eyed believer has not yet seen: ah! it is a pity that any thing of Christ should lie hid from his people. Study to know Christ more intensely, to get the experimental taste and lively power of his knowledge upon your heart and affections: this is the knowledge that carries all the sweetness and comfort in it. Christian, I dare appeal to thy experience, whether the enjoyment of Jesus Christ, in ordinances and duties, has not a higher and sweeter relish than any created enjoyment thou didst ever taste in this world? Oh then separate, devote, and wholly give thyself, thy time, thy strength to this most sweet, transcendent study.

Let me close the whole with a double caution: one to ourselves, who by our calling and profession are the ministers of Christ; another to those that sit under the doctrine of Christ daily. As to ministers: if this doctrine be the most excellent, necessary, fundamental, profound, noble, and comfortable doctrine, let us then take heed lest, while we study to be exact in other things, we be found ignorant in this. Ye know it is ignominious, by the common suffrage of the civilized world, for any man to be unacquainted with his own calling, or not attend to the proper business of it: it is our calling, as the Bridegroom’s friends, to woo and win souls to Christ, to set him forth to the people as crucified among them, Galatians 3:1; to present him in all his attractive excellencies, that all hearts may be ravished with his beauty, and charmed into his arms by love: we must also be able to defend the truths of Christ against undermining heretics, to instill his knowledge into the ignorant, to answer the cases and scruples of poor doubting Christians. How many intricate knots have we to untie! What pains, what skill is requisite for such as are employed about our work! And shall we spend our precious time in frivolous controversies, philosophical niceties, dry and barren scholastic notions? Shall we study every thing but Christ? revolve all volumes but the sacred one? What is observed even of Bellarmine, that he turned with loathing from school because it wanted the sweet savor of piety, a reproof to many among us, who are often too much in love with worse employment than what he was said to loathe. Oh let the knowledge of Christ dwell in us richly.

Let us see that our knowledge of Christ is not a powerless, barren, ineffectual knowledge. Oh, that, in its passage from our understanding to our lips, it might powerfully melt, sweeten, and relish our hearts! Remember, brethren, a holy calling never saved any man, without a holy heart; if our tongues only be sanctified, our whole man must be condemned. Oh let the keepers of the vineyard look to, and keep their own vineyard! we have a heaven to win or lose, as well as others.

Let us take heed that we withhold not our knowledge of Christ in unrighteousness from the people. Oh that our lips may disperse knowledge and feed many. Remember, I beseech you, the relations wherein you stand, and the obligations resulting thence: remember the great Shepherd gave himself for, and gave you to the flock. Your time, your gifts, are not yours, but God’s. Remember the pinching wants of souls who are perishing for want of Christ! Did Christ not think it too much to sweat blood, yea, to die for them? and shall we think it much to watch, study, preach, pray, and do what we can for their salvation? Oh let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ. As to the

people that sit under the doctrine of Christ daily, and have the light of his knowledge shining round about them: take heed ye do not reject and despise this light. This may be done by neglecting the means of knowledge. Surely, if you thus reject knowledge, God will reject you. Hosea 4:6. It is a despising of the richest gift that ever Christ gave to the church; and however it be a contempt and slight that begins low, and seems only to vent itself upon foibles, such as the artificial tones and gestures of speakers, yet, believe it, it is a daring sin, that flies higher than you are aware:

"He that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth Him that sent me." Luke 10:16. You despise the knowledge of Christ when you despise the directions and loving constraints of that knowledge; when you refuse to be guided by your knowledge. Your light and your lusts contest and struggle within you; oh it is sad when your lusts master your light! You sin not as the heathen sin, who know not God; but when you sin, you wound your own consciences and offer violence to your own convictions. And what sad work will this make in your souls! How soon will it lay your consciences waste!

Take heed also that you rest not satisfied with that knowledge of Christ you have attained, but go on to perfection. It is the pride and ignorance of many professors, when they have got a few raw and indigested notions, to swell with self-conceit of their excellent attainments. And it is the sin, even of the best of saints, when they see how deep the knowledge of Christ lies, and what pains they must take to dig for it, to throw by the shovel of duty, and cry, Dig we cannot. To your work, Christians, to your work. Let not your candle go out: devote yourselves to this study; cherish the blessed communications of light and grace from on high; and count all things but dross in comparison with that excellency which is in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

01.02. Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Christ in His Essential and Primeval Glory "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." 1 Corinthians 2:2

"Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and was daily His delight, rejoicing always before him." - Proverbs 8:30

THESE words are a part of that excellent commendation of Wisdom, by which in this book Solomon intends two things: first, grace or holiness; "Wisdom is the principal thing," Proverbs 4:7; secondly, Jesus Christ the fountain of that grace: and, as the former is renowned for its excellency, Job 28:14-15, so is the latter, in this context, wherein the Spirit of God describes the most blessed state of Jesus Christ, the Wisdom of the Father, from those eternal delights he had with his Father before his assumption of our nature: "Then was I by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." That eternity was wholly swallowed up in unspeakable delights and pleasures. The Father and Son delighted one in another (from which delights the Spirit is not here excluded) without communicating their joy to any other; for no creature then existed, save in the mind of God. Proverbs 8:30.

"Then was I by him, as one brought up with him:" in his very bosom. "The only-begotten Son" was "in the bosom of the Father," John 1:18; an expression of the greatest dearness and intimacy, as if he had said, wrapt up in the very soul of his Father -embosomed in God.

"I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." These delights of the Father and the Son one in the other, knew not a moment’s interruption or diminution. Thus did these great and glorious persons mutually communicate their fullest pleasure and delight, each into the heart of the other: they lay, as it were, embosomed in one another, entertaining themselves with delights and pleasures ineffable and. inconceivable. Hence we observe, The state of Jesus Christ before his incarnation was that of the highest and most unspeakable delight and pleasure in the enjoyment of his Father. As He was "in the bosom of the Father," John 1:18, the posture of dearest love, John 13:23; so in Isaiah 42:1, the Father calls him "Mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth;" and he is said, in this state, to be rich, 2 Corinthians 8:9; and to be "equal with God," and "in the form of God;" Php 2:6; that is, to have all the glory and ensigns of the majesty of God; and the riches which the apostle speaks of, was no less than all that God the Father hath; "All that the Father hath is mine," John 16:15; and what he now hath in his exalted state is the same that he had before his humiliation. John 17:5. Now to portray (as we are able) the unspeakable felicity of that original state of Christ:

I. Let us consider that state negatively, ’by removing from it all the degrees of debasement and sorrow involved in his incarnation.

He was not then abased to the condition of a creature, which was a low step indeed; for by this, saith the apostle, "he made himself of no reputation," Php 2:7; it emptied him of his glory. For God to be made man, is such an abasement as none can express; but not only to appear in true flesh,

but also "in the likeness of sinful flesh," Romans 8:3, oh, what is this!

Christ was not under the law in this state. It was no disparagement to Adam in the state of innocency, or to angels in their state of glory, to be under law to God; but it was an inconceivable abasement to the absolute independent Being to come under law; yea, not only under the obedience, but also under the malediction and curse of the law: "But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." Galatians 4:4. In this state he was not liable to any of those sorrowful consequences and attendants of that frail and feeble state of humanity which he afterwards assumed. There was no sorrowing or sighing in that bosom where he lay, though afterwards he became "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Isaiah 53:3. "A man of sorrows," as if he had been constituted and made up of pure and unmixed sorrows; every day conversing with griefs, as with his intimate companions and acquaintance. He was never pinched with poverty and want while he continued in that bosom, as he was afterwards, when he said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Matthew 8:20. Ah! blessed Jesus! thou neededst not to have wanted a place to lay thy head, hadst thou not left that bosom for my sake. He never underwent reproach and shame in that bosom: there was nothing but glory and honor reflected upon him by his Father, though afterwards "he was despised and rejected of men." Isaiah 53:3. His Father never looked upon him without smiles and love, delight and joy, though afterwards he became a reproach of men, and despised of the people. Psalms 22:6. While he lay in that bosom of peace and love, he never knew what it was to be assaulted with temptations, to be besieged by unclean spirits, as he did afterwards: "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into time wilderness to be tempted of the devil." Matthew 4:1. It was for our sakes that he submitted to those exercises of spirit, to be "in all points tempted like as we are," Hebrews 4:15, that he might be unto us "a merciful and faithful High Priest." Hebrews 2:17. He was never sensible of pains and tortures in soul or body, though afterwards he groaned and sweat under them. Isaiah 53:5. The Lord embraced him from eternity, but never wounded him till be stood in our place and room. There were no bidings or withdrawings of his Father from him; there was not a cloud from eternity upon the face of God, till Jesus Christ had left that bosom. It was a new thing to Christ to cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Matthew 27:46. There were never any impressions of his Father's wrath upon him, as there were afterwards: God never delivered such a bitter cup into his hands before, as that. Matthew 26:39. There was no death, to which he was subject, in that bosom. All these things were new to Christ; he was above them all, till, for our sakes, he voluntarily subjected himself unto them.

II. Let us consider Christ's primeval state positively, and guess (for indeed we can but guess) at the glory of it. We cannot but conceive it to be a state of matchless happiness, if we consider the persons enjoying and delighting in each other: he was with God, John 1:1, God, the fountain, ocean, and center of all delights and joys; "In thy presence is fulness of joy." Psalms 16:11. To be wrapt up in the soul and bosom of all delights, as Christ was, must needs be a state of bliss transcending apprehension.

Consider the intimacy, dearness, yea, oneness of those great Persons; and the nearer the union the sweeter the communion. Now Jesus Christ was not only near and dear to God, but one with him: "I and my Father are one," John 10:30; one in nature, will, love, and delight. There is indeed a moral union of souls among men by love, but this was a natural. oneness: no child is so one with his father, no husband so one with the wife of his bosom, no friend so one with his friend, no soul

so one with its body, as Jesus Christ and his Father were one. Oh what matchless delights must necessarily flow from such a blessed union!

Consider again the purity of that delight with which the blessed Father and Son embraced each other. The best of. creature delights are mixed, debased, and alloyed; if there be something engaging and delightful, there is also something cloying and distasteful. The purer any delight is, the more excellent. Now, there are no crystal streams flowing so purely from the fountain, no beams of light so unmixed from the sun, as the loves and delights of these holy and glorious persons were: the holy, holy, holy Father embraced the thrice holy Son with a most holy delight and love.

Consider the constancy of this delight; it was from everlasting, as in verse 23, and from eternity; it never suffered one moment's interruption. The overflowing fountain of God's delight and love never stopped its course, never ebbed: "I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him."

III. Let us consider the glory of that state comparatively either with the choicest delights that one creature takes in another, or that God takes in the creature, or that the creatures take in God. Measure these immense delights, between the Father and his Son, by either of these lines, and you shall find them infinitely short. The delight that creatures take in each other, is sometimes a great delight; such was Jacob's delight in Benjamin, whose life is said to be "bound up in the lad's life, Genesis 44:30, a dear and high expression.; such was that of Jonathan in David, whose soul was knit with his soul, "he loved him as his own soul," 1 Samuel 18:1; and such is the delight of one friend in another; there is a friend that is as a man's own soul, Deuteronomy 13:6. Yet all this is but creature delight, and can in no particular equal the delights between the Father and the Son; for this is but a finite delight, according to the measure and abilities of creatures, but that is infinite, suitable to the infinite perfection of the Divine Being. This is always mixed, that perfectly pure.

It is confessed that God takes great delight in some creatures. The Lord takes pleasure in his saints, he rejoices over them with singing; and resteth in his love. Zephaniah 3:17; Isaiah 62:5. But yet there is a great difference between his delight in creatures, and his delights in Christ; for all his delight in the saints is secondary, and for Christ's sake; but his delights in Christ are primary, and. for his own sake. We are accepted in the Beloved, Ephesians 1:6; he is beloved, and accepted for himself. The delight that the best of creatures take in God and Christ, it must be confessed, is a choice delight; and that is a transcendent love, with which they love and delight in him; "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside, thee." Psalms 73:25. But surely our delight in God is no perfect rule by which to measure his delight in Christ; for our love to God, at best, is still imperfect: that is the burden and constant complaint of saints; but this is perfect: ours is inconstant, ebbing and flowing, but this is constant. So then, the condition and state of Jesus Christ before his incarnation, was a state o the highest and matchless delight, in the enjoyment a his Father.

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What an astonishing act of love was this, for the Father to give the delight of his soul, out of his very bosom, for poor sinners! All tongues must needs pause and falter, that attempt the expressions of his grace, expressions being here swallowed up: "God so loved the world, that be gave his only begotten Son." John 3:16. So loved them: how did be love them? nay, here you must

excuse the tongues of angels. Which of us would deliver a child, the child of our delights, an only child, to death, for the greatest inheritance in the world? what tender parent can endure parting with such a child? When Hagar was taking her last leave (as she thought) of her Ishmael, "she went and sat her down over against him, a good way off: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice, and wept." Genesis 21:16. Though she were none of the best of mothers, nor he the best of children, yet she could not give up the child. Oh it was hard to part! What an outcry did David make, even for an Absalom, wishing he had died for him! What a breach has the death of some children made in the hearts of some parents, which will never be closed up in this world! Yet surely, never did any child lie so close to a parent's heart, as Christ to his Father's; and yet he willingly parts with him, though his only one, the Son of his delights; and that to death, a cursed death; for sinners, for the worst of sinners. Oh the admirable love of God to men! matchless love t a love past finding out! Let all men, therefore, in the business of their redemption, give equal glory to the Father with the Son. John 5:23. If the Father had not loved thee, he had never parted with such a Son for thee. From one wonder let our souls turn to another, for they are now in the midst of wonders: adore, and be forever astonished at the love of Jesus Christ to poor sinners, that ever he should consent to leave such a bosom, and the ineffable delights that were there, for such poor worms as we are. Oh the heights, depths lengths, and breadths of unmeasurable love! See Romans 5:6-8: read, and wonder. How is the love of Christ commended to poor sinners! As the Father loved him; even so, believers, hath he loved you. John 17:23. What manner of love is this! Who ever loved as Christ loves. Who ever denied himself for Christ, as Christ denied himself for us? An interest in Jesus Christ is the true way to all spiritual preferment in heaven. Do you covet to be in the heart, in the favor and delight of God? Get interest in Jesus Christ, and you shall presently be there. In heaven, persons are preferred according to their interest in the Beloved. Ephesians 1:6. Christ is the great favorite there: his image upon your soul, and his name in your prayers, makes both accepted with God.

How worthy is Jesus Christ of all our love and delights! You see how infinitely the Father delighteth in him; and shall not our hearts delight in him? Oh that you did but see this lovely Lord Jesus Christ! Why do ye lavish away your precious affections upon vanity? none but Christ is worthy of them. When you spend your precious affections upon, other objects, what is it but to dig for dross with golden mattocks? The Lord direct our hearts into the love of Christ. Oh that our hearts, loves, and delights, did meet and concenter with the heart of God in this most blessed object! Oh let him that left God's bosom for you, be embosomed by you, though your love be nothing to God's: he that left God's bosom for you, deserves yours.

If Christ be the beloved of the Father's soul, think what a grievous and insufferable thing it is to the heart of God, to see his dear Son despised, slighted, and rejected by sinners: how God will bear this, that parable, Matthew 21:33-41, will inform you: surely he will miserably destroy such wretched sinners. What a dismal word is that, If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha," 1 Corinthians 16:22; that is, let the great curse of God lie upon that man till the Lord come. Oh sinners! you shall one day know the cost of this sin: you shall feel what it is to despise Jesus that is able to compel love from the hardest hear Oh that you would slight him no more! Oh that this day your hearts might fall in love with him! I tell you if you would set your love to sale, none bids so fair for it as Christ.

If Christ lay eternally in this bosom of love, and yet was content to forsake and leave it for your sakes, then, Christians, be you ready to forsake all the comforts you have on earth for Christ. Famous Galleacius left all for this enjoyment; Moses left all the glory of Egypt; Peter and the other apostles left all. Luke 18:28. But what have we to leave for Christ in comparison with what he left for us? Surely Christ is the highest pattern of self-denial in the world. Let this confirm your faith in prayer. If he, that has such an interest in the heart of God, intercede with the Father for you, then never doubt of audience and acceptance with him; surely you shall be accepted through the Beloved. Christ was never denied any thing that he asked. The Father hears him always. John 11:42. Though you are not worthy, Christ is, and he ever lives to make intercession for you. Hebrews 7:25. Let this encourage thy heart, O saint, in a dying hour; and not only make thee patient in death, but in a holy manner impatient till thou be gone-for whither is thy soul now going, but to that bosom of love whence Christ came? "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, John 17:24; and where is he but in that bosom of glory and love where he lay before the world was? John 17:5. Oh then let every believer encourage his soul comfort ye one another with these words, "I am leaving the bosom of a creature; I am going to the bosom of God,"

Sinners, embrace the bosom-Son of God. Poor fellow-mortals! whatever you are or have been, under whatever guilt or discouragement you lie, embrace Christ, who is freely offered to you, and you shall be as dear to God as the holiest and most eminent believer in the world; but if you still continue to despise and neglect such a Saviour, sorer wrath is treasured up for you than other sinners. Hebrews 10:28-29. Oh that these discoveries and overtures of Christ may never come to such a fatal issue with any of your souls, before whom his glory has been thus opened!

01.03. Chapter 3

Chapter 3 The Covenant of Redemption Between the Father and the Redeemer "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." 1 Corinthians 2:2

"Therefore wilt I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many, and wade intercession for he transgressors" - Isaiah 53:12 In Isaiah 53:1-12, the Gospel seems to be epitomized: the subject is the death of Christ, and the glorious issue thereof. By reading it, the eunuch of old, and many Jews since, have been converted to Christ. Christ is here considered absolutely, and relatively. Absolutely, and thus his innocency is clearly vindicated, Isaiah 53:9. Though he suffered grievous things, yet it was not for his own sins; for "he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth." But, he is considered relatively, in the capacity of a Surety for us: thus the justice of God is fully vindicated in his sufferings, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Isaiah 53:6. How he came to sustain this capacity and relation of a Surety for us, is in these verses plainly asserted to be by his compact and agreement with his Father, before the worlds were made. Isaiah 53:10-12. In this verse we have, 1. His work, which was indeed a hard work, to pour out his soul unto death, aggravated by his being "numbered with the transgressors;" his "bearing the sins of many;" and by the manner of his bearing it, namely, meekly and forgivingly: "he made intercession for the transgressors:" this was his work. 2. The reward or fruit which is promised him for this work, "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong;" wherein is a plain allusion to conquerors in war, for whom are reserved the richest garments, and most honorable captives to follow the conqueror, as an addition to his magnificence and triumph; these were wont to come after them in chains, Isaiah 45:14; see Judges 5:30. 3. The relation between that work and this triumph. Some will have this work to hold no other relation to that glory, than a mere antecedent to a consequent; others give it the respect and relation of a meritorious cause to a reward. However, it is plain, that the Father here agrees and promises to give the elect to the Son, if be will undertake their redemption by pouring out his soul unto death; of all which this is the plain result: The business of man’s salvation was transacted upon covenant terms, between the Father and the Son, from all eternity.

I. Consider the persons transacting arid dealing with each other in this covenant. And indeed they are great persons, God the Father and God the Son; the former as a Creditor, and the latter as a Surety. The Father claims satisfaction, the Son engages to give it.

II The business transacted between them; and that was the redemption and recovery of all God’s people: our eternal happiness lay now before them, our dearest and everlasting concerns were now in their hands. The elect (though not yet in being) are here considered as existent, yea, and as fallen, miserable, forlorn creatures: how these may again be restored to happiness without prejudice to the honor, justice, and truth of God: this, this is the business that lay before them.

III. This manner, or quality of the transaction, was federal, or of the nature of a covenant; it was by mutual engagements and stipulations, each person undertaking to perform his part in order to our recovery.

IV. More particularly, we will next consider the articles to which they do both agree; or, what it is that each person doth for himself promise to the other. And, to let us see how much the Father's heart is engaged in the salvation of poor sinners, there are four things which he promiseth to do for Christ, if he will undertake that work.

He promiseth to invest him, and anoint him to a threefold office, answerable to the misery that lay upon the elect, as so many bars to all communion with and enjoyment of God; for, if ever man be restored to that happiness, the blindness of his mind must be cured, the guilt of sin expiated, and his captivity to sin led captive Christ must, "of God, be made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." 1 Corinthians 1:30. And he is made so to us as our Prophet, Priest, and King; but he could not put himself into either of these; for if so, he had acted without commission, and consequently all he did had been invalid; "Christ glorified not himself to be made an High Priest, but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son." Hebrews 5:5. A commission, therefore, to act authoritatively in these offices, being necessary to our recovery, the Father engages to him to seal him such a threefold commission.

He promiseth to invest him with an eternal and royal priesthood, "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Meichisedec." Psalms 110:4. This Meichisedec being king of righteousness, and king of Salem, that is, Peace, had a royal priesthood; and his descent not being reckoned, it had an adumbration of eternity in it, and so was more fit to typify and shadow forth the priesthood of Christ than Aaron was. Hebrews 7:17; Hebrews 7:24-25.

He promiseth moreover to make him a Prophet, and that an extraordinary one, even the Prince of prophets; the chief Shepherd, as much superior to all others as the sun is to the lesser stars; so it is said, "I will give thee for a light to the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes," &c. Isaiah 42:6-7. And not only so, but to make him King also, and that of the whole empire of the world; "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost ends of the earth for thy possession." Psalms 2:8. Thus the Father promises to qualify and furnish the Son completely for the work, by his investiture with this threefold office,

He promiseth to crown his work with success, and bring it to a happy issue: "He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." Isaiah 53:10. He shall not begin, and not finish; he shall not shed his invaluable blood upon hazardous terms; but shall see and reap the sweet fruits thereof; as the joyful mother forgets her sorrows when she delightfully embraces her, living. child. The Father promiseth to accept him in his work: "Surely," saith the Son, "my work is with my God." Isaiah 49:4. And, "I shall be glorious in the eyes of the Lord" Isaiah 49:5. His faith hath therein respect to this compact and promise. Accordingly, the Father manifests the satisfaction he had in him, and in his works even while he was about it upon the earth, "when there came such a voice from the excellent glory, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." 2 Peter 1:17.

He engaged to reward him highly for his work, by exalting him to singular and super-eminent glory and honor, when he should have dispatched and finished it. So you read, "I will declare the

decree; the Lord hath said unto me, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." Psalms 2:7. It is spoken of the day of his resurrection, when he had just finished his sufferings. And so the apostle expounds and applies it. Acts 13:32-33. For then did the Lord wipe away the reproach of his cross. As if the Father had said, Now thou hast again recovered thy glory, and this day is to thee as a new birth-day.

These are the encouragements and rewards proposed and promised to him by the Father. This was the joy set before him, as the apostle expresses it in Hebrews 12:1-29 which made him so patiently "endure the cross, and despise the shame." And in like manner Jesus Christ gives his engagement to the Father; that, upon these terms, he is to be made flesh, to divest, as it were, himself of his glory, to come under the obedience and malediction of the law, and not to refuse any, the hardest sufferings it should please his Father to inflict on him. So much is implied in Isaiah 50:5-7. "The Lord hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord God will help me, therefore shall I not be confounded; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." And the sense of this place is well delivered to us in other terms, "Then said I, Lo, I come; I delight to do thy will, O God, thy law is within my heart." Psalms 40:6-10. Oh see with what a full consent the heart of Christ closeth with the Father's offers and proposals! like some echo that answers your voice twice or thrice over. So doth Christ here answer his Father's call, "I come; I delight to do thy will; yea, thy law is in my heart."

V. I will briefly show how these articles and agreements were on the part of both performed, and that precisely and punctually. The Son having thus consented, accordingly he applies himself to the discharge of his work. He took a body, and in it fulfilled all righteousness, even to a tittle. Matthew 3:15. And, at last, his soul was made an offering for sin, so that he could say, "Father, I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work which thou gayest me to do." John 17:4. He went through all the parts of his active and passive obedience, cheerfully and faithfully. The Father made good his engagements to Christ, all along, with no less faithfulness than Christ did his. He promised to assist, and hold his hand, Isaiah 42:5, and so he did; "there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him." Luke 22:43. In his agony in the garden, this was seasonable aid and succor. He promised to accept him in his work, and that he should be glorious in his eyes: so he did; for he not only declared it by a voice from heaven, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," Luke 3:22; but it was fully declared in his resurrection and ascension, which were a full discharge and justification of him. He promised him that "He should see his seed," Isaiah 53:10, and so he did; for his very birth-dew was as the dew of the morning; and ever since his blood has been fruitful in the world. He promised gloriously to reward and exalt him; and so he hath, and that highly and super-eminently, "giving him a name above every name in heaven and earth." Php 2:9-11. Thus were the articles performed.

VI. When was this compact made between the Father and the Son? I answer, it bears date from eternity. Before this world was, then were his delights in us, while as yet we had no existence, but only in the infinite mind and purpose of God, who had decreed this for us in Christ Jesus, as the apostle speaks, 2 Timothy 1:9. What grace was that which was given us in Christ before the world began, but this grace of redemption, which was from everlasting thus contrived and designed for us, in the way which has been here opened? Then was the counsel, or consultation of peace

between them both, as some understand Zechariah 6:13.

INFERENCE

We see the abundant security God has given his people for their salvation, and that not only in respect of the covenant of grace made with them, but also of this covenant of redemption made with Christ for them; which is indeed the foundation of the covenant of grace. God's single promise is security enough to our faith, but his covenant of grace adds further security; both these, viewed as the effects and fruits of this covenant of redemption, make all fast and sure. Happy were it, if Christians, in perplexity and distress, would turn their eyes from the defects in their obedience, to the fullness of Christ, and see themselves complete in him.

Moreover, hence we infer the validity and unquestionable success of Christ's intercession in heaven for believers. You read, "that he ever liveth to make intercession," Hebrews 7:25, and, that his blood speaks good things for them. Hebrews 12:24. Now, that his blood shall obtain what it pleads for in heaven, is undoubted, and that from the consideration of this covenant of redemption. For here you see that the things he now asks of his Father, are the very same which his Father promised him, and covenanted to give him, before this world was. So that, besides the interest of the person, the very equity of the matter speaks its success, and requires performance. Whatever he asks for us, is as due to him as the wages of the hireling, when the work is ended. If the work be done, and done faithfully, as the Father hath acknowledged it is, then the reward is due, and due immediately; and no doubt but he shall receive it from the. hands of a righteous God.

Hence, in like manner, you may be informed of the consistency of grace with full satisfaction to the justice of God. The apostle tells us, we are saved "according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Jesus Christ before the world began," 2 Timothy 1:9, that is, according to the gracious terms of this covenant of redemption; and yet you see, notwithstanding, how strictly God claims satisfaction from Christ. So then, grace to us, and satisfaction to justice, are not so inconsistent as some adversaries of the truth would make them: what was debt to Christ, is grace to us. "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Romans 3:24.

Hence judge of the antiquity of the love of God to believers; what an ancient Friend he hath been to us; who loved us, provided for us, and contrived all our happiness, before we were, yea, before the world was. We reap the fruits of this covenant now, the seed whereof was sown from eternity; yea, it is not only ancient, but also most free: no excellencies of ours could engage the love of God; for as yet we were not.

Hence judge how reasonable it is that believers should embrace the hardest terms of obedience unto Christ, who complied with such hard terms for their salvation. They were hard and difficult terms indeed, on which Christ received you from the Father's hand; it was, as you have heard, to pour out his soul unto death; "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he be. came poor." 2 Corinthians 8:9. Blush, ungrateful believers; oh, let shame cover your faces; judge in yourselves now, hath Christ deserved that you should hesitate at trifles, that you should shrink at a few petty difficulties, and complain, this is hard, and that is severe? Oh, if you knew the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in this his wonderful condescension for you, you could not do it.

How greatly are we all concerned to make it sure to ourselves, that we are of this number which the Father and the Son agreed for before the world was; that we were comprehended in Christ's engagement and compact with the Father! But some one will say, who can know that? I answer, you may know, without ascending into heaven, or prying into unrevealed secrets, that your names were in that covenant, if (1.) You are believers indeed; for all such the Father then gave to Christ: "The men that thou gayest me, (for of them he spake immediately before,) they have believed that thou didst send me." John 17:6, John 17:8. (2.) If you savingly know God in Jesus Christ. Such were given him by the Father: "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me." John 17:6. By this they are discriminated from the rest: "The world hath not known thee, but these have known." John 17:25. (3.) If you are men of another world: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." John 17:16. May it be said of you, as of dying men, that you are not men for this world, that you are crucified and dead to it, Galatians 6:14, that you are strangers in it! Hebrews 11:13-14. (4.) If you keep Christ's word: "Thine they were, and thou gayest them me; and they have kept thy word." John 17:6. By keeping his word, understand the receiving of the word, in its sanctifying effects and influences, into your hearts, and your perseverance in the profession and practice of it to the end: "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." John 17:17. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will." John 15:7. Blessed and happy is that soul upon which these blessed characters appear, which our Lord Jesus has laid so close together, within the compass of a few verses, in John 17:1-26. These are the persons the Father delivered unto Christ, and Christ accepted from the Father, in this blessed covenant.

01.04. Chapter 4

Chapter 4 The Adorable Love of God in Giving His Own Son for Us "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." 1 Corinthians 2:2 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" John 3:16 In these words are to be considered, The original spring or fountain of our best mercies-The love of God. The mercy flowing out of this fountain, and that is Christ, The Mercy, as he is emphatically called, Luke 1:72; the marrow, kernel, and substance of all other mercies. "He gave his only begotten Son." The objects of this love, or the persons for whom the eternal Lord delivered Christ, namely, "the world." This must respect the elect of God in the world; such as do, or shall actually believe, as it is exegetically pressed in the next words, "That whosoever believeth in him should not perish." Those whom he calls the world in that, he styles believers in this expression; these are the objects of this love. It is not angels, but men, that were so loved. The manner in which this never-enough celebrated mercy flows to us, from the fountain of Divine love, and that is most freely and spontaneously. "He gave," not he sold, or barely parted with, but gave. Nor yet doth the Father's giving imply Christ to be merely passive; for as the Father is here said to give him, so the apostle tells us, that he gave himself: "Who loved me, and gave himself for me." Galatians 2:20. The Father gave him out of good will to men, and he as willingly bestowed himself on that service. Hence we learn, that The gift of Christ is the highest and fullest manifestation of the love of God to sinners, ever made from eternity.

How is this gift of God to sinners signalized in that sentence of the apostle, "Herein, is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins!" 1 John 4:10. Why doth the apostle so magnify this gift in saying, "Herein is love," as if there were love in nothing else? May we not say, that to have a being, a being among rational creatures, therein is love? To have our life carried so many years, like a taper in the hand of Providence, through so many dangers, and not yet put out in obscurity, therein is love? To have food and raiment convenient for us, beds to lie on, relations to comfort us, in all these is love? Yea; but in all these there is no love, in, comparison with the love in sending or giving Christ for us: these are great mercies in themselves; but compared to this mercy, they are all swallowed up, as the light of candles when brought out to the sun. No, no, herein is love, that God gave Christ for us. When the apostle would show, Romans 5:8, what is the noblest fruit, that most commends to men the root of Divine love that bears it, he shows us this very fruit of it, "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us:" this is the very essence of that love. In expounding this precious point, we will show, I. How Jesus Christ was given by the Father, and what is implied therein. His designation and appointment unto death for us; for you read that it was done "according to the determinate counsel of God." Acts 2:23. As the lamb under the law was separated from the flock, and set apart for a sacrifice; and though still living, was intentionally and preparatively given, and consecrated to the Lord; so Jesus Christ was, by the counsel and purpose of God, thus chosen, and set apart for his service: and therefore, in Isaiah 42:1, God calls him his Elect, or chosen One. His giving, Christ, implies a parting with him, or setting him (as the

French version hath it) at some distance from himself for a time. There was a kind of parting between the Father and the Son, when he came to tabernacle in our flesh: "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world, and go to the Father." John 16:28. This distance, occasioned by his incarnation and humiliation, was properly as to his humanity, which was really distant from the glory into which it is now taken up; and in withholding the manifestation of delight and love, the Lord seemed to treat him as one at a distance from him. Oh! this was it that so deeply pierced and wounded his soul, as is evident from that complaint, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou hearest not," &c Psalms 22:1-2.

God's giving of Christ, implies his delivering him into the hands of justice; even as condemned persons are, by sentence of law, given or delivered into the hands of executioners. So Acts 2:23, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain;" and so he is said "to deliver him up to death for us all." Romans 8:32.

God's giving of Christ, implies his application of him, with all the purchase of his blood, and settling all this upon us as an inheritance and portion. "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven; for the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." John 6:32-33. God hath given him as bread to poor starving creatures, that by faith they might eat and live. And so he told the Samaritan woman, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." John 4:10. Bread and water are the two necessaries for the support of natural life; God hath given Christ, you see, to be all that, and more, to the spiritual life.

II. This gift of Christ was the highest and fullest manifestation of the love of God that ever the world saw.

Consider how near and dear Jesus Christ was to the Father: he was his Son, "his only Son;" the Son of his love, yea, one with himself; the express image of his person; the brightness of his Father's glory: "Unto us a Son is given," Isaiah 9:6, and such a Son as he calls "his dear Son." Colossians 1:13. A late writer tells us, that in the famine in Germany, a poor family being ready to perish, the husband proposed to the wife to sell one of the children for bread to relieve themselves and the rest. The wife at last consented it should be so; but then they began to think which of the four should be sold; and when the eldest was named, they both refused to part with that, being their first-born, and the beginning of their strength. Well, then they came to the second, but could not yield that he should be sold, being the very picture and lively image of his father. The third was named, but that also was a child that best resembled the mother. And when the youngest was thought of, that was the Benjamin, the child of their old age; and so they determined rather to perish in the famine than part with a child for relief. And you know how Jacob mourned when his Joseph and Benjamin were rent from him. What is a child but a piece of the parent wrapt up in another skin? And yet our dearest children are but as strangers to us in comparison of the unspeakable dearness betwixt the Father and Christ. Now that he should ever thus part with his Son, his only Son, is such a manifestation of love as will be admired to all eternity. And then,

Let it be considered to what he gave him, even to death, and that of the cross; to be made a curse for us; to be the scorn and contempt of men; to the most unparalleled sufferings that ever were

inflicted or borne by any. It breaks our heart to behold our children struggling in the pangs of death; but the Lord beheld his Son struggling under agonies that never any felt before him. He saw him falling to the ground, groveling in the dust, sweating blood, and amidst those agonies turning himself to his Father, and, with a heart-rending cry, beseeching him, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass." Luke 22:42. To wrath, to the wrath of an infinite God, was Christ delivered, and that by the band of his own Father. Sure, then, that love must needs want a name, which made the Father of mercies deliver his only Son to such miseries for us.

It is a special consideration to enhance the love of God in giving Christ, that in giving him he gave the richest jewel in his cabinet, a mercy of the greatest worth and most inestimable value. Heaven itself is not so valuable and precious as Christ is: "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" Psalms 73:25. Oh what a fair One! what an only One! what an excellent, lovely One is Christ! Put the beauty of ten thousand paradises, like the garden of Eden, into one; put all trees, all flowers, all smells, all colors, all tastes, all joys, all sweetness, all loveliness in one; oh what a fair and excellent thing would that be! And yet it should be less to that fair and dearest well-beloved Christ, than one drop of rain to the whole seas, rivers, lakes, and fountains of ten thousand earths. Now, for God to bestow the mercy of mercies, the most precious thing in heaven or earth, upon poor sinners; and, as great, as lovely, as excellent as his Son was, yet not to account him too good to bestow upon us, what manner of love is this!

Once more let it be considered on whom the Lord bestowed his Son: upon angels? No; but upon men. Upon men, his friends? No; but upon his enemies. This is love; and on this consideration the apostle lays a mighty weight. "God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. When we were yet enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." Romans 5:8-10. Who would part with a son for the sake of his dearest friends? but God gave him to, and delivered him for enemies: Oh love unspeakable!

Let us consider how freely this gift came from him. It was not wrested out of his hand by our importunity; for we as little desired as deserved it. It was surprising, self moved, eternal love, that delivered him to us. "Not that we loved him, but he first loved us." 1 John 4:19. Thus, as when you weigh a thing, you cast in weight after weight, till the scales break; so doth God, one consideration upon another, to overcome our hearts, and make us admiringly to cry, "What manner of love" is this! Thus I have showed you what God’s giving of Christ is, and what matchless love is manifested in that incomparable gift.

INFERENCE

Learn hence the exceeding preciousness of souls, and at what a high rate God values them, that he gave his Son, his only Son out of his bosom, as a ransom for them. Surely this speaks their preciousness: all the world could not redeem them; gold and -silver could not be their ransom; so speaks the apostle, "You were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ." 1 Peter 1:18. Such an esteem God had for them, that rather than they should perish, Jesus Christ shall be made a man, yea, a curse for them. Oh, then, learn to put a due value upon your own souls: do not sell that cheap for which God hath paid so dear: remember what a treasure you carry about you; the glory that you see in this world is not equivalent in worth to it. "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Matthew 16:26.

If God has given his own Son for the world, then it follows, that those for whom God gave his own Son, may warrantably expect any other temporal mercies from him. This is the apostle's inference, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not, with him, freely give us all things?" Romans 8:32. And so, 1 Corinthians 3:21-23, "All things are yours, for ye are Christ's:" that is, they hold all other things in Christ, who is the capital and most comprehensive mercy. No other mercy you need or desire, is or can be so dear to God as Jesus Christ is. As for the world, and the comforts of it, it is the dust of his feet; he values it not, as you see by his providential disposals of it, having given it to the worst of men. "All the Turkish empire," saith Luther, "as great and glorious as it is, is but a crumb which the Master of the family throws to the dogs." Think upon any other outward enjoyment that is valuable in your eyes, and there is not so much comparison between it and Christ, in the esteem of God, as between your dear children and the lumber of your houses, in your esteem. If then God has parted so freely with that which was infinitely dearer to him than these, how shall he deny these when they may promote his glory and your good? As Jesus Christ was nearer the heart of God than all these, so Christ is, in himself, much greater and more excellent than all of them. Ten thousand worlds, and the glory of them all, is but the dust of the balance if weighed with Christ. These things are but poor creatures, but he is "over all, God blessed for ever Romans 9:5. They are common gifts, but he is the gift of God. John 4:10. They are ordinary mercies, but he is The. Mercy, Luke 1:72, as one pearl or precious stone is greater in value than ten thousand pebbles. Now, if God has so freely given the greater, how can you suppose he should deny the lesser mercies? Will a man give to another a large inheritance, and grudge him a trifle?, how can it be?

There is no other mercy you need, but you are entitled to it by the gift of Christ; it is, as to right, conveyed to you with Christ. So, in the fore-cited 1 Corinthians 3:21-23, the world is yours, yea, all is yours, for ye are Christ's. So 2 Corinthians 1:20, "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen." With him he hath given you all things richly to enjoy. 1 Timothy 6:17.

If God has given you this nearer, greater, and all-comprehending mercy, when you were enemies to him, and alienated from him, it is not imaginable he should deny you any inferior mercy, when you are come into. a state of reconciliation and amity with him. So the apostle reasons, "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Romans 5:8-10.

If the greatest love hath been manifested in giving Christ to the world, then it follows, that the greatest evil and wickedness is manifested in despising, slighting, and rejecting Christ. It is sad to abuse the love of God manifested in the least gift of providence; but, to slight the richest displays of it, even that peerless gift, wherein God commends his love in the most astonishing manner, this is sin beyond description. Blush, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth! yea, be ye horribly afraid! No guilt like this. But, are there any such in the world? Dare any slight this gift of God? Indeed, if men's words might be taken, there are few or none that dare do so; but if their lives and practices may be believed, this, this is the sin of the far greater part of the christianized world. Witness the lamentable stupidity and supineness; witness the contempt of the Gospel; witness the hatred and persecution of his image, laws, and people. What is the language of all this, but a vile esteem of Jesus Christ? And now let me a little expostulate with those ungrateful souls that trample under foot the Son of God; that value not this love that gave him up to die. What is that mercy which you so contemn and undervalue? is it so vile and cheap a thing as your conduct

speaks it to be? is it indeed worth no more than this in your eyes! Surely you will not be long of that opinion! Will you be of that mind, think you, when death and judgment shall have thoroughly awakened you? Oh, no: then a thousand worlds for Christ! Or, think ye, that any besides you in the world are of your mind? You are deceived if you think so; "To them that believe he is precious," 1 Peter 2:7, through all the world: And in the other world they are of a quite contrary mind. Could you but bear what is said of him in heaven, in what a dialect the saved of the Lord extol their Saviour; or could you but imagine the self-revenges, the self-torments, which the damned suffer for their folly, and what a value they would set upon one tender of Christ, if it might but again be hoped for; you would see that such as you are the only despisers of Christ. Besides, methinks it is astonishing that you should despise a mercy in which your own souls are so dearly, so deeply, so everlastingly concerned, as they are in this gift of God. If it were but the soul of another, nay, less, if but the body of another, and yet less than that, if but another's beast, whose life you could preserve, you are obliged to do it; but when it is thyself, yea, the best part of thyself, thine own invaluable soul, that thou ruinest and destroyest thereby, oh, what a monster art thou to cast it away thus! What! will you slight your own souls? care you not whether they be saved, or whether they be damned? is it indeed an indifferent thing with you which way they fall at death? have you imagined a tolerable hell? is it easy to perish? are you not only turned God's enemies, but your own too? Oh, see what monsters sin can turn men into! Oh the stupifying, besotting, intoxicating power of sin!, But perhaps you think that all these are but uncertain sounds with which we alarm you; it may be thine own heart will preach such doctrine as this to thee: "Who can assure me of the reality of these things? why should I trouble myself with an invisible world, or be so much concerned for what my eyes never saw, nor did I ever receive the report from any that have seen them?" Well, though we cannot now show you these things, yet shortly they shall be shown you, and your own eyes shall behold them. You are convinced and satisfied that many other things are real which you never saw; but be assured, that "if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at first began to be spoken to us by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by them that heard him, God also bearing them witness?" Hebrews 2:2-4. But, perhaps you say, if they be certain, yet they are not near; it will be a long time before they come. Poor soul! how dost thou cheat thyself! It may be not one twentieth part so long a time as thy own fancy paints for thee; thou art not certain of the next moment. And suppose what thou imaginest; what are twenty or forty years when they are past? yea, what are a thousand years to vast eternity? Go, trifle away a few days more; sleep out a few nights more, and then lie down in the dust; it will not belong ere the trump of God shall awaken thee, and thine eyes shall behold Jesus coming in the clouds of heaven, and then you will know the price of this sin. Oh, therefore, if there be any sense of eternity upon you, any pity or love for yourself in you; if you have any interests more than the beasts that perish; despise not your own offered mercies, slight not the richest gift that ever was yet opened to the world; and a sweeter cannot be opened to all eternity.

01.05. Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Of Christ’s Wonderful Person "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." 1 Corinthians 2:2 "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." John 1:14

We have contemplated the covenant of redemption. It is such as infinitely exceeds the power of any mere creature to perform. He that undertakes to satisfy God by obedience for man’s sin, must himself be God; and he that performs such a perfect obedience, by doing and suffering all that the law required, in our room, must be man. These two natures must be united in one person, else there could not be a cooperation of each nature in his mediatorial work. How these natures are united, in the wonderful person of our Immanuel, is the first part of the great mystery of godliness: a subject, studied and adored by angels! and the mystery thereof is wrapped up in the passage before us. Wherein we have, The Person assuming, the Word, that is, the second Person or Subsistent in the most glorious God-head; called the Word, either because he is the scope or principal matter, both of the prophetical and promissory word; or because he expounds and reveals the mind and will of God to men, as verse 18: "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared" or expounded "him." The nature assumed, flesh, that is, the entire human nature, consisting of a true human soul and body. For so this word "sarx" in Romans 3:20, and the Hebrew word basar, which answers to it, by a usual metonymy of a part for the whole, is used, Genesis 6:12. The word flesh, rather than man, is doubtless used here to enhance the admirable condescension and abasement of Christ implying man’s vileness, weakness, and opposition to spirit. Hence the whole nature is denominated by that part, and called flesh. The assumption itself, he was made; not "fuit", he was, (as Socinus would render it, designing thereby to overthrow the existence of Christ’s glorified body now in heaven,) but factus est, he was made, that is, he took or assumed the true human nature into the unity of his Divine person, with all its integral parts and essential properties; and so was made, or became a true and real man, by that assumption. The apostle speaking of the same act, Hebrews 2:16, uses another word, He "took on him," or he assumed. And when it is said, he was made flesh, misconceive not, as if there was a mutation of the Godhead into flesh; for this was performed, "not by changing what he was, but by assuming what he was not," as Augustine well expresses it. As when the Scripture, in a like expression, says, "He was made sin," 2 Corinthians 5:21, and made a curse, Galatians 3:13, the meaning is not, that he was turned into sin, or into a curse; no more may we think here the Godhead was turned into flesh, and lost its own being and nature, because it is said he was made flesh. This assertion "that the Word was made flesh," is also here strongly confirmed. He "dwelt among us," and we saw his glory. This was no phantasm, but a most real and indubitable thing. For, he pitched his tent, or tabernacled with us. And we are eye-witnesses of it. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life, declare we unto you." 1 John 1:1-3. Hence,

Jesus Christ did really assume the true and perfect nature of man, into a personal union with his Divine nature, and still remains true God, and true man, in one person for ever. The proposition contains one of the deepest mysteries of godliness, 1 Timothy 3:16. A mystery, by which apprehension is dazzled, invention astonished, and all expression swallowed up. If ever the tongues of angels were desirable to explicate any word of God, they are so here. The proper use of words is of great importance in this doctrine. We walk upon the brink of danger. The least tread awry may ingulf us in the bogs of error. Arius would have been content, if the council of Nice would but have gratified him in a letter, [to have changed the meaning of the Greek word for "of a like substance" for, "of the same substance] The Nestorians also desired but a letter, [one letter to be changed in the Greek wording] These seemed but small and modest requests, but, if granted, had proved no small prejudice to the truth. I desire therefore the reader would, with greatest attention of mind, apply himself to these truths. It is a doctrine hard to understand, and dangerous to mistake. As Prosper has well said, "It is better not touch the bottom, than not keep within the circle." Christ did assume a true human body; that is plainly asserted, Php 2:7-8, &c. Hebrews 2:14; Hebrews 2:16. In one place it is called taking on him the seed of Abraham, and in the text, flesh. He did also assume a true human soul; this is undeniable by its operations, passions, and expiration at last, Matthew 26:38; Matthew 27:50. And that both these natures make but one person, is as evident from Romans 1:3-4, "Jesus Chris was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." So Romans 9:5, "Of whom, as concerning, the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." Let us then consider the nature; the effects; and the reasons or ends of this wonderful union.

I. The nature of this union. The assumption of which I speak, is that whereby the Second Person in the God-head did take the human nature into a personal union with himself, by virtue whereof the manhood subsists in the Second Person, yet without confusion, both making but one person, Immanuel, God with us. So that though we truly ascribe a twofold nature to Christ, yet not a double person; for the human nature of Christ never subsisted separately and distinctly, by any personal subsistence of its own, as it doth in all other men, but, from the first moment of conception, subsisted in union with the Second Person. To explicate this mystery more particularly, let it be considered: The human nature was united to the Second Person miraculously and extraordinarily, being supernaturally framed in the womb of the virgin, by the overshadowing power of the Highest. Luke 1:34-35. And this was necessary to exempt the assumed nature from the stain and pollution of Adam’s sin, which it wholly escaped; inasmuch as he received it not, as all others do, in the way of ordinary generation, wherein original sin is propagated; but this being extraordinarily produced, was a most pure and holy thing. Luke 1:35. And indeed this perfect shining holiness, in which it was produced, was absolutely necessary, both in order to its union with the Divine Person, and the design of that union; which was both to satisfy for, and to sanctify us. The two natures could not be conjoined in the person of Christ, had there been the least taint of sin upon the human nature. For God can have no fellowship with sin, much less be united to it. Or, supposing such a conjunction with our sinful nature, he being thus a sinner himself, could never satisfy for the sins of others; nor could any unholy thing ever make us holy. "Such an High Priest therefore became us as is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." Hebrews 7:26. And such a one he must needs be, whom the Holy Ghost produced in such a peculiar way, "that holy thing." As it was produced miraculously, so it was assumed integrally; that is to say, Christ took a complete and perfect

human soul and body, with all and every faculty and member pertaining to it. And this was necessary, (as both Augustine and Fulgentius have well observed,) that thereby he might heal the whole nature of that leprosy of sin which hath seized and infected every member and faculty. "He assumed all to sanctify all;" as Damascen expresses it. He designed a perfect recovery, by sanctifying us wholly in soul, body, and spirit; and therefore assumed the whole in order to it.

He assumed our nature, as with all its integral parts, so with all its sinless infirmities. And therefore it is said of him, "That it behooved him," "in all things" (that is, all things natural, not formally sinful, as it is limited by the same apostle, Hebrews 4:15) "to be made like unto his brethren," Hebrews 2:17. But here divines carefully distinguish infirmities into personal and natural. Personal infirmities are such as befall particular persons from particular causes, such as dumbness, blindness, lameness, leprosies, monstrosities, and other deformities. These it was no way necessary that Christ should, nor did he at all assume; but the natural ones, such as hunger, thirst, weariness, sweating, bleeding, mortality, &c. which though they are not in themselves formally and intrinsically sinful, yet are they the effects and consequence of sin. They are so many marks, that sin has left of itself upon our natures. And on that account Christ is said to be sent "in the likeness of sinful flesh." Romans 8:3. Wherein the gracious condescension of Christ for us is marvelously signalized, that. he would not assume our innocent nature, as it was in Adam before the fall, while it stood in all its primitive glory and perfection; but after sin had quite defaced, ruined, and spoiled it. The human nature is so united with the Divine, as that each nature still retains its own essential properties distinct. And this distinction is not, and cannot be lost by that union.

II. The effects, or immediate results of this marvelous union. The two natures being thus united in the person of the Mediator, by virtue thereof the properties of each nature are attributed, and do truly agree in the whole person; so that it is proper to say, the Lord of glory was crucified, 1 Corinthians 2:8, and the blood of God redeemed the church, Acts 20:28, that Christ was both in heaven and in the earth at the same time, John 3:13. Yet we do not believe that one nature doth transfuse or impart its properties to the other, or that it is proper to say the Divine nature suffered, bled, or died; or the human is omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent; but that the properties of both natures are so ascribed to the person, that it is proper to affirm any of them of him in the concrete, though not abstractly. The right understanding of this would greatly assist in teaching the true sense of the fore-named, and many other dark passages in the Scriptures.

Another fruit of this union, is the singular advancement of the human nature in Christ, far beyond and above what it is capable of in any other person, it being hereby replenished and filled with an unparalleled measure of Divine graces and excellencies; in which respect he is said to be "anointed above his fellows," Psalms 45:7, and so becomes the object of adoration and divine worship, Acts 7:59.

Hence follows, as another excellent fruit of this union, the concourse and cooperation of each nature in his mediatorial works; for in them he acts according to both natures: the human nature doing what is human, namely, suffering, sweating, bleeding, dying; and his Divine nature stamping all these with infinite value; and so both sweetly concur unto one glorious work and design of mediation. Papists generally deny that he performs any of these mediatorial works as God, but only as man; but how boldly do they therein contradict the Scriptures! See 2 Corinthians 5:10; Hebrews 9:14-15.

III. The grounds and reasons of this assumption. The Divine did not assume the human nature necessarily, but voluntarily; not out of indigence, but bounty; - not because it was to be perfected by it, but to perfect it, that so Christ might be prepared for the full discharge of his mediatorship, in the offices of our Prophet, Priest, and King. Had he not possessed this double nature in the unity of his person, he could not have been our Prophet: for, as God, he knows the mind and will of God, John 1:18, and John 3:13; and as man he is fitted to impart it suitably to us, Deuteronomy 18:15-18, compared with Acts 20:22. As Priest, had he not been man, he could have shed no blood; and if not God, it had been of no adequate value for us, Hebrews 2:17; Acts 3:28. As King, had he not been man, he had been of a different nature, and so no fit head for us; and if not God, be could neither rule nor defend his body the church. These then were the designs and ends of that assumption.

INFERENCE

Let all Christians rightly inform their minds in this truth of so great moment in religion, and hold it fast against all subtle adversaries that would wrest it from them. The learned Hooker observes, that the dividing of Christ's person, which is but one, and the confounding of his natures, which are two, has been the occasion of. those errors which have so greatly disturbed the peace of the church. The Arians denied his Deity, leveling him with other created beings. The Apollinarians maimed his humanity. The Sabellians affirmed, that the Father and Holy Ghost were incarnated as well as the Son; and were forced upon that absurdity by another error, namely, denying the three distinct persons in the Godhead, and affirming they were but three names. The Eutychians confounded both natures in Christ, denying any distinction of them. The Seleusians affirmed that he unclothed himself of his humanity when he ascended, and has no human body in heaven. The Nestorians so rent the two names of Christ asunder, as to make two distinct persons of them. But ye, beloved, have not so learned Christ. Ye know he is, True and very God;

True and very man; that, These two natures make but one person, being united inseparably; That they are not confounded or swallowed up one in another, but remain still distinct in the person of Christ.

Hold ye the sound words which cannot be condemned; Great things hang upon all these truths. O suffer not a stone to be loosed out of the foundation.

Adore the love of the Father and the Son, who valued your souls so highly, and were willing to save you at such a cost. The love of the Father is herein admirably conspicuous, who so vehemently willed our salvation, that he could degrade the beloved of his soul to so vile and contemptible a state. And how astonishing is the love of Christ, that would make such a stoop as this to exalt us! Oh that you would get your hearts suitably impressed and affected with this love both of the Father and the Son! How is the courage of some noble Romans celebrated in history, for the brave adventures they made for the commonwealth; but they could never stoop as Christ did, being so infinitely below him in personal dignity. And here infinite wisdom has also left a famous and everlasting mark of itself which invites, yea, even chains the eyes of angels and men to itself. Had there been a. general council of angels to devise a way of recovering poor sinners, they would all have been at an everlasting demur and loss about it. It could not have entered their thoughts, (though they are most intelligent and sagacious,) that ever mercy, pardon, and grace, should find such a way as this to issue forth from the heart of God to the hearts of sinners. Oh,

bow wisely is the method of our recovery laid! so that Christ may be well called "the power and wisdom of God," 1 Corinthians 1:24; forasmuch as in him the Divine wisdom is more glorified than in all the other works of God upon which he has impressed it.

Hence also we infer the incomparable excellency of the Christian religion, that shows poor sinners such a sure foundation on which the trembling conscience may rest. While poor distressed souls look to themselves, they are perpetually in darkness. The cry of the distressed natural conscience is, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord" Conscience sees God arming himself with wrath, to avenge himself for sin, and cries out, Oh, how shall I prevent him; if he would accept the fruit of my body (those dear pledges of nature) for the sin of my soul, he should have them! But now we see God coming down in flesh, and so intimately uniting our nature to himself, that it had properly no personal separate subsistence, but is united with the Divine person: hence it is easy to imagine what worth and value must be in that blood; and how eternal love, springing forth triumphantly from it, flourishes into pardon, grace, and peace. Here is a way in which the sinner may see justice and mercy kissing each other, and the latter exercised freely without prejudice to the former. All other consciences, through the world, lie either in a deep sleep in the devil’s arms, or else are rolling, sea-sick, upon the waves of their own fears and dismal presages. Oh, happy are they that have dropped anchor on this ground, and not only know they have peace, but why they have it. Of how great moment is it, that Christ should have union with our particular persons, as well as with our common nature! For, by this union with our nature alone, never any man was, or can be saved. Yea, let me add, that this union with our natures is utterly in vain to you, and will do you no good, except he have union with your persons by faith also. It is indeed infinite mercy that God is come so near you as to dwell in your flesh; and that he has fixed upon such an excellent method to save poor sinners. And has he done all this? Is he indeed come home, even to your own doors, to seek peace? Does he veil his insupportable glory under flesh, that he may treat the more familiarly? and yet do you refuse him, and shut your heart against him? Then bear one word, and let thine ears tingle at the sound of it: thy sin is thereby aggravated beyond the sin of devils, who never sinned against a mediator in their own nature; who never despised, or refused, because, indeed, they were never offered terms of mercy, as you are. And I doubt not but the devils themselves, who now tempt you to reject, will, to all eternity, upbraid your folly for rejecting this great salvation, which in this excellent way is brought down even to your own doors.

If Jesus Christ has assumed our nature, then be is sensibly touched with the infirmities that attend it, and so hath pity and compassion for us under all our burdens. And indeed this was one end of his assuming it, that he might be able to have compassion on us: "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." Hebrews 2:17-18. Oh what a comfort is this to us, that he who is our High Priest in heaven, has our nature to enable him to take compassion on us !

Hence we see to what a height God intends to build up the happiness of man, in that he hath laid the foundation thereof so deep, in the incarnation of his Son. They that intend to build high, lay the foundation law. The happiness and glory of our bodies, as well as our souls, are founded in Christ’s taking our flesh upon him; for therein, as in a model or pattern, God intended to show what in time he resolves to make of our bodies; for he will transform our vile bodies, and make them one

day conformable to the glorious body of Jesus Christ. Php 3:21. This flesh was therefore assumed by Christ, that in it might be shown, as in a pattern, how God intends to honor and exalt it. And, indeed, a greater honor cannot be done to the nature of man than what is already done by this grace of union; nor are our persons capable of higher glory than what consists in their conformity to this glorious Head.

How wonderful a comfort is it, that he who dwells in our flesh is God! What joy may not a poor believer make out of this! God and man in one person! Oh! thrice happy conjunction! As man, he is full of experimental sense of our infirmities, wants, and burdens; and, as God, he can support and supply them all. The aspect of faith upon this wonderful Person, how relieving, how reviving, how abundantly satisfying is it! God will, never divorce the believing soul and its comfort; after he hath married our nature to his own Son, by the hypostatical, and our persons also, by the blessed mystical union.

01.06. Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Of the Authority by which Christ, as Mediator, Acted "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." 1 Corinthians 2:2 "For him hath God the Father sealed." - John 6:27. This Scripture is a part of Christ's excellent reply to an earthly-minded multitude, who followed him, not for any spiritual excellencies that they saw in him, or soul-advantages they expected by him, but for bread. Instead of making his service their meat and drink, they only served him that they might eat and drink. Self may creep into the best hearts and actions; but it only predominates in the hypocrite. These people had sought Christ from place to place, and having at last found him, they salute him with the question, "Rabbi, whence camest thou hither?" John 6:25. Christ's reply is partly dissuasive, and partly directive. He dissuades them from putting the secondary and subordinate in the place of the principal and ultimate end; from preferring their bodies to their souls, their fleshly accommodations to the glory of God. "Labor not for the meat that perisheth:" by which he does not take them off from their lawful labors and callings, but dissuades them from minding those things too intently; and from the odious sin of making religion but a pretense for sensual gratification. "But labor for that meat which endureth to eternal life:" to get bread for your souls to live by eternally. And, that he might engage their diligence in seeking it to purpose, he shows them not only where they may have it,-"which the Son of man shall give you,"-but also how they may be fully satisfied that he hath it for them, "For him hath God the Father sealed." In these words are three parts observable. The Person sealing or investing Christ with authority and power; which is said to be God the Father. Though all the persons in the Godhead are equal in nature, dignity, and power, yet in their operation there is an order observed among them: the Father sends the Son, the Son is sent by the Father, the Holy Ghost is sent by both. The subject in which God the Father lodges this authority, "Him," that is, the Son of man. God the Father hath so sealed him, as he never sealed any other before him, or that shall arise after him. No name is given in heaven, or earth, but this name, by which we are saved. Acts 4:12. "The government is upon his shoulder." Isaiah 9:6. The way and manner of the Father's delegating and committing this authority to Christ; and that is, by sealing him. Where. we have both a metonymy, the symbol of authority being put for the authority itself; and a metaphor, sealing, which is a human act for ratifying and confirming an instrument or grant, being here applied to God. Like as princes, by sealed credentials, confirm the authority of those they send. Hence,

Jesus Christ did not of himself undertake the work of our redemption, but was solemnly sealed unto it by God the Father. When I say be did not of himself undertake this work, I mean not that he was unwilling, for his heart was as fully and ardently engaged in it as the Father's: so he tells us, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God; thy law is in my heart." Psalms 40:7-8. But the meaning is, he came not without a due call, and full commission from his Father. And this is the meaning of that scripture, "I proceeded and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me." John 8:42. And this the apostle plainly expresses, "No man taketh this honor to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron: so also Christ glorified not himself to be made an High Priest; but he that said

unto him, Thou art my Son." Hebrews 5:4-5. And on account of these sealed credentials which he received from the Father, he is called "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession," Hebrews 3:1, that is, one called and sent forth by the Father's authority. Our present business, then, is to open Christ's commission, and to view the great seal of heaven by which it was ratified.

I. What was that office, or work, to which his Father sealed him? I answer, more generally, he was sealed to the whole work of mediation for us, thereby to recover and save all whom the Father had given him: so John 17:2; it was to "give eternal life to as many as were given him" it was "to bring Jacob again to him," Isaiah 49:5, or, as the apostle expresses it, "that he might bring us to God." 1 Peter 3:18. More particularly, in order to the sure and full effecting of this most glorious design. he was sealed to the offices of a Prophet, Priest, and King, that so be might bring about and compass this work.

God sealed him a commission to preach the glad tidings of salvation to sinners. This commission Christ opened and read in the audience of the people; "And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, &c. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." Luke 4:17-21.

He also sealed him to the priesthood, and that the most excellent; authorizing him to execute both the parts of it, namely, expiatory and intercessory. He called him to offer up himself a sacrifice for us: "I have power (saith he) to lay down my life; this commandment have I received of my Father." John 10:18, And upon that account, his offering up of his blood is, by the apostle, styled an act of obedience: "He became obedient unto death." Php 2:8. He, also called him to intercede for us. "Those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath, by him that said unto him, The Lord sware, and will not repent, Thou art a Priest for ever," Hebrews 7:21; Hebrews 7:24-25 : his sacrifice is virtually continued, in his living for ever to make intercession, as Hebrews 7:24.

He called him to his regal office; he was set upon the highest throne of authority by his Father's commission: "All power in heaven and earth is given to me." Matthew 28:18. To all this was Christ sealed and authorized by his Father.

II. What doth the Father's sealing of Christ to this work and office imply? The validity and efficacy of all his mediatorial acts. For by virtue of this his sealing, whatever he did was fully ratified. And in this very thing lies much of a believer's comfort and security; forasmuch as all acts done without commission and authority, how great or able soever the person that performs them, are in themselves null and void. But what is done by commission and authority, is authentic, and valid among men.

It imports the great obligation lying upon Jesus Christ to be faithful in the work to which he was sealed: for the Father, in this commission, devolves a great trust upon him, and relies upon him for his most faithful discharge of it. And, indeed, upon this very account Christ reckons himself specially obliged to pursue the Father's design and end: "I must work the works of him that sent me." John 9:4. And, "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me." John 5:30. His eye is still upon that work and will of his Father. He reckons himself under a necessity of

punctual and precise obedience to it; and, as a faithful servant, will have his own will swallowed up in his Father's will.

It imports Christ's complete qualification and fitness to serve the Father's design and end of our recovery. Had not God known him to be every way fit and qualified for the work, he would never have sealed him a commission for it. Men may, but God will not seal an unfit or incapable person for his work. And, indeed, whatever is desirable in a servant, was eminently found in Christ. For faithfulness, none like him. Moses, indeed, was faithful in every point, but still as a servant; but Christ as a Son. Hebrews 3:6. He is "the faithful and true witness." Revelation 1:5. For zeal, none like him. The zeal of God's house did eat him up. John 2:16-17. He was so intent upon his Father's work that he forgot to eat bread, counting his work his meat and drink. John 4:32. Yea, love to his Father carried him on through all his work, and made him delight in the hardest piece of his service; for be served him as a Son. Hebrews 3:5-6. All that ever he did was done in love. For wisdom, none like him. The Father knew him to be most wise, and said of him before he was employed, "Behold, my Servant shall deal prudently." Isaiah 52:13. For self-denial, never any like him; he sought not his own glory, but the glory of him that sent him. John 8:50. Had he not been thus faithful, zealous, full of love, prudent, and self-denying, he had never been employed in this great affair.

It implies Christ's sole authority in the church, to appoint and enjoin what he pleaseth; and this is his peculiar prerogative. God's sealing him is a single, not a joint commission; he hath sealed him, and none beside him. Indeed there were some that pretended a call and commission from God; but all that came before him, giving themselves out for the Messiah, were "thieves and robbers," that came not in at the door, as he did. John 10:8. And he himself foretells, that after him some should arise, and labor to deceive the world with a feigned commission, and a counterfeit seal: "There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch, that if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect." Matthew 24:24. But God never commissioned any besides him, neither is there any other name under heaven. Acts 4:12.

III. Let us inquire how God the Father sealed Jesus Christ to this work. By solemn designation to this work. He singled him out and set him apart for it: and therefore the prophet Isaiah calls him God's elect, chap. 42:1; and the apostle Peter, Chosen of God. 1 Peter 2:4. This word which we render elect, not only signifies one that in himself is surpassing, worthy, and excellent, but also one that is set apart and designed, as Christ was, for the work of mediation. And so much is included in John 10:36, where the Father is said to sanctify him, that is, to separate and devote him to this service.

He was sealed, not only by solemn designation, but also by supereminent and unparalleled sanctification. He was anointed, as well as appointed to it. The Lord filled him with the Spirit, and that without measure, to qualify him for this service. So Isaiah 61:1-3, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach," &c. Yea, the Spirit of the Lord was not only upon him, but he was full of the Spirit, Luke 4:1, and so full as was never any beside him; for God "anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows." Psalms 45:7. Believers are his fellows, or co-partners of this Spirit ; they have an anointing also, but not as Christ had: in him it dwelt in its fullness, in them according to measure. It was poured out on Christ, our Head, abundantly, and ran dawn to the hem of his garment. "God gave not the Spirit to him by measure." John 3:34. God

filled Christ's human nature, to the utmost capacity, with all fullness of the Spirit of knowledge, wisdom, love, &c. beyond all creatures, for the plenary and more effectual administration of his mediatorship. He was full extensively, with all kinds of grace; and full, intensively, with all degrees of grace. "It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell," Colossians 1:19, as light in the sun, or water in a fountain; so that the holy oil that was poured out upon the head of kings and priests, whereby they were consecrated to their offices, was but typical of the Spirit by which Christ was consecrated or sealed to his offices. Exodus 30:23-25; Exodus 30:1-38; Exodus 31:1-18; Exodus 32:1-35.

Christ was sealed by the Father's immediate testimony from heaven, whereby he was declared to be the person whom the Father had solemnly designed and appointed to this work. And God gave this extraordinary testimony of him at two remarkable seasons: the one was just at his entrance on his public ministry, Matthew 3:17; the other but a little before his sufferings. Matthew 17:5. By this God owned, approved, and, as by a seal, ratified his work.

Christ was sealed by the Father, in all those extraordinary miraculous works wrought by him, by which the Father gave yet more full and convincing testimonies to the world, that this was he whom he had appointed to be our Mediator. These proved to the world that God had sent him, and that his doctrine was of God. "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and power, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him." Acts 10:38. And so, John 5:36, "I have a greater witness than that of John; for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." Therefore he still referred those that doubted of him, or of his doctrine, to the seal of his Father, even the miraculous works he wrought in the power of God. Matthew 9:3-5.

IV. We will inquire why it was necessary Christ should be sealed by his Father to this work.

He had not otherwise corresponded with the types which prefigured him; and in him it was necessary that they should be all accomplished. Under the law, the kings and high priests had their inauguration by solemn unctions, in all which this consecration, or sealing of Christ to his work, was shadowed out: and therefore you find, Hebrews 5:4-5, "No man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also," (mark the necessary correspondence between Christ and them,) "Christ glorified not himself to be made an High Priest but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son."

Hereby the hearts of believers are the more engaged to love the Father, inasmuch as the Father's love and good will to them was the origin and spring of their redemption. For had not the Father sealed him such a commission, he had not come; but now he comes in the Father's name, and in the Father's love as well as his name; and so all men are bound to ascribe equal glory and honor to them both, as John 5:23.

Christ would not come without a commission, because we should have had no ground for our faith in him. How should we have been satisfied that this is indeed the true Messiah, except he had opened his commission to the world, and showed his Father's seal annexed to it? If he had come without his credentials from heaven, and only told the world that God had sent him, and that they must take his bare word for it, who could have rested his faith on that testimony? This is the true meaning of John 5:31, "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true." How so? you will say,

does not this contradict what he says, John 8:14, "Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true?" I answer: You must understand the word truth here, not as opposed to reality; but the meaning is, If I had only given you my bare word for it, and not brought other evidence from my Father, my testimony had not been authentic and valid according to human laws; but now all doubting is precluded.

INFERENCE The unreasonableness of infidelity, and how inexcusable are those who reject Christ. You see he hath opened his commission in the Gospel, shown the world his Father's hand and seal to it, given as ample satisfaction as reason itself could desire or expect; yet even his own received him not. John 1:11. And he knew it beforehand, and therefore complained by the prophet, "Who hath believed our report? &c. Isaiah 53:1-12; Isaiah 1:1-31. Yea, and that He is believed on in the world, is by the apostle put among the great mysteries of godliness. 1 Timothy 3:16. A man that well considers with what convincing evidence Christ comes, would rather think it a mystery that any should not believe. And it is equally wonderful to see the facility with which men embrace the most foolish imposture. Let a false Christ arise, and he shall deceive many. Matthew 24:24. Of this Christ complains, and not without great reason; "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another come in his own name, him will ye receive." John 5:43. As if he had said, You are incredulous to none but me: every deceiver, every pitiful cheat that has but wit, or rather wickedness enough to tell you the Lord hath sent him, though you must take his own single word for it, he shall obtain and get disciples; but though I come in my Father's name, showing you a commission signed and sealed by him, doing those works which none but God can do; yet ye receive me not. But in all this we must adore the justice of God in permitting it to be so, giving men up to such unreasonable obstinacy and hardness. It is a sore plague that lies upon the world, and a wonder that we all are not ingulfed in the same infidelity.

If Christ was sealed to his work by his Father, how great the sin of rejecting and despising such as are sent and sealed by Jesus Christ. As he came to us in his Father's name, so he hath sent forth, by the same authority, ministers in his name; and as he acts in his Father's, so they in his authority. "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." John 17:18. "As my Father hath sent me, even so have I sent you." John 20:21. You may think it a small matter to reject a minister of Christ; but in so doing you despise and slight both the Father who sent his Son, and Christ who sent his minister to you. This reverence and submission are not due to them as men, but as Christ's ambassadors. And by the way, this may instruct ministers, that the way to maintain that veneration and respect that is due to them, in the consciences of their hearers, is to keep close to their commission.

How great an evil is it to intrude into the office of the ministry without a due call. It is more than Christ himself would do; he glorified not himself; the honors and advantages attending that office have invited many to run before they were sent. But, surely this is an insufferable violation of Christ's order. The blessing there may be in all gospel ordinance., duly administered. Christ having received full commission from his Father, and by virtue thereof having instituted and appointed these ordinances in the church, all the power in heaven is engaged to make them good, to confirm and ratify them. Hence in the censures of the church, you have that great expression, "Whatsoever ye bind or loose on earth, shall be bound or loosed in heaven." Matthew 18:18. And so for the word and ordinances, "All power in heaven and earth is given unto me. Go therefore," &c. Matthew 28:18-20. These are not the appointments of men; your faith stands not in the

wisdom of men, but in the power of God. That very power which God the Father committed to Christ, is the fountain whence all Gospel institutions flow. And he hath promised to be with his officers, not only the extraordinary officers of that age, but with his ministers in succeeding ages to the end of the world. Oh therefore, when ye come to an ordinance, come not with slight thoughts, but with great reverence, and great expectations, remembering Christ is there to make all good.

Again, here you have another call to admire the grace and love both of the Father and Son to your souls: it is not lawful to compare them, but it is duty to admire them. Was it not wonderful grace in the Father to seal a commission for the death of his Son, for humbling him as low as hell, and in that method to save you, when you might have expected he should have sealed your doom to hell, rather than a commission for your salvation? He might rather have set his irreversible seal to the sentence of your damnation, than to a commission for his Son's humiliation for you. And no less is the love of Christ to be wondered at, that would accept such a commission as this for us, and receive this seal, understanding fully, as he did, what were the contents of that commission: that the Father delivered him thus sealed, and knowing that there could be no reversing of it afterwards.

Oh, then, love the Lord Jesus, all ye his saints, for still you see more and more of his love breaking forth for you. I commend to you a sealed Saviour; oh that every one that reads these lines might, in a pang of love, cry out with the enamored spouse, "Set me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm; for love is strong as death, jealousy, is cruel as the grave; the coals thereof are coals of fire, which have a most vehement flame." Song of Solomon 8:6.

Hath God sealed Christ for you, then draw forth the comfort of his sealing for you, and rest not till ye also be sealed by him.

Remember, that hereby God stands engaged, even by his own seal, to allow and confirm whatever Christ hath done in the business of our salvation. And on this ground you may thus plead with God: Lord, thou hast sealed Christ to this office, and therefore I depend upon it, that thou allowest all that he hath done, and all that he hath suffered for me, and wilt make good all that he hath promised me. If men will not deny their own seals, much less wilt thou.

Get your interest in Christ sealed to you by the Spirit, else you cannot have the comfort of Christ's being sealed for you. Now the Spirit seals by working those graces in us which are the conditions of the promises; and also by shining upon his own work, and helping the soul to discern it; which follows the other both in order of nature and of time. The person sealed is the true believer, Ephesians 1:13; and the comfort and aid imparted are ever consonant to the written word. Isaiah 8:20. The Spirit produces in the sealed soul, great care and caution to avoid sin. Ephesians 4:30. Great love to God. 1 John 2:5. Readiness to suffer any thing for Christ. Romans 5:3-5. Confidence in addresses to God. 1 John 5:13-14; and great humility and self-abasement, as in Abraham, who lay on his face when God sealed the covenant to him. Genesis 17:1-3. This, oh this brings home the sweet and good of all, when the peace and comfort of all graces of the Spirit are sealed upon the soul.

Chapter 10

02.00. CHRIST ALTOGETHER LOVELY

CHRIST ALTOGETHER LOVELY by John Flavel "Yes, He is altogether lovely! This is my Beloved,

and this is my Friend." Song of Solomon 5:16

02.01. Christ is to be loved

I. Christ is to be loved At the ninth verse of this chapter, you have a question put forth by the daughters of Jerusalem, "What is your beloved more than another beloved?" The spouse answers, "He is the chief among ten thousand." She then recounts many of the things she finds so excellent in her beloved and then concludes with these words: "Yes, he is altogether lovely." The words set forth the transcendent loveliness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and naturally resolve themselves into three parts:

First, Who he is: the Lord Jesus Christ, after whom she had been seeking, for whom she was overcome by love; concerning whom these daughters of Jerusalem had enquired: whom she had struggled to describe in his particular excellencies. He is the great and excellent subject of whom she here speaks.

Secondly, What he is, or what she claims of him: That he is a lovely one. The Hebrew word, which is often translated "desires," means "to earnestly desire, covet, or long after that which is most pleasant, graceful, delectable and admirable." The original word is both in the abstract, and plural in number, which says that Christ is the very essence of all delights and pleasures, the very soul and substance of them. As all the rivers are gathered into the ocean, which is the meeting-place of all the waters in the world, so Christ is that ocean in which all true delights and pleasures meet.

Thirdly, What he is like: He is altogether lovely, the every part to be desired. He is lovely when taken together, and in every part; as if she had said, "Look on him in what respect or particular you wish; cast your eye upon this lovely object, and view him any way, turn him in your serious thoughts which way you wish; consider his person, his offices, his works, or any other thing belonging to him; you will find him altogether lovely, there is nothing disagreeable in him, there is nothing lovely without him." Hence note,

DOCTRINE: That Jesus Christ is the loveliest person souls can set their eyes upon: "You are the most excellent of men." Psalms 45:2

02.02. What is meant by Christ being 'altogether

II. What is meant by Christ being ’altogether lovely’

He is "Altogether Lovely!" Here it is said of Jesus Christ, which cannot be said of any mere creature, that he is "altogether lovely." Let us consider this excellent expression, and particularly reflect on what is contained in it, and you shall find this expression "altogether lovely."

1. It excludes all unloveliness and disagreeableness from Jesus Christ. As a theologian long ago said, "There is nothing in him which is not loveable." The excellencies of Jesus Christ are perfectly exclusive of all their opposites; there is nothing of a contrary property or quality found in him to contaminate or devaluate his excellency. And in this respect Christ infinitely transcends the most excellent and loveliest of created things. Whatever loveliness is found in them, it is not without a bad aftertaste. The fairest pictures must have their shadows. The rarest and most brilliant gems must have dark backgrounds to set off their beauty; the best creature is but a bitter sweet at best. If there is something pleasing, there is also something sour. if a person has every ability, both innate and acquired, to delight us, yet there is also some natural corruption intermixed with it to put us off. But it is not so in our altogether lovely Christ, his excellencies are pure and unmixed. He is a sea of sweetness without one drop of gall.

2. There is nothing unlovely found in him, so all that is in him is wholly lovely. As every ray of God is precious, so everything that is in Christ is precious. Who can weigh Christ in a pair of balances, and tell you what his worth is? "His price is above rubies, and all that you can desire is not to be compared with him," Proverbs 8:11.

3. Christ embraces all things that are lovely. He seals up the sum of all loveliness. Things that shine as single stars with a particular glory, all meet in Christ as a glorious constellation. Colossians 1:19, "It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell." Cast your eyes among all created beings, survey the universe: you will observe strength in one, beauty in a second, faithfulness in a third, wisdom in a fourth; but you shall find none excelling in them all as Christ does. Bread has one quality, water another, clothing another, medicine another; but none has them all in itself as Christ does. He is bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, a garment to the naked, healing to the wounded; and whatever a soul can desire is found in him.

4. Nothing is lovely in opposition to him, or in separation from him. If he truly is altogether lovely, then whatever is opposite to him, or separate from him can have no loveliness in it. Take away Christ, and where is the loveliness of any enjoyment? The best creature-comfort apart from Christ is but a broken cistern. It cannot hold one drop of true comfort, Psalms 73:26. It is with the creature- the sweetest and loveliest creature- as with a beautiful image in the mirror: turn away the face and where is the image? Riches, honors, and comfortable relations are sweet when the face of Christ smiles upon us through them; but without him, what empty trifles are they all?

5. Christ transcends all created excellencies in beauty and loveliness. If you compare Christ and other things, no matter how lovely, no matter how excellent and desirable, Christ carries away all

loveliness from them. "He is before all things," Colossians 1:17. Not only before all things in time, nature, and order; but before all things in dignity, glory, and true excellence. In all things he must have the pre-eminence.

Let us but compare Christ's excellence with the creature's in a few particulars, and how manifest will the transcendent loveliness of Jesus Christ appear! For,

1. All other loveliness is derived and secondary; but the loveliness of Christ is original and primary. Angels and men, the world and all the desirable things in it, receive what excellence they have from him. They are streams from the fountain. The farther anything departs from its fountain and original, the less excellency there is in it.

2. The loveliness and excellency of all other things, is only relative, consisting in its reference to Christ, and subservience to his glory. But Christ is lovely, considered absolutely in himself. He is desirable for himself; other things are desirable because of him.

3. The beauty and loveliness of all other things are fading and perishing; but the loveliness of Christ is fresh for all eternity. The sweetness of the best created thing is a fading flower; if not before, yet certainly at death it must fade away. Job 4:21. "Does not their excellency, which is in them, go away?" Yes, yes, whether they are the natural excellencies of the body, acquired endowments of the mind, lovely features, graceful qualities, or anything else we find attractive; all these like pleasant flowers are withered, faded, and destroyed by death. "But Christ is still the same, yesterday, today, and forever," Hebrews 13:8.

4. The beauty and holiness of creatures are ensnaring and dangerous. A man may make an idol out of them, and indulge himself beyond the bounds of moderation with them, but there is no danger of excess in the love of Christ. The soul is then in the healthiest frame and temper when it is most overwhelmed by love to Christ, Song of Solomon 5:8.

5. The loveliness of every creature is of a confining and obstructing nature. Our esteem of it diminishes the closer we approach to it, or the longer we enjoy it. Creatures, like pictures, are fairest at a certain distance, but it is not so with Christ; the nearer the soul approaches him, and the longer it lives in the enjoyment of him, still the sweeter and more desirable he becomes.

6. All other loveliness cannot satisfy the soul of man. There is not scope enough in any one created thing, or in all the natural universe of created things for the soul of man to reach out and expand; but the soul still feels itself confined and narrowed within those limits. This comes to pass from the inadequacy and unsuitableness of the creature to the nobler and more excellent soul of man. The soul is like a ship in a narrow river which does not have room to turn. It is always running aground and foundering in the shallows. But Jesus Christ is in every way sufficient to the vast desires of the soul; in him it has sea-room enough. In him the soul may spread all its sails with no fear of touching bottom. And thus you see what is the importance of this phrase, "Altogether lovely."

02.03. How is Christ altogether lovely?

III. How is Christ altogether lovely?

Next I promised to show you in what respects Jesus Christ is altogether lovely.

First, Christ is altogether lovely in his PERSON. He is Deity dwelling in flesh, John 1:14. The wonderful, perfect union of the divine and human nature in Christ renders him an object of admiration and adoration to both angels and men, 1 Timothy 3:16. God never presented to the world such a vision of glory before. Consider how the human nature of our Lord Jesus Christ is overflowing with all the graces of the Spirit, in such a way as never any of the saints was filled. O what a lovely picture does this paint of him! John 3:34, "God gives the Spirit to him without limit." This makes him "the most excellent of men, and his lips have been anointed with grace," Psalms 45:2. If a small measure of grace in the saints makes them sweet and desirable companions, what must the riches of the Spirit of grace filling Jesus Christ without measure make him in the eyes of believers? O what a glory must it fix upon him!

Secondly, Christ is altogether lovely in his OFFICES. Let us consider for a moment the suitability, fullness, and comforting nature of his offices of Prophet, Priest and King.

First, The SUITABILITY of the offices of Christ to the miseries of men. We cannot but adore the infinite wisdom of his receiving them. We are, by nature, blind and ignorant, at best but groping in the dim light of nature after God, Acts 17:27. Jesus Christ is a light to enlighten the Gentiles, Isaiah 49:6. When this great prophet came into the world, then did the day-spring from on high visit us, Luke 1:78. By nature we are alienated from, and at enmity against God; Christ comes into the world to be an atoning sacrifice, making peace by the blood of his cross, Colossians 1:20. All the world, by nature, is in bondage and captivity to Satan, a miserable slavery. Christ comes with kingly power, to rescue sinners, as a prey from the mouth of the terrible one.

Secondly, Let the FULLNESS of his offices be also considered, which make him able "to save to the uttermost, all that come to God by him," Hebrews 7:25. The three offices, comprising in them all that our souls do need, become a universal relief to all our distresses; and therefore,

Thirdly, Unspeakably COMFORTING must the offices of Christ be to the souls of sinners. If light be pleasant to our eyes, how pleasant is that light of life springing from the Sun of righteousness! Malachi 4:2. If a pardon is sweet to a condemned criminal, how sweet must the sprinkling the blood of Jesus be to the trembling conscience of a law-condemned sinner? If a rescue from a cruel tyrant is sweet to a poor captive, how sweet must it be to the ears of enslaved sinners, to hear the voice of liberty and deliverance proclaimed by Jesus Christ? Out of the several offices of Christ, as out of so many fountains, all the promises of the new covenant flow, as so many soul-refreshing streams of peace and joy. All the promises of illumination, counsel and direction flow out of Christ’s prophetic office. All the promises of reconciliation, peace, pardon, and acceptance flow out of his priestly office, with the sweet streams of joy and spiritual comforts which accompany it. All the promises of converting, increasing, defending, directing, and supplying grace, flow out of the

kingly office of Christ; indeed, all promises may be reduced to these three offices, so that Jesus Christ must be altogether lovely in his offices.

Thirdly, Christ is Lovely in His RELATIONS.

First, He is a lovely REDEEMER, Isaiah 61:1. He came to open the prison-doors to those who are bound. This Redeemer must be a lovely one; if we consider the depth of misery from which he redeemed us, even "from the wrath to come," 1 Thessalonians 1:10. Consider the numbers redeemed, and the means of their redemption. Revelation 5:9, "And they sang a new song, saying, ’You are worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by your blood, out of every kindred and tongue, and people and nation.'" He redeemed us not with silver and gold, but with his own precious blood, by way of price, 1 Peter 1:18-19. with his out-stretched and glorious arm, by way of power, Colossians 1:13. he redeemed us freely, Ephesians 1:7, fully Romans 8:1, at the right time, Galatians 4:4, and out of special and particular love, John 17:9. In a word, he has redeemed us forever, never more to come into bondage, 1 Peter 1:5. John 10:28. O how lovely is Jesus Christ in the relation of a Redeemer to God’s elect!

Secondly, He is a lovely BRIDEGROOM to all that he betroths to himself. How does the church glory in him, in the words following my text; "this is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O you daughters of Jerusalem!" Heaven and earth cannot show anyone like him, which needs no fuller proof than the following particulars:

1. That he betroths to himself, in mercy and in loving kindness, such deformed, defiled, and altogether unworthy souls as we are. We have no beauty, no goodness to make us desirable in his eyes; all the origins of his love to us are in his own breast, Deuteronomy 7:7. He chooses us, not because we were lovely, but in order that he might make us lovely Ephesians 5:27. He came to us when we lay in our blood, and said unto us, "Live"; and that was the time of love, Ezekiel 16:5.

2. He expects no restitution from us, and yet gives himself, and all that he has, to us. Our poverty cannot enrich him, but he made himself poor to enrich us, 2 Corinthians 8:9. 1 Corinthians 3:22.

3. No husband loves the wife of his bosom, as much as Christ loved his people, Ephesians 5:25. He loved the church and gave himself for it.

4. No one bears with weaknesses and provocations as Christ does; the church is called "the Lamb’s wife," Revelation 19:9.

5. No husband is so undying and everlasting a husband as Christ is; death separates all other relations, but the soul’s union with Christ is not dissolved in the grave. Indeed, the day of a believer’s death is his marriage day, the day of his fullest enjoyment of Christ. No husband can say to his wife, what Christ says to the believer, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you," Hebrews 8:5.

6. No bridegroom enriches his bride with such honors by marriage, as Christ does; he makes them related to God as their father, and from that day the mighty and glorious angels think it no dishonor to be their servants, Hebrews 1:14. The angels will admire the beauty and glory of the spouse of Christ, Revelation 21:9.

7. No marriage was ever consummated with such triumphal proceedings as the marriage of Christ and believers shall be in heaven, "In her beautiful robes, she is led to the king, accompanied by her bridesmaids. What a joyful, enthusiastic procession as they enter the king's palace!" Among the Jews, the marriage-house was called the house of praise; there was joy upon all hands, but nothing like the joy that will be in heaven when believers, the spouse of Christ, shall be brought there. God the Father will rejoice to behold the blessed accomplishment and confirmation of those glorious plans of his love. Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom will rejoice to see the travail of his soul, the blessed birth and product of all his bitter pains and agonies, Isaiah 53:11. The Holy Spirit will rejoice to see the completion and perfection of that sanctifying design which was committed to his hand, 2 Corinthians 5:5, to see those souls whom he once found as rough stones, now to shine as the bright, polished stones of the spiritual temple! Angels will rejoice: great was the joy when the foundation of this design was laid, in the incarnation of Christ, Luke 2:13. Great therefore must their joy be, when the top-stone is set up with shouting, crying, "Grace, grace." The saints themselves shall rejoice unspeakably, when they shall enter into the King's palace, and be forever with the Lord, 1 Thessalonians 4:17. Indeed there will be joy on all hands, except among the devils and damned, who shall gnash their teeth with envy at the everlasting advancement and glory of believers. Thus Christ is altogether lovely, in the relation of a Bridegroom.

Thirdly, Christ is altogether lovely, in the relation of an ADVOCATE. 1 John 2:1-2, "If any man sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins." It is he that pleads the cause of believers in heaven. He appears for them in the presence of God, to prevent any new alienation, and to continue the state of friendship and peace between God and us. In this relation Christ is altogether lovely. For,

1. He makes our cause his own, and acts for us in heaven, as if for himself, Hebrews 4:15. He is touched with a most tender understanding of our troubles and dangers, and is not only one with us by way of representation, but also one with us in respect of sympathy and affection.

2. In heaven, Christ our Advocate tracks our cause and business, as his great and primary design and business. For this reason in Hebrews 7:25. he is said to "live forever to make intercession for us." It is as if our concerns were so attended to by him there, that all the glory and honor which is paid him in heaven would not divert him one moment from our business.

3. He pleads the cause of believers by his blood. Unlike other advocates, it is not enough for him to lay out only words, which is a cheaper way of pleading; but he pleads for us by the voice of his own blood, as in Hebrews 12:24, where we are said to be come "to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than that of Abel." Every wound he received for us on earth is a mouth opened to plead with God on our behalf in heaven. And hence it is, that in Revelation 5:6 he is represented standing before God, as a lamb that had been slain; as it were exhibiting and revealing in heaven those deadly wounds received on earth from the justice of God, on our account. Other advocates spend their breath, Christ spends his blood.

4. He pleads the cause of believers freely. Other advocates plead for reward, and empty the purses, while they plead the causes of their clients.

5. In a word, he obtains for us all the mercies for which he pleads. No cause miscarries in his hand, which he undertakes, Romans 8:33-34. O what a lovely Advocate is Christ for believers!

Fourthly, Christ is altogether lovely in the relation of a FRIEND, for in this relation he is pleased to acknowledge his people, Luke 12:4-5. There are certain things in which one friend manifests his affection and friendship to another, but there is not one like Christ. For,

1. No friend is so open-hearted to his friend as Christ is to his people: he reveals the very counsels and secrets of his heart to them. John 15:15. "Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knows not what his Lord does; but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you."

2. No friend in the world is so generous and bountiful to his friend, as Jesus Christ is to believers; he parts with his very blood for them; "Greater love (he says) has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends," John 15:13. He has exhausted the precious treasures of his invaluable blood to pay our debts. O what a lovely friend is Jesus Christ to believers!

3. No friend sympathizes so tenderly with his friend in affliction, as Jesus Christ does with his friends: "In all our afflictions he is afflicted," Hebrews 4:15. He feels all our sorrows, needs and burdens as his own. This is why it is said that the sufferings of believers are called the sufferings of Christ, Colossians 1:24.

4. No friend in the world takes that contentment in his friends, as Jesus Christ does in believers. Song of Solomon 4:9. "You have ravished my heart, (he says to the spouse) you have ravished my heart with one of your eyes, with one chain of your neck." The Hebrew, here rendered "ravished," signifies to puff up, or to make one proud: how the Lord Jesus is pleased to glory in his people! How he is taken and delighted with those gracious ornaments which he himself bestows upon them! There is no friend so lovely as Christ.

5. No friend in the world loves his friend with as impassioned and strong affection as Jesus Christ loves believers. Jacob loved Rachel, and endured for her sake the parching heat of summer and cold of winter; but Christ endured the storms of the wrath of God, the heat of his indignation, for our sakes. David manifested his love to Absalom, in wishing, "O that I had died for you!" Christ manifested his love to us, not in wishes that he had died, but in death itself, in our stead, and for our sakes.

6. No friend in the world is so constant and unchangeable in friendship as Christ is. John 13:1, "Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them unto the end." He bears with millions of provocations and wrongs, and yet will not break friendship with his people. Peter denied him, yet he will not disown him; but after his resurrection he says, "Go, tell the disciples, and tell Peter." Let him not think he has forfeited by that sin of his, his interest in me. Though he denied me, I will not disown him, Mark 16:7. O how lovely is Christ in the relation of a friend!

I might further show you the loveliness of Christ in his ordinances and in his providences, in his communion with us and communications to us; but there is no end of the account of Christ's loveliness! I will rather choose to press believers to their duties towards this altogether lovely Christ, which I shall briefly conclude in a few words.

02.04. Application

IV. Application

1. Is Jesus Christ altogether lovely? Then I beseech you to set your souls upon this lovely Jesus. I am sure such an object as has been here represented, would compel love from the coldest breast and hardest heart. Away with those empty nothings, away with this vain deceitful world, which deserves not the thousandth part of the love you give it. Let all stand aside and give way to Christ. O if only you knew his worth and excellency, what he is in himself, what he has done for you, and deserved from you, you would need no arguments of mine to persuade you to love him!

2. Esteem nothing lovely except as it is enjoyed in Christ, or used for the sake of Christ. Love nothing for itself, love nothing separate from Jesus Christ. In two things we all sin in love of created things. We sin in the excess of our affections, loving them above the proper value of mere created things. We also sin in the inordinacy of our affections, that is to say we give our love for created things a priority it should never have.

3. Let us all be humbled for the corruption of our hearts that are so eager in their affections for vanities and trifles and so hard to be persuaded to the love of Christ, who is altogether lovely. O how many pour out streams of love and delight upon the vain and empty created thing; while no arguments can draw forth one drop of love from their stubborn and unbelieving hearts to Jesus Christ! I have read of one Joannes Mollius, who was observed to go often alone, and weep bitterly; and being pressed by a friend to know the cause of his troubles, said "O! it grieves me that I cannot bring this heart of mine to love Jesus Christ more fervently."

4. Represent Christ to the world as he is, by your behavior towards him. Is he altogether lovely? Let all the world see and know that he is so, by your delights in him and communion with him; zeal for him, and readiness to part with any other lovely thing upon his account. Proclaim his excellencies to the world, as the spouse did in these verses. Persuade them how much your beloved is better than any other beloved. Show his glorious excellencies as you speak of him; hold him forth to others, as he is in himself; altogether lovely. See that you "walk worthy of him unto all well pleasing," Colossians 1:10. "Show forth the praises of Christ," 1 Peter 2:19. Let not that "worthy name be blasphemed through you," James 2:7. He is glorious in himself, and he is sure to put glory upon you; take heed that you do not put shame and dishonors upon him; he has committed his honor to you, do not betray that trust.

5. Never be ashamed to be counted as a Christian. He is altogether lovely; he can never be a shame to you; it will be your great sin to be ashamed of him. Some men glory in their shame; do not let yourself be ashamed of your glory. If you will be ashamed of Christ now, he will be ashamed of you when he shall appear in his own glory, and the glory of all his holy angels. Be ashamed of nothing but sin; and among other sins, be ashamed especially for this sin, that you have no more love for him who is altogether lovely.

6. Be willing to leave every thing that is lovely upon earth, in order that you may be with the altogether lovely Lord Jesus Christ in heaven. Lift up your voices with the bride, Revelation 22:20 "Come Lord Jesus, come quickly." It is true, you must pass through the pangs of death into his intimacy and enjoyment; but surely it is worth suffering much more than that, to be with this lovely Jesus. "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and the patient waiting for Jesus Christ," 2 Thessalonians 3:5.

7. Let the loveliness of Christ draw all men to him. Is loveliness in the creature so attractive? And can the transcendent loveliness of Christ draw none? O the blindness of man! If you see no beauty in Christ that causes you to desire him, it is because the god of this world has blinded your minds.

8. Strive to be Christ-like, if ever you would be lovely in the eyes of God and man. Certainly, my brethren, it is only the Spirit of Christ within you, and the beauty of Christ upon you, which can make you lovely people. The more you resemble him in holiness, the more will you show of true excellence and loveliness; and the more frequent and spiritual your communication and communion with Christ is, the more of the beauty and loveliness of Christ will be stamped upon your spirits, changing you into the same image, from glory to glory. Amen.

"Yes, He is altogether lovely! This is my Beloved,

and this is my Friend." Song of Solomon 5:16

02.05. He is Lovely in His Offices

He is Lovely in His Offices

Secondly, He is altogether lovely in his offices: let us consider for a moment the suitability, fullness, and comforting nature of them.

First, The suitability of the offices of Christ to the miseries of men. We cannot but adore the infinite wisdom of his receiving them. We are, by nature, blind and ignorant, at best but groping in the dim light of nature after God,Acts 17:1-34.html"> Acts 17:1-34.html">Acts 17:27Acts 17:1-34.html">. Jesus Christ is a light to lighten the Gentiles, Isaiah 49:1-26.html">Isaiah 49:6. When this great prophet came into the world, then did the day-spring from on high visit us, Luke 1:1-80.html">Luke 1:78. By nature we are alienated from, and at enmity against God; Christ comes into the world to be an atoning sacrifice, making peace by the blood of his cross,Colossians 1:1-29.html"> Colossians 1:1-29.html">Colossians 1:20Colossians 1:1-29.html">. All the world, by nature, is in bondage and captivity to Satan, a miserable slavery. Christ comes with kingly power, to rescue sinners, as a prey from the mouth of the terrible one.

Secondly, Let the fullness of his offices be also considered, which make him able "to save to the uttermost, all that come to God by him,"Hebrews 7:1-28.html"> Hebrews 7:1-28.html">Hebrews 7:25Hebrews 7:1-28.html">. The three offices, comprising in them all that our souls do need, become an universal relief to all our distresses; and therefore,

Thirdly, Unspeakably comforting must the offices of Christ be to the souls of sinners. If light be pleasant to our eyes, how pleasant is that light of life springing from the Sun of righteousness!Malachi 4:1-6.html"> Malachi 4:1-6.html">Malachi 4:2Malachi 4:1-6.html">. If a pardon be sweet to a condemned criminal, how sweet must the sprinkling the blood of Jesus be to the trembling conscience of a law-condemned sinner? If a rescue from a cruel tyrant is sweet to a poor captive, how sweet must it be to the ears of enslaved sinners, to hear the voice of liberty and deliverance proclaimed by Jesus Christ? Out of the several offices of Christ, as out of so many fountains, all the promises of the new covenant flow, as so many soul-refreshing streams of peace and joy. All the promises of illumination, counsel and direction flow out of Christ’s prophetic office. All the promises of reconciliation, peace, pardon, and acceptation flow out of his priestly office, with the sweet streams of joy and spiritual comforts which accompany it. All the promises of converting, increasing, defending, directing, and supplying grace, flow out of the kingly office of Christ; indeed, all promises may be reduced to these three offices, so that Jesus Christ must be altogether lovely in his offices.

02.06. He is Lovely in His Relations

He is Lovely in His Relations.

First, He is a lovely Redeemer,Isaiah 61:1-11.html"> Isaiah 61:1-11.html">Isaiah 61:1Isaiah 61:1-11.html">. He came to open the prison-doors to them that are bound. Needs must this Redeemer be a lovely one, if we consider the depth of misery from which he redeemed us, even "from the wrath to come," 1 Thessalonians 1:10. Consider the numbers redeemed, and the means of their redemption. Revelation 5:1-14.html">Revelation 5:9, "And they sang a new song, saying, ’You are worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by your blood, out of every kindred and tongue, and people and nation.'" He redeemed us not with silver and gold, but with his own precious blood, by way of price, 1 Peter 1:18-19. with his out-stretched and glorious arm, by way of power, Colossians 1:1-29.html">Colossians 1:13. he redeemed us freely, Ephesians 1:1-23.html">Ephesians 1:7, fully Romans 8:1-39.html">Romans 8:1, at the right time, Galatians 4:1-31.html">Galatians 4:4, and out of special and particular love, John 17:1-26.html">John 17:9. In a word, he has redeemed us for ever, never more to come into bondage, 1 Peter 1:5. John 10:1-42.html">John 10:28. O how lovely is Jesus Christ in the relation of a Redeemer to God’s elect!

Secondly, He is a lovely bridegroom to all that he betroths to himself. How does the church glory in him, in the words following my text; "this is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O ye daughters of Jerusalem!" Heaven and earth cannot show anyone like him, which needs no fuller proof than the following particulars:

1. That he betroths to himself, in mercy and in loving kindness, such deformed, defiled, and altogether unworthy souls as we are. We have no beauty, no goodness to make us desirable in his eyes; all the origins of his love to us are in his own breast,Deuteronomy 7:1-26.html"> Deuteronomy 7:1-26.html">Deuteronomy 7:7Deuteronomy 7:1-26.html">. He chooses us, not because we were, but in order that he might make us lovely Ephesians 5:1-33.html">Ephesians 5:27. He came to us when we lay in our blood, and said unto us, "Live"; and that was the time of love, Ezekiel 16:1-63.html">Ezekiel 16:5.

2. He expects no restitution from us, and yet gives himself, and all that he has, to us. Our poverty cannot enrich him, but he made himself poor to enrich us, 2 Corinthians 8:9. 1 Corinthians 3:22.

3. No husband loves the wife of his bosom, as much as Christ loved his people,Ephesians 5:1-33.html"> Ephesians 5:1-33.html">Ephesians 5:25Ephesians 5:1-33.html">. He loved the church and gave him self for it.

4. No one bears with weaknesses and provocations as Christ does; the church is called "the Lamb’s wife,"Revelation 19:1-21.html"> Revelation 19:1-21.html">Revelation 19:9Revelation 19:1-21.html">.

5. No husband is so undying and everlasting a husband as Christ is; death separates all other relations, but the soul's union with Christ is not dissolved in the grave. Indeed, the day of a believer's death is his marriage day, the day of his fullest enjoyment of Christ. No husband can say to his wife, what Christ says to the believer, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you,"Hebrews 8:1-13.html"> Hebrews 8:1-13.html">Hebrews 8:5Hebrews 8:1-13.html">.

6. No bridegroom enriches his bride with such honours by marriage, as Christ does; he makes them related to God as their father, and from that day the mighty and glorious angels think it no dishonour to be their servants,Hebrews 1:1-14.html"> Hebrews 1:1-14.html">Hebrews 1:14Hebrews 1:1-14.html">. The angels will admire the beauty and glory of the spouse of Christ, Revelation 21:1-27.html">Revelation 21:9.

7. No marriage was ever consummated with such triumphal proceedings as the marriage of Christ and believers shall be in heaven, Psalms 45:14-15Psalms 14:1-7.html">. "She shall be brought to the king in raiment of needle-work, the virgins, her companions that follow her, shall be brought unto thee; with gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought; they shall enter into the king's palace." Among the Jews, the marriage-house was called the house of praise; there was joy upon all hands, but nothing like the joy that will be in heaven when believers, the spouse of Christ, shall be brought there. God the Father will rejoice to behold the blessed accomplishment and confirmation of those glorious plans of his love. Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom will rejoice to see the travail of his soul, the blessed birth and product of all his bitter pains and agonies,Isaiah 53:1-12.html"> Isaiah 53:1-12.html">Isaiah 53:11Isaiah 53:1-12.html">. The Holy Spirit will rejoice to see the completion and perfection of that sanctifying design which was committed to his hand, 2 Corinthians 5:5, to see those souls whom he once found as rough stones, now to shine as the bright, polished stones of the spiritual temple. Angels will rejoice: great was the joy when the foundation of this design was laid, in the incarnation of Christ, Luke 2:1-52.html">Luke 2:13. Great therefore must their joy be, when the top-stone is set up with shouting, crying, "Grace, grace." The saints themselves shall rejoice unspeakably, when they shall enter into the King's palace, and be forever with the Lord, 1 Thessalonians 4:17. Indeed there will be joy on all hands, except among the devils and damned, who shall gnash their teeth with envy at the everlasting advancement and glory of believers. Thus Christ is altogether lovely, in the relation of a Bridegroom.

Thirdly, Christ is altogether lovely, in the relation of an Advocate. 1 John 2:1, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the Propitiation." It is he that pleads the cause of believers in heaven. He appears for them in the presence of God, to prevent any new alienation, and to continue the state of friendship and peace between God and us. In this relation Christ is altogether lovely. For,

1. He makes our cause his own, and acts for us in heaven, as if for himself,Hebrews 4:1-16.html"> Hebrews 4:1-16.html">Hebrews 4:15Hebrews 4:1-16.html">. He is touched with a most tender understanding of our troubles and dangers, and is not only one with us by way of representation, but also one with us in respect of sympathy and affection.

2. Christ our Advocate tracks our cause and business in heaven, as his great and primary design and business. For this reason inHebrews 7:1-28.html"> Hebrews 7:1-28.html">Hebrews 7:25Hebrews 7:1-28.html">. he is said to "live for ever to make intercession for us." It is as if our concerns were so attended to by him there, that all the glory and honour which is paid him in

heaven would not divert him one moment from our business.

3. He pleads the cause of believers by his blood. Unlike other advocates, it is not enough for him to lay out only words, which is a cheaper way of pleading; but he pleads for us by the voice of his own blood, as inHebrews 12:1-29.html"> Hebrews 12:1-29.html">Hebrews 12:24Hebrews 12:1-29.html">, where we are said to be come "to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Every wound he received for us on earth is a mouth opened to plead with God on our behalf in heaven. And hence it is, that in Revelation 5:1-14.html">Revelation 5:6 he is represented standing before God, as a lamb that had been slain; as it were exhibiting and revealing in heaven those deadly wounds received on earth from the justice of God, on our account. Other advocates spend their breath, Christ spends his blood.

4. He pleads the cause of believers freely. Other advocates plead for reward, and empty the purses, while they plead the causes of their clients.

5. In a word, he obtains for us all the mercies for which he pleads. No cause miscarries in his hand, which he undertakes,Romans 8:1-39.html"> Romans 8:1-39.html">Romans 8:33-34Romans 8:1-39.html">. what a lovely Advocate is Christ for believers!

Fourthly, Christ is altogether lovely in the relation of a friend, for in this relation he is pleased to acknowledge his people,Luke 12:1-59.html"> Luke 12:1-59.html">Luke 12:4-5Luke 12:1-59.html">. There are certain things in which one friend manifests his affection and friendship to another, but there is not one like Christ. For,

1. No friend is so open-hearted to his friend as Christ is to his people: he reveals the very counsels and secrets of his heart to them.John 15:1-27.html"> John 15:1-27.html">John 15:15John 15:1-27.html">. "Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knows not what his Lord does; but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you.

2. No friend in the world is so generous and bountiful to his friend, as Jesus Christ is to believers; he parts with his very blood for them; "Greater love (he says) has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends,"John 15:1-27.html"> John 15:1-27.html">John 15:13John 15:1-27.html">. He has exhausted the precious treasures of his invaluable blood to pay our debts. O what a lovely friend is Jesus Christ to believers!

3. No friend sympathizes so tenderly with his friend in affliction, as Jesus Christ does with his friends: "In all our afflictions he is afflicted,"Hebrews 4:1-16.html"> Hebrews 4:1-16.html">Hebrews 4:15Hebrews 4:1-16.html">. He feels all our sorrows, needs and burdens as his own. This is why it is said that the sufferings of believers are called the sufferings of Christ, Colossians 1:1-29.html">Colossians 1:24.

4. No friend in the world takes that contentment in his friends, as Jesus Christ does in believers. Son 4:9. "You have ravished my heart, (he says to the spouse) you have ravished my heart with one of your eyes, with one chain of your neck." The Hebrew, here rendered "ravished," signifies to puff up, or to make one proud: how the Lord Jesus is pleased to glory in his people! How he is taken and delighted with those gracious ornaments which himself bestows upon them! There is no friend so lovely as Christ.

5. No friend in the world loves his friend with as impassioned and strong affection as Jesus Christ loves believers. Jacob loved Rachel, and endured for her sake the parching heat of summer and cold of winter; but Christ endured the storms of the wrath of God, the heat of his indignation, for our sakes. David manifested his love to Absalom, in wishing, "O that I had died for you!" Christ manifested his love to us, not in wishes that he had died, but in death itself, in our stead, and for our sakes.

6. No friend in the world is so constant and unchangeable in friendship as Christ is.John 13:1-38.html"> John 13:1-38.html">John 13:1John 13:1-38.html">, "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." He bears with millions of provocations and wrongs, and yet will not break friendship with his people. Peter denied him, yet he will not disown him; but after his resurrection he says, "Go, tell the disciples, and tell Peter." Let him not think he has forfeited by that sin of his, his interest in me. Though he denied me, I will not disown him,Mark 16:1-20.html"> Mark 16:1-20.html">Mark 16:7Mark 16:1-20.html">. how lovely is Christ in the relation of a friend!

I might further show you the loveliness of Christ in his ordinances and in his providences, in his communion with us and communications to us, but there is no end of the account of Christ's loveliness: I will rather choose to press believers to their duties towards this altogether lovely Christ, which I shall briefly conclude in a few words.

02.07. Application

APPLICATION

1. Is Jesus Christ altogether lovely? Then I beseech you set your souls upon this lovely Jesus. I am sure such an object as has been here represented, would compel love from the coldest breast and hardest heart. Away with those empty nothings, away with this vain deceitful world, which deserves not the thousandth part of the love you give it. Let all stand aside and give way to Christ. O if only you knew his worth and excellency, what he is in himself, what he has done for you, and deserved from you, you would need no arguments of mine to persuade you to love him!

2. Esteem nothing lovely except as it is enjoyed in Christ, or used for the sake of Christ. Love nothing for itself, love nothing separate from Jesus Christ. In two things we all sin in love of created things. We sin in the excess of our affections, loving them above the proper value of mere created things. We also sin in the inordinacy of our affections, that is to say we give our love for created things a priority it should never have.

3. Let us all be humbled for the corruption of our hearts that are so eager in their affections for vanities and trifles and so hard to be persuaded to the love of Christ, who is altogether lovely. O how many pour out streams of love and delight upon the vain and empty created thing; while no arguments can draw forth one drop of love from their stubborn and unbelieving hearts to Jesus Christ! I have read of one Joannes Mollius, who was observed to go often alone, and weep bitterly; and being pressed by a friend to know the cause of his troubles, said "O! it grieves me that I cannot bring this heart of mine to love Jesus Christ more fervently."

4. Represent Christ to the world as he is, by your behaviour towards him. Is he altogether lovely? Let all the world see and know that he is so, by your delights in him and communion with him; zeal for him, and readiness to part with any other lovely thing upon his account. Proclaim his excellencies to the world, as the spouse did in these verses. Persuade them how much your beloved is better than any other beloved. Show his glorious excellencies as you speak of him; hold him forth to others, as he is in himself: altogether lovely. See that you "walk worthy of him unto all well pleasing,"Colossians 1:1-29.html"> Colossians 1:1-29.html">Colossians 1:10Colossians 1:1-29.html">. "Show forth the praises of Christ," 1 Peter 2:19. Let not that "worthy name be blasphemed through you," James 2:1-26.html">James 2:7. He is glorious in himself, and he is sure to put glory upon you; take heed that you do not put shame and dishonours upon him; he has committed his honour to you, do not betray that trust.

Never be ashamed to be counted as a Christian: he is altogether lovely; he can never be a shame to you; it will be your great sin to be ashamed of him. Some men glory in their shame; do not let yourself be ashamed of your glory. If you will be ashamed of Christ now, he will be ashamed of you when he shall appear in his own glory, and the glory of all his holy angels. Be ashamed of nothing but sin; and among other sins, be ashamed especially for this sin, that you have no more love for him who is altogether lovely.

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03.00. COMMUNION WITH CHRIST

COMMUNION WITH CHRIST, BY THE REV. J. FLAVEL.

EDITED BY THE REV. WILLIAM VINT.

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1830.

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COMMUNION WITH CHRIST.

Communion with Christ

IMMANUEL:

OR, A DISCOVERY OF TRUE RELIGION, AS IT IMPORTS A LIVING PRINCIPLE IN THE MINDS OF MEN. BY SAMUEL SHAW.

Memoirs OF THE AUTHOR. The Rev. Samuel Shaw, A.M. was born of religious parents at Repton, in Derbyshire, in 1695, and educated at the Free- School there, then the best in that part of England. He went at fourteen years of age to St. John's College, Cambridge, where he was chamber-fellow with Dr. Morton. When he had completed his studies, he went to Tamworth in Warwickshire, and was usher in the Free-School in 1656. When that reverend person Mr. Blake died, in 1657, Mr. Shaw spoke an eloquent oration at his funeral, after Mr. Anthony Burgess had preached a sermon. They were both printed, and such as have perused them must think a conjunction of three such men, as the deceased and the two speakers, a singular happiness to that neighbourhood. From Tamworth Mr. Shaw removed to Mosely, a small place in the borders of Worcestershire, being invited by Col. Greavis, who showed him much kindness. On his coming hither, he was ordained by the classical presbytery at Wirksworth; and by the assistance of Mr. Gervas Pigot of Thrumpton, he obtained a presentation from the Protector to the rectory of Long-Whatton, which was in the gift of the crown. He had full possession of this place in June, 1658, and continued in the peaceable enjoyment of it till 1660. Fearing some disturbance in the month of September that year, he got a fresh presentation* under the great seal of England, without much difficulty, as the former incumbent Mr. Henry Robinson was dead, and two more who enjoyed it after him. But though his title was thus corroborated. Sir John Pretty man, by making interest with the lord chancellor, found means to remove Mr. Shaw, about a year before the Act of Uniformity passed; and introduced one Mr. Butler, who had no manner of title to the place. He was a man of such mean qualifications, and so little respected in the parish, that some of them told Sir John, that they heard Mr. Butler had given him a pair of coach-mares to get him the living, but they would give him two pair to get him out, and put Mr. Shaw in again. But he now quitted the church, as he could not satisfy himself to conform to the new terms. He was afterwards. Copies of both these Presentations may be seen in Calamy offered this living without any other condition than re-ordination. But he used to say, He would not lie to God and man, in declaring his presbyterian ordination invalid. When he left Whatton he removed to Cotes, a small village near Loughborough. Here his family caught the plague of some relations, who came from London to avoid it, about harvest-time in 1665.

He then preached in his own house, and afterwards published that excellent book, called The Welcome to the Plague, grounded on Amos 4:12, -'Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.'' He buried two children, two friends, and one servant of that distemper; but he and his wife survived it; and not being ill both at once, they looked after one another and the rest of the family: which was a great mercy, for none durst come to his assistance. He was in a manner shut up for three months, and was forced not only to attend his sick, but to bury his dead himself in his own garden.

Towards the latter end of the year 1666, he removed to Ashby-de-la-Zouch in the same county; and was chosen to be the sole master of the freeschool in 1668. The revenue was then but small, The excellent temper of mind which he expressed under this severe dispensation, is discovered in the above-mentioned work, whick is reprinted in vol. i. the school-buildings quite out of repair, and

the number of scholars few. But by his diligence he soon got the salary augmented, not only for himself, but his successors; and by his interest with several gentlemen, he procured money for the building of a good school-house, and a gallery for the scholars in the church. But then he had another difficulty; which was, how to get a licence without subscription to such things as his conscience did not allow of. However, he got over it; for by means of Lord Conway, he obtained from Archbishop Sheldon a licence (which Calamy gives at length), to teach school any where in his whole province; and that without once waiting upon the Archbishop. As he needed a licence also from the bishop of the diocese, he got a friend to make his application to Dr. Fuller, then bishop of Lincoln, who put into his lordship's hands Mr. Shaw's late book occasioned by the plague. The bishop was so much pleased with the piety, peaceableness, humility, and learning there discovered, that he gave him a licence Vipon such a subscription as his own good sense dictated, and said, that he was glad to have so worthy a man in his diocese upon any terms. He added, that he understood there was another book of his in print, called Immanuel, which he desired to see.

Mr. Shaw's learning, piety, and good temper soon raised the reputation of his school, and the number of his scholars, above any in those parts; having often one hundred and sixty boys or more under his care. His own house and others in the town, were continually full of boarders from London, and other distant parts of the kingdom. Several divines of the Church of England, (v. g. Mr. Sturgess of All-Saints in Derby, Mr. Walter Horton, afterwards one of the canons of Lichfield, &c.) and many gentlemen, physicians, lawyers, and others, owed their school-learning to his good instructions.

He endeavoured to make the youth under his care, in Jove with piety; to principle them in religion by his advice, and ' allure them to it by his good example. His temper was affable, his conversation pleasant and facetious, his method of teaching winning and easy. He had great skill in finding out, and suiting himself to, the tempers of boys.

He freely taught poor children, where he saw in them a disposition for learning, and afterwards procured them assistance to perfect their studies at the university. He did indeed excellent service in the work of education; and his school was a great advantage to the trading part of the town.

AViicn the liberty of the Dissenters was settled by act of parliament, he licensed his school-room for 3 place of worship. The first time he used it, he preached from Acts 19:9, "Disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus."" He so contrived his meetings, as not to interfere with the establishment, preaching at noon between the services at church, and constantly attending there both parts of the day, with all his scholars, his family, and all his hearers; so that the public assembly was hereby considerably augmented; and the weekly lecture was chiefly attended by him and his scholars. He was upon the most friendly terms with the vicar of the place, and corresponded with Dr. Barlow, the bishop of Lincoln, to whom he presented his book of Meditations, which has been generally esteemed, and read with great profit. Upon which his lordship, who was a great reader, and a good judge of books, wrote him the following letter: —

" My Rev. Brother,

I have received yours, and this comes (with my love and respects) to bring you thanks for the rational and pious book you so kindly sent me.

Though my businesses be many, and my infirmities more, being now past 74, yet I have read all your book, and some parts of it more than once, with great satisfaction and benefit. For in your meditations of the love of God and the world, I am neither afraid nor unwilling to confess it, and make you my confessor,) you have instructed me in several things, which I knew not before, or at least considered not so seriously, and so often as I might and ought. One great occasion or cause why we love our gracious God less, and the world more than we should, is want of knowledge, or consideration.

God himself, Isaiah 1:2-3, complains of this, and calls heaven and earth to witness the justice of his complaint. “I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master*’s crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.” It is strange, and yet most true, that the ox and ass, irrational and stupid creatures, should know their masters, who feed and take care of them, and yet men, rational creatures, even Israel, God’s only church and people, whom he had miraculously preserved and nourished, should neither know nor consider. This consideration is our duty, and the want of it our sin; a sin of omission, and therefore it is no wonder if it be a moral cause and occasion of some consequent sin of commission; so that the best men by reason of the old man, and the remains of corruption in them may, and many times do sin, and come short of fulfilling the law and doing their duty, when they want this consideration, or such a degree and measure of it as is required to the moral goodness of an action. Suppose a man tempted to commit adultery, murder, perjury, or any such sin; if such a man would seriously consider the nature of the sin he is going to commit, that it is a transgression of the law of God, to whom he owes all he has, both for life and livelihood, that it pollutes his soul, that it dishonours his gracious God and heavenly Father, that it makes him obnoxious to eternal misery, both of body and soul: I say, he who considers this, as all should, would certainly be afraid to commit such impieties. Now of such considerations, you have given us many in your book, and those grounded on the clear light of nature, or on evident reason, or revelation; and it is my prayer and hope that many may read, and to their great benefit remember, and practise them. I am well pleased with your discourse against usury; which, as is commonly managed, I take to be one of the crying sins of our ungrateful nation.

Give me leave, faithfully and as a friend to add one thing more. In your second page, there is, I believe, a little mistake. For you seem to say, that James, who wrote the canonical epistle, was brother to John the apostle. Now it is certain, that amongst the apostles there were two of that name.

1. James the son of Zebedee, and brother of John.

2. James the son of Alplieus, Matthew 10:2-3, who was called James the less, Mark 15:40, whose mother was Mary, who was sister to the Virgin Mary; and so our blessed Saviour and James the son of Alpheus were sisters’ children, cousin-germans.

Now that James the son of Zebedee, and brother of John, did not write that canonical epistle, will be certain, if we consider, 1. That James, brother of John, was slain by Herod Agrippa, Acts 12:2, which was Anno Christi 44 or 45. And 2ndly, If it be considered, that the epistle of James was not written till the year of Christ 63: for so Baronius, Simpson, and the best chronologers assure us. They say, that epistle of James was not written till almost twenty years after James the brother of John was slain by Herod: and therefore it is certain, he neither did nor could write it. I beg your

pardon for this tedious, and I fear impertinent, scribble. My love and due respects remembered. I shall pray for a blessing upon you and your studies, and your prayers are heartily desired by and for Your affectionate friend and brother,

THOMAS LINCOLN.

Uuckdcn, March 16, 1681. For my Reverend Friend, Rev. Sam Shaw, at his House at Ashby-de-la-Zouch.

* Jac. Usserius, Annal. pag. 868, Ed. 1608; Baron. Annal. torn. \.

If such a correspondence as this between the bishops of the church of England and the ministers among the Dissenters, had been generally maintained, it might have produced much better effects than the great distance that has been kept up on both sides. — Mr. Shaw was a man of a peaceable disposition. He was frequently employed, and very successful in his endeavours to reconcile differences. He had a public and generous spirit, and was ever ready to encourage any good designs. He was given to hospitality, and was very moderate in his principles. For the space of almost thirty years he spent himself in endeavours to make the world better, though with no great gains to himself. It was his chief aim to live usefully; and he thought that, a considerable reward to itself He was of a middle stature, and his countenance not very penetrating: like another Melancthon, that could not fill a chair with a big look and portly presence; but his eye was sparkling, and his conversation witty, savoury, affable, and pertinent. He was ready at repartees and innocent jests, with a mixture of poetry, history, and other polite learning. But his greatest excellency was in religious discourse, in praying and preaching. One that knew him well, writes as follows: — " I have known him spend part of many days and nights too in religious exercise, when the times were so dangerous that it would hazard an imprisonment to be worshipping God with five or six people like minded with himself. I have sometimes been in his company for a whole night together, when we have been fain to steal to the place in the dark, to stop out the light and stop in the voice, by clothing and fast closing the windows, till the first day-break down a chimney has given us notice to be gone. I bless God for such seasons. If some say it was needless to do so much: I reply, the care of our souls and eternity, which only was minded there, requires more. I say, I bless God for the remembrance of them, and for Mr. Shaw at them, whose melting words in prayer, I can never forget.

He had a most excellent faculty in speaking to God with reverence, humility, and a holy awe of his presence, "filling his mouth with arguments: by his strength he had power with God; he wept and made supplication; he found him in Bethel (such were our assemblies,) and there he spake with us.'"

I have heard him for two or three hours together pour out prayer to God, without tautology or vain repetition, with that vigour and fervour, and those holy words that imported faith and humble boldness, as have dissolved the whole company into tears," &c. In short, a mixture of so much learning and humility, wit and judgment, piety and pleasantness, are rarely found together, as met in him. He died Jan. 22, 1696, in the fifty-ninth year of his age. His funeral sermon was preached by Mr. William Crosse, his brother-in-law, from Luke 23:28.

PREFACE.

Amongst the many stupendous spectacles that are wont to surprise and amuse inquisitive minds, there seems to be nothing in the world of a sadder and more astonishing description, than the small progress and propagation of the Christian religion. This I call a sad observation, because religion is a matter of the most weighty and necessary importance, without which it is not possible for an immortal soul to be perfected and made happy: I call it astonishing, because the Christian religion hath in itself such advantages of recommending itself to the minds of men, and contains in it such mighty engines to work them into a hearty compliance with it, and to captivate their reason unto itself, as no other religion in the world can with any face pretend to. I do earnestly, and I suppose rationally and scripturally, hope that this Veritas magna, those sacred oracles will yet more prevail, and that the Founder of this most excellent religion, who was lifted up upon the cross, and is now exalted to his throne, will yet draw more men unto himself: and this, perhaps, is all the millennium that we can warrantably look for. But, in the mean time, it is too, too evident, that the kingdom of Satan doth more obtain in the world, than the gospel of Christ, either in the letter or power of it. As to the former, if we will receive the probable conjecture of learned inquirers, we shall not find above one-sixth part of the known world yet christianized, or giving so much as an external adoration to the crucified Jesus. As to the latter, I will not be so bold to make any arithmetical conjectures, but judge it more necessary, and more becoming a charitable and christian spirit, to sit down in secret, and weep over that sad but true account given in the gospel, “Few are chosen,”’ Matthew 20:16; and again, “Few there be that find it,” Matthew 7:14; being grieved, after the example of my compassionate Redeemer, “for the hardness of their hearts,’’ and praying with Joab, in another case, “ The Lord make his people an hundred times so many more as they be! “ 1 Chronicles 21:3. It is besides my present purpose to inquire into the immediate causes of the non-propagation of the gospel in the former sense; only it is easy and obvious to guess, that few will enter in by “the way of the tree of life,” when the same is guarded with a “flaming sword!” And it were reasonable to hope, that if the minds of Christians were more purged from a selfish bitterness, fierce animosity, and arbitrary sourness, and possessed with a more free, generous, benign, compassionate, condescending, candid, charitable, and Christ-like spirit, which would be indulgent towards such as are, for the present, under a less perfect dispensation, as our Saviour’s was, Luke 9:49-50, Luke 9:54-55, would not impose anything harsh or unnecessary upon the sacred and inviolable consciences of men, but would allow and maintain that liberty to men, which is just and natural to them in matters of religion, and no way forfeited by them; then, I say, it might be reasonable to hope, that the innate power and virtue of the gospel would prove most victorious; Judaism, Mahometism, and Paganism, would melt away under its powerful influences, and Satan himself ’fall down as lightning” before it, as naturally as the eye-lids of the morning do chase away the blackness of the night, when once they are lifted up upon the earth. But my design is chiefly to examine the true and proper cause of the non-progress of the gospel, as to the power of it, and its inefficaciousness upon the hearts and consciences of those that do profess it. And now, in finding out the cause hereof, I shall content myself to be wise on this side heaven, leaving that daring course of searching the decrees of God, and rifling into the hidden rolls of eternity, to them who can digest the uncomfortable notion of a self-willed, arbitrary, and imperious Deity; which, I doubt, is the most vulgar apprehension of God, men measuring him most grossly and unhappily by a self-standard. And as I dare not soar so high, so neither will I adventure to stoop so low, as to rake into particulars; which are differently assigned, according to the different humours and interests of them that do assign them; each party in the world being so

exceedingly favourable to itself, as to be ready to say with David, “ The earth, and all the inhabitants of it, are dissolved; I bear up the pillars of it,” Psalms 75:3; ready to think that the very interest of religion in the world is involved in them and their persuasions and dogmas, and that the whole church is undone, if but a hair fall from their heads, if they be in the least injured or abridged; which is a piece of very great fondness, and indeed the more unpardonable, inasmuch as it destroys the design of the gospel, in confining and limiting the Holy One of Israel, and making God as topical, as he was when he dwelt no where upon earth but at the temple in Jerusalem.

Waving these extremes therefore, I conceive the true cause in general of the so little prevailing of true religion in the hearts and lives of men, is the false notion that men have of it, placing it there where indeed it is not, nor doth consist. That this must needs be a cause of the not prevailing of the gospel wherever it is found, I suppose every body will grant; and that it is almost every where to be found, will, I doubt, too evidently appear by that description of the true Christian religion, which the most sacred author of it, the Lord Jesus Christ, made to the poor Samaritaness; which I have endeavoured briefly to explain, according to the tenor of the gospel, in this small Treatise; which I first framed for private use, in a season when it was most important for me to understand the utmost secrets of my own soul, and do the utmost service I was able towards the salvation of those that were under my roof; expecting every day to render up my own or their souls into the arms of our most merciful Redeemer, and to be swallowed up in that eternal life, into which true religion daily springs up, and will, at length, infallibly conduct the christian soul. This work, thus undertaken, and in a great measure then carried on, I have since perfected, and do here present to the perusal of my dear country, having made it public for no private end; but, if it might be, to serve the interest of God’s glory in the world; which I do verily reckon that I shall do, if, by his blessing, I may be instrumental to undeceive any soul mistaken in so high an affair and of such importance as religion is, or any way to awaken and quicken any religious soul not sufficiently impressed with the unspeakable glory, nor cheerfully enough springing up into the full fruition of eternal life.

What a certain and undefeatable tendency true religion hath towards the eternal happiness and salvation of men’s souls, will, 1 hope, evidently appear out of the body of this small Treatise; but that is not all (though indeed that were enough to commend it to any rational soul, that is any whit free and ingenuous, and is not so perfectly debauched as to apostatize utterly from right reason;) for it is also the sincerest policy imaginable, and the most unerring expedient in the world, for the uniting and establishing of a divided and tottering kingdom or commonwealth: to demonstate which was the very design of this Preface. It is well known, (O that it were but as well and effectually believed!) that “ godliness is profitable to all things,”“ and that it hath the promises and blessings of the “ life that now is, and of that which is to come, 1 Timothy 4:8; that the right seeking of the kingdom of God and his righteousness, hath no less than all things annexed to it, Matthew 6:33. How unmeasurable is the body and bulk of that blessedness, to which all the comforts of this life are to be as an appendix to a volume! But men are apt to shuffle off general things; therefore I will descend to instances, and show in a few particulars, what a mighty influence religion in the power of it, would certainly have for the political happiness and flourishing state of a nation. Wherein I doubt not but to make appear, that not religion, as some slanderously report, but indeed the want of it, is the immediate troubler of every nation, and individual society; yea, and soul too: according to that just saying of the holy apostle, “ From whence come wars and fightings? come

they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" James 4:1. Here let me desire one thing of the reader, and that is, to bear in his mind all along, where he finds the word religion, that I have principally a respect to the description given of it in the text, and that I mean thereby a divine principle implanted in the soul, springing up into everlasting life."' And now I should briefly touch those faults, both in governors towards their subjects, subjects towards their governors, and towards each other, which do destroy the peaceful state, and the sound and happy constitution of a body politic: and indeed I fear it will run me upon some inconvenience, if not confusion, to wave this method. But out of a pure desire to avoid whatever may be interpretable to ill-will, curiosity, presumption, or any other bad disposition, and that it may appear to any ingenuous eye, that I am more desirous to bind up than to rake into sores, I will expressly show how religion would heal the distempers of any nation, without taking any more than an implicit notice of the distempers themselves.

First then. It is undoubtedly true that religion, deeply radicated in the nature of princes and governors, would most effectually qualify them for the most happy way of reigning. Every body knows well enough what an excellent euchrasy, and lovely constitution the Jewish polity was in, under the influence of holy David, wise Solomon, devout Hezekiah, zealous Josiah, and others of the same spirit; so that I need not spend myself in that inquiry, and so consequently not upon that argument. Now, there are many ways by which it is easy to conceive that religion would rectify and well-temper the spirits of princes. This principle will verily constitute the most noble, heroical, and royal soul, inasmuch as it will not suffer men to find any unhallowed satisfaction in a divine authority, but will be springing up into a God-like nature, as their greatest and most perfect glory. It will certainly correct and limit the over-eager affectation of unwieldy greatness and unbounded dominion, by teaching them that the most honourable victory in the world is self-conquest, and that the propagation of the image and kingdom of God in their own souls is infinitely preferable to the advancement or enlargement of any temporal jurisdiction. The same holy principle, being the most genuine offspring of divine love and benignity, will also polish their rough and over-severe natures, instruct them in the most sweet and obliging methods of government by assimilating them to the nature of God, who is infinitely abhorrent from all appearance of oppression, and hath most admirably provided that his servants should not be slaves, by making his service perfect freedom. The pure and impartial nature of God cannot endure superstitious flatterers, or hypocritical professors; and the princes of the earth, that are regenerated into his image, will also estimate men according to God; I mean, according to his example who loves nothing but the communications of himself, and according to their participation of his image, which alone is amiable and worthy of advancement. What God rejected in his fire-offerings, religion will teach princes to dislike in the devotions, as they call them, of their courtiers; I mean, not only the leaven of superstitious pride and dogged morosity, but also the honey of mercenary prostrations and fawning adulations. In a word, this religious principle which makes God its pattern and end springs from him, and is always springing up into him, would sovereignly heal the distempers of men ruled by humour, selfinterest, and arbitrariness, and teach them to seek the good of the public before self-gratifications. For so God rules the world; who, however some men slander him, I dare say, hath made nothing the duty of his creature but what is really for its good; neither doth he give his people laws on purpose that he might show his sovereignty in making them, or his justice in punishing the breach of them; much less doth he give them any such statutes, as which himself would as willingly they broke as kept, so he might but exact the penalty.

What I have briefly said concerning political governors, the judicious reader may view over again, and apply to the ecclesiastical. For I do verily reckon that if the hearts of these men were in that right religious temper and holy order which I have been speaking of, it would plentifully contribute towards the happy and blissful state of any kingdom, I will speak freely, let it light where it will, that principle which springs up into popular applause, secular greatness, worldly pomp and ostentation, flesh-pleasing, or any kind of self-exaltation, which is various, is really contradistinct from that divine principle, that religious nature which springs up into everlasting life. And certainly, notwithstanding all the recriminations and self-justifications which are, on all hands, used to shuffle off the guilt, these governors must lay aside their sullen pride, as well as the people their proud sullenness, before the church of God be healed in its breaches, purged of Antichristianism, or can probably arrive at any sound constitution or perfect stature. But I suppose religion will not have its full and desirable effect upon a nation, by healing the sickly heads of it, except it be like the holy oil poured upon the sacrificer's head, which ran down also upon the skirts of his garments, Psalms 133:2.

Therefore,

Secondly, It is indispensably requisite for the thorough healing and right constituting of any political body, that the subjects therein be thus divinely principled. This will not fail to dispose them rightly towards their governors, and towards one another.

1. Towards their governors. There are many evil and perverse dispositions in subjects towards their rulers; all which religion is the most excellent expedient to rectify. The first and fundamental distemper here seems to be a want of due reverence toward these vicegerents of God upon earth; which easily grows up into something positive, and becomes a secret wishing of evil to them. This fault, as light as some esteem it, was severely punished in Queen Michal, who despised her lord, king David, in her heart, and her barren womb went down to its sister the grave under the great reproach of living and dying childless. And if an ordinary hatred be so foully interpreted by the holy apostle, " Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer," 1 John 3:15; surely disloyal and malignant dispositions towards governors must needs have a fouler face; and we may say, by a parity of reason, " Whosoever hateth his prince is a rebel and a regicide." Now this distemper, as fundamental and epidemical as it is, the spirit of true religion will heal, and I think I may say that only: for I know nothing in the world that hath, nay, I know that nothing in the world hath that sovereignty and dominion over the dispositions and affections of the soul, as this principle thoroughly ingrafted in the soul, doth challenge to itself. This alone can frame the heart of man into that beautiful temper and complexion of love and loyalty, that he will not curse the king, no, not in his secret thoughts; no, not though he were well assured that there were no winged messenger to tell the matter, Ecclesiastes 10:20.

Another distemper in subjects, respective to their governors, is impatience of bearing a yoke; which is an evil so natural to the proud and imperious spirit of man, that I believe it were safe to affirm, that every irreligious subject could be well content to be a prince; however there may be many who, utterly despairing of such an event, may with the fox in the fable profess they care not for it. From this principle of pride and impatience of subjection, I suspect it is that the millennarians do so scornfully declaim against, and so loudly decry the carnal ordinances of magistracy and ministry: not that they do verily seek the advancement of Christ's kingdom (which indeed every

disorderly, tumultuous, proud, impatient soul doth, ipto facto, deny and destroy) but of themselves. To whom one might justly apply the censure which Pharaoh injuriously passes upon the children of Israel, with a little alteration, " Ye are proud, therefore ye say, Let us go, and do sacrifice to the Lord,'" Exodus 5:17. This distemper the power of religion would excellently heal, by mortifying ambitious inclinations, and quieting the impatient turbulences of the fretful and envious soul, by fashioning the heart to a right humble frame and cheerful submission to every ordination of God. You will see in this treatise that a right religious soul, powerfully springing up into everlasting life, hath no list nor leisure to attend to such poor attainments and sorry acquisitions, as the lording it over other men; being feelingly acquainted with a life far more excellent than the most princely, and being overpowered with a supreme and sovereign good, which charms all its inordinate ragings, and laying hold upon all its faculties, draws them forth by a pleasing violence, unto a most zealous pursuit of itself, A principle of humility makes men good subjects; and they that are indeed probationers for another world, may very well behave themselves with a noble disdain towards all the glories and preferments of this. The last distemper that I shall name in subjects towards their governors is discontents about conceited mis-government and mal - administration, which commonly spring from an evil and sinister interpretation of the ruler's actions, and are attended with'an evil and tumultuous zeal for relaxation.

]Now this distemper, as great as it is and destructive to the well-being of a body politic, true religion would heal both root and branch. Were that noble part and branch of the Christian religion, universal charity, rightly seated in the soul, it would not suffer the son of the bond-woman to inherit with it; it would cast out those ireful jealousies, sour suspicions, harsh surmises, and imbittered thoughts which lodge in unhallowed minds, and display itself in a most amicable sweetness and gentleness of disposition, in fair glosses upon doubtful actions, friendly censures or none at all, kind extenuations of greater faults and covering of lesser; for this is the proper genius of this divine principle, to be very unbelieving of evil or easily entertaining of good reports, gladly interpreting all things to a good meaning that will possibly admit of such a construction; or if you will, in the apostle's phrase, " Charity is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil,"

1 Corinthians 13:5. And as charity doth cut up this root of discontents, so will faith allay and destroy these discontents themselves, which are about mis-government and ill-administration. This noble principle administers ease and satisfaction to the soul, if she happen to be provoked: for it will not suffer her long to stand gazing upon second causes, but carries her up in a seasonable contemplation to the supreme cause, without whom no disorder could ever befall the world; and there commands her to repose herself, in the bosom of infinite wisdom and grace, waiting for a comfortable issue. He may well be vexed indeed, that has so much reason as to observe the many monstrous disorders which are in the world, and not so much faith as to eye the inscrutable providence of a benign and all-wise God, who permitteth the same with respect to the most beautiful end and blessed order imaginable. Though faith abhors the blasphemy of laying blame upon God, yet it so fixes the soul upon him, and causes her so to eye his hand and end in all mal-administrations of men, that she hath no leisure to fall out with men, or quarrel with instruments.

These discontents, I said, were frequently attended with an evil and seditious zeal for relaxation, discovering itself in secret treacherous conspiracies, and many times in boisterous and daring attempts. These are at the first sight so directly contrary to the character given of religious men,

namely, “ the quiet of the land,’’ Psalms 35:20, and the genius of religion, which is wholly made up of “ love, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance, mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, forbearance, forgiveness, charity, thankfulness, wisdom,” Galatians 5:22-23.

Colossians 3:12-16; that it is easy to conceive that religion, in the power of it, would certainly heal this evil disease also. There are many pretenders to religion, whose complaint is still concerning oppression and persecution, their cry is all for liberty and deliverance; but to make it the more passable and plausible, they style it the advancement of the kingdom of Christ. This pretence is so fair, but withal so deceitful, that I count it worth my time to speak a little more liberally to it. And here I do from the very bottom of my soul protest, that I account the advancement of the glory of God and the kingdom of Christ, to be the most desirable thing in the world; and that it is highly becoming the greatest spirits upon earth to employ their very utmost zeal and diligence to assist the accomplishment thereof: yea, so utterly do I abhor irreligion and atheism, that, as the apostle speaks, Php 1:18, in somewhat a like case, I do verily rejoice that Christ is professed, though it be but pretended, and that truth is owned, though it be not owned in truth. I will further add, that the oppressing and obstructing of the external progress and propagation of the gospel is hated of Christ, and to be lamented of all true Christians. Yea, I will further allow men a due sensibleness of their personal oppressions and injuries, and a natural warrantable desire to be redeemed from them. And now having thus purged myself, I entreat the christian reader patiently and without prejudice to suffer me to speak somewhat closely to this matter: yea, I do verily assure myself that I shall be accepted, or at least indulged by all free and ingenuous spirits, who are rightly acquainted with the genius of the christian religion, and do prefer truth before interest.

And, first, for the complaint that is mostly concerning oppression and persecution; certainly religion, if it did rightly prevail in our hearts, would very much heal this distemper, if not by a perfect silencing of these complaints, yet surely by putting them into another tune. I reckon that religion quite silences these complaints, when it engages the soul so entirely in serving the end of God in afflictions, and in a right improvement of them for religious purposes, that she cannot spend herself in fruitless murmurings and unchristian indignation. As fire seizeth upon every thing that is combustible, and makes it fuel for itself, and a predominant humour in the body converts into its own substance whatever is convertible, and makes it nourishment to itself; so doubtless this spirit of burning, this divine principle, if it were rightly predominant in the soul, would nourish itself by all things that lie in its way, though they seem ever so heterogeneous and hard to be digested; and rather than want meat it would, with Samson, fetch it out of the very eater himself But if religion should not utterly silence these complainings, by rendering the soul thus forgetful of the body, and regardless of its smart, in comparison of the happy advantage that may be made of it; yet, methinks, it should draw the main stream of these tears into another channel, and put these complaints into another tune. It is very natural to the religious soul to make God ail things unto itself, to lay to heart the interest of truth and holiness more than any particular interest of its own; and to bewail the disservice done to God more than any self-incommodation. Must not he needs be a good subject to his prince, who can more heartily mourn that God’s laws are not kept, than that he himself is kept under? that can be more grieved that men are cruel, than that they kill him? that can be more troubled because there are oppressions in the world, than because he himself is oppressed? such subjects religion alone can make. As for the cry that is made for liberty and

deliverance, I confess I do not easily apprehend what is more, or more naturally desirable than true liberty: yea, I believe there are many devout and religious souls that, from a right noble and generous principle, and out of a sincere respect to the Author and end of their creation, are almost intemperately studious of it, do prefer it above all preferments, or anything that may be properly called sensual, and would purchase it with anything that they can possibly part with. But yet that I may a little moderate, if not quite stifle this cry, I must freely profess that I do apprehend too much of selfishness generally in it; because this liberty is commonly abstracted from the proper end of it, and desired merely as a naturally convenient good, and not under a right religious conversation. Self-love is the very heart and centre of the animal life; and doubtless this natural principle is as truly covetous of self-preservation, and freedom from all inconveniences, grievances, and confinements, as any religious principle can be. And therefore I may well allude to our Saviour's words, and say, " If you love and desire deliverance,"*' only under the notion of a natural good, " what do you more than others? Do not even the publicans the same?" Matthew 5:47. But were this divine principle rightly exercising its sovereignty in the soul, it would value all things, and all estates and conditions, only as they have a tendency to the advancement and nourishment of itself. With what an ordinary, not to say disdainful eye, would the religious soul look upon the fairest self-accommodations in the world; and be ready to say within itself, What is a mere abstract deliverance from afflictions worth? wherein is a naked freedom from afflictions to be accounted of will this make me a blessed man? was not profane and impudent Ham delivered from the deluge of water, as well as his brethren? were not the iilthy, shameless daughters of Lot delivered from the deluge of fire, as well as their father? And yet we are so far from rising up and calling these people blessed, that the heart of every chaste and modest Christian is ready to rise against the very mention of their names, when he remembers how both the one and the other, though in a different sense, discovered their father's nakedness. If we did really value ourselves by our souls, and our souls themselves by what they possess of the image of God, if we did rightly prefer the advancement of the divine life before the gratification of the animal, it is easy to conceive how we should prefer patience before prosperity, faith in God before the favour of men, spiritual purity before temporal pleasures or preferments, humility before honour, the denial of ourselves before the approbation of others, the advancement of God's image before the advancement of our own names, an opportunity of exercising gracious dispositions before the exercising of any temporal power or secular authority; and in a word, the displaying of the beauty, glory, and perfections of God, before health, wealth, liberty, livelihood, and life itself We should certainly be more indifferently affected towards any condition, whether prosperity or adversity, and not be so fond of the one, nor weary of the other, if we did verily vakie them only by the tendency that they had to further religion, and advance the life of Christ in our souls. This would certainly make men more sincerely studious to read God's end in afflicting them, and less longing to see the end of their afflictions. And as for treacheries, plottings, invasions, usurpations, rebellions, and that tumultuous zeal for relaxation, which this impatience of oppression, and fondness of deliverance do so often grow up into, I dare say there is nothing like religion, in the power of it, for the effectual healing of them. The true spirit of religion is not so weary of oppression, though it be by sinful men, as it is abhorrent from deliverance, if it be by sinful means. May I not be allowed to allude to the Apostle, and say, whereas there is amongst you this zeal, contention, and faction, "Are ye not carnal, and walk as men.?" 1 Corinthians 3:3. Is not this the same which a mere natural man would do, strive and struggle, by right and by wrong, to redeem himself from whatsoever is grievous and galling to

the interest of the flesh? Might it not be reasonably supposed, that if religion did but display itself aright in the powerful actings of faith, hope, and humility, it would quench this scalding zeal, and calm these tempestuous motions of the soul, and make men rather content to be delivered up to the adversary, though the flesh should by him be destroyed, so the spirit might be saved, and the divine life advanced in the way of the Lord. O how dear and precious are the possession and practice of faith, patience, humihty, and self-denial to a pious soul, in comparison of all the joys and toys, treasures, pleasures, ease and honour of the world, the safety and liberty of the flesh! How much more then, when these must be accomplished by wicked means, and purchased at the rate of God's displeasure? And because the kingdom of Christ is so often alleged to defend and patronize these strange fervours and frenzies, let me here briefly record to all that shall read these lines, the way and method of Christ himself in propagating his own kingdom. It will not be denied but that Christ was infinitely studious to promote his own kingdom in the best and most proper sense: but I no where read that he ever attempted it by force or fraud, by violent opposition or crafty insinuation. Nay, he reckoned that his kingdom was truly promoted, when these tumultuous, impatient, imperious, proud lusts of men were mortified. Nothing had been more easy with him, considering his miraculous power, infallible wisdom, and the mighty interest and party which he could by these have made for himself in the world, than to have raised his own kingdom upon the ruins of the Roman, and to have quite shuffled Caesar out of the world: but indeed nothing- more impossible, considering the perfect innocency and infinite sacredncss of his temper, nor anything more contradictious, considering the proper notion of his kingdom; which he professes not to be secular, and so not to be maintained by fighting: but if you would know in what sense he was a King, he himself seems to intimate it in his answer to Pilate, " Thou sayest that I am a king; to this end was I born, that I should bear witness unto the truth,'' John 18:37. So then it seems wherever there are truth and holiness predominant, there is Christ really enthroned, and actually triumphant. Where religion doth vitally inform, animate, and actuate men's souls, it doth make them rightly to understand that the kingdom of Christ is not the thriving of parties, the strengthening of factions, the advancement of any particular interest, though it seem to be of ever so evangelical a complexion; no, nor yet the proselyting of the world to the profession of Christianity, or of the Christian world to the purer and more reformed profession of it, though these latter would be a great external honour to the person of Christ: but that it is most properly and happily propagated in the spirits of men; and that wherever there are faith, patience, humility, selfdenial, contempt of this world, and pregnant hopes of a better, pure obedience to God, and sincere benignity to men, here and there is the kingdom of God, Christ regnant, and the gospel in the power and triumph of it. And may not these things be, and be most conspicuously, in a persecuted condition of the church? That certainly was a high instance of the mighty power of the divine life in our blessed Saviour, which the apostle Peter records of him, who "when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously,"

1 Peter 2:23. The same divine principle dwelling plentifully in our soul, would conduct us to the same behaviour, according to the precept given by the same Apostle, " Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing," &c.

1 Peter 3:9. How vainly do men dream that they serve the interest and advance the kingdom of Christ by fierce and raging endeavours to cast off every yoke that galls them, and kicking against every thorn that pricks them, when indeed they serve the interest of the flesh, and do, under a fine

cloak, gratify the mere animal life, and sacrifice to sciflove, which is as covetous of freedom from all retrenchments and confinements as religion itself can be. It is said indeed that when the churches had rest they were “edified and multiplied,” Acts 9:31; but when they suffer “according to the will of God,” they are then glorified: for “ the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon them,” 1 Peter 4:14, as the apostle Paul professes of himself in that most noble and heroical passage of his to the Corinthians; “ Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me,” 2 Corinthians 12:9.

Secondly, Religion will not fail rightly to dispose the hearts of subjects towards one another; and that whether they be of the same way and judgment with themselves, or different. I dare not assert that it would make them all of the same way and mind; neither do I believe it would: yet I am confident it would do more towards this catholic union, than all the laws and severities in the world can. Mutual forbearance and forgiveness, christian kindness and discreet condescension, are the most warrantable and most effectual method for introducing uniformity, and unanimity too, which is much better, into the church of Christ. But, however, religion would certainly give a right disposition, and teach men a right behaviour in reference to each other, whether Friends or Dissenters. This principle would teach men to love their friends and accomplices only in the Lord, as his members, not as their own partizans. Are not they strangely devoted to interest that will vindicate anything in a partizan, which they will declaim against in a Dissenter? And yet how is the sacred name of christian friendship reproached every where by reason of this partiality! How much better did true religion instruct the great Apostle, “ to know no man after the flesh,’’ 2 Corinthians 5:16, no, not Christ himself. The same principle would not fail to cure the distempers of men relative to those that are of a different way and judgment from themselves; whether of Protestants towards Protestants, or Protestants and Papists towards one another. It would heal the distempered affections and behaviours of Protestants towards Protestants. Were men thoroughlybaptized into the spirit of love and wisdom, which are so lively pourtrayed by the apostles St. Paul and St. James, that one might be well enamoured of the very description: how certainly would all oppressions, law-suits, disputations about unprofitable and indeterminable points, either be suppressed or sanctified, either not be, or not be vexatious? Not to speak of the oppressions done by overreaching, stealing, lying, false witness-bearing, slanderous detractions, envious suggestions, and malignant dissemination of doubtful suspicions, by which commonly poor men oppress the rich; all which true religion abhors. There is a great oppression that goes uncontrouled in the world, which is, by the cruel engrossings and covetous insatiable tradings of richer men. What these are intentionally I will not say, but that they are really and eventually as great oppressions as those inhuman depopulations, and squeezing exactions, which are so much inveighed against, I doubt not. But, be they what they will, or be they excused how they will, I am confident that this divine principle that powerfully springs up into everlasting life, would mightily relieve the world in this respect; in that it would moderate men”’s desires of corruptible riches, forbid them to seek the things of this world any more or any otherwise than in consistency with, and subserviency to, their primary and most diligent seeking of the kingdom of God; it would make men seek the wealth of others even as their own, and make private advantages stoop to the public good. / do verily believe^ that if there ivere none but good me7i in England, there would be no poor men there.

Civil laws may provide for the maintenance of the poor; but the law of divine love, a principle of religion, if it were universally obeyed, would make men so nobly regardless of earthly accommodations, that there would soon be room enough for all men to thrive into a sufficient stature; and then, being so grown, they would covet no more. In law-suits, if there were any, men would seek the advancement of truth, and not of their own cause and interest distinct from it. And O how excellently would it still the noise of axes and hammers about the temple of God!

It would take men off from vain speculations and much eagerness about unnecessary opinions, by employing them in more substantial and important studies. The very being of religion in the soul would indeed decide a world of controversies, which the schools have long laboured in vain to determine. For I reckon that these scholastic wars fitly called polemics, like those civil dissentions spoken of by the apostle James, James 4:1, do, for the most part, spring from men's lusts that war in their members, such as pride, curiosity, wantonness of wit, disobedience, and unsubduedness of understanding; and the like. I have observed widi frreat grief, how the spirits of many men, I had ahnost said sects of men, run out wholly into disputes about ceremonies,proand con^ about church government, about what is orthodox and what is heterodox, about the true and the false church, (which commonly they judge by something external, and indeed separable from the essence of a true church;) and hereabout are their zeal, their conference, and their very prayers themselves mostly bestowed. Who can doubt but that religion, in the power of it, would find men something else to do? yea, and if it could not perfectly determine these niceties, yet it would much heal our dissentions about them, and bring tears to quench the strange and unnatural heats that are amongst us, and cause such dreadful inflammations in our breasts. But it may seem that there is such a fatal enmity and irreconcileable feud betwixt Papists and Protestants, that nothing, no, not religion itself, can heal it. And truly if we suppose that it is religion that engages both parties in this enmity, I think it will prove incurable; but God forbid that this pure offspring of heaven should be so blasphemed!

It is not religion, but indeed the want of it, that begets this implacable animosity, whatever is pretended. Cruel religion, bloody religion, selfish religion, envious and revengeful religion! Who can choose but cry out of the blasphemy of this contradiction at the very firit hera-ing? Nay, I dare affirm it without hesitation, that the more rehgious any Protestant or Papist is, the more abhorrent he is from brutish savageness, wicked revenge, and deviUsh hatred. The church of Rome judges the reformed heretics are not fit to live; and why not because they Hve not well, but because they cannot think and believe as they do. And is this the genuine product of true religion? nothing less. For a desire of ruling over men's consciences, and of subjecting the faith of others to themselves, is certainly compatible to a mere natural man, nay, to the devil himself, who is as lordly, cruel, and imperious as any other. The reformed churches, on the other hand are, I doubt, generally more offended at the Papists for their persecutions of them, than for their real persecuting and crucifying Christ afresh by their sins; and so, consequently, do rather write and fight against them, than either pity or pray for them. I hope there are as many wellspirited Christians in England, at least proportionably, as in any church upon earth; and yet I fear there are far more that could wish the Papists out of this world, than that earnestly desire that they might be fitted for, and so counted worthy of a better. And doth this spring from a religious principle, think ye, or a selfish? Doth it not agree well to the animal life, and natural self, to be tender of its own interests and concernments, to wish well to its own safety, to defend itself from violence? May I not allude to our Saviour's

words and say.

“ If ye hate them that hate you, how can that be accounted religious? Do not even the publicans the same?‘“ Matthew 5:46. I doubt we know not sufficiently what spirit we should be of. The power of religion, rightly prevailing in the soul, would mould us into another kind of temper; it would teach us as well to love, and pity, and pray for Papists, as to hate Popery. I know the prophecy indeed, that the beast and the false prophet shall be cast alive into the lake burning with brimstone, and the remnant shall be slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse. Revelation 19:20, but, inasmuch as that sword is said to proceed “ out of his mou.th,” Revelation 19:21; I would gladly interpret it of “the word of God,” Ephesians 6:17, which kills men unto salvation. However, let the interpretation of that text, and others of the like importance, be what it will, I reckon it very unsafe to turn all the prophecies and threatenings of God into prayers, lest perhaps we should be found to contribute to the damning of men’s souls. Yea, when all is said concerning the sovereign decrees of God, and his essential and inflexible punitive justice, and all those texts that seem to speak of God’s revenging himself with delight, are interpreted to the utmost harshness of meaning that the cruel wit of man can invent; yet it remains a sealed, and to me a sweet truth, “ I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God,’’ Ezekiel 18:32; and again, “As I live, saith the Lord God. I have no pleasure in the deatli of the wicked,” Ezekiel 33:11. Wherefore, to wave all those dreadful glosses (that do rather describe the bitter and revengeful temper of man that makes them, than interpret the pure and perfect nature of God upon whom they are made,) let us attend to that beautiful character that is every where given of religion, which is our highest concern, in the person of Moses, of Paul, and of Christ Jesus himself, the author and exemplar of it; who by his incarnation, life, and death, abundantly demonstrated the infinite benignity and compassionate ardors of his soul towards us, when we were worse than Papists, as being out of a possibility of salvation without him; and “let that mind be in us, which was in him also,” Php 2:5. Though it be not directly our Saviour’s meaning in my text, yet I believe it is reductively, that this pure and divine principle, religion, springs up into everlasting life, not only our own, but other inen’’s also.

But, however religion is described, sure I am it is most unnatural to the religious soul that is regenerated into the pure spirit of piety, pity, and universal charity, to be of a cruel, fierce, revengeful, condemning disposition. And therefore whatever are the ranting and wrathful strains of some men’’s devotions, I beseech the reader to endeavour with me, that charity towards men’s souls may go along in conjunction with zeal and piety towards God, when we present ourselves before the throne of his grace; and fio, I am ccnfidcnt, it v.ill if we pray sincerely to this purpose, namely, “ That God would cause the wickedness of the wicked to come to an end, that he would consume the Antichrist, but convert the Papist, and make the wonderers after the beast to become followers of the Lamb!”

I doubt there are many that think they can never be too liberal in wishing ill of the Papists, nay, they count it a notable argument of a good Protestant, 1 had almost said an evidence of grace, to be very furious and vehement against them. Alas! how miserably do we bewray ourselves in so doing, to be nothing less than what we pretend to by doing it. For are not we ourselves herein antichristian, whilst we complain of their cruelties, our own souls, in the very act, boiling over with revengeful and scalding affections? If we do indeed abhor their cruelty, because it is contrary to the holy precepts of the gospel, and the true kingdom of Christ, we ought to be as jealous at the same time lest anything like unto it should be found in ourselves; otherwise are we not carnal? For

mere nature, as 1 have often said, will abhor anything that is contrary to itself, and will not willingly suffer its delicate interest to be touched. The apostle tells us, that no man speaking by the " Spirit of Christ, calleth Christ accursed," 1 Corinthians 12:3; but I doubt it is common to curse Antichrist, and yet by a spirit that is antichristian, I mean carnal, selfish, cruel, and uncharitable. For there is a spiritual Antichrist, or, if you will, in the Apostle's phrase, a " spirit of Anti-christ,'"' 1 John 4:3, as well as a political Antichrist; and I doubt the former prevails most in the world, though it be the least discerned and banned.

Men do by Antichrist as they do by the devil, defy him in words, but entertain him in their hearts, run away from the appearance of him, and, in the mean time, can be well content to be all that in the very deed which the devil and Antichrist is.

All this evidently appears to be for want of the true power and spirit of religion which I commend for so great a healer, even the to iravatdg of our distempers.

Perhaps no papist will find in his heart to read this epistle written by a heretic; yet possibly too, some one or other may: therefore I will adventure briefly to prescribe this same medicinal divinity to them also; though perhaps I might be excused upon other accounts, all that I have hitherto said to distempered Protestants being rightly enough, nutatis mutandis, applicable to them. But moreover, whereas they value their church, and the truth and rightness of it, by its universality and prosperity; the power of religion would make men to value themselves and their adherents, only by the divine impressions of piety and purity, and to account such only worthy of the glorious title of apostolical, and children of God, who are sincere followers of the apostles wherein they were followers of Christ, namely, in true holiness and righteousness. Are they industrious and zealous for the proselyting of the world, and spreading of their interest ffir and near? And are not all wicked men yea, and the devil himself so too? The fairest and most flourishing state of a church is nothing to God, and so consequently not to a pious soul, in comparison of those excellent divine beauties wherewith religion adorneth the world. But whereas the greatest complaint, and the most dreadful charge which the Protestants bring against the Papists, is their inhumanity and most unchristian cruelty, exercised against all whom they can but make shift to esteem heretics; and they, on the other hand, allege, that the interest of religion, and the catholic faith doth require it, and that they do not so properly murder men, as sacrifice them to the honour of God: it will be proper to spend a little time, at least, to clear religion of this blame; that as wisdom is at all times justified of, and in her childr^i, so she may be sometimes justified by them, especially when the aspersions are so monstrously foul. And indeed she has sufficiently instructed us how to justify her from all such imputations; having so fairly pourtrayed herself by the pen of the apostle James, both negatively and affirmatively. She is void of " strife, envyings, bitterness, and every evil work;" but she is " pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy,'"' James 3:14-17. This is the proper description of heavenly wisdom, or pure religion: and O that all Christians would estimate themselves to be wise according to their consonancy and conformity thereunto! then I would easily believe, that none would be papists in practice, whatever they might be in opinion. What, sirs, is the God of the Christians become like a devil, that he should delight in cruelty, and drink the blood of men? Is the butchering of reasonable creatures that reasonable service which he requires? Romans 12:1. Is the living sacrifice of your own bodies turned into the dead sacrifice of other men's? It was wont to be said, " AVhat communion hath Christ with Behal.?" 2 Corinthians 6:15. And is the Prince of peace now become

very Satan, the author of enmity, malignity, confusion, and every evil work? Did he shed his blood for his enemies, to teach us that goodly lesson of shedding the blood of ours? Did he come " to seek and to save that which was lost,"' Luke 19:10, to set us an example that we might seek to destroy, and that only to repair our own losses? Be it so; that the Protestant churches have apostatized from you, this, I hope, is not a greater crime than the apostacy of mankind from God, which yet he expiated, not with the blood of the apostates, but with his own.

Religion was formerly a principle springing up into eternal life. How is the world changed, that it should now be a principle springing up into massacres, and temporal death? or is religion now become a principle springing up into secular power, worldly dominion, temporal greatness, and all manner of fleshly accommodations? This was of old the description of sensuality, and a heathen genius, "for after all these things do the Gentiles seek,'' Matthew 6:32. Are there so many mighty engines in the gospel to engage the hearts of men to believe, profess, and obey it, and must they all now give place to fire and sword? Are these the only gospel methods of winning men to the catholic faith? What! are we wiser for Christ, or more zealous than he himself was.- Did he forbid fire from heaven, and will you fetch it even from hell to consume Dissenters? Did he sheath his sword that was drawn in his own defence, and set a dreadful seal upon it too, "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword;*" and will you adventure to draw it in a way of revenge and persecution, and count it meritorious too, as if you should therefore never perish because you take it? Is it not written in your Bibles, as well as ours, that "no murderer shall enter into the kingdom of God?'" And do you think by murders to propagate this kingdom upon earth, and have a more abundant entrance into it yourselves hereafter? Can hell dwell with heaven? Shall bloody cruelty ever come to lodge in the bosom, or lie down in the sacred arms of eternal love? Be not deceived, sirs, with a false heaven; but take this for an indubitable and self-evidencing aphorism of truth. No soul of man hath any more of heaven, no, nor ever shall have, than he hath of God, and of his pure, placable, patient, benign, and gracious nature. And this is that everlasting life which a religious principle is always springing up into; so that it hereby appears plainly, that religion, in the power of it, would heal these feverish distempers also, and so restore a most excellent constitution, both personal and political.

It may possibly seem that I have toiled too much in these discoveries; and perhaps my pains may prove ungrateful to many: but may it please Almighty God that they may prove a vindication of religion, restorative of the sickly and lapsed ecclesiastical or political state, yea, or medicinal and profitable to any single soul of man, I shall venture to estimate it against an age of pains. And if it should prove that by all this toil I have caught nothing, as the weary disciples complained of old, nevertheless being well assured that I have a word of God for my encouragement, I will let down the net once again, and so finish these epistolary pains with an earnest hortatory address to all that shall peruse them.

Let nothing satisfy your souls. Christians, let nothing administer rest or settlement to your hearts, that is common to the natural man, or compatible to the mere animal life. There are a great many high strains of zeal and seeming devotion, by which many men judge themselves to be some great ones, and concerning which they are ready to say. These things are the great power of God; which, if they be well looked into, will be found to grow upon no better root than natural self, and to spring from no higher principle than this animal life. It is impossible for me to give an exact catalogue of all these; many of them I have occasionally recorded in the latter end of the ensuing

treatise; to which yet many more might be added, if I had a fair opportunity. But at present let me in general commend to you this description given by our Saviour of true religion, as the rule whereby I do earnestly intreat you faithfully to examine yourselves, your actions, affections, zeal, confidence, professions, performances. Let me speak freely; all pomp of worship, all speculative knowledge, though ever so orthodox, is as agreeable to the animal life as the divine: and all external models of devotion, humble confessions, devout hymns, pathetical prayers, raptures of joy, much zeal to reform indecencies in worship or superstitions, a fierce raging against the political Antichrist, do as well suit a natural man as a spiritual, and may be as fairly acted over apparently, by a mere selfish carnal principle, as by that which is truly divine. When Diogenes trampled upon Plato's stately bed, saying calco Platonis fastum, it was answered him very sharply, sed majore fastti, he was prouder in treading upon it, than Plato was in lying upon it. I doubt it may be applied too truly to a great deal of that cynical and scornful zeal, that is in the world at this day; men declaim against the pride, and pomp, and grandeur of antichristian prelates, with a pride no whit inferior to theirs whom they thus decry. However it is plain that those things which are imitable by a sensual heart, and indeed performable by the mere magic of an exalted fancy, are not to be rested in by a sincere Christian. Head over therefore, I beseech you, the fruits of the Spirit recorded by the apostle Paul and the apostle Peter, Galatians 5:22, & 2 Peter 1:5-6; and estimate yourselves by them; these things are utterly incompatible to the mere animal man; all the natural men and devils in the world.cannot be humble, meek, self-denying, patient, jcharitable, lovers of God more than of themselves, jor of their enemies as themselves. Would you judge rightly of the goodness of any opinion? theu value it by the tendency that is in it to advance the life of God: particularly thus judge of the millennarian opinion, which begins to be so much hugged in the world: concerning which I will only say thus much at present, that, in the common notion of it, as it promises a state of much ease, liberty, power, prosperity, and freedom from all persecutions and oppressions, it is as grateful to the fleshly palate, and will be as gladly embraced by the mere animal man, as by the greatest saint upon earth. And therefore, supposing it to be true, yet I cannot but wonder how it comes to administer so much satisfaction, and afford such a marvellous relish to minds divinely principled, as many seem to taste in it. By this same tendency to advance the divine life in your souls, judge also of all your enjoyments, riches, honours, liberties, friends, health, children. &c. and value them, if it be possible, only under this consideration. But to hasten to an end, I will endeavour to enforce this general exhortation by two or three weighty considerations. First, it is utterly impossible that any speculation, opinion, profession, enjoyment, ornament, performance, or any other thing, but the transformation of the mind into the very image and nature of God, should ever be able to perfect our souls, or commend us unto God.

They cannot perfect our souls, as being most of them exterior, and all of them inferior to it. They cannot commend a man to God, who loves us, and whom we so far know and love, as we partake of his nature, and resemble him: this is the love of God, this is the worship of God, and this is really the souFs acquaintance with him, and nothing but this.

Secondly, the advancement of the divine life is that which God mainly designs in the world. I need instance but in two things:1. The sending of his own Son into the world for this very end and purpose, " that he might take away our sins," says the Apostle John; and again, " that he might destroy the works of the devil;'"' and again, says the Apostle Paul, " That he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." 2. It appears that this is

the grand design of God in the world, inasmuch as he doth not deliver his faithful servants out of their afflictions and tribulations; which he would not fail to do, did he not intend them a greater good thereby, and design to lead them on and raise them up to a higher life. Now, what can more ennoble these souls of ours, than to live upon the same design with God himself? And now, reader, I commend thee to the blessing of God, in the perusal of this small tract, which I have composed, and now exposed under a sense of that common obligation that li6s upon every person to be active in his sphere for the interest of the name and honour of God, and to render his life as useful as he may: more particularly, under a sense of my own deficiency in several accomplishments, whereby others are better fitted to serve their generation: and especially, under a sense of the peculiar engagement that lieth upon me, to dedicate my life entirely to his service, from whom I have so lately, and that so signally, received the same afresh: in imitation of whom, I hope thou wilt be indulgent towards my infirmities: to whom I heartily commend thee, and to the precious influences of his eternal Spirit, and rest.

Thy servant, In his work and for his sake,

SAMUEL SHAW.

03.01. CHAP. I. The occasion of the words of the text

CHAP. I. The occasion of the words of the text — The principal contents of it — The origin qf true religion — All souls the offspring of God, and a more especial portraiture qf him; hut pious souls yet more especially — God the author of religion from without, in several respects; God the author qf it from within, enlightening the faculty — Religion something of God in the soul — A discovery qf religious meti by the affinity they have to God — God alone to be acknowledged in all holy accomplishjnents — The origin qf sin from hence discovered.

John 4:14.

“ But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.’ This chapter contains an excellent, profitable familiar discourse of the blessed Saviour of the world, into whose lips gi’ace was poured, and he ceased not to pour it out again. That which is said of the wise, is fully verified of wisdom itself, His lips dispersed knowledge. A poor woman of Samaria comes to draw water, and our Saviour takes ocassion from the water to instruct her in the great and excellent doctrines of the kingdom of heaven. O the admirable zeal for God, and compassion for souls, which dwelt in that divine breast! and O the wonderful, unsearchable counsels of an all-wise God! He ordains SauPs seeking of asses to be the means of his finding a kingdom upon earth; and this poor woman’s seeking of water, to be an occasion of her finding the way to the kingdom of heaven. She comes to the well of Jacob, and, behold, she meets with the God of Jacob there. The occasion, passages, and issue of this discourse, would each afford many good and profitable observations, but I think none more than this verse that I have pitched upon; in which the mystery of gospel-grace is rarely unfolded, and true christian religion is excellently described. For so I understand our Saviour, not as speaking of faith, or knowledge, or any other particular grace, but of grace in general, of the Holy Spirit of God; that is, the gifts and graces of it, of true godliness; or, if you will, of christian religion; for that word I shall choose to retain throughout my discourse, as being most intelligible and comprehensive. In which words we find the true christian religion unfolded in the origin, nature, properties, consequences, and end of it. The origin of it is found in those words, “ I shall give him;” the nature of it is described by “a well of water;’’ the properties of it will be found in the phrase of ’ springing up;’“’ the consequence of it, that the man that is endoTA’ed with it “shall never thirst;”’ the end or perfection of it is “everlasting life.”“ Of,ali these, by God’s assistance, in this order.

’ First, I begin at the origin of it, as it seems meet I should; for indeed it is first found in the words, “The water that I shall give him.” And here the proposition that I shall go upon must be,.

“ That the true Christian religion is of divine origin.” All souls are indeed the offspring of God.

Those noble faculties of understanding, and a will free from constraint, do more resemble the nature of God than all the world besides. There is more of the glory, beauty, and brightness of God in a soul, than there is in the sun itself. The Apostle allows it as a proper speech spoken in

common of all men, “for we are also his offspring.” God hatk transferred more lively prints of himself, and his divine essence, upon a rational soul, than he hath upon the whole creation: so that the soul of man, even as to its constitution, doth declare and discover more of the nature of God, than all the other things that he hath made, ’whereof the Apostle speaks.

He that rightly converseth with his own soul, will get more acquaintance with God, than they that gaze continually upon the material heavens, or traverse the dark and utmost corners of the earth, or “go down unto the sea in ships;” the serious consideration of the little world will teach more of him than the great one could do; so that I hesitate not to take the Apostle’s words concerning the word of God, and apply them to the nature of God — “ Say not in thy heart, Who shall ascend into heaven,” to bring a discovery of God from thence? or, “who shall descend into the deep,’“ to fetch it up from thence? The nature and essence of God is nigh thee, even in thine own soul, excellently displayed in the constitution and frame, powers and faculties thereof: God hath not made any creatures so capable of receiving and reflecting his image and glory, as angels and men: which hath made me often to say, “ That the vilest soul of man is much more beautiful and honourable than the most excellent body, than the very body of the sun at noon-day.”

And, by the way, this may render sin odious and loathsome; because it hath defiled the fairest piece of God’s workmanship in the world, and hath blurred the clearest copy which he had drawn of himself in the whole creation. But though all rational souls be the children of God, yet all of them do not imitate their father; though their constitution do express much of the essence of God, yet their disposition doth express the image of the devil. But pious souls, who are followers of God, are indeed his dear children.

Holy souls, who are endowed with a divine and God-like disposition, and do work the works of God, these are most truly and properly his offspring. And in this respect God’s children are his “ workmanship created unto good works.” Religion is of a divine origin: God is the author and father of it, both from without and from within.

1. God is the author of it from without. When man had fallen from God by sin, and so had lost his way, and was become both unwilling and unable to return, God was pleased to set up that glorious light, his own Son, “ the Sun of righteousness,’’ in the world, that he might guide our feet into the way of peace, who is therefore called, “ A light to lighten the Gentiles,’’ and compared to a candle set upon a candlestick. God of his infinite free grace, and over-flowing goodness, provided a Mediator, in and by whom these apostate souls might be reconciled, and re-united to himself; and “ to as many as receive him, to them he giveth power to become the sons of God.”

Yet further, it pleased God in his infinite wisdom and mercy, to chalk out the way of life and peace in the holy scriptures, and therein to unlock the secrets of salvation to succeeding generations.

Herein he hath plainly laid down the terms of the covenant of peace which was made in the Mediator, and given precepts and promises for the direction and encouragement of as many as will inquire into the same. These are the sacred oracles which live clear and certain answers to all that do consult them about their future state. Christ Jesus opened the way into the holiest of all, and the scriptures come after and point it out unto us: he purchased life and immortality, and these bring it to light. And yet further, that these might not be mistaken or perverted to men’’s destruction, which were ordained for their salvation, which sometimes doth come to pass, God

hath been pleased to commit these records into the hands of his church, and therein to his ministers, whom he hath appointed, called, qualified, instructed, for the opening, explaining, interpreting, and applying of them: so that they are called " scribes instructed unto the kingdom of God, and stewards of the mysteries, stewards over the household of God, to give unto every one his portion.' These apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, God hath given " for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ;'

These things hath God done for us, from without us; he hath set up a light, chalked out our way, and appointed us guides. To which I might add the many incitements and motives which we call mercies or comforts of this life; and the many affrightments of judgment and afflictions which God hath added to the promises and threatenings of his word, to bring us into the way of life. But all these are too little, too weak of themselves to bring back a straggling soul, or to produce a living principle of true religion in it. Therefore, 2. God is the author of religion from within.

He doth not only reveal himself and his Son to the soul, but in it; he doth not only make discoveries to it, but lively impressions upon it; he doth not only appoint, and point out the way of life, but breathes in the breath of life. He hath not only provided a Saviour, a Redeemer, but he also draws the soul unto him. He hath not only appointed pastors and teachers, but he himself impregnates their word, and clothes their doctrine with his own power, using their ministry as an instrument whereby to teach; so that the children of God are said to be " all taught of God." Ministers can only discover, and as it were, enlighten the object; but God enlightens the faculty, he gives the seeing eye, and does actually enable it to discern. Therefore the work of converting a soul is still ascribed to God in scripture; he begets us again; he draws the soul, before it can run after him; Christ apprehends the soul, lays powerful hold of it. God gives a heart of flesh, a new heart; he causes men to walk in his statutes. He puts his law into their inward parts, and writes it in their hearts. To which I might add many more quotations of the same value. But yet, methinks, we are not come to a perfect discovery of religion's being the offspring of God in the minds of men. For it is God who enlighteneth the faculty as to the learning of all other things also; he teacheth the grammar and the rhetoric, as well as the divinity; he instructeth even the husbandman to discretion in his affairs of husbandry, and teaches him to plough, and sow, and thrash, &c. Not only the gift of divine knowledge, but indeed " every good gift cometli from the Father of lights/' God doth from within give that capacity, illumination of the faculty, ingenuity, whereby we comprehend the mysteries of nature, as well as of grace.

Therefore we may conceive of the origin of religion in a more inward and spiritual manner still.

It is not so much given of God, as itself is something of God in the soul; as the soul is not so properly said to give life, as to be the life of man. As the conjunction of the soul with the body is the life of the body, so verily the life of the soul stands in its conjunction with God by a spiritual union of will and affections. God doth not enlighten men''s minds as the sun enlightens the world, by shining unto them and round about them, but by shining into them, by enlightening the faculty, as I said before, yea, which seems to be somewhat more, by shining in their hearts, as the Apostle phraseth it.

He sets up a candle, which is his own light within the soul; so that the soul sees God in his own light, and loves him with the love that he hath shed abroad in it; and religion is no other than a reflection of that divine image, life, and light, and love, which from God are stamped and imprinted

upon the souls of true Christians. God is said to enlighten the soul, but it is not as the sun enlightens, that you see; so he draws the soul too, but not ab extra only, as one man draweth another with a cord, as Jupiter in Homer draws men up to heaven by a chain, and Mahomet, his disciples by a lock of hair; but he draws the soul, as the sun draws up earthly vapours by infusing its virtue and power into them; or, as the loadstone draws the iron, by the powerful insinuations of his grace. God doth not so much communicate himself to the soul by way of discovery, as by way of impression, as I said before; and indeed not so much by impression either, as by a mystical and wonderful way of implantation. Religion is not so much something from God, as something of God in the minds of good men, for so the scripture allows us to speak, it is therefore called his image, and good men are said to " live according to God in the spirit;" but, as if that were not high enough, it is not only called his image, but even a participation of his divine nature, something of Christ in the soul, an Infant-Christ as one calls it, alluding to the Apostle, where the saving knowledge of Christ is called Christ himself, — " until Christ be formed in you.' True religion is, as it were, God dwelling in the soul, and Christ dwelling in the soul, as the Apostles St. John and St. Paul do express it: yea, God himself is pleased thus to express his relation to the pious soul — " I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a humble spirit;"' and again — '' As God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them."

Pure religion is a beam of the Father of lights, lumen delumiie; it is a drop of that eternal fountain of goodness and holiness, the breath of the power of God, a pure influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty, the brightness of the everlasting light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of his goodness, more beautiful than the sun, and above all the orders of stars; being compared with the light, she is found before it, as the author of the book of Wisdom speaks, chap, vii. What is spoken of the eternal Son of God, may in a sense, be truly affirmed of religion considered in the abstract, that it is " the effulgency or beaming forth of divine glory," Hebrews 1:3; for there is more of the divine glory and beauty shining forth in one pious soul, than in all things in the world beside; the glorious light of the sun is but a dark shadow of the divine light, not to be compared with the beauty of holiness. An immortal soul doth more resemble the divine nature than any other created being; but religion in the soul is a thousand times more divine than the soul itself. The material world is indeed a darker representation of divine wisdom, power, and goodness; it is as it were the footsteps of God: the immaterial world of angels and spirits does represent him more clearly, and are the face of God: but holiness in the soul doth most nearly resemble him of all created things; one may call it the beauty and glory of his face.

Every creature partakes of God indeed; he had no copy but himself and his own essence to frame the world by; so that all these must needs carry some resemblance of their Maker. But no creature is capable of sucli communications of God as a rational immortal spirit is; and the highest that angel or spirit, or any created nature can be made capable of, is to be holy as God is holy. So then, if the poet may call the soul, and St. Paul allows him in it, a particle of the Divine essence; sure one may rather speak at that rate of religion, which is the highest perfection that the soul can attain to, either in the world that now is, or that which is to come. One soul, any one soul of man, is worth all the world beside for glory and dignity; but the lowest degree of true holiness, pure religion, conformity to the divine nature and will, is more worth than a world of souls, and to be preferred before the essence of angels. I have often admired three great myssteries and mercies, God revealed in the flesh, God revealed in the word, and God revealed in the soul, this last is the

mystery of godliness which I am speaking of, but cannot fathom; it is this that the Apostle says transcends the sight of our eyes, the capacity of our ears, and all the faculties of our souls too, " Eye hcith not seen," &c. Christ Jesus formed in the soul of man, incarnate in a heart of flesh, is as great a miracle, and a greater mercy, than Christ formed in the womb of a virgin, and incarnate in a human body. There was once much glorjang concerning Christ in the world, the hope of Israel; but let us call out to the powers of eternity, and the ages of the world to come, to help us to celebrate and magnify Christ in us " the hope of glory;'' or, if you will, Christ in us the first-fruits of glory. What has been said may,

First, Help us in our discoveries of that precious pearl, religion. There is nothing in the world that men do generally more seek, or less find: no nation in the world but hath courted it in one way or other; but alas how few that have obtained it! At this day there are many claims laid to it, all pretending a just title; the men of Judah cry. She is of kin to us; the men of Israel say. We have ten parts in this queen, and we have more right in religion than ye; according as they contended of old about King David. They say of Christ, as it was foretold, though perhaps not in the same sense as was foretold, Lo, here he is; and lo, there he is; which hath made many say, he is not at all: or, if I may go on in the same allusion, they live by the rule that there follows, they will not go forth to seek him any where. Mighty strivings, yea, and wars there have been about the Prince of peace, whose he should be; and at this day no question more debated, nor less decided, than, Which is the religious party in the land.' O would to God men would dispute this controversy with works and not with words, much less with blows! Religion is of an eminent pedigree, of a noble descent; you may find her name in the register of heaven, and look where God is, there is she. She carries her name in her forehead: the divine disposition that she is of, the divine works which she worketh, which no one else can work, the same do bear witness which is she.

I am ready to say with the man that had been blind, " herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not" religion who she is, and yet she is the mighty power of God opening the eyes, changing the hearts, and as it were edifying the souls of men. Why do we not also go about enquiring which of those many stars is the moon in the firmament? If ye ask which is the religious party? I will point you to the blessed and eternal God, and say, As he is, so are they, in their capacity, each one resembling the children of a king; or, I will point out the religious Christian by the same token as Christ himself was marked out to John the Baptist — "Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining, the same is he." If ye enquire about the children of God, the Apostle shall describe them for you, the followers of God are his dear children. That which is most nearly allied to the nature and life of God, that call religion, under whatsoever disguises or reproaches it may go in the world. Examine the world by no lower a mark, than that character that is given of David, and the man that doth appear to be after God's heart, namely, conformable to his image, compliant with his will, and studious of his glory, pitch upon him, for that is the man, under what name soever he goes, of what party or faction soever he is. And let no soul examine itself by any lower marks than this, iari tiq Qeog fv^ov, " participation of the divine nature, conformity to the divine image/"' Examine what alliance your soul hath to God, " whose is the image and superscription." Religion is a divine accomplishment, an efflux from God, and may, by its affinity to heaven, be discerned from a brat of hell and darkness.

Therefore, Christians, if you will form a judgment of your state, lay your hearts and lives to the rule, the eternal goodness, the uncreated purity and holiness, and see whether you resemble that copy:

for conformity to the image and will of God, that is religion; and that God will own for his, when all the counterfeits and shadows of it will fly away, and disappear for ever. I fear it may be imputed as a great piece of vanity and idle curiosity to many counterfeit speculative Christians, that they are very inquisitive, prying into the hidden rolls of God's decrees, the secrets of predestination, to find out the causes and method of their vocation and salvation; in the mean time they are not solicitous for, nor studious of the relation and resemblance that every religious soul bears unto God himself, the heaven that is opened within the pious soul itself, and the whole plot and mystery of salvation transacted upon the heart of a true Christian. There is a vanity which I have observed in many pretenders to nobility and learning, when men seek to demonstrate the one by their coat of arras, and the records of their family, and the other by a gown, or a title, or their names standing in the register of the university, rather than by the accomplishments and behaviour of gentlemen or scholars. A like vanity, I doubt, may be observed in many pretenders to religion: some are searching God's decretals, to find their names written in the book of life; when they should be studying to find God"'s name written upon their hearts, holiness to the Lord engraven upon their souls: some are busy in examining; themselves by notes and marks without them; when they should labour to find the marks and prints of God and his nature upon them: some have their religion in their books and authors, which should be the law of God written in the tables of the heart: some glory in the bulk of their duties, and in the multitude of their pompous performances, and religious achievements, crying, with Jehu, " Come, see here my zeal for the Lord f whereas it were much more excellent, if one could see their likeness to the Lord, and the characters of divine beauty and holiness drawn upon their hearts and lives. But we, if we would judge rightly of our religious state, must view ourselves in God, who is the fountain of all goodness and holiness, and the rule of all perfection. Value yourselves by your souls, and not by your bodies, estates, friends, or any outward accomplishments, as most men do: but that is not enough; if men rest there, they make an idol of the fairest of God's creatures, even their own souls; therefore value your souls themselves by what they have of God in them. To study the blessed and glorious God in his word, and to converse with him in his works, is indeed an excellent and honourable employment; but O what a blessed study it is to view him in the communications of himself, and the impressions of his grace upon our own souls! All the thin and subtile speculations which the most eminent philosophers have of he essence and nature of God are a poor, and low, and beggarly employment and attainment, in comparison of those blessed visions of God which a pious soul hath in itself, when it finds itself partaker of a divine nature, and living a divine life.

O labour to view God and his divine perfections in your own souls, in those copies and transcripts of them which his Holy Spirit draws upon the hearts of all pious men. This is the most excellent discovery of God that any soul is capable of; it is better and more desirable than that famous discovery that was made to Moses in the cleft of the rock. Nay, I should much rather desire to see the real impression of a God-like nature upon my own soul, to see the crucifying of my own pride and self-will, the mortifying of a mere sensual life, and a divine life springing up in my soul instead of it; I would much rather desire to see my soul glorified in the image and beauty of God put upon it, which is indeed a pledge, yea, and a part of eternal glory, than to have a vision from the Almighty, or hear a voice witnessing from heaven, and saying, " Thou art my beloved Son, in whom my soul is well pleased."" This that I am speaking of is a true foundation of heaven itEielfin the soul, a real beginning of happiness; for happiness, heaven itself, is nothing else but a perfect conformity, a cheerful and eternal compliance of all the powers of the soul with the will of God: so

that as far as a pious soul is thus conformed to God, and filled with his fulness, so far is he glorified upon earth.

Sed hen qziantum didamiis ah illo!

Secondly, Let wisdom then be justified of her children; let the children of God, those that are his genuine offspring, rise up and call him blessed, in the imitation of their Lord and Saviour, that eldest Son of God, that " first-born amongst many brethren,"" who rejoiced in spirit, and said, "I thank thee. Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast revealed these things,"" or, according to the style of the apostle Peter, "• Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again!'"

There is no greater contradiction in the world, than a man pretending religion, and yet ascribing it to himself; whereas pure religion is purely of a divine origin: besides, religion doth principally consist in the subduing of self-will, in conformity to, and compliance with the divine will, in serving the interest of God's glory in the world. Then, and not till then, may a soul be truly called religious, when God becomes greatest of all to it and in it, and the interest of God is so powerfully planted in it, that no other interest, no self-interest, no crcature-love, no particular private end, can grow by it, no more than the magicians could stand before Moses, when he came in the power of God to work wonders. So that what Solomon saith of self-seeking, " For men to seek their own glory is not glory;" the like I may safely say upon that double ground that I have laid down, self-religion is not religion. How vainly and madly do men dream of their self-religion carrying them to heaven; when heaven itself is nothing else but the perfection of self-denial, and God's becoming all things to the saints. Instead of advancing men towards heaven, there is nothing in the world that doth more directly make war against heaven, than that (Siracides calls it) that proud and petulant spirit of self-will that rules in the children of disobedience. So that when the Holy Ghost would describe David one of the best men, to the best advantage, he describes him with opposition to self and self-will, "a man after God's own heart;'"" and again, " he served the will of God in his generation."

There have been of old a great number of philosophical men, who being raised up above the speculations of their own souls, which is the logical life, unto a contemplation of a deity; and being purged, by a lower kind of virtue and moral goodness, from the pollutions that are in this world through lust, did yet ultimately settle into themselves, and their own self-love. They were full indeed, but it was not with the fulness of God, as the Apostle speaks, but with a self-sufficiency; the leaven of self-love lying at the bottom made them swell with pride and self-conceit. Now these men, though they were free from gross external enormities, yet did not attain to a true knowledge of God, nor any true religion, because they set up themselves to be their own idols, and carried such an image of themselves continually before their eyes, that they had no clear and spiritual discerning of God. They did, as it is storied of one of the Persian kings, enshrine themselves in a temple of their own. But what speak I of heathen philosophers? Is there not the same unclean spirit of self-adoration to be found amongst many Christians, yea, and teachers of Christianity too? witness that whole brood, those men, who, whilst they suspend the grace of God upon man's free will, do utterly rob him of his glory. Some of these have impudently given a short, but unsavoury answer to the Apostle's question, "Who maketh you to differ from another.'' " I make myself to differ.?""' These men, while they pretend to high attainments, do discover a low and most ignoble spirit: to fasten and feed upon anything in the creature, is the part of a low and degenerate spirit;

on the other hand, it is the greatest perfection of the creature, not to be its own, not to be anything in itself, or any way distinct from the blessed God, the Father and Fountain of light and grace. Holy Paul is all along in a different strain, as, " I, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." I told you before what a fair and honourable character the Holy Ghost hath given of holy David, "a man after God's own heart:"" now you may also find a description of these men too in scripture, not much differing from the other in phrase, but very much in sense; it is the same that is given of the proud prince of Tyrus — " They set their heart as the heart of God.'' But we, if we do indeed partake of the divine nature, shall not dare to take any part of the divine glory; if we conform to God's image, we shall not set up our own. This self-glorying, in the predominancy of it, is utterly inconsistent with true religion, as fire is with water; for religion is nothing else but the shinings forth of God into the soul, the reflection of a beauty and glory which God hath put upon it.

Give all therefore unto God; for whatsoever is kept back, is sacrilegiously purloined from him, glory we in the fulness of God alone, and in selfpenury and nothingness. The whole of religion is of God. Do we see and discern the great things of God?

It is by that light that God hath set up in us; according to that of the Apostle — " The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." That love whereby we love him, he first shed abroad in our hearts. If our souls be beautiful, it is with his brightness, the beauty and glory of essential holiness, according to that of the Apostle — " Partakers of his holiness." If we be really and truly full, we receive it of Ids fulness, according to that of the Apostle — " filled with all the fulness of God/"' In a word, if we be in any God-like dispositions, like unto him, it is by his spreading of his image in us, and over us. By all which, it appears to be a thing not only wicked and unwarrantable, but utterly impossible for a pious soul to exalt himself against God, for grace to advance itself against divine glory; for grace is nothing else but a communication of divine glory; and God is then glorified, when the soul in holy and gracious dispositions becomes like unto him. How is it possible that grace should be a shadow to obscure divine glory, when itself is nothing else, as it comes from God, but a beam of glory? and as it is found in the creature, may properly be called a reflection of it. To conclude then, be ye persuaded, that a man hath so much of God as he hath of humility, and self-denial, and self-nothingness, and no more; he is so far of God, as he loves him, honours him, imitates him, and lives to him, and no farther.

Thirdly, By this discovery of the origin of religion, we come to understand the origin of sin and wickedness. And here, according to the method wherein I spoke of the origin of religion, I might show you how the origin of sin from without is of the devil, who first ushered it into the world, and ceaseth not to tempt men to it continually; as also of men, who are his instruments; and that it does, in a sense, spring from many occasions without. But these things are more improperly said to be the causes of sin. The inward cause is the corrupt heart of man, that unclean spirit, that diabolical nature, which is indeed the worst and most pernicious devil in the world to man. It is an old saying, one man is a devil to another; which though it be in some sense true, yet it is more proper to say, man is a devil to himself; taking the spirit and principle of apostacy, that rebellious nature, for the devil, which indeed doth best deserve that name. But yet, if we inquire more strictly into the origin and nature of this monster, we shall best know what to say of it, and how to describe it, by what we have heard of religion. Sin then, to speak properly, is nothing else but a degeneration from a holy state, an apostacy from a holy God. Religion is a participation of God, and sin is a straggling off from him. Therefore it is wont to be defined by negatives, a departure

from God, a forsaking of him, a living in the world withovit him, &c. The souFs falling off from God, describes the general nature of sin; but then as it sinks into itself, or settles upon the world, and fastens upon the creature, or anything therein; so it becomes specified, and is called pride, covetousness, ambition, and by many other names. All souls are the offspring of God, were originally formed into his image and likeness; and when they express the purity and holiness of the divine nature, in being perfect as God is perfect, then are they called the children of God: but those impure spirits that do lapse and slide from God, may be said to implant themselves into another stock by their own low and earthly lives, and are no more owned for the children of God, but " are of their father the devil." By which you may understand the low and base origin of sin: nothing can be so vile as that which, to speak properly, is nothing else but a perfect falling off from glory itself. By this you may also by the way, take notice of the miserable condition of unholy souls. We need not call for fire and brimstone to paint out the wretched state of sinful souls. Sin itself is hell and death, and misery to the soul, as being a departure from goodness and holiness itself: I mean from God, in conjunction with whom the happiness, and blessedness, and heaven of a soul consist. Avoid it therefore, as you would avoid being miserable.

03.02. CHAP. II. True religion described

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True religion described, as to the nature of it, by water; a metaphor usual in the scriptures — 1. By reason of the cleansing virtue of it; the defiling nature of sin, and the beauty of holiness manifested — 2. By reason of the quenching virtue of it; this briefly touched upon, and the more full handling of it referred to its proper place; the nature of religion described by a well of water; that it is a principle in the souls of men, proved page by much scripture; an examination of religion by this test, by which examination are excluded all things that are merely external reformations, and performances instanced in; a godly man hath neither the whole of his business, nor his motives lying without him; in the same examination many things internal found not to be religion; it is no sudden passion of the mind; no, not though the same amount to an ecstacy; nor anything begotten and maintained by fancy, and the mere power of imagination

I COME now to speak of the nature of true religion, which is here described by our blessed Lord, by “a well of water.” First, by water. Secondly, by a well of water. I shall speak something of both these, but more briefly of the former,

I. Pure religion, or gospel grace, is described by water. This is a comparison very familiar in the holy scriptures, both of the Old Testament and the New. By this similitude, gospel grace was typified in the ceremonial law, wherein both persons and things, ceremonially unclean, were commanded to be washed in water, as is abundantly to be seen in that administration. Under this notion, the same grace is prayed for by the Psalmist, when he had defiled himself in the bed of a stranger — “ Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” He had dnmk water out of a strange cistern, as his son Solomon describes that unclean act; and now he calls out for water from the fountain of grace to undefile him: he now cries out for water from the fountain of grace, the blessed Messiah, that sprung up into the world at Bethlehem, and that with more earnestness than formerly we read that he wished for the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate. In the same phrase the same grace is promised by the ministry of the Prophets, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto us.

Thus we read of the fair and flourishing state of the church — “ Thou shaltbe like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not;’’ and of the fruitful state of the gospel proselytes —

“ All the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim.” “Which promises, that they are understood of the grace of sanctification, the prophet Ezekiel showeth plainly ’ — “ I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will’T cleanse vou:”“ for ordinary elementary water cannot cleanse men from idols. The prophet Isaiah also puts it out of doubt, whose prophecy, together with the interpretation of it, we find both in one verse — “ I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed,

and my blessing upon thy offspring." By the same ceremony, the gospel dispensation shadows out the same mystery in the sacrament of baptism; and, by the same phrase our Saviour offers and promises the same grace — " If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink:"*' and his apostles after him, who, in allusion to water, call this grace the " washing of regeneration.'' To which I might add 1 Peter 3:21, and many other texts if it required.

Now, as the grace of God is compared to nre, because of its refining nature, and consuming the dross and refuse of depravity in the soul; and to other things for other reasons: so it is compared to water, especially for those two properties, namely, cleansing and quenching; for observe this by the way, that it is a very injurious thing to the Holy Ghost, to press the metaphors which he useth in scripture, further than they do naturally and freely serve.

Neither are we to adhere to the letter of the metaphor, but to attend unto the scope of it. If we tenaciously adhere to the phrase, wanton wits will be ready to quarrel with absurdities, and so unawares run into strange blasphemies: they will cry out presently, How can fire wash? when they read that of the Prophet — " The Lord will wash away the filth of the daughter of Zion, by the spirit of burning/'' But who art thou, O man! that wilt teach him to speak who formed the tongue? The Spirit of God intends the virtue and property of things, when he names them; and that we must mainly attend to.

1. Therefore, by the phrase water ^ is the cleansing nature of religion commended to us: it is the undefiling of the soul, which sin and wickedness hath polluted: sin is often described in scripture by filthiness, loathsomeness, abomination, uncleanness, a spot, a blemish, a stain, a pollution; which indeed is a most proper description of it. The spots of leprosy, and the scurf of the foulest scurvy, are beauty spots in comparison of it; Job upon the dunghill, furnished cap-a-pee with scabs and boils, was not half so loathsome as goodly Absalom, in whose body '' there was no blemish from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head;"' but his soul was stained with the sanguine spots of malice and revenge, and festered with the loathsome carbuncle and tumour of ambition. Lazarus, lying at the gates full of raw and running sores, was a far more lovely object in the pure eyes of God, than dame Jezebel, looking out at the window, adorned with spots and paints. If the best of a godly man that he hath of his own, even his righteousness, be as a filthy rag, whence shall we borrow a phrase foul enough to describe the worst of a wicked man, even his wickedness? I need say no more of it, I can say no worse of it, than to tell you it is something contrary to God, who is the eternal Father of light, who is beauty, and brightness, and glory itself; or, to give it you in the Apostle's phrase, " a falling short of the glory of God.'' Which hath made me many times to wonder, and almost ready to cry out with the Prophet, " Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this!" when I have seen poor, ignorant, wicked, and profane wretches, passing by a person or a family visited with some loathsome disease, in a mixture of fear and disdain, stopping their breath, and hastening away; when their own souls have been more vile than the dung upon the earth, spotted with ignorance and atheism, swollen with the risings of pride and self-will, and contempt of God and his holy image. This might well be matter of wonder to any man, till he consider with himself, that one part of these men's uncleanness, is that very blindness which keeps them from discerning it: I speak principally of the defilement of the soul; though indeed the same do pollute the whole conversation, every action springing from such an unclean heart, thereby becomes filthy; even as Moses's hand, put into his bosom, became leprous; or rather as one that is unclean by a dead body, defileth all that he toucheth.

Now, religion is the cleansing of this unclean spirit and conversation; so that, though the soul were formerly as filthy and odious as Augeus's stable, when once those living waters flow into it, and through it, from the pure fountain of grace and holiness, the Spirit of our God, one may^say^^of it as the Apostle of his Corinthians, " Such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified,'" &c. The soul that before was white as leprosy, is now white as wool. The soul that before was like Moses' hand, leprous as snow, is now like David's heart, white as snow; yea, and whiter too. O what a beauty and glory is upon that pious soul that shines with the image and brightness of God upon it! Solomon, in all his glory, was not beautiful like such a soul; nay, I dare say, the splendor of the sun, in its greatest strength and altitude, is a miserable glimmering, if it be compared with the day-star of religion, that even in this life arises in the heart; or, if you will, in the Prophet's style, " the Sun of righteousness, which ariseth with healing in his wings," upon them that fear the name of God. To speak without a metaphor, the pious soul, having received into itself, the pure effluxes of divine light and love, breathes after nothing more than to see more familiarly, and love more ardently: its inclinations are pure and holy; its motions spiritual and powerful; its delights high and heavenly; it may be said to rest in its love; and yet it may be said, that love will not suffer it to rest, but is still carrying it out into a more intimate union with its beloved object. What i.s said of the ointment of Phrist'y name, is true of the water of his Spirit, it is " poured forth, therefore do the virgins love him." Rehgion begets a chaste and virgin love in the soul towards that blessed God that begot it; it bathes itself in the fountain that produced it: and suns itself perpetually in the warm beams that first hatched it. Religion issues from God himself, and is ever issuing out towards God alone, passionately breathing with the holy Psalmist, " Whom have I in heaven but thee? In earth there is none that I desire beside thee!" The soul that formerly may be said to have lain among the pots, by reason of its filthiness, is now as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold: the soul that formerly may be said to have sat down by the flesh-pots of Egypt, in regard of its sensual and earthly loves, being redeemed by the almighty grace of God, is upon its way to the holy land, hastening to a country not earthly but heavenly. This pure principle being put into the soul, puts it upon holy studies, indites holy meditations, directs it to high and noble ends, and makes all its embraces to be pure and chaste, labouring to compass God himself, which before were adulterous and idolatrous; free for sin, and self, and the world, to lodge and lie down in. In a word, this offspring of heaven, this King's daughter, the pious soul, is "all glorious within;" yea, and outwardly too, " she is clothed with wrought gold." Here faith within is more precious than gold; and her conversation is curiously made up of an embroidery of good works, some of piety, some of charity, some of sobriety, but all of purity, and shineth with more noble and excellent splendour, than the high-priest's garments and breast-plate spangled with such variety of precious stones. This precious ointment, this holy unction, as the Apostle calls it, is as diffusive of itself, and ten thousand times more fragrant, than that of Aaron, so much commended in Psalms 83:1-18 that ran down from his head upon his beard, and from thence upon the skirts of his garment. " Not my feet only, but my hands and my head. Lord," saith Peter, not well knowing what he said; but the soul that is truly sensible of the excellent purity which is caused by divine washings, longs to have the whole man, the whole life also, made partaker of it, and cries, Lord, not my head only, not my heart only, but my hands and my feet also; make me wholly pure, as God is pure. In a word then, true religion is the cleansing of the soul, and all the powers of it; so that, whereas murderers sometimes lodged in it, now righteousness; the den of thieves, thievish lusts, and loves, and interests, and ends, which formerly stole away the soul from God, its

right owner, is now become a temple fit for the great King to dwell, and live, and reign in: and the whole conversation is turned from its wonted vanity, worldliness, and iniquity, and is continually employed about things that are “ true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report.”

2. By the phrase water, the quenching nature of religion is commended to us. God hath endued the immortal soul with a restless appetite, and raging thirst after some chief good, which the heart of every man is continually groping after, and catching at, though indeed few find it, because they seek it where it is not to be found. If we speak properly, it is not gold or silver, or popular applause, which the covetous or ambitious mind doth viltimately aim at, but some chief good, happiness, sufficiency, and satisfaction in these things; wherein they are more guilty of blasphemy than atheism, for it is clear that they do not deny a Supreme Good; for that which men do chiefly and ultimately aim at, is their god, be it what it will; but they do verily blaspheme the true God, when they place their happiness there where it is not to be found, and attribute that fulness and sufficiency to something else besides the living God. Sin hath not destroyed the nature and capacity of the rational soul, but hath diverted the mind from its adequate object, and hath sunk it into the creature, where it wanders hither and thither, like a banished man, from one den and cave to another, but is secure no where. A wicked man, who is loosed from his centre by sin, and departed from the fountain of his life, flies low in his affections, and flutters perpetually about the earth, and earthly objects, but can find no more rest for the foot of his soul, than Noah’s dove could find for the sole of her foot.

Now, religion is the hand that pulls this wandering bird into her own ark from whence she was departed; it settles the soul upon its proper centre, and quenches its burning thirst after happiness. And hence it is called water in scripture, as appears from these expressions — “ The Lord shall satisfy thy soul in drought;”“ and — “ I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground compared with — “ Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.”

Religion is a taste of infinite goodness, which quenches the souFs thirst after all other created and finite good; even as that taste which honest Nathanael had of Christ’’s divinity, took him off from the expectation of any Messiah to come, and made him cry out presently, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.’’’ And every religious soul hath such a taste of God, even in this life, which, though it do not perfectly fill him, yet doth perfectly assure him where all fulness dwells. But of this I shall have occasion to discourse more largely, when I come to treat of the consequences of true religion.

I proceed, therefore, to the second phrase, whereby our Saviour describes the nature of true religion; it is a well, a fountain in the soul: “ Shall be in him a well of water.”“ From which phrase, to wave niceties, I shall only observe, “ That Religion is a principle in the souls of men.’’ The water that Christ pours into the soul is not like the water that he pours upon our streets, that washes them, and runs away; but it becomes a cleansing principle within the soul itself; every drop from God becomes a fountain in man; not as if man had a kind of avToZ(i)ri in himself, or were the first spring of his own motions towards God: I find not any will in the natural man so divinely free.

God hath indeed given this to his own Son, his only begotten Son, to have “life in himself,” but not to any of his adopted ones. If you ask me concerning man in his natural capacity, I am so far from thinking that he hath a self-quickening power, a principle of life in himself, that I must needs assert

the contrary with the Apostle, that he is “ dead in trespasses and sins;” so far from thinking that he hath in himself a well of water, that I must call him, with the Prophet, “ thirsty and dry ground.’“ As for the regenerate man, I will not enter into that deep controversy concerning the co-operation of man’s will with the Spirit of God, and its subordination to that in all gracious acts, or what description of cause this renewed will of man may be safely called; only I will affirm, that repenting and believing are properly man’’s acts, and yet they are performed by God’s power; first, Christ must give this water ere it can be a well of water in the soul; which is enough, I suppose, to clear me from siding with either of those parties, whether those that ascribe to God that which he cannot do, or those that ascribe to free will that which God alone can do. But I fear nothinsr from these controversies; for that way wherein I shall discourse of this matter, will nothing at all border upon them. This, then, I affirm, that religion is a living principle in the souls of good men. I cannot better describe the nature of religion, than to say it is a nature; for so does the Apostle speak, or at least allows us to speak, when he calls it a participation of a divine nature. Nothing but a nature can partake of a nature; a man’s friend may partake of his goodness and kindness, but his child only partakes of his nature; he that begets, begets a nature; and so doth he that procreates again. The sun enlightens the world outwardly, but it does not give a sun-like nature to the tilings so enlightened; and the rain doth moisten the earth, and refresh it inwardly, but it does not beget the nature of water in the earth, “ But this water that I give,” says our Saviour, “ becometh a well of water in the soul.” Religion is not anything without a man, hanging upon him, or annexed to him; neither is it every something that is in a man, as we shall see anon; but it is a divine principle informing and actuating the souls of good men, a living and lively principle, a free and flowing principle, a strong and lasting principle, an inward and spiritual principle. I must not speak of all these distinctly in this place, for fear of interfering in my discourse. When I say religion is a principle, a vital form acting the soul, and all the powers of it, an inward nature, Sec.; saith not the scripture the same here, a well or fountain of water? And elsewhere, a ’^ new man, the hidden man of the heart, the inward man.’“ As the soul is called an inward man, relative to the body, so religion is called an inward man, relative to the soul itself. It is a man within man. The man that is truly alive to God, hath in him not only inward parts, for so a dead man hath, but an inward man, an inward nature and principle. Again, it is called a root. Job 19:28; or, if not there, yet plainly in Mark 4:17, where temporary professors are said to have no root in themselves. And this is by the same propriety of speech whereby a wicked principle is called, “a root of bitterness.’’ Again, it is called a seed, “ the seed of God;” where this seed of God is called an abiding or remaining principle. In the first creation, God made the trees of the earth, having their seed in themselves; and in the new creation, these trees of righteousness of God’s planting, are also made with seed in themselves, though not of themselves; it is said to be the seed of God indeed, but remaining in the pious soul. Again, it is called a treasure, in opposition to an alms or annuity, that lasteth but for a day or year, as a well of water, in opposition to a draught of water; and a treasure of the heart, in opposition to all outward and earthly treasures. It is a treasure affording continual expences, not exhausted, yea, increased by expences; wherein it exceeds all treasures in the world. By the same propriety of speech, sin is called a treaure too, but it is an evil treasure, as our Saviour speaks in that same place. Do you not see what a stock of wickedness sinful men have within themselves, which, although they have spent upon ever since they were born, yet it is not impaired, nay, it is much augmented thereby; and shall not the second Adam bestow something as certain and permanent upon his offspring, as the first Adam conveyed to his posterity? Though men have

something without them, to guide them in the way of life, yet it is some living principle within them, that denominates them living men. The scripture will abundantly inform you which is the true circumcision, the true sacrifice to God. And indeed the law itself is not so much to be considered as it was engraven in tables of stone, as *’ being written in the heart.”“ The Jews needed not have taken up their rest in the law, considered as an outward rule or precept; for they knew or might have known, that God require th “ truth in the inward parts,”as one of themselves, a prophet and king of their own, acknowledgeth. But I doubt many Christians are also sick of the same disease, whilst they view the gospel as a history, and an external dispensation; whereas the Apostle, when he opposeth it to the law, seems altogether to make it an internal thing, a vital form and principle seated in the minds and spirits of men. The law was an external rule or dispensation that could not give life, though it showed the way to it; but the gospel, in the most proper notion of it, seems to be an internal impression from God, a living principle, whereby the soul is enabled to express a real conformity to God himself If we consider the gospel in the history of it, and as a piece of book learning, it is as weak and impotent a thing as the law was; and men may be as remiss and formal in the profession of this as they were of that, which we see by daily sad experience. But if we consider the gospel as an efflux of life and power from God himself upon the soul, producing life wherever it comes, then we have a clear distinction between the law and the gospel; to which the Apostle seems to refer, when he calls the Corinthians “ the epistle of Christ, not written with ink, nor in tables of stone, but with the Spirit of the living God, in fleshly tables of the heart.”“ According to which notion of the law and gospel, I think we may, with a learned man of our own, come to a good understanding of that tormented text, Jer. 30:31, quoted by the Apostle — “This is the covenant that I will make, I will put my law into their minds,”“’ &c. The gospel doth not so much consist in words as in virtue; a divine principle of religion in the soul, is the best gospel: and so Abraham and Moses under the law, were truly gospellers; and, on the other hand, all carnal Christians that converse with the gospel only as a thing without them, are as truly legal, and as far short of the righteousness of God, as ever any of the Jews were. Thus we see that religion is a principle in the souls of good men — “ shall be in him a well of water.’“

We shall here now take notice of the difference between the true, and all counterfeit religions.

Religion is that pearl of great price, which few men are possessed of, though all men pretend to it, Laodicean-like, saying, ’’they are rich and need nothing,”’ when indeed “ they are poor and have nothing.’’ This, then, shall be the test by which, at present, we will a little try the counterfeit pearls.

True religion is an inward nature, an inward and abiding principle in the minds of good men, a well of water.

1. Then we must exclude all things that are merely external; these are not it. Religion is not something annexed to the soul, ah ewtra, but a new nature put into it. And here we shall glance at two things: —

(1.) A pious soul does not find the whole of his business lying without him. Religion does not consist in external reformations, though ever so many and specious. A false and slight religion may serve to tie men’s hands, and reduce their outward actions to a fair seemliness in the eyes of men, but true religion’s main dominion and power is over the soul, and its business lies mostly in reforming and purging the heart, with all the affections and motions thereof It is not a battering ram coming from without, and serving to beat down the outworks of open and visible enormities of life,

but it enters with a secret and sweet power into the soul itself, and reduces it from its rebellious temper, and persuades it willingly to surrender itself, and all that is in it. Sin may be beaten out of the outward conversation, and yet retire and hide itself in the secret places of the soul, and there bear rule as perfectly by wicked loves and lusts, as ever it did by profane and notorious practices. A man"'s hands may be tied by some external cords cast upon them, from visible revenge, and yet murders may lodge in the temple of his heart, as murderers lodged in the temple of old: men"'s tongues may be tied up from the foul sin of giving fair words concerning themselves; very shame may chastise them out of proud boastings, and self-exaltings, when, in the meantime, they swell in self-conceit, and are not afraid to bear an unchaste and sinful love towards their own perfections, and adore an image of self set up in their hearts. What a fair outside the Pharisee had, himself will best describe, for indeed it is one of his properties to describe himself, "God, I thank thee that I am not," &c. But if you will have a draught of his inside, you may best take it from our Saviour, Matthew 23:23. Neither doth religion consist in external performances, though ever so many, and seemingly spiritual. Many professors of Christianity, I doubt, sink all their religion into a constant course of duties, and a model of performances, being mere strangers to the life, and strength, and sweetness of true religion. Those things are needful, and useful, and helpful, yea, and honourable, because they have a relation and some tendency to God; but they are apt to become snares and idols to superstitious minds, who conceit that God is some way gratified by these; and so they take up their rest in them. That religion, which only varnishes and beautifies the outside, tunes the tongue to prayer and conference, instructs and extends the hands to diligence and alms-deeds, which awes the conversation into some external righteousness or devotion, is here excluded, as also by the Apostle, 1 Corinthians 13:1. Much less can that pass for religion, which spends itself about forms, and opinions, and parties, and many disputable points, which we have seen so much of in our own generation. The religion that runs upon modes, and turns upon interests, as a door turns upon its hinges, is a poor narrow scant thing, and may easily view itself at once, altogether from first to last. Men may be as far from the kingdom of heaven in their more spiritual forms, and orthodox opinions, as they were in their more carnal and erroneous, if they take up their rest in them: neither is it the pursuing of any interest that will denominate them religious, but the grand interest of their souls.

(2.) A pious soul in its more inward and spiritual acts, hath not its motive without it: for a man may be somewhat more inward in his emotions, and yet as outward in his motives as the former. Religious acts, and gracious emotions, are not originally and primarily caused by some weights hung upon the soul, either by God or men, neither by the worldly blessings which God gives, nor the heavy afflictions which he sends. The wings, by which the pious soul flies out towards God, are not waxed to it, as the poets feign Icarus's to have been; but they grow out of itself, as the wings of an eagle that flies swiftly towards heaven: on the other side, a soul may be pressed down unto humiliation under the heavy weight of God"'s judgments, that has no mind to stoop, no self-denying or self-abasing disposition in it. Thus you may see Jehu flying upon the wings of ambition and revenge, borne up by successes in his government; and his predecessor Ahab bowing down mournfully under a heavy sentence. The laws, and penalties, and encouragements, and observations of men, sometimes put a weight upon the soul too, but they beget a more sluggish, uneven, and unkindly movement in it. You may expect that under this head I should speak something of heaven and hell: and truly so I may very pertinently, for I think they belong to this place. If you take heaven properly, for a full and glorious union to God, and fruition of him, and

hell for an eternal separation and straggling from the divinity; and suppose that the love of God, and the fear of living without him, be well drunk into the soul, then verily these are pure and religious principles: but if we view them as things merely without us, and reserved or US, and under those common carnal notions of delectableness and dreadfulness, they are no higher nor better motives to us, than the carnal Jews had in the wilderness, when they turned their backs upon Egypt, where they had been in bondage, and set their faces towards Canaan, where they hoped to find milk and honey, peace, plenty, and liberty. A soul is not carried to heaven, as a body is carried to the grave, upon men"'s shoulders; it is not borne up by props, whether human or divine; nor carried to God in a chariot, as a man is carried to see his friend; the holy fire of ardent love, wherein the soul of Elijah had been long carried up towards God, was something more excellent, and indeed more desirable, than the fiery chariot by which his body and soul where translated together. Religion is a spring of motion which God hath put into the soul itself. And as all things that are external, whether actions or motives, are excluded in this examination, which we make of religion; so neither, 2. Must we allow of every thing that is internal to be religion. And therefore,

(1.) It is not a fit, a start, a sudden passion of the mind, caused by the power and strength of some present conviction in the soul, which, in a hot mood, will needs set out after God in all haste. This may fitly be compared to the rash and rude motion of the host of Israel, who, being chidden for their slothfulness over night, rose up early in the morning, and gat them up to the top of the mountain, saying, " Lo we be here, and will go up unto the place which the Lord hath promised, for we have sinned." And indeed it fares with these men oftentimes as it did with those, both as to the undertaking, and as to the success; their motion is as sinful as their station; and their success is answerable, they are driven back and discomfited in their enterprize. Nay, though this passion might arise so high, as to be called an ecstacy or a rapture, yet it deserves not the name of religion: " For religion is," as one speaks elegantly, " like the natural heat that is radicated in the hearts of living creatures, which hath the dominion of the whole body, and sends forth warm blood and spirits, and vital nourishment into every part and member; it regulates and orders the motions of it in -a due and even manner." But these extatical souls, though they, may blaze like a comet, and swell like a torrent or land-flood for a time, and shoot forth fresh and high for a little season, are soon extinguished, emptied, and dried up, because they have not a principle, a stock to spend upon, or, as our Saviour speaks, " no root in themselves." These men's motions and actions bear no more proportion to religion, than a land-flood that swells high, and runs swiftly, but it is only during the rain; or, in the scripture phrase, than a morning dew that soon passes away, is like a well or fountain of water.

If religion be a principle, a new nature in the soul, then it is not mere mechcanism, a piece of art. Art imitates nature: nothing more common, I doubt, than for religion itself, that new nature, to go into an art. I need not tell you how all the external acts and shootings forth of religion, may be dissembled and imitated by art, and l>e acted over by a mimical apish Pharisee, who finds nothing at all of the gentle and mighty heat, nor the divine and noble life of it in his own soul, w^hereby he may fairly deceive the credulous world, us I have partly hinted already. But it is possible, I wish it be not common, for men that are somewhat more convinced, enlightened, and affected, to imitate the very power and spirit of religion, and to deceive themselves too, as if they possessed some true, living principle; and herein they exceed the most exquisite painters. Now, this may be done

by the power of a quick and raised fancy; men hearing such glorious things spoken of heaven, the city of the great King, the new Jerusalem, may be carried out by the power of self-love to wish themselves there, being mightily taken with a conceit of the place. But how shall they come at it? Why, they have seen in books, and heard in discourses, of certain signs of grace, and evidences of salvation; and now they set their fancies to work, to find or make some such things in themselves. Fancy is well acquainted with the several affections of love, fear, joy, grief, which are in the soul, and having a great command over the animal spirits, it can send them forth to raise up these affections, even almost when it listeth; and when it hath raised them, it is but putting to some thoughts of God and heaven, and then these look like a handsome platform of true religion drawn in the soul, which they presently view, and fall in love with, and think they do even taste of the powers of the world to come, when indeed it is nothing but a self-fulness and sufficiency that they feed upon. Now, you may know this artificial religion by this: these men can vary it, alter it, enlarge it, straiten it, and new-mould it at pleasure, according to what they see in others, or, according to what themselves like best; one while acting over the joy and confidence of some Christians, anon the humiliation and broken-heartedness of others. But this fanciful religion, proceeding indeed from nothing but low and carnal conceits of God and heaven, is of a flitting and vanishing nature. But true Christians are gently, yet powerfully moved by the natural force of true goodness, and the excellencies of God, and move on steadily and constantly in their way to him and pursuit of him. The spirit of regeneration in good men spreads itself upon the understanding, and sweetly diffuses itself through the will and affections, which makes true religion to be a consistent and thriving principle in the soul, as not being acted upon the stage of imagination, but upon the highest powers of the soul itself, and it may be discerned by the evenness of its movements, and the immortality of its nature; for a good man, though indeed he cannot go on always with like speed and cheerfulness in his way, yet is not willing at any time to be quite out of it. By this same nature of true religion you may examine all those spurious and counterfeit religions, that spring from a natural belief of a deity, from convictions, observations, fleshly and low apprehensions of heaven, book-learning, and the precepts of men, as the Prophet calls them, and the rest, which are seated in the fancy, and swim in the brain; whose effect is but to gild the outward man, or, at best, but to move the soul by an external force, in an unnatural, inconstant and transient manner. In a word, all these pretenders to religion may seem to have water, but they have no well: as there are others, deep men, principled indeed with learning, policy, ingenuity, &c. but not with true goodness, whom the Apostle calls wells, but without water. But the truly pious, and God-like soul, hath in itself a principle of pure religion. “ The water that I shall give him, shall be a well of water, springing up into eternal life.’’

03.03. CHAP. III. Containing the first property mentioned of true religion

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Coniaining the first property mentioned of true religion — namely, The freeness and unconstrainedness of it — this discovered in several outivard acts of morality and ivorship — as also in the more inward acts of the soul — This freedom considered first as to its author — in which is examined how far the command of God may he said to upon act a pious soul Secondly, Considered as to its object — Two cautionary concessions — 1. That some things without the soul may be said to be motives — how far afflictions and temporal prosperity may be said to be so — 2. That there is a constrai?it lying upon the pious soul — which yet takes not away its freedom — An inquiry into forced devotion — first, into the causes of it, namely. Men themselves, and that upon a threefold account, other men, or the providences of God — and next, into the properties of it, proving that it is for the most part dry and spiritless, needy and penurious, uneven, and not permanent.

I PROCEED now, from the nature of religion, to speak of the properties of it, as many of them as are couched under this phrase, “ springing up into everlasting life.’’ Not to push the phrase any farther than it will naturally afford discourse, I shall only take notice of these three properties of true religion, contained in the word, “ springing up,’”“ namely, the freeness, activity, and permanency, or perseverance of it. The first property of it, couched under this phrase, is, that it is free and unconstrained, lleligion is a principle, and it flows and acts freely in the soul, after the manner of a fountain; and, in the day of its mighty power, makes the people a willing people, and the soul, in whom it is truly seated, to become a free will-offering unto God.

Alexander the Great subdued the world with force of arms, and made men rather his tributaries and servants, than his lovers and friends; but the great God, the King of souls, obtains an amicable conquest over the hearts of his people, and overpowers them in such a manner, that they love to be his servants, and do willingly and readily obey him, without dissimulation or constraint, without mercenariness or morosity: in which they are unlike to the subjects of the kingdoms of this world, who are kept in their duties by fear and force, not from a pure kindness and benevolence of mind, to whom “ the present yoke is always grievous.” Hence it is that the increase of this people is called their flowing unto the Lord, “ The mountain of the Lord’s house shall be esteiblished, and all nations shall flow unto it;” and again, “ They shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord.’’ And the disposition of this people is described to be a hearty and willing frame, Ephesians 6:6-7, and elsewhere often to the same purpose. Now this willingness or freeness of pious souls might be explained and confirmed by the consideration both of their outward and inward acts.

1. As to the outward acts of service which the true Christian doth perform, he is freely carried out towards them, without any constraint or force. If he keep himself from the evil of the place, and

age, and company, wherein he lives and converses, it is not by a restraint which is upon him merely from without him, but by a principle of holy temperance planted in the soul: it is the seed of God abiding in him that preserves him from the commission of sin. He is not kept back from sin as a horse by a bridle, but by an inward and spiritual change made in his nature. On the other hand, if he employ himself in any external acts of moral or instituted duty, he does it freely, not as of necessity or by constraint. If you speak of acts of charity, the pious man gives from a principle of love to God, and kindness to his brother, and so cheerfully, not grudgingly, or of necessity. An alms may be wrung out of a miser; but it proceeds from the liberal soul as a stream from its fountain: therefore he is called a deviser of liberal things, and one that standeth upon liberalities, as those last words of Isaiah 32:8, are rendered by the Dutch translators.

If you speak of righteousness or temperance, he is not overruled by power, or compelled by laws, but indeed actuated by the power of that law which is written and engraven upon his mind. If you speak of acts of worship, whether moral or instituted, in all these he is also free, as to any constraint. Prayer is not his task, or a piece of penance, but it is the natural cry of the new-born soul; neither does he take it up as a piece of policy, to bribe God's justice, or engage men's charity, to purchase favour with God or man, or his own clamorous conscience: but he prays, because he wants, and loves, and believes; he wants the fuller presence of that God whom he loves; he loves the presence which he wants; he believes that he that loves him will not suffer him to want any good thing that he prays for. And therefore he does not bind up himself severely, and limit himself penuriously to a morning and evening sacrifice and solemnity, as unto certain rent-seasons, wherein to pay a homage of dry devotion; but his loving and longing soul, disdaining to be confined within canonical hours, is frequently soaring in some heavenly raptures or other, and sallying forth in holy ejaculations: he is not content with some weak essays towards heaven, in set and formal prayer, once or twice a-day, but labours also to be all the day long drawing in those divine influences, and streams of grace, by the mouth of faith, which he begged in the morning by the tongue of prayer; which has made me sometimes to think it a proper speech to say, the faith of prayer, as well as the prayer of faith; for believing, and hanging upon divine grace, doth really drink in what prayer opens its mouth for, and is, in effect, a powerful kind of praying in silence: by believing we pray, as well as in praying we believe. A truly religious man hath not his hands tied up merely by the force of a national law, no, nor yet by the authority of the fourth commandment, to keep one in seven, a day of rest; as he is not content with mere resting upon the Sabbath, knowing that neither working, nor ceasing from work, doth of itself commend a soul to God, but doth press after intimacy with God in the duties of his worship; so neither can he be content with one Sabbath in a week, nor think himself absolved from holy and heavenly meditations any day in the week; but labours to make every day a Sabbath, as to the keeping of his heart up unto God in a holy frame, and to find every day to be a Sabbath, as to the communications of God unto his soul: though the necessities of his body will not allow him, it may be, (though indeed God hath granted this to some men) to keep every day us a Sabbath of rest; yet the necessities of his soul do call upon him to make every day, as far as may be, a Sabbath of communion with the blessed God.

If you speak of fasting, he keeps not fasts merely by virtue of civil, no, nor a divine institution; but, from a principle of godly sorrow afflicts his soul for sin, and daily endeavours more and more to be emptied of himself, which is the most excellent fasting in the world. If you speak of thanksgiving, he does not give thanks by laws and ordinances, but having in himself a law of thankfulness, and

an ordinance of love engraven upon, and deeply radicated in his soul, delights to live unto God, and to make his heart and life a living descant upon the goodness and love of God; which is the most divine way of thank-offering in the world; it is the hallelujah which the angels sing continually. In a word, wherever God hath a tongue to command, true godliness will find a hand to perform; whatever yoke Christ Jesus shall put upon the soul, religion will enable to bear it, yea, and to count it easy too; the mouth of Christ hath pronounced it easy, and the Spirit of Christ makes it easy. Let the commandment be what it will, it will not be grievous. The same spirit doth, in some measure, dwell in every Christian, which without measure dwelt in Christ, who counted it his meat and drink to do the will of his Father.

2. And more especially, the true Christian is free from any constraint as to the inward acts which he performeth. Holy love to God is one principal act of the gracious soul, whereby it is carried out freely, and with an ardent love towards the object that is truly and infinitely lovely and satisfactory, and to the enjoyment of it. I know indeed that this springs from self-indigency, and is commanded by the sovereignty of the Supreme Good, the object that the soul eyes: but it is properly free from any constraint. Love is an affection that cannot be extorted as fear is; nor forced by any external power, nor indeed internal either: the revenues of the King of Persia, or the treasures of Egypt, cannot commit a rape upon it, neither indeed can the soul itself raise and lay this spirit at pleasure; which made the poet complain of himself, as if he were not sole emperor at home.

Though the outward bodily acts of religion are ordinarily compelled, yet this pure, chaste, virgin affection cannot be forced; it seems to be kind a of a peculiarity in the soul, though under the jurisdiction of the understanding. By this property of it, it is elegantly described by the Spirit of God, “ If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.” It cannot be bought with money, or money-worth, cannot be purchased with gifts or arts; and if any should offer to bribe it, it would give him a sharp and scornful check, in the language of Peter to Simon, “ Thy money perish with thee;” love is no hireling, no base-born mercenary affection, but noble, free, and generous. Neither is it low-spirited and slavish, as fear is: therefore, when it comes to full age, it will not suffer the son of the bond-woman to divide the inheritance, the dominions of the soul with it; when it comes to be “perfect, it casteth out fear,”“ says the Apostle. Neither indeed is it directly under the authority of any law, whether human or divine: it is not begotten by the influence of a divine law, as a law, but as holy, just, and good, as we shall see more anon: the law of love; or, if you will, in the Apostle’s phrase, “the spirit of love, and of power, in opposition to the spirit of fear, doth more influence the believer in his pursuit of God than any law without him: this is as a win ST to the soul; whereas outward commandments are but as guides in his way, or, at most, but as spurs in his sides. The same I may say of holy delight in God, which is indeed the flower of love, or love grown up to its full age and stature, which hath no torment in it, and consequently no force upon it. Like unto which are holy confidence, faith, and hope, ingenuous and natural acts of the religious soul, whereby it hastens into the divine embraces, ’as the eagle hasteneth to the prey,” swiftly and speedily, and not by force and constraint, “ as a fool to the correction of the stocks,’** or a bear to the stake.

These are all genuine offsprings of holy religion in the soul, and they are utterly incapable of force; violence is contrary to the nature of them; for to use the Apostle’s words, with the change of one word, “ Hope that is forced, is not hope.’“

Now a little farther to explain this excellent property of true religion, we may a little consider the author, and the object of it. The author of this noble and free principle is God himself, who hath made it a partaker of his own nature, the agency of which is free; himself is the fountain of his own acts. The uncreated life and liberty hath given this privilege to the religious soul, in some sense, to have life and liberty in itself, and a dominion over its own acts. I do not know that any created being in the world hath more of divinity in it than the soul of man, as Cicero expresses himself; nor that anything in the soul doth more resemble the divine essence, than the noble freedom which the soul hath in itself; which freedom is never so divine and generous, as when it has God himself for its object. This excellent freedom is something of God in the soul of man, and therefore may justly claim the free spirit for its author; or the Son of God for its origin, according to that expression in John 8:36, " If the Son shall make you free, then shall ye be free indeed." But here it may be demanded, whether the command of God doth not actuate the pious soul, and set it upon its holy emotions? I confess indeed that the command of God is much eyed by a godly man, and is of great weight with him, and does in some sense lay a constraint upon him; but yet I think not so much the authority of the law, as the reasonableness and goodness of it, prevail principally with him. The religious soul does not so much eye the law under the notion of a command, as under the notion of holy, just, and good, as the Apostle speaks, and so embraces it, chooses it, and longs to be perfectly conformable to it. I do not think it so proper to say that a good man loves God, and all righteousness and holiness, and religious duties, by virtue of a command to do so, as by virtue of a new nature that God hath put into him, which doth instruct and prompt him so to do. A religious soul being reconciled to the nature of God, does embrace all his laws by virtue of the equitableness and perfection that he sees in them; not because they are commanded, but because they are in themselves to be desired, as David speaks, Psalms 19:10. In which Psalm the holy man gives us a full account why he did so love and esteem the laws and commandments of God, namely, because they are perfect, right, pure, clean, true, sweet, and lovely, as you will find, Psalms 19:7-10. To love the Lord our God with all our heart, and strength, and mind, is not only a duty, by virtue of that first and great commandment that doth require it; but indeed the highest privilege, honour, and happiness of the soul. To this purpose may that profession of the Psalmist's be applied — " I have chosen thy precepts;'"* and, " I have chosen the way of truth."

Choosing is an act of judgment and understanding, and respects the quality of the thing, more than the authority of the command. David did not stumble into the way of truth accidentally, by virtue of his education, or acquaintance, or the like circumstance; nor was he lashed or driven into it by the mere severity of a law without him; but he chose the way of truth, as that which was indeed most eligible, pleasant, and desirable. What our blessed Saviour says concerning himself, is also true of every true Christian in his measure; he makes it his meat and drink to do the will of God. Now, we know that men do not eat and drink because physicians prescribe it as a means to preserve life; but the sensual appetite is carried out towards food, because it is good, sweet, and suitable: and so the spiritual appetite is carried out towards spiritual food, not so much by the force of an external precept, as by the attractive power of that higher good which it finds suitable and sufficient for it. As for the object of this free and generous spirit of religion, it is no other than God himself principally and ultimately, and other things only as they are subservient to the enjoyment of him. God, as the Supreme Good, able to fill, and perfectly satisfy all the wants and indigencies of the soul, and so to make it wholly and eternally happy, is the proper object of the souFs most free and cheerful movements. The soul eyes God as the perfect and absolute Good, and God in Christ

as an attainable good, and so finds every -way enough in this object, to encourage it to pursue after him, and throw himself upon him. Religion fixes upon God, as upon its own centre, as upon its proper and adequate object; it views God as the infinite and absolute Good, and so is drawn to him without any external force. The pious soul is overpowered indeed, but it is only with the infinite goodness of God, which exercises its sovereignty over all the faculties of the soul: which overpowering is so far from straitening or pinching it, that it makes it truly free and generous in its motions.

Religion wings the soul, and makes it take a flight freely and swiftly towards God and eternal life: it is of God, and by a sympathy that it hath with him, it carries the soul out after him, and into conjunction with him. In a word, the pious soul being loosed from self-love, emptied of self-fulness, beaten out of all self-satisfaction, and delivered from all selfconfining lusts, wills, interests, and ends, and being mightily overcome with a sense of a higher and more excellent good, goes after that freely, centres upon it firmly, grasps after it continually, and had rather be that than what itself is, as seeing that the nature of that Supreme Good is infinitely more excellent and desirable than its own.

Thus have I briefly explained and confirmed the freeness of this principle in the truly pious soul, I would now make some little improvement of it, but that it seems needful I should here interweave a cautionary concession or two.

1. It must be granted, that some things without the soul may be motives, in our common sense, and encouragements to the soul to quicken, and hasten, and strengthen it in its religious acts. Though grace be an internal principle, and most free from any constraint, yet it may be excited, or stirred up, as the Apostle speaks, 2 Timothy 1:6, by such means as God hath appointed hereunto, as prayer, meditation, reading, as the Apostle intimates in the body of that fore-quoted Epistle. But perhaps there will a question arise concerning some other things, which may seem to lay a constraint upon the spirits of men. I deny not but that the seemingly religious emotions of many men are merely violent, and their devotion is purely forced, as we shall see by and by; but I affirm, and I think have confirmed it, that true and sincere religion is perfectly free and unconstrained. This being premised; now, if you ask me, what I think of aflSictions; I confess God doth ordinarily use them as means to make good men better, and it may be sometimes to make bad men good: these may be as weights to hasten and speed the souFs motion towards God, but they do not principally originate such motions. If you ask me of temporal prosperity, commonly called mercies and blessings, of promises and rewards propounded; I confess they may be as oil to the wheels, and ought to quicken and encourage to the study of true and powerful godliness; but they are not the spring of the souFs emotions; they ought to be unto us, as dew upon the grass to refresh and fructify the soul; but it is the root which properly gives life and growth.

It may be granted, that there is a kind of constraint and necessity lying upon the pious soul in its holy and most excellent motions: according to that of the Apostle — “ The love of Christ constraineth us;” and again — “ Necessity is laid upon me*” to preach the gospel. But yet it holds good, that grace is a most free principle in the soul, and that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. For the constraint that the Apostle speaks of is not opposed to freedom of soul, but to not acting; »ow although the soul, so principled and spirited, cannot but act, yet it acts freely. Those things that are according to nature, though they be done necessarily, yet are they done with the

greatest freedom imaginable. The water flows, and the fire burns necessarily yet freely. Religion is a new nature in the soul; and the religious soul being touched effectually with the sense, and impressed with the influences of divine goodness, fulness, and perfection, is carried indeed necessarily towards God, as its proper centre, and yet its motions are pure, free, generous, and with the greatest delight and pleasure conceivable. The necessity that lay upon Paul to preach the gospel is not to be understood of any external violence that was done to him, much less of bodily necessity, by reason of which many men serve their own bellies in that great function, more than the Lord Jesus; for though he preached the gospel necessarily, yet did he preach freely and willingly, as he often professeth. The pious man cannot but love God as his chief good, yet he delights in this necessity under which he lieth, and is exceeding glad that he finds his heart framed and enlarged to love him. I say enlarged, because God is such an object, as does not contract and pinch and straiten the soul, as all created objects do, but ennoble, ampliate, and enlarge it. The sinful soul, the more it lets out, and lays out, and spends itself upon the creature, the more it is straitened and contracted, and the native freedom of it is enslaved, debased, and destroyed; but grace does establish and ennoble the freedom of the soul, and restore it to its primitive perfection: so that a pious soul is never more at large, more at rest, more at liberty, than when it finds itself delivered from all self-confining creature-loves and passions and under the most powerful influences and constraint of infinite love and goodness. By this that hath been said of the free and generous spirit of true religion, we may learn what to think of the forced devotion of many pressed soldiers of Christ in his church militant; that there is a vast difference and distance between the pressed, and unpressed Christian. Though indeed the freedom of the will cannot be destroyed, yet, in opposition to a principle, many men''s devotion may be said to be wrung out of them, and their obedience may be said to be constrained. 1 shall explain it briefly in two or three particulars.

(1.) Men force themselves, many times, to some things in religion that are besides, yea, and against their nature and genius. I need not instance in a slight conformity to the letter of the law, and some external duties which they force themselves to perform, as to hear, pray, give alms, or the like: in all which the violent and unnatural obedience of a Pharisee may be more popular and specious, than the true and genuine obedience of a free-born disciple of Jesus Christ. If going on hunting, and catching of venison might denominate a good and dutiful son, Esau may indeed be as acceptable to his father as Jacob; but God is not such a father as Isaac, whose affections were bribed with fat morsels; he feeds not upon the pains of his children, nor lives on the sweat of their brows. I doubt not but that an unprincipled Christian, that hath the heart of a slave, may also force himself to imitate the more spiritual part of religion, and, as it were, to act over the very temper and disposition of a son of God. Therefore we read of a semblance of joy and zeal which was found in some, whom yet our Saviour reckons no better than stony ground, and of great ecstasies in others, whom yet the Apostle supposes may come to nothing, and what appearance of the most excellent and divine graces of patience, and contempt of the world, many of the sourer sort of monastical devotees, and our mongrel breed of CathoUcs, the Quakers, do make at this day, all men know: nay, some of the last sort do seem to themselves, I believe, to act over the temper and experience of the chief Apostles, rejoicing with Peter, and the rest, that they are “counted worthy to suffer shame,”“’ and keeping a catalogue of their stripes with Paul, and in these things I am confident, to use the Apostle’s words, that they think themselves “not a whit behind the very chief Apostles:’’ nay, they are not ashamed to lay claim to that grace of graces, self-denial, which they have forced themselves to act over so artificially, that even a wise man might almost be deceived

into a favourable opinion of them, but that we know that whilst they profess it they destroy it; for it is contrary to the nature of self-denial, to magnify and boast itself: and indeed it is very evident to a wise observer, that these men, by a pretence of voluntary humility, and counterfeit self-denial, do, in truth, endeavour most of all to establish their own righteousness, and erect an idol of self-supremacy in themselves, and do really fall in love with an avTapKua, or self-sufficiency, instead of the infinite fulness of God.

Now there seem to be three things in a formal hypocrite that do especially force a kind of devotion, and show of religion from him, namely, consciousness of guilt, self-love, and false apprehensions of God. 1st. There is in all men a natural consciousness of guilt, arising from that imperfect and glimmering light they have of God, and of their duty towards him; which, though it be in some men more quick and stinging, in others more remiss and languid, yet, I think, is not utterly extinguished and choked, no, not in the worst and most dissolute men, but that it doth sometimes beget a bitter sadness in the midst of their sweetest merriments, and doth disturb their most supine and secure rest, by fastening its stings in their very souls at some time or other, and filling them with agonies and anguish, and haunting them with dreadful apparitions, which they cannot be perfectly rid of, any more than they can run away from themselves. This foundation of hell is laid in the bowels of sin itself, as a preface to eternal horror.

Now, although some more profligate and desperate wretches do furiously bluster through these briars, yet others are so caught in them, that they cannot escape these pangs and throes, except they make a composition, and enter into terms to live more honestly, or at least, less scandalously. In which undertaking they are carried on in the second place, by the power of self-love, or a natural desire of selfpreservation: for the worst of men hath so much reason left him, that he could wish that himself were happy, though he hath not so much light as to discover, nor so much true freedom of will as to choose, the right way to happiness. Conscience having discovered the certain reward and wages of sin, self-love will easily prompt men to do something or other to escape it. But now, what shall they do? why, religion is the only expedient that can be found out; and therefore they begin to think how they may become friends with God; they will up and be doing. But how come they to run into so great a mistake about religion? why, their false and gross apprehensions of God, in the third place, do drive them from him, in the way of superstition and hypocrisy, instead of leading them in the way of sincere love, and self-resignation to him. Self being the great Diana of every natural man, and the only standard by which he measures all things, he knows not how to judge of God himself, but by this; and so he comes to fancy God in a dreadful manner, as an austere, passionate, surly, revengeful majesty, and so something must be done to appease him: but yet he fancies this angry Deity to be of an impotent, mercenary temper like himself, and not hard to be appeased either; and so imagines that some cheap services, specious oblations, external courtesies, will engage him, and make him a friend; a sheep, or a goat, or a bullock, under the Old Testament; a prayer, or a sacrament, or an alms, under the New: for it is reconciliation to an angry God that he aims at, not union with a good God; he seeks to be reconciled to God, not united to him, though indeed these two can never be divided. Thus we see how a man void of the life and spirit of religion, yet forces himself to do God a kind of worship, and pay him a kind of homage.

(2.) Sometimes men may be said, in a sense, to be forced by other men, to put on a mask of holiness, a dress of religion. And this constraint men may lay upon men by their tongues, hands,

and eyes. By their tongues, in the business of education, often and ardent exhortation and inculcation of things divine and heavenly; and thus an unjust man, like the unjust judge in the gospel, though he fear not God sincerely, yet may be overcome by the importunity of his father, friend, minister, tutor, to do some righteous acts. This seems to have been the case of Joash king of Judah, the spring-head of whose religion was no higher than the instructions of his tutor and guardian Jehoiada the high-priest. By their hands; that is, either by the enacting and executing of penal laws upon them, or by the holy example which they continually set before them. By their eyes; that is, by continually observing and watching their behaviour; when many eyes are upon men, they must do something to satisfy the expectations of others, and purchase a reputation to themselves. It may be said, that sometimes God doth lay an external force upon men; as particularly by his severe judgments, or threatenings of judgments, awakening them, humbling them, and constraining them to some kind of worship and religion. Such a forced devotion as this was the humiliation of Ahab, and the supplication of Saul. For God himself acting upon men, only from without them, is far from producing a living principle of free and noble religion in the sovd.

Now, the better to discern this forced and violent religion, I will briefly describe it by three or four of its properties, with which I will shut up this point.

1. This forced religion is, for the most part, dry and spiritless. I know, indeed, that fancy may be screwed up to a high pitch of joy and transport, so as to raise the mind into a kind of rapture, as I have formerly hinted in my discourse upon these words. A mere artificial and counterfeit Christian may be so strongly acted on by imagination, and the power of self-love, that he may seem to himself to be fuller of God than the sober and constant soul.

You may sec hov/ the hypocritical Pharisees, swollen with self-conceit, gloried over the poor man that had been blind, but now saw more than all they, “ Thou wast altogether born in sin, and dost thou teach us?” — and indeed over the whole people, “ This people that knoweth not the law is cursed.” A counterfeit Christian may rise high as a meteor, and blaze much as a comet, which is yet drawn up by mere force from the surface of the earth or water. And as to the external and visible acts and duties of religion, which depend much upon the temper and constitution of the body, it may easily be conceived and accounted for, how the mimical and mechanical Christian may rise higher in these, and be more zealous, watchful, and cheerful, than many truly religious and sincere men, as having greater power of quickness and fancy, and a greater portion of animal spirits; upon which the motions and actions of the body do mainly depend. The animal spirits may so nimbly serve the soul in these corporal acts, that the whole transaction may be a fair imitation of the motions of the divine Spirit, and one would verily think there were a gracious principle in the soul itself This seems to be notably exemplified in Captain Jehu, whose religious actions, as he would fain have them be esteemed, were indeed rather fury than zeal, and proceeded more from his own fiery spirits, than from that spirit of fire, or spirit of burning, which is of God. But commonly this forced devotion is jejune and dry, void of zeal and warmth, and drives on heavily in pursuit of the God of Israel, as Pharaoh did in pursuit of the Israel of God, when his chariot-wheels were taken off. God’s drawing the soul from within, as a principle, doth indeed cause that soul to run after him, but you know the motion of those things that are drawn by external force is commonly heavy, slow, and languid.

2. This forced religion is penurious and needy.

Something the slavish-spirited Christian must do to appease an angry God, or to allay a storming conscience, as I hinted before; but it shall be as little as may be. He is ready to grudge God so much of his time and strength, and to find fault that Sabbaths come so thick, and last so long, and that duties are to be performed so often: so he is described by the Prophet, “When will the Sabbath be past, and the new moon gone? “‘ But yet I will not deny, but that this kind of religion may be very liberal and expensive too, and run out much into the branches of external duties, as is the manner of many trees that bear no fruit; for so did the base spirit of the Pharisees, whose often fasting, and long praying, is recorded by our Saviour in the gospel, but not with approbation. Therefore these are not the things by which you must take measure, and make estimate of your religion. But in the great things of the law, in the grand duties of mortification, self-denial, and resignation; here this forced religion is always very stingy and penurious. In the duties that do nearly touch upon their beloved lusts, they will be as strict with God as may be, they will break with him for a small matter, God must have no more than his due, as they blasphemously phrase it in their hearts; with the slothful servant in the gospel, “Lo, there thou hast that is thine; ’’ self and the world sure may be allowed the rest. They will not part with all for Christ. Is it not a little one? let me escape thither, and take up my abode there, said Lot. They will not give up themselves entirely unto God; “the Lord pardon me in this one thing,”“ cries Naaman; so they, in this or that, let God hold me excused. The slavish-spirited Christian is never more shrunk up within himself, than when he is to converse with God indeed: but the pious soul is never freer, larger, gladder, than when he doth most intimately and familiarly converse with God. The soul that is free as to liberty, is free also as to liberality and expenses; and that not only in external, but internal and spiritual obedience, and compliance with the will of God; he gives himself wholly up to God, knows no interest of his own, keeps no reserve for himself, or for the creature.

3. This forced religion is uneven, as depending upon inconstant causes. As land-floods, that have no spring within themselves, vary their motions, are swift and slow, high and low, according as they are supplied with rain; even so these men’s motions in religion, depending upon fancy for the most part, than which nothing is more fickle and flitting, have no constancy nor consistency in them.

I know indeed, that the spirits of the best men cannot always keep one pace, nor their lives be always of one piece; but yet they are never willingly quite out of the call or compass of religion. But this I also touched upon formerly. Therefore,

4. This forced religion is not permanent. The meteors will down again, and be choked in the earth whence they arose. Take away the weight, and the motion ceases; take away Jehoiada, and Joash stands still, yea, runs backward. But this I shall speak more to, when I come to speak of the last property of religion, namely, its perseverance.

Chapter 22

03.04. CHAP. IV. The active and vigorous nature of true religion proved by many scriptural ,,,

CHAP. IV The active and vigorous nature of' true religion proved by many scriptural phrases of the most porverful importance — more particularly explained in three things — 1. In the soul's continual care and study to be good — 2. In its care to do good — 3. In its powerful and incessant longings after the most full enjoyment of God.

I COME now to the second property of true religion, which is to be found in this phrase, " springing up," or leaping up; wherein the activity and vigorousness of it is described. Keligion, though it be compared to water, yet is no standing pool of water, but " a well of water springing up.'"' And here the proposition that I shall establish, is, " That true religion is active and vigorous." It is no lazy and languid thing, but full of life and power: so I find it every where described in scripture, by things that are most active, lively, vigorous, operative, spreading, powerful, and sometimes even by motion itself. As sin is, in scripture, described by death and darkness, which are a cessation and privation of life, and light, and motion: so religion is described by life, which is active and vigorous; by an angelical life, which is spiritual and powerful; yea, a divine life, which is, as I may say, most lively and vivacious. " Christ liveth in me," and the production of this new nature in the soul is called a quickening, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;'"* and the reception of it, a "passing from death unto life."*' Again, as sin and wickedness are described by flesh, which is sluggish and inactive, so this holy principle in the soul is called spirit, " The spirit lusteth against the flesh; "yea, the "spirit of power,'" and the "spirit of life,"

— " The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death/^ How can the power and activity of any principle be more commended, than by saying it is life, and the " spirit of life," and "the law of the spirit of life" in the soul? which hath made me sometimes to apply those words of the Prophet, as a description of every pious soul, " I am full of power and might by the Spirit of the Lord."

Yea, further, the holy Apostle seems to describe a godly principle in the soul by activity and motion itself, Php 3:12-14; where he gives this excellent character of himself, and this lively description of his religious disposition, as if it were nothing else but activity and fervour; I follow after, that I may apprehend; I forget those things that are behind, and reach forth unto those things that are before; I press towards the mark, &c. It were too much to comment upon those phrases of like importance, "labouring, seeking, striving, fighting, running, wrestling, panting, longing, hungering, thirsting, watching," and many others, which the Holy Ghost makes use of in the scriptures, to express the active, industrious, vigorous, diligent, and powerful nature of this divine principle, which God hath put into the souls of his people. The streams of divine grace, which flow forth from the throne of God, and of the Lamb, into the souls of men, do not cleanse them, and so pass away, like some violent land-flood, that washes the fields and meadows, and so leaves them to contract as much filth as ever; but the same becomes a " well of water," continually springing up, boiling, and bubbling, and working in the soul, and sending out fresh rivers, as our Saviour calls them — "Out

of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

But, more particularly to unfold the active nature of this divine principle in the soul, we shall consider it in these three particulars, namely, as it is still conforming to God, doing for him, and longing after him.

1. The active and sprightly nature of true godliness, or religion planted by God in the soul, shows itself in a continued care and study to be good, to conform more and more to the nature of the blessed God, the glorious pattern of all perfection. The nature of God being infinitely and absolutely perfect, is the only rule of perfection to the creature. If we speak of goodness, our Saviour tells us, that God alone is good; of wisdom, the Apostle tells us, that God is only wise; of power, he is omnipotent; of mercy and kindness, he is love itself. Men are only good by way of participation from God, and in a way of assimilation to him: so that, though good men may be imitated, and followed, yet it must be with this limitation, as far as they are followers of God: the great Apostle durst not press his example any further — " Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." But the nature of God being infinitely and absolutely perfect, is to be eyed and imitated singly, entirely, universally, in all things wherein the creature is capable of following him, and becoming like unto him. So Christians are required to look up unto the Father of lights, the fountain of all perfections, and to take from him the pattern of their dispositions, and conversation, and to eye him, continually, and eyeing him, to derive an image of him, not into their eye, as we do by sensible objects, but into their souls, to polish and frame them into the most clear and lively resemblances of him; that is, in the language of scripture, to be " perfect, as their heavenly Father is perfect, to be " holy as God is holy." And thus the genuine children of God are described by the Holy Ghost, they are " followers of God.'' This is the shortest, but the surest and clearest mark that can be given of a good man, "a follower of God." They are not owned for the children of God, who are created by him, nor they who have a notional knowledge of him, who profess him, or exhibit some external worship and service to him in the world, but they that imitate him: the true children of Abraham were not those that were descended from him, or boasted of him, but they that did the works of Abraham, John 8:39; even so are they only the offspring of heaven, the true and dear children of the living God, who are followers of him; " be ye followers of God as dear children.'"' A pious soul having its eyes opened, to behold the infinite beauty, purity, and perfection, of that good God, whose nature is the very fountain, and must, therefore, be the rule of all goodness, presently comes to undervalue all created excellencies, both in itself, and all the world besides, as to any satisfaction that is to be had in them, or any perfection that can be acquired by them, and cannot endure to take up with any lower good, or live by any lower rule than God himself. A pious man, having the unclean and rebellious spirit cast out, and being once reconciled to the nature of God, is daily labouring to be more intimately united thereunto, and to be all that God is, as far as he is capable, — the nature of God being infinitely more pure and perfect, and more desirable than his own. Religion is a participation of life from him, who is life itself, and so must needs be an active principle, spreading itself in the soul, and causing the soul to spread itself in God: and, therefore, the kingdom of heaven, which, in many places of the gospel, 1 take to be nothing else but this divine principle in the soul, which is both the truest heaven, and most properly a kingdom (for thereby God doth most powerfully reign and exercise his sovereignty, and most excellently display and manifest his glory in the world) is compared to " seed sown in good ground,'" which both springeth up into a blade, and bringeth forth fruit; to mustardseed, which spreadeth itself, and

groweth great, so that the birds of the air may lodge in the branches thereof; to leaven, spreading itself through the whole quantity of meal, and leavening the whole, and all the parts of it. By a like similitude, the path of the just is compared to a shining light, whose glory and lustre increaseth continually, “shining more and more unto the perfect day;” which continual growing up of the holy soul into God, is excellently described by the Apostle, in an elegant metaphor, “ We all, with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory;” that is, from one resemblance of divine glory to another. The gracious soul not being contented with its present attainments, and having in its eye a perfect and absolute good, forgets that which is behind, and labours, prays, strives, and studies, to get the perfections of God more clearly copied out upon itself, and itself, as much as may be, swallowed up in the divinity. It covets earnestly these best things, to be perfected in grace and holiness, to have divine characters more fair and legible, divine impressions more deep and lively, divine life more strong and powerful, and the communicable image of the blessed God spread quite over it, and through it. A pious soul is not content to receive of Christ’s fulness, but labours to be filled with the fulness, with all the fulness of God; he rejoices indeed that he hath received of Christ grace for grace, as a child hath limb for limb with his father; but this his joy is not fulfilled, except he find himself adding daily some cubits to his infant-stature; nor indeed then either, nor can it be, until he come to the measure of the stature of his Lord, and be grown up unto him in all things who is the head, even Christ. He delights and glories in God, beholding his spices growing in his soul; but that does not satisfy him, except he may see them flowing out also. He is neither barren nor unfruitful, as the Apostle Peter speaks; but that is not enough, he desires to be fat and fruitful also, as a watered garden, as the Prophet expresseth it, even as the garden of God. The spirit lusteth against the flesh, and struggles with it in the same womb of the soul, as Jacob with Esau, until he had cast him out. The seed of God warreth continually against the seed of the serpent, raging and restless, like Jehu, shooting, and stabbing, and strangling all he meets with, till none at all remain of the family of that Ahab who had formerly been his master. O how does the pious and devout soul long to have Christ’s victory carried on in itself, to have Christ going on in him conquering and to conquer, till at length the very last cnemv be subdued, that tlic Prince of Peace may ride triumphantly through all the coasts and regions of his heart and life, and not so much as a dog move his tongue against him! This holy principle which is of God in the soul, is actually industrious too; it doth not fold the arms together, hide its hand in its bosom, faintly wishing to obtain a final conquest over its enemies, but advances itself with a noble stoutness against lusts and passions, even as the sun glorieth against the darkness of the night, until it have chased it all away. The pious soul puts itself under the banner of Christ, fights under the conduct of the angel of God’s presence, and so marches up undauntedly against the children of Anak, those earthly loves, lusts, sensual affections, which are indeed taller and stronger than all other enemies that encounter it in this wilderness state: and the gracious God is not wanting to such endeavours, he “ remembering his promise, helpeth his servant,” even that promise, that “they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.”“ A true Israelitish soul, impregnated with this noble and heroic principle, is not like those slothful Israelites, that were content with what they had got of the holy land, and either could not, or cared not to enlarge their border. But he makes war upon the remainder of the Canaanites, and is never at rest until he have, with Sarah, cast out the bondwoman and her son too. You may see an emblem of such a soul in Moses holding up his hands all the day long, till Amalek was quite discomfited, Exodus 17:12. As often as the floods of temptation, springing from the devil, the

world, or the flesh, do offer to come in upon him, he opposeth them in the strength of Christ; or, if you will, in the Prophet's phrase, " The Spirit of the Lord lifteth up a standard against them;" so that he is not carried down by them, or, at least, not overwhelmed with them. In the beginning of my discourse upon this head, I hinted to you the reason why the pious soul continually studies conformity to God, even because he is the perfect and absolute Good, and the soul reckons that its happiness consists only in being like unto him, in partaking of a divine nature. But I might also here take occasion to speak of three things, which I will but briefly name, and so pass on.

(1.) A godly man reckons with himself, that conformity to the image and nature of God, is the most proper conversing with God in the world. The great, and indeed only employment of an immortal soul, is to converse with its Creator; for this end it was made, and made so capacious as we see it, now, to partake of a divine nature, to be endued with a God-like disposition, is most properly to converse with God; this is a real, powerful, practical, and feeling converse with him, infinitely to be preferred before all notions, professions, performances, or speculations.

(2.) A godly man reckons that the image of God is the glory and ornament of the soul; it is the lustre, and brightness, and beauty of the soul, as the soul is of the body. Holiness is not only the duty, but the highest honour and dignity that any created nature is capable of: and therefore the pious soul, who hath his senses exercised to discern good and evil, pursues after it, as after his full and proper perfection.

(3.) A godly man reckons, that conformity to the divine image, participation of a divine nature, is the surest and most comfortable evidence of divine love, which is a matter of so great inquiry in the world. By growing up daily in Christ Jesus, we are infallibly assured of our implantation into him. The Spirit of God descending upon the soul in the impressions of meekness, kindness, uprightness, which is a dove-like disposition, is a better, and more desirable evidence of our sonship, and God''s favour towards us, than if we had the Spirit descending upon our heads in a dove-like shape, as it did upon our blessed Saviour. These are the reasons, why the sincere Christian, above all things, labours to become God-like, to be formed more and more into a resemblance of the Supreme Good, and to drink in divine perfection into the very inmost of his soul.

2. The active and industrious nature of true godliness, or religion, manifests itself in a good man's continual care, and study to do good, to serve the interest of the holy and blessed God in the world. A good man being mastered with the sense of the infinite goodness of God, and the great end of his life, cannot think it worth while to spend himself for any inferior good, or bestow his time and strength for any lower end than that is; and therefore, as it is the main happiness of his life to enjoy God, so he makes it the main business of his life to serve him, to be doing for him, to lay out himself for him, and to display, and propagate his glory in the world. And, as he is filled with apprehensions of the Supreme Goodness, which doth infinitely deserve, and may justly challenge, all that he can do or expend for him, so he doth indeed really partake of the active and communicative nature of that blessed Being, and himself becomes active and communicative too: a pious soul, sluggish and inactive, is as if one should say, a pious soul altogether unlike to God; a pure contradiction. I cannot dwell upon any of those particular designs of serving the interest of God's glory, which a good man is still driving on in the world: only this, in general, whether he pray, or preach, or read, or celebrate Sabbaths, or administer private reproof or instruction, or indeed

plough or sow, eat or drink, all this while he lives not to himself, but serves a higher interest than that of the flesh, and a higher good than himself, or any created being. A true christian activity doth not only appear in those things which we call duties of worship, or religious performances; but in the whole frame of the heart contriving, and the conversation expressing and unfolding the glory of God. A lioly, serious, heavenly, humble, sober, righteous, and self-denying course of life, does most excellently express the divine glory, by imitating the nature of God, and most effectually calls all men to the imitation of it; according as our Saviour hath nakedly stated the case, " Hereby is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit:'" by which fruits are not to be understood only preaching, praying, conference, which are indeed high and excellent duties; but also righteousness, temperance, self-denial, which things are pure reflections of the divine image, imd a real glorifying of God"'s name and perfections. A good Christian cannot be content to be happy alone, to be still drawing down lieaven into his own soul; but he endeavours also by prayer, counsel, and holy example, to draw up the souls of other men heaven-ward. This God witnesseth of Abraham, "I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord. And this Moses doth excellently witness of himself in that holy rapture of his, " Would God that all the Lord"*s people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them;*" By such examples as these a good man desires to live, yea, by higher precedents than either Abraham or Moses, even by the example of the Father and of the Son, he admires and strives to imitate that character which is given of God himself, " Thou art good, ijnd dost good f' and that which is given of Christ-Jesus, the Lord of life, who "went about doing good:*" who also witnessed elsewhere concerning himself, that he came not into the world to do his own will, nor seek his own glory, but the will and glory of him that sent him: and again, " Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?

O how happy would the pious soul count itself, if it could but live and converse in the world, in the same manner, and with the same devout, fervent, exalted spirit, as Christ Jesus did, whose meat and drink it was still to be doing the will, and advancing the glory of his Father! But, alas! the poor soul finds itself ensnared by passions, and selfish affections from within, clogged with an unwieldy body, and distracted with secular affairs from without, that it cannot rise so nimbly, run so swiftly, nor serve the infinite and glorious God so cheerfully, nor liberally, as it would; and therefore the poor prisoner sighs within itself, and wishes that it might escape: but finding a certain time determined upon it in the body, which it must be content to live out, it looks up, and is ready to envy the angels of God, because it cannot live as they do, who are always upon God's errand, and almost thinks much that itself is not a ministering spirit, serving the pure and perfect will of the Supreme Good, without grudging or ceasing. The pious soul, under these powerful apprehensions of the nature of God, the example of Christ, and the honourable office of the holy angels, is ready to grudge the body that attendance that it calls for, and those offices which it is forced to perform to it; as judging them impertinent to its main happiness, and most excellent employment; it is ready to envy that more cheerful and willing service, which it finds from the heavy and drossy body with which it is united; and to cry out, O that I were that to my God, which my body, my eyes, hands, and feet, are to me! for I say to one of these, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Do this, and he doth it. In a word, a good man being acquainted feelingly with the highest Good, eyeing diligently the great end of his coming into the world, and his short time of being in it, serves the eternal and blessed God, lives upon eternal designs, and by consecrating all his actions unto God, gives a kind of immortality to them, which are in themselves flitting and transient: he counts it a reproach

to any man, much more to a good man, to do anything insignificantly, much more to live impertinently; and he reckons all things that have not a tendency to the highest Good, and a subserviency to the great and last end, to be impertinencies, yea, and absurdities in an immortal soul, which should continually be “springing up into everlasting life.’“

3. The active and vigorous nature of true religion manifests itself in those powerful and incessant longings after God, with which it fills that soul in which it is planted. This I superadd to the two former, because the religious man though he be formed into some likeness to God, yet desires to be more like him; and though he be somewhat serviceable to him, yet desires to be more instrumental in doing his will: though he be good, yet he desires to be better; and though he do good, ye he desires to do better, or at least more. And, indeed, I reckon that these sincere and holy hungerings after God, which I am going to speak of, are one of the best signs that I know in the world of spiritual health, and the best criterion of a true Christian: for, in this low and animal state, we are better acquainted with lovings and languishings, than with fruition or satisfaction; and the best enjoyment that we have of God in this world is but scant and short, indeed but a kind of longing to enjoy him. Love is certainly a high and noble affection; but, alas! our love, whilst we are here in the body, is in its non-age, in its weak and sickly state, rather a longing than a loving, much unlike to what it will be wlien it shall be grown up unto its perfect stature in glory. But this sickly kind of languishing affection is a certain symptom of a healthful constitution; or as the Apostle calls it, of ’^the spirit of a sound mind.”“ Pious souls are thirsty souls, always gasping after the living springs of divine grace, even as the parched desart gapeth for the dew of heaven, the early and the latter rain.

One would wonder what kind of magic there was in Elijah’s mantle, that the very casting of it upon Elisha should make him leave oxen and plough yea, father and mother, and all, to run after a stranger: Elijah himself seems to wonder at it, What have I done to thee?” O but what a mighty charm is there in divine love! which when it is once shed abroad in the soul, makes the soul to spread itself in it and to it, as the sun-flower attending the motions of the sun, and turning itself every way towards it, welcoming its warm and refreshing beams. Elijah passing by Elisha as he was at plough, and catching him with his mantle, is but a scant resemblance of the blessed God passing by a carnal mind, and wrapping it in the mantle of his love, and thereby causing it to run, yea, to fly swiftly after him. If divine grace do but once touch the soul, the soul presently adheres to it, as the needle to the loadstone. They that heard Christ Jesus chiding the winds and the waves, cried out, “ What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?^’’ but if one had been present when he called James and John from their nets, Matthew from the custom-house, and Zaccheus from the tree, and by calling made them willing to come, he surely would have cried out, What manner of God is this! that, by his bare word makes poor men leave their trades and livelihood, and rich men their gainful exactions, usuries, oppressions, to follow him, and shows them no reasons why. What a mighty virtue is there in the ointment of Christ’s name, that as soon as it is poured out, the virgins fall in love with him? Micah cried out when he was in pursuit of his gods, and should they ask him what ailed him? And will ye wonder that a holy soul, in pursuit of the holy God, should be in earnest; that he should run, and cry as he runs? as I have seen a fond child whom the father or mother have endeavoured to leave behind them. God breathing into the soul, makes the soul breathe after him, and in a mixture of holy disdain and anger, to thrust away from itself all distracting companions, occasions, and concerns, saying with

Ephraim to her idols, “ Get ye hence.” The soul thus inspired is so far from prostituting itself to any earthly, sensual, selfish lusts, and loves, that it cannot brook anything that would weaken it in the prosecution of the highest good; it is impatient of every thing that would either stop or slacken its motions after God. The pious man desires still to be doing something for God indeed; but if the case so fall out, that he cannot spend his life for God as he desires, yet he will be spending his soul upon him, though he cannot perpetually abide upon the knee of prayer, yet he would be continually upon the wing of faith and love: when his tongue cleaves to the roof of his mouth, that he cannot speak for God, yet his soul will cleave uMto him, and complain because it can speak no longer; for faith and love are knitting graces, and do long to make the soul as much one with their object, as is possible for the creature to be with its Creator. Religion puts a restless appetite into the soul after a higher Good, and makes it throw itself into his arms, and wind itself into his embraces, longing to be in a more intimate conjunction with him, or rather entirelywrapped up in him; itself is an insatiable and covetous principle in the soul, much like to the daughter of the horseleech, crying continually, “ Give, give/’* What the Prophet speaks rhetorically of hell, is also true concerning this offspring of heaven in the soul, “ it enlargeth itself, and openeth its mouth without measure.”’’’ The spirit of true godliness seems to be altogether such that it cannot rest in any measure of gi-ace, or be fully contented with any of its attainments in this life; but ardently longs to receive the more plentiful communications of love, the more deep and legible impressions of grace, the more clear and ample experiences of divine assistance, the more sensible evidences of divine favour, the more powerful and transporting illapses and incomes of divine consolation into itself; “ let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.”’’’ Such is the spirit of true godliness, that the weakest that is endued with it, longs to be as David, and the Davids to be as God, as the angel of the Lord, according to that promise, “ In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them.” The pious soul, that is in his right senses, under the powerful apprehensions of the loveliness of God, and the beauty of holiness, cannot be content to live by any lower instance than that of David, whose soul even broke for the longing that it had unto the Lord, or that of the spouse, who was even sick of love. You have read of the mother of Sisera looking out at the window, waiting for his coming, and crying through the lattice, “ Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariot?’’ But this is not to be compared to the earnest expectation of the creature, the new creature, waiting for the manifestation of God; which the Apostle elegantly expresseth, and yet seems to labour for words, as if he could not sufficiently express it either, Romans 8:19. You have read of the Israelites marching up towards the promised land, and murmuring that they were held so long in the wilderness; but the true Israelitish soul makes more haste with less discontent, marches as under the conduct of the angel of God’s presence, and longs to arrive at its rest: but, alas! it is held in the wilderness too; and therefore cannot be fully quiet in itself, but sends forth spies to view the land, the scouts of faith and hope, like Caleb and Joshua, those men of another spirit; and these go and walk through the holy land, and return home to the soul, and come back, not as Noah’s dove with an olive leaf in her mouth, but with some clusters in their hands they bring the soul a taste of the good things of the kingdom, of the glories of her eternal state: yea, the soul itself marches up to possess the land, goes out, with the Church in the Canticles, to meet the Lord, to seek him whom her soul loveth. Religion is a sacred fire kept burning in the temple of the soul continually, which being once kindled from heaven, never goes out, but burns up heaven-wards, as the nature of fire is, this fire

is kept alive in the soul to all eternity, though sometimes, through the ashes of earthly cares and concerns cast into it, or the sun of earthly prosperity shining upon it, it may sometimes burn more dimly, and seem almost as if it were quite smothered: this fire is for sacrifice too, though sacrifice be not always offered upon it; the same fire of faith and love which offered up the morning sacrifice is kept alive all the day long, and is ready to kindle the evening sacrifice too, when the appointed time of it shall come. In this chariot of fire it is that the soul is continually carried out towards God, and accomplisheth a kind of glorification daily; and when it finds itself firmly seated and swiftly carried herein, it no longer envies the translation of Elijah. The spirit of sanctification is in the soul as a burning fire shut up in the bones, which makes the soul weary with forbearing, and so powerful in longings that it cannot stay; as the spirit of prophecy is described, Jer. xx. It is more true of the Spirit of God than of the spirit of Elihu, the spirit within constraineth, and even presseth the soul, so that it is ready to swoon and faint away for very vehemence of longing. See the delighted spouse falling into one of these fainting fits, and crying out mainly for some cordial from heaven to keep up her sinking spirits, “ Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love.*’’ O beautiful and blessed sight, a soul working towards God, panting, and longing, and labouring after its proper happiness and perfection! Well, the sinking soul is relieved; Christ Jesus reacheth forth his left hand to her head, and his right hand embraceth her; and now she recovers, her hanging hands lift up themselves, and the beauties of her fading complexion are restored; now she sits down “under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit is sweet unto her taste.” "See here the fairest sight on this side heaven; a soul resting, and glorying, and spreading itself in the arms of God, growing up in him, growing great in him, growing full in his fulness, and perfectly transported with his pure love! O my soul, be not content to live by any lower instance? “ Did not our hearts burn within us,”“ said the two disciples one to the other, “whilst he talked with us?’’ But the soul in which the sacred fire of love is powerfully kindled, doth not only burn towards God, whilst he is more familiarly present with it, and, as it were, blows upon it; but if he seem to withdraw from it, it burns after him still; “ My beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone; I sought him; I called him.”“ And if the fire begin to languish, and seem as if it would go out, the holy soul is startled presently, and labours, as the Apostle speaks, to revive it, and blow it up again, calls upon itself to awake, to arise and pursue, to mend its pace, and to speed its heavy and sluggish motions. This divine active principle in the soul maintains a continual striving, a holy struggling and stretching forth of the soul towards God, a bold and ardent contention after the Supreme Good; religion hath the strength of the divinity in it, its motions towards its object are quick and potent. That elegant description which the Prophet makes of the wicked heart, with some change, may be brought to express this excellent temper of the pious soul; it is like the working sea which cannot rest: and although its waters do not cast up mire and dirt, yet in a holy impatience, they rise and swell, and cast themselves up high towards heaven. In a word, that I may comprize many things in few expressions, no man so ambitious as the humble, none so covetous as the heavenly-minded, none so voluptuous as the self-denying: religion gives a largeness and wideness to the soul, which sin, and self, and the world, had straitened and confined; but his ambition is only to be great in God, his covetousness is only to be filled with all the fulness of God, and his voluptuousness is only to drink of the rivers of his pure pleasures: he desires to enjoy the God whom he sees, and to be satisfied with the God whom he loves. O now, how are all the faculties of the soul awakened to attendance upon the Lord of life! It hearkens for the sound of his feet coming, the noise of his hands knocking at the door; it stands upon its

watch-tower waiting for his appearing, waiting more earnestly than they that watch for the morning, and rejoices to meet him at his coming; and having met him, runs into his arms, embraces him, holds him, and will not let him go, but brings him into the house, and entertains him in the guest-chamber: the soul complains that itself is not large enough, that there is not room enough to entertain so glorious a guest, no, not though it have given him all the room that it hath, it receives him with the widest arms, and the sweetest smiles; and if he depart and withdraw, fetches him again with the deepest sighs, Retiurn, return, O Prince of Peace, and make me an everlasting habitation of righteousness unto thyself!

It will not be amiss here briefly to touch upon the reason of the pious souFs so ardent pantings after God. And here I might show first, negatively, that it springs not from any carnal ambition of being better and higher than others, not from any carnal hope of impunity and safety, nor merely from the bitter sense of pressing and tormenting afflictions in this life. But I shall rather insist upon it affirmatively. These earnest breathings after God spring from the feeling apprehensions of self-indigency and insufficiency, and the powerful sense of divine goodness and fulness; they are produced by the divine bounty and self-sufficiency, manifesting itself to the spirits of men, and conceived and brought forth by a deep sense of selfpoverty; one might almost apply the Apostle''s words to this purpose, “We receive the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in him.’““ I shall not discourse upon these two heads disjointly, but frame them into one i-dea, and so you may take it thus; these holy longings of the pious soul after God, do arise from the sense of its distance from God. To be so far distant from God who is life and love itself, and the proper and full happiness of the soul, is grievous to the soul that is rightly affected towards him: and hence it is that the soul cannot be at rest, but still longs to be more intimately joined to him, and more perfectly filled with him: and the clearer the souFs apprehensions are of its object, and the deeper its sense is of its own unlikeness to him, and distance from him, the more strong and impatient are its breathings; insomuch that not only fear, as the Apostle speaks, but even love itself sometimes seems to itself to have a kind of agony and torment in itself; which made the Church cry she was sick of love, that is, sick of every thing that kept her from her love, sick of that distance at which she stood from her beloved Lord. The pious soul being delighted with the infinite sweetness and goodness of God, longs to be that rather than what itself is, and beholding how it is estranged from him, by many sensual loves, selfish passions, corporeal clogs, and distractions, bewails its distance, and cries out within itself, “ O when shall I come and appear before God! ^’ O when will God come and appear gloriously to me and in me! “ Who will deliver me from this body of death!” O that mortality were swallowed up of life! David’s soul waited for God as earnestly, and more properly than they that watch for the morning; they may be said rather to be weary of the long, and cold, and troublesome night, than properly covetous of the day; but he, out of a pure and spiritual sense of his estrangement from God, longs to appear before him, and be wrapped up in him. Heal the godly man of all his afflictions, grievances, and adversities in the world, that he may have nothing to trouble him, nor put him to pain, yet he is not quiet, he is in pain because of the distance at which he stands from God, give him the whole world, and all the glory of it, yet he has not enough; he still cries, and craves.

Give, give; because he is not entirely swallowed up in God: he openeth his mouth wide, as the Psalmist speaks, and all the silver, and gold, peace, health, liberty, preferment, that you impart to it, cannot fill it; because they are not God, he cannot look upon them as his chief good. In a word,

a pious man doth not so much say, in the sense either of sin or affliction, “ O that one would give me the wings of a dove, that I might fly away, and be at rest! “” as in the sense of his dissimilitude to, and distance from God, O that one would give me the wings of an angel, that I might fly away towards heaven!

Chapter 23

03.05. CHAP. V. An expostulation with Christians concerning their remiss and shiggish temper

CHAP. IV An expostulation with Christians concerning their remiss and sluggish temper — an attempt to convince them of it by some considerations — which are — 1. The activity of worldly men — 2. The restless appetites of the body — 3. The strong propensions of every creature towards its own centre — An inquiry into the slothfulness and inactivity of christian souls — The grace of faith vindicated from the slander of being merely passive — A short attempt to awaken Christians unto greater vigour and activity.

We have seen in what respects religion is an active principle in the soul where it is seated: give me leave to enlarge a little here for conviction or reprehension. By this property of true religion we shall be able to discover much that is false and counterfeit in the world. If religion be no lazy, languid, sluggish, passive thing, but life, love, the spirit of power and freedom, a fire burning, a well of water springing up, as we have sufficiently seen, what shall we say then of that heavy, sluggish, spiritless kind of religion that most men take up with? Shall we call it a spirit of life, with the Apostle; and yet allow of a religion that is cold and dead.' Shall we call it a spirit of love and power with the Apostle; and yet allow of it, though it be indifferent, low, and impotent? Or will such pass for current with the wise and holy God, if we should pass a favourable censure upon it? And why should it ever pass with men, if it will not for ever puss with God? But, indeed, how can this inactivity and sluggishness pass for religion amongst men? Who can think you are in pursuit of the infinite and Supreme Good, that sees you so slow in your motions towards it? Who can think that your treasure is in heaven, that sees your heart so far from thence? The more anything partakes of God, and the nearer it comes to him who is the fountain of life, and power, and virtue, the more active, powerful, and lively will it be. We read of an atheistical generation in Zephaniah 1:12, who fancied to themselves an idle and slothful God, that minded not the affairs of the world at all, saying, " The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil; which was also the false and gross conceit of many of the heathen, as Cicero confesses of some of the philosophers themselves, " who maintain that God has no power in himself, and can impart no power to any other:" and, indeed, though it be not so blasphemous, yet it is almost as absurd, to fancy an idle saint, as an idle deity. Sure I am, if it be not altogether impossible, yet it is altogether a shameful and deformed sight, a holy soul in a lethargy, a pious soul that is not in pursuit of God. Moses indeed bids Israel '* stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord;'*' but there is no such divinity in the holy scriptures as this, ' stand still and see the salvation of the soul," though some have violently pressed those words, Exodus 14:13, to serve under their slothful standard: no, no, the scripture speaks to us in another manner, " work out your own salvation:'"' and indeed the Spirit of God doth every where describe religion by the activity, industry, vigour, and quietness of it, as I hinted in the very beginning of this discourse, and could abundantly confirm and explain, if there were need of it. But that I may more powerfully convince and awaken the lazy and heavy spirit and temper of many professors, I will briefly touch upon a few particulars, which I will next propound to their serious consideration.

1. The children of this world, earthly and sensual men, are not so slothful, so lazy, so indifferent in the pursuit of earthly and sensual objects. You say you have laid up your treasure in heaven; we know they have laid up their treasure in the earth: now, who is it that behaves himself most suitably and seemly towards his treasure? you or they.'* You say you have a treasure in heaven, and are content to be able to say so, but make no haste to be fully and feelingly possessed of it, to enjoy the benefit and sweetness of it. But they " rise up early and sit up late,' and either pine themselves, or eat the bread of sorrow, to obtain earthly and perishing inheritances; they compass the world, travel far, sell all to purchase that part which is of so great price with them: and when they have accomplished it, O how do they set their heart upon it, bind up their very souls in the same bags with their money, and seal up their aiFections together with it: yea, and they are not at rest either, but find a gnawing hunger upon their hearts after more still, to add house to house, and land to land, and one bag to another: the covetous miser is ready to sit down and wring his hands, because he hath no more hands to scrape with; the voluptuous Epicure is angry that he hath not the neck of a crane the better to taste his dainties; and ambitious Alexander, when he domineers over the known world, is ready to sit down and whine, because there are no more worlds to conquer. What Christian but must be ashamed of himself, when he reads the description which Plautus the comedian gives of a covetous worldling, under the person of Euclio, how he hid his pot of gold, heeded it, watched it, visited it almost every hour, would not go from it in the day, could not sleep for it in the night, suspected every body that so much as looked towards it, and by all means kept it even as his life? For where is the like eager and ardent disposition to be found in a Christian towards God himself? Tell me, is it possible for a man that vehemently loves a virgin, to be content all his life long to court her at a distance, and not care whether ever he eventually marry her or not? Or must not such a one necessarily pursue a matrimonial and most intimate union with her? Let us now confess the truth, and every one judge himself. This dull and earthly body, is not so indifferently affected towards meat and drink, and rest, and the things that serve its necessities, and gratify its temper. Hunger will break down stone walls, and thirst will give away a kingdom for a cup of water; sickness will not be eased by good words, nor will a drowsy brain be bribed by any entertainments of company or recreation: no, no, the necessities of the body must and will be relieved with food, and physic, and sleep; the restless and raging appetite will never cease calling and crying to the soul for supplies till it arise and give them. Behold, O my soul! consider the mighty and incessant appetites and tendencies of the body after sensual objects, after its suitable good and proper perfection, and be ashamed of thy more remiss and sluggish inclinations towards the highest good, a God-like perfection.

3. No creature in the whole world is so languid, slow, and indifferent in its motions towards its proper rest and centre. How easy were it to call heaven and earth to witness the free, pleasant, cheerful, eager progress of every creature according to its kind, towards its own centre and happiness? The sun in the firmament rejoices to run its race, and will not stand still one moment, except it be miraculously overpowered by the command of God himself; the rivers seem to be in pain, till by a continued flowing they have accomplished to themselves a kind of perfection, and be swallowed up in the bosom of the ocean, except they be benumbed with frost, or otherwise over-mastered and retarded by foreign violence; I need not instance in sensitive and vegetating things; all which you know with a natural vigour and activity grow up daily towards a perfect state and stature. Were it not a strange and monstrous sight to see a stone settling in the air, and not working towards its centre? Such a spectacle is a pious soul settling upon earth, and not

endeavouring a nearer and more intimate union with its God. Wherefore, Christians, either cease to pretend that you have chosen God for your portion, centre, happiness, or else arise and cease not to pursue and accomplish the closest union and the most familiar conjunction with him that your souls are capable of: otherwise I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day: and the day is coming, when you will be put to shame by the whole creation. Doth every, even the meanest creature of God, pursue its end and perfection, and proper happiness, with ardent and vehement longings; and shall a soul, the noblest of all creatures, stand folding up itself in itself, or choking up its wide and divine capacity with dust and mire? Shall a pious soul, the noblest of all souls, hang the wing, suspend its motions towards the Supreme Good, or so much as once offer to faint and languish in its enterprises for eternal life? Tell it not at Athens, publish it not at Rome, lest the heathen philosophers deride and hiss us out of the world. But you will ask me, When a Christian may be said to be sluggish and inactive? and who these lazy souls are? I will premise two things, and then give you a brief account of them. (1.) When I speak of a sluggish and spiritless religion, I do not speak as the hot-spirited Anabaptists or Chiliasts, who being themselves acted by a strange fervour of mind, miscalled zeal, are wont to declaim against all men as cold and benumbed in their spirits, who do not call for fire from heaven to consume all Dissenters, under the notion of Antichristian; who are not afraid to reproach the divine, holy, gentle, yet generous spirit of religion; calling it weak, womanish, cowardly, low, cold, and I know not what.

These men, I believe, so far as I can guess at their spirit, if they had lived in the days of our Saviour, and had beheld that gentle, meek, humble, peaceable spirit, which did infinitely shine forth in him, would have gone nigh to have reproved him for not carrying on his own kingdom with sufficient vigour and activity; if not have judged Christ himself to be much Antichristian. I hope you see nothing in all my discoveries of the active spmt of religion that savours of such a fiery spirit as this. (2.) When I do so highly commend the active spirit of true religion, and the vigorous temper of truly religious souls, I would not be understood as if I thought all such souls were alike swift, or that any such soul did always move with like swiftness, and keep a like pace towards God. I know that there are different sizes of active souls, yea, and different degrees of activity in the same soul, as may be seen.

Song of Solomon 5:3, compared with the sixth verse of the same chapter, and in many other places of scripture. But yet, that none may flatter and deceive themselves with an opinion of their being what indeed they are not, I will briefly discover the sluggishness and inactivity of Christians in a few particulars. I pray take it not ill though the greater part of Christians be found guilty; for that is no other than what Christ himself has prophesied.

1. The active spirit of religion in the soul will not suffer men to take up their rest in a constant course of external performances; and they are but slothful souls that place their religion in anything without them. By external performances I mean not only open, and public, and solemn services, but even the most private, and secret performances that are in and by the body, and without the soul. It is not possible that a soul should be happy in anything that is extrinsical to itself, no, not in God himself, if we consider him only as something without the soul: the devil himself knows and sees much of God without him; but having no communications of a divine nature or life, being perfectly estranged from the life of God, he remains perfectly miserable. I doubt it is a common deceit in the world, men toil and labour in bodily acts of worship and religion in a slavish and

mercenary manner, and think, with those labourers in the parable, that at the end they must needs receive great wages, and many thanks, because they have borne the heat and burden of the day. Alas! that ever men should so grossly mistake the nature of religion, as to sink it into a few bodily acts and carcase-services, and to think it is nothing else but a running the round of duties and ordinances, and a keeping up a constant set and course of actions!

Such an external legal righteousness the apostle Paul, after his conversion, could not take up with, but counted it all loss and dung in comparison of that God-like righteousness which was now brought into his soul, that inward and spiritual conformity to Christ, which was now wrought in him: " That I may be found in Christ, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith; that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection; and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable imto his death."' I know indeed that men will be loth to confess that they place their religion in anything without them; but, I pray, consider seriously wherein you excel other men, save only in praying or hearing now and then, or some other outward acts, and judge yourselves by your nature, and not by your actions.

2. The active spirit of religion, where it is in the soul, will not suffer men to take up their rest in a mere pardon of sin; and they arc but slothful souls that could be so satisfied. Blessed is the man indeed whose iniquities are pardoned. But if we could suppose a soul to be acquitted of the guilt of all sin, and yet to lie bound under the dominion of lusts and passions, and to live without God in the world, he were yet far from true blessedness. A real hell and misery will arise out of the very bowels of sin and wickedness, though there should be no reserve of fire and brimstone in the world to come. It is utterly impossible that a soul should be happy out of God, though it had the greatest security imaginable that it should never suffer anything from him. The highest care and ambition indeed of a slavish and mercenary spirit is to be secured from the wrath and vengeance of God, but the breathings of the ingenuous and holy soul are after a divine life, and God-like perfections. This right gracious temper you may see in David, which is also the temper of every truly religious soul, '' Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me.^ Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit.''

3. The active spirit of religion, where it is in the soul, will not suffer men to take up their rest in mere innocence, or freedom from sin; and they are slothful souls that could count it happiness enough to be harmless. I doubt men are much mistaken about holiness; it is more than mere innocence, or freedom from the guilt or power of sin, it is not a negative thing; there is something active, noble, divine, and powerful, in true religion. A soul that rightly understands its own penury and self-insufficiency, and the emptiness and meanness of all creature-good, cannot possibly take up its rest, or place its happiness in anything but in a real participation of God himself; and therefore is continually making out towards that God from whom it came, and is labouring to unite itself more and more unto him. Let a low-spirited, fleshly-minded Pharisee take up with a negative holiness and happiness, as he doth, "God, I thank thee that I am not'' so and so: a noble and high-spirited Christian cannot take up his rest in any negation or freedom from sin. Every pious soul is not so learned, in.deed, as to be able to describe the nature and proper perfection of a soul, and to tell you how the happiness of a soul consists, not in cessation and rest, as the happiness of a stone

doth, but in life, and power, and vigour, as the happiness of God himself doth: but yet the spirit of true religion is so excellent and powerful in every pious soul, that it is still carrying it to the fuller enjoyment of a higher good: and the soul doth find and feel within itself, though it cannot discourse philosophically of these thinojs, that thouch it were free from all distur])ance of sin and affliction in the world, yet still it wants some sunreme and positive good to make it completely happy, and so bends all its power thitherward. This is the description which you will every where find given in scripture of the true spirit of holiness, which hath always something positive and divine in it, as, " Cease to do evil, learn to do well;" and, "Put off the old man, put on that new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." And accordingly a truly pious person, to use the Apostle's words, though he know nothing by himself, yet doth not thereby count himself happy.

4. The active spirit of true religion, where it is in the soul, will not suffer m-en to take up their rest in some measures of grace received; and so far as the soul doth so, it is sluggish and less active than it ought to be. This, indeed, ofttimes comes to pass when the soul is under some distemper of proud selfishness, earthly-mindedness, or the like, or is less apprehensive of its object and happiness; as it seems to have been the case of the spouse, " I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them.

Some such fainting fits, languishings, surfeitings, insensibleness, must be allowed to be in the pious soul during its imprisoned and imperfect state: but we must not judge ourselves by any present distempers, or infirmities. The nature of religion, when it actuates the soul rightly and powerfully, is to carry it after a more lively resemblance of God, which is the most proper and excellent enjoyment of him. A mind rightly and actually sound is most sick of love; and the nature of love is, not to know when it is near enough to its object, but still to long after the most perfect conjunction with it. This well of water, if it be not violently obstructed for a time, is ever springing up till it be swallowed up in the ocean of divine love and grace. The soul that is rightly acquainted with itself and its God, sees something still wanting in itself, and to be enjoyed in him, which makes it that it cannot be at rest, but is still springing up into him, till it come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of its Lord. In this holy, loving, longing, striving, active temper, we find the great Apostle: " Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth imto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." And by how much the more of divine grace any soul hath drunk in, the more thirsty is it after much more.

5. The active spirit of true religion, where it is powerfully seated in the minds of men, will not sufter them to settle into a love of this animal life, nor indeed suffer them to be content to live for ever in such a kind of body as this; and that soul is in a degree lazy and slothful, that dotli not desire to depart and be with his Lord. The pious soul eyeing God as his perfect and full happiness, and finding that his being in the body doth separate him from God, keep him in a poor and imperfect state, and hinder his blissful communion with the highest good, groans within himself, with the Apostle, that mortality were swallowed up of life. I know not how much, but I think he hath not very much of God, neither sight of him nor love of him, that could be content to abide for ever in this imperfect, mixed, low state, and never be perfected in the full enjoyment of him. And it seems that they in whom the love of God is rightly predominant, potent, flourishing, do also look earnestly "for

the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life," as without doubt they ought to do. " What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God?""'

Let this suffice by way of general reprehension. But more particularly, the consideration of the active nature of true religion may well serve to correct a mistake «ibout the noble grace of faith.

How dishonourably do some speak of this excellent and powerful grace, when they make it to be a slothful, passive thing, an idle kind of waiting, or a melancholic sitting still; where, indeed and in truth, is life and power. Be not mistaken in so high and eminent a grace: true faith doth not only accept the imputed righteousness of Christ for justifieation, but by a lively dependence upon God drinks in divine influences, and eagerly draws in grace, and virtue, and life, from the fountain of grace, for more perfect sanctification: and for this cause, I think, a purifying virtue is ascribed to it. Acts 15:9. Faith is not a lazy languid thing, content to wait for salvation till the world to come; but is even now panting after it, and accomplishing it too in a way of mortification, self-denial, and growing up in God, it is not content to be a candidate waiting for life and happiness, but is actually drawing down heaven into the soul, attracting God to itself, and gaining still further participations of divine grace for its aid: its motto is that of the famous painter, " No day without a line:" it longs to find some divine lineament, some line of God's image drawn upon the soul daily. Faith is a giving grace, as well as receiving; it gives up the whole soul to God, and is troubled that it can give him no more: it binds over the soul afresh to God every day, and is troubled that it can bind it no faster nor closer to him. The believing soul is wearied because of murderers, murdering loves, lusts, cares, earthly pleasures, and calls mightily upon Christ to come and take vengeance upon them: it is wearied because of those robbers that are daily stealing away precious time and affections from God, which are due unto him, and calls upon Christ to come and scourge these thieves, these buyers and sellers, out of his own temple. In a word, the pious soul is active, and faith is the very life and action of the soul itself.

Lastly, Let me exhort all Christians from hence to be zealous, to be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, and longing after him; " stir up the grace of God that is in you; quench not," that is, blow up, enflame "the Spirit of God in you." Awake, christian soul, out of thy lethargy, and rejoice, as the sun, to run the race that is set before thee, and, as a mighty man refreshed with wine, to fight thy spiritual battles against the armies of uncircumcised, profane, and earthly concupiscences, loves, and passions. Eye God as your centre, the enjoyment of him as the happiness, and full conformity to him as the perfection of your souls; and then say, Awake, arise, O my soul, and hide not thy hand in thy bosom, but throw thyself into the very heart and bosom of God; lay hold upon eternal life. Again, Observe how all things in the world pursue their several perfections with unwearied and impatient longings, and say. Come, my soul, and do thou likewise. Converse not with God so much under the notion of a lawgiver, but as with love itself; nor with his commands, as having authority in them, but as having goodness, and life, and sweetness in them. Again, Consider your poverty as creatures, and how utterly impossible it is for you to be happy in yourselves, and say. Arise, O my souly from off this weak and tottering foundation, and build thyself upon God, cease pinching thyself within the straits of self-sufficiencies, and come stretch thyself upon infinite goodness and fulness.

Again, Pore not upon your attainments; do not sit brooding upon your present accomplishments, but forget the things that are behind, and say. Awake, O my soul, there is yet infinitely much more in God; pursue after him for it, till thou hast gotten as much as a created being is capable to receive of the divine nature. In a word, take heed you live not by the lowest examples, (which thing keeps many in a dwindling state all their days) but by the highest: read over the spouse”*s temper, sick of love; David’s temper, waiting for God more than they that watch for the morning, breaking in heart for the longing that he had to the Lord, and say, Arise, O my soul, and live as high as the highest.

It is no fault to desire to be as good, as holy, as happy as an angel of God; and thus, O my soul, open thy mouth wide, and God hath promised to fill thee.

03.06. CHAP. VI. That religion is a lasting and persevering principle in the souls of men

CHAP. VI. That religion is a lasting and persevering principle in the souls of men — The grounds of this perseverance assigned— -Jir sty negatively, it doth not arise from the absolute impossibilitiy of losing of grace in the creature, nor from the strength of man's free will — Secondly, affirmatively, the grace of election cannot fail '—The grace of justification is neither suspended nor violated — the covenant of grace is everlasting — the Mediator of this covenant lives for ever — the promises of it immutable — the righteousness brought in by the Messiah everlasting — Art objection ansivered concerning a regenerate man's willing his own apostacy — An objection answered, drawn from the falls of saints in scripture — A discovery of counterfeit religion, and the shameful apostacy of false professors — An encouragement to all holy diligence, from the consideration of this doctrine.

I COME now to the third property of true religion contained in these words, and that is, the perseverance of it. And here the foundation of my following discourse shall be this proposition: —

" True religion is a lasting and persevering principle in the souls of good men.""" It is said of the hypocritical Jews, that their goodness was as the " early dew, that soon passes away." But that principle of goodness which God planteth in the souls of his people, is compared to a well of water, evermore sending forth fresh streams, and incessantly springing up towards God himself. Our Saviour compares hypocritical professors to " seed sown upon stony ground,'' that springs up indeed, but soon withers away, but this well of water, which is in the sincerely pious soul, springs up into everlasting life; it springs and is never dried up; "it is a spring of water, whose waters fail not,""" or lie not, as it is expressed by the Prophet, Isa. I8:11, or if you look upon it under the metaphor of oil, as it is sometimes expressed in scripture, then it is truly that oil that faileth not, whereof the widow of Sarepta's cruise of oil was but a scant resemblance. Amongst other texts which the learned Dr. Arrowsmith brings to prove the infallibility of the perseverance of saints, this saying of our Saviour's which is the subject of my whole discourse, is one; who also quoteth Theophylact for the same opinion, namely, the perseverance of this principle, yea, and somewhat more, even the growth and multiplication of it. To the same purpose the same excellent author quoteth John 10:27-28, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." In which our Saviour strongly asserteth the certain glorification of his people, by using a verb of the present tense, " I give unto them eternal life;" he will as certainly give it them, as if they had it already; excqit the words do imply that they have it already, namely, the beginnings of it, even in this life: and if so, then the words yet more strongly assert the doctrine of perseverance; for how can that life be called eternal, which may be ended? In the same words he seemeth purposely to prevent fears, and beforehand to answer objections, by securing them both from internal and external enemies; they shall never perish, namely, of their own accord, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand; for the word in the oriffinal is such as doth secure them from the

power of devils as well as men; and what is said of the church in general, is also certain concerning every true member of it in particular; “ the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Christ hath not only chosen and ordained his people that they should be holy, but also that they should persevere in holiness; not only that they should bring forth good fruits, but that their “ fruits should remain.”“

Hence they are said to be born again of incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever. And he that is born of God, is said to have the seed of God in him, and remaining in him, and so remaining in him as that he shall never again commit sin, that is, shall not become any more ungodly, 1 John 3:9. To all which may be added that strong and strengthening text, “I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord:’“ which one text doth excellently assert both those high and comfortable doctrines of assurance and perseverance; and these doctrines are worthy to be honoured in the church, by a vindication of the passage from the corrupt glosses and cavils of the Papists, who have endeavoured to rob Christians of the sweetness which may be drawn out of that pregnant honey-comb: in a word, let the holy Psalmist’s experience of the supporting virtue of this doctrine shut up the proof of it at present, who found himself wonderfully comforted by it after all his fears and falls, where he sings of the loving-kindness of the Lord in time past: “ Thou hast holden me by thy right hand;”” and, at present, “ I am continually with thee;’’ that is, thou art continually with me; and, with the like courage and confidence, he speaks of all time to come, “ Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory.”“ Now, although the doctrine of the perseverance of saints be thus fully and clearly laid down in scripture, yet it is easy to err in giving an account of it, and of the grounds of it. And therefore I shall proceed to the grounds of it, which I will briefly lay down negatively and affirmatively. First, negatively: —

1. The certain perseverance of the saints in a state of grace doth not arise from the absolute impossibility of losing of grace in the creature: it is one thing to affirm, that grace shall not be lost, and another thing to affirm, that it is absolutely uiiloseable.

God hath told us, that the world shall no more be drowned, but who will say for all that that it is not in itself capable of drowning? whilst we think to honour God by asserting the permanency of grace, we must take heed lest we make a god of grace, and so dishonour him. Grace, as it is in God, in the fountain, which divines sometimes call active grace, is eternal and unchangeable, not subject to any defection or alteration. There is no time, or place, or case, wherein the love and goodness of God faileth towards believers. It is one and the same in God towards his people, even when they are under the greatest desertions, and have no sense at all of it; we must not say the sun is grown dark, as often as a dark cloud interposeth between it and our sight. Yea, however it be most certain that the pure and holy God hateth sin even in his people, yet it is also certain that the good and gracious God loveth the persons of his saints, even at what time they sin: “ For the love of God towards the regenerate,’’ saith Davenant, “ is not founded upon their perfect purity and holiness, but upon Christ Jesus the Mediator, who hath transferred their sins upon himself, and so hath redeemed them from the wrath of God.’’ The love and kindness of God towards his people is absolutely unchangeable and everlasting. But grace in the creature, itself being a creature, is not simply and absolutely unchangeable or unloseable: there is a possibility of losing inherent grace, if

it be considered in itself; yea, and it would actually be lost and perish, liut that God upholdeth his people with one hand, whilst he exerciseth them with the other. Though with all my might I desire to maintain the perseverance of the saints, yet I dare not, as the manner of some is, ground it upon the firmness and rootedness of faith in man, but upon the goodness and faithfulness of God, which is such towards believers, that he will keep them by his mighty power " through faith unto salvation,''' as the Apostle expresseth it.

2. It doth not arise from the strength of man's free will, as if he were of himself able to keep him-, self for ever in a state of grace, when God had once put him into it. The saints indeed shall for ever will their own perseverance, as we shall see afterwards, but it is God that worketh in them even this will. Man''s own free will, or self-sufficiency, is so far from being the ground of his perseverance in grace and holiness, that I do believe nothing in the world is more directly contrary to grace than habitual and predominant self-confidence; and, even in the saints themselves, there is nothing that tends more towards their a^ostacy, than this self-conceit and confidence of their own strength, as something distinct from God, though the same be not habitual and predominant; for they themselves are many times sadly weakened and set back by that means, and sufler many lamentable spiritual decays. This,sccms to have sometimes been the case of Hczekiah and of David too, and had like to have been the case of Paul, when he had so much abounded in revelations. Sure it is, that nothing doth more estrange the hearts of God''s people from him, nor bind up the influences of divine grace and favour from them, than this security, confidence in the strength of their own wills, and vain opinion of selfsufficiency, which thing the sad experience of holy Christians doth attest: not only the Apostles James and Peter, but indeed all the true disciples of Christ in the world agree to that proverb, " God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." In a word, though " to do justly," and " to love mercy,""have indeed much of religion in them, yet unto perseverance it is also required that a man deny Jbimself and the sufficiency of his own free-will; and, in the Prophet's expression, " Walk humbly with his God." You know whose boast it was, " Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended;" and again, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee;" and what was the lamentable consequence of this self-confidence, you know likewise: wherefore "let him that standeth" by his own strength, " take heed lest he fall.

I proceeed now to speak something affirmatively concerning the grounds of the saint's perseverance in a state of grace. I have already showed you that active grace is absolutely of an immutable nature: and although passive grace be not so, yet it shall not be totally and finally lost, For,

1. The grace of election cannot fail. When I think of that uncertain, conditional, mutable decree of saving men, which some ascribe to God, who is infinite and eternal wisdom and oneness, methinks I may, with great reason, apply the Apostle's words spoken concerning himself, and say, when God is thus graciously minded to choose his people to eternal life, " Doth he use lightness, or the things that he purposeth, doth he purpose according to the flesh," after the manner of men, who are unsteady and wavering in their determinations? Is there with him yea, yea, and nay, nay? What doth the Apostle mean by those words, " The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal. The Lord knoweth them that are his?" The Apostle, in the foregoing verse, having related the apostacy of Hymeneus and Philetus, and the overthrow of some men's faith by their means, immediately subjoins this comfortable doctrine of the stedfastness and firmness of God's decrees

of election, to prevent the offence which the saints might take against the falls of others, and to relieve them against the fears that they might possibly conceive concerning their own perseverance; as if he had said, let no one be offended, as if the salvation of believers were uncertain; it appears that these men were none of God's people, because they are seduced, and the faith that they had is overthrown; and as for your part who are chosen, fear not lest ye also should apostatize, it is not possible to deceive the elect in the necessary and fundamental truths of the gospel, Matthew 24:24; fear not lest ye also should be drawn away by the error of the wicked into perdition, " for the foundation of God standeth sure,"' &c. In which sentence, says Dr. Arrowsmith, almost every word breathes firmness and performance: nothing more firm in a building than the foundation; that you may not doubt of that, it is also called sure, or steady; this sure foundation is said to stand, that is, say the Dutch annotators, abideth stedfast and certain; for it is the foundation not of man's laying but of God's, with whom there is " no variableness nor shadow of change;'' yea, farther, this foundation is said to be sealed; now, what is accounted more firm and sure than those things which are sealed with a seal? especially such a seal as this, '^ The Lord knoweth who are his;" though the wisest of men are often deceived in their opinions, yet the knowledge of God is infinitely infallible, according to that of Augustine, " If any of the elect perish, God is deceived; but God is not deceived, therefore none of the elect can perish, for the Lord knoweth who are his.'' When Samuel indeed went to separate one of the sons of Jesse from the rest of his brethren to be king over Israel, he first pitched upon Eliab, and afterwards rejected him, 1 Samuel 16:1-23; but God is guilty of no inconstancy in that eternal election which he makes of men to be kings and priests unto himself Those several acts of divinp grace mentioned Romans 8:29-30, though they be many links, yet run one into another, and all from first to last make up but one chain; concerning which divine and mysterious concatenation one may boldly use that peremptory prohibition which our Lord useth concerning a less indissoluble conjunction, What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder."

2. The grace of justification is neither suspended nor violated; it admits neither of intercision nor recision, neither of pause nor period. There is nothing between justification and glorification in the Apostle''s sentence, but the copulative and, Romans 8:30. There is nothing between a justified soul and glory, but a mere passage into it. May we be allowed to triumph with the holy Apostle in the same chapter, Who shall bring an accusation against God's elect.? " It is God that justifieth.'"" But what though you be at present justified, may some say, is there not a possibility of being unjustified again, may not the righteousness of the righteous be taken from him, may you not be condemned hereafter? But who is he that shall condemn us? it is Christ that died." As if the Apostle had said, the love of God towards his justified ones is not grounded upon their purity, loveliness, or perfection, but it is founded upon their Redeemer, which Redeemer hath done enough, both to bring them into a justified state, and to keep them in it for ever; it is Christ that died to free them from sin, it is Christ that is risen again for their justification; " who is at the right hand of God,'*'' to deliver them from all their enemies, that maketh intercession for them, for their perseverance. God loves nothing but the communications of himself; so far as anything partakes of the divine image, so far it partakes of divine favour and complacency, so that whilst a good man bears a resemblance to God so long he shall be accepted of him, and embraced in the arms of his love; and that shall be for ever, as we shall see under the next head.

Until you have blotted out all the image and superscription of God out of a pious soul, until you have rased out all the stamps and impressions of goodness; in a word, until you have rendered him wicked and ungodly, you cannot remove him from the embraces of God, which thing men and devils shall never be able to do, as I have partly showed already, and shall yet show more at large.

It is true indeed that Adam fell from a just state, though not from a justified state; for that supposes sin formerly committed. But this is no great wonder; for he had his righteousness in himself, and his happiness in his own keeping: but the condition of believers is now more safe and firm, as depending not upon any created power or will, but upon the infinite and effectual help and strength of a Mediator, which will never fail.

3. The covenant of grace is everlasting. It hath pleased God to enter into a covenant of grace and peace with every believing soul; which, I suppose.

I need not go about to prove, all Christians acknowledging it, though they do not all agree in one notion of it. Now this covenant, wherein God engages himself to be their God (for that is the summary contents of it on his part) is expressly called by the Apostle, " the everlasting covenant." And again, Jeremiah 32:40, " I will make an everlasting covenant with them f which covenant, and the everlastingness of it, are fully explained in the following words, " I will not turn away from them to do them good f the inviolable nature of this covenant is also expressly asserted in that famous place, Jeremiah 31:31-32, " I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, (which my covenant they brake;'") as if he had said, I will make a covenant that shall not be subject to breaches. In the former covenant with their fathers, I gave them laws to keep, which they kept not; but, in the new covenant, I will give them also a heart to keep my laws; it is not possible that covenant should be broken, one principle part of which is a heart both able and willing to keep it. The similitudes which God useth in the thirty-fifth, thirty-sixth, and thirtyseventh verses of that same chapter, do also further confirm and illustrate this doctrine of the everlastingness of this covenant of grace.

Under this head let me glance at three things.

(1.) The Mediator of this covenant lives for ever, and lives to make intercession for believers; and from this the Apostle argues, that they shall be saved to the uttermost, or evermore, as the margin reads it. From this also the Apostle argues the unchangeable state of believers, as we observed before on liom. John 8:34. Christ Jesus is always heard and accepted of the Father in all the requests that he maketh to him, according to that in John 11:41-42, " Jesus lifted up his eyes and said. Father, I thank thee, that thou hast heard me, and I know that thou hearest me always." If these things be so, then the perseverance of the saints is built upon a most certain foundation, is secured against the very gates of hell; for Christ hath prayed for them that they may be where he is; and, in the mean time, that they may be kept " from the evil,"' and that their faith, " fail not."'

2. The promises of this covenant are immutable, " they are in Christ Jesus yea and amen;'' as if one should say in Latin, Certo certiora, perfectly sure and certain. God, who is truth itself, will not, cannot be unto his people as a liar, or " as waters that fail,'' as the Prophet's phrase is. The infinite fountain of grace and truth cannot possibly become like one of the brooks which Job speaks of, which seem to be full of water, and are so at a certain winter season, but when the poor scorched Arabian comes to look for water in summer he goes away ashamed, because they are now

vanished, they are consumed out of their place. Now the promise is conceming not only grace, but the final perseverance of it: if he promise pardoning grace, it is in these full and satisfying expressions, " I will remember their sin,*" any one of their sins, "no more."

If he promise purging and purifying grace, it is in the like amplitude of phrase, " that they may fear me for ever;'"' and again, " they shall not depart from me;" with many other places of like importance.

3. God is said, to dwell in the souls of his people, in opposition to a way-faring man, "who turneth in to tarry for a night." God indeed hath promised, that it shall be said to them that were not his people, " Ye are the sons of the living God," Hosea 1:10; but never on the contrary, hath he any where threatened them that are the sons of the living God that it shall at any time be said to them, " Ye are not my people." True indeed, as to external profession, church-membership, mere covenant holiness, and outward communion, God doth many times disinherit and reject them that were so his people; but, as to true godliness, participation of the divine image, internal and spiritual communion, we may confidently say with the Apostle to the Corinthians, " God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord;" or, with the same Apostle to the Thessalonians, " Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." Do what? why, that which he was speaking of and praying for, namely, " Preserve spirit, and soul, and body, blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

I conclude then, that grace in the creature is a participation of him who is essential and perfect grace and goodness, a communication made by him of his holy nature, which becomes a living principle in the souls of men, a fountain sending forth a continued stream of holy dispositions and affections without intercision or cessation; though these streams run sometimes higher, sometimes lower, sometimes swifter, sometimes slower, yet they are never wholly dried up as the brooks of Tenia were.

For, where God hath once opened a fountain in the soul, he feeds it with fresh supplies from himself; as a fountain itself would dry up, if it were not nourished by the supplies of subterraneous waters. The perseverance of grace depends purely upon the supports and supplies of uncreated essential life and goodness. Eut how do we know that God will certainly afford these supplies? We build upon his goodness and love in Christ towards his people, which is infinite and unspeakable; and upon his faithfulness in accomplishing his promise, namely, that he will never leave nor forsake them, that he will keep them by his power unto salvation. They that are of the number of God's holy and chosen ones, shall, no doubt, continue of that number according to that in 1 John 2:19 - They that are truly in Christ shall abide in him. The seed of God remaineth in the godly, and they cannot sin, because they are born of God; " He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one touclieth him not.""* What can be more express and ample than that consolatory promise of our Lord made to his poor frail sheep, " I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." But some one may say perhaps. What if man will apostatize? what if the saints themselves will forsake God? will he not then say of them, as the Apostle of the unbelieving husband, " If they will depart, let them depart?'' Will not God forsake them that forsake him?

A?is. Yes, God will forsake them that forsake him; but they never shall forsake him: they being rightly renewed after the image of God, and perfectly overpowered by his grace, shall never will

any such departure: “ I will betroth thee unto me for ever.” “It is certain,” saith Dr. Arrowsmith, “ that God will condemn all impenitent sinners; but it is as certain that all justified and regenerate sinners shall repent; — this always occurs through the influence of the Spirit.” It seems unreasonable to demand, what if man himself will apostatize? seeing he is, by the grace of God, so renewed in his will, and put into such a condition, that he cannot will any such thing. “ God doth not give unto his saints,” saith Augustine, “ only such help without which they could not persevere if they would (which was that v.hich he gave Adam;) but he also worketh in them the will: that because they shall not persevere except they both can and will, his bountiful grace bestoweth upon them both the can and the will: for their will is so inflamed by the Spirit of God, that they therefore can, because they so will; they therefore so will, because God worketh in them to will.” Neither is it any disparagement or injury to the freedom of man’s will, that it should be overpowered by divine grace, and determined only to that which is good. The indifference and fluctuation of the will of man is indeed the imperfection of it; and the more God reveals himself to the soul, as the chief good, the more this indifference of the will is destroyed, and the faculty is determined; not by being constrained, but indeed perfected. O happy liberty, for a soul to be indifferently affected towards its own happiness, and to be free to choose its own misery! The noblest freedom in the world is, when a soul being delivered from its hesitancies, and healed of its indifferences, is carried like a ship with spread sails and powerful winds in a most speedy, cheerful, and steady course into its own harbour, into the arms and embraces of its own object. The grace of God doth never so overpower the will of man, as to reduce it to a condition of slavery, so as that man should not have a proper dominion over his own acts; but I think we do generally conclude that, in the world to come, in the future state, the wills of all glorified saints shall be so advanced and perfected in their freedom, as not in the least to verge towards anything that is evil, but shall in the most gladsome and steady manner be eternally carried towinds their full and glorious object, which the glorified understanding shall then represent in a most true, clear, and ample manner; and this we take to be the soul’s truest liberty in the highest elevation of it. Now, althouojh it be not altogether thus with us in this present world, for, by reason of the weakness and rauddiness of our understandings which do here represent God unto us so faintly and disadvantageously, it comes to pass that the will cannot so freely and fervently, with so ardent and generous motions pursue its excellent object, as it shall do hereafter, yet I believe that the more God reveals himself to any soul, the more the fluctuations and volatileness of it are healed, and a true liberty of will, increased; and that he doth so far reveal himself to every truly pious soul, as to establish this noble freedom in him, in such a degree as will keep it from willing a final departure from him, and carry him certainly (how remissly and faintly so ever) towards the supreme and sovereign Good, till he come to be perfectly swallowed up in it. A will thus truly and divinely free, though it be not the proper efficient cause, yet certainly is an inseparable concomitant of final perseverance. So then the more God communicateth himself to any soul, the more powerfully it willeth a nearer conjunction with him; and no soul, I conceive, to whom God communicateth himself savingly, can at any time will an utter separation from him. As for the foukst faults of scripture saints, that are any where recorded, I know not what more can rationally be inferred from them, but that grace in the creature admits of ebbs and flows, is subject to augmentations and diminutions; which I know no sober person that denies. But I think the history of their lapses, if we take it altogether, hath a very favourable aspect upon the doctrine of perseverance; yea, for aught I know, one great design of God in penning those relations, might be to confirm this very doctrine, by giving us so express and ample an

account of their repentance and recovery, that we are indeed to believe they were strengthened by their falls, so far were their falls from proving mortal to them: one would think, that if ever the habits of grace should be utterly suffocated and extinct, if ever they should languish even unto death, it would be under the power of such contrary acts as David and Peter committed, and especially Solomon, whose acts, for aught I can see, were as foul, and also often repeated, which is the likeliest thing that I know to destroy gracious habits. I know there are instances given of Joash, Hymeneus, Alexander, and Demas, utterly falling from that apparently gracious state, wherein for some time they had been. But it did never yet appear to me beyond contradiction, that ever they were any of them in such a state. Joash is put amongst the number of hypocrites by some that have examined his story: and for aught that can evidently appear to the contrary,

Demas might be no better. Most is pleaded for Hymeneus and Alexander, who put away a good conscience, and made shipwreck of faith, 1 Timothy 1:19. But it does not yet appear that the faith which they made shipwreck of, was any more than the profession or doctrine of the true faith; yea, rather it doth appear that it was no more. Neither does it at all appear, that they ever had that good conscience, which they are said, in our translation, to have put away, which may as fitly be rendered, rejected; for that we find to be the most common use of the Greek word airiijOio), to reject, repel, or thrust away from one. I am not confident that this apostacy of theirs was total either, supposing it to be an apostacy; for however their faith was shipwrecked, possibly some plank or other of it might be left. And who dare say that it was final? the Apostle doth not, that I perceive, give them up for lost, but executes discipline upon them, as it seems, for their recovery, of which one might think, by the following words that he had some hopes — that they may learn not to blaspheme.'" In short then, as to these two men, I conceive, that good conscience which they put away they never had, ^nd the faith which they had was not the good faith. And as to the other two that were named, and indeed as to all other instances of the like nature, I suppose we may give this general answer, that either they did but seem to stand, or they did but seem to fall; the former perhaps was the case of Joash, the latter of Demas. Whenever you observe therefore the backslidings of any seeming Christians, take heed of concluding rashly against the perseverance of saints, but rather infer with the holy Apostle, " They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would, no doubt, have continued with us:'" which words, if they be meant only of a communion in doctrine and profession, so as to conclude against a separation of such as are indeed in such a communion; then we may argue the more strongly, from the less to the greater, against the final apostacy of any that are in a higher and more excellent communion. As for those texts of scripture that seem to suppose a man''s falling away from grace, and turning from righteousness, I conceive a fair answer may be given to them, by the distinguishing of righteousness; and so it may be granted, that many men have turned away from, and utterly made shipwreck of, their legal righteousness, consisting in an external conformity to the letter of the precepts of the law, void of the supernatural and divine principle: it is indeed the common lot of these men that spring up thus fairly, and yet have no root, to "wither away." And yet, on the other hand, it abides an everlasting maxim of truth, " Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.'' If there be any texts that seem to speak of apostatizing from an evangelical righteousness, a righteousness of faith, and so cannot well be solved by this distinction, as that in Hebrews 10:38, and some others, it must be considered that suppositions are made of things impossible as well as possible, yea, and that even in the scriptures themselves, as some have observed from Galatians

1:8, 1 Corinthians 15:14, which texts do not at all imply what they suppose, I know indeed that eternal salvation is ordinarily entailed upon perseverance, and so is promised to us in scripture, as it were conditionally, “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.” — “ You hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh, through death, to present you holy, and unblameable, and unreprovable in his sight, if ye continue in the faitb, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel,” &c. To the same purpose are those words, “He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved;” and “He that overcometh, and keepeth my words unto the end, to him will I give,” &c. All which do strongly imply that there is no salvation but in a way of perseverance; and the words being laid down thus conditionally, especially the words first quoted, are indeed cautionary and quickening to the dull and sluggish minds of men, but do not necessarily imply any uncertainty or doubtfulness in the thing itself, no more than those words of the Apostle Peter, 2 Peter 1:10, compared with the latter end of the twelfth verse, where he doth affirm them to be “ established in the truth,” and yet at the same time doth speak to them by way of caution and encouragement. There are many texts that seem to suppose the apostacy of men in a state of regeneration, but not one that doth assert it, that ever I could yet find; but they are almost without number, that, to my apprehension, do more than seem to assert the contrary, namely, their final perseverance: of which perseverance we have also, through the goodness of God, thousands of instances; but no man could ever yet produce one instance of the contrary, but by mere conjecture; which conjectures, let them that make them see that they neither be over charitable towards men, or uncharitable towards God. Wherefore I do conclude that what is said concerning heaven and hell in the parable, as to one branch of it, is true of grace and wickedness; a gulf is fixed, and they that would pass from God to sin and the devil cannot: not that there shall ever be in any a real and predominant desire so to pass, as I suppose I have already proved; but it denotes the impossibility of the thing. It is Equally impossible that a pious soul should fall from God, and become a hater of him, fall from his love and image, and take upon him the image of the devil, as it was for Lazarus to quit Abraham’s bosom for the flames of hell: the case seems to be the same, the former being the most real heaven, and the latter the truest hell.

True religion is that hcly fire which, being once Ivindled in the soul from heaven, never goes out; whereof the fire of the altar was but a faint and imperfect resemblance: it is as true in this respect of good men, as it is of wicked men in another, “their fire never goes out. And here, now, we are presented with another crreat difference between true and counterfeit reliorion.

All counterfeit religions on will fade in time, thoucrh ever so specious and flourishing; all dew will pass away, though some lies much longer than other; all land-floods will fail; yea, the flood of Noah at length dried up, though it were of many months’ duration. But this well of water which our Saviour speaks of here, will never utterly fail; cold adversity cannot freeze it up; scorching prosperity cannot dry it up; the upper springs of uncreated grace and goodness will evermore feed those nether springs of grace and holiness in the creature. Though heaven and earth pass away, yet shall the seed of God remain, ’* He that hath begun a good work will certainly perform it.” Where the grace of God hath begotten a divine principle and spirit of true religion in a soul; there is the central force even of heaven itself, still attracting, and carrvins; the soul in its motions thitherward, until it have lodged it in the very bosom and heart of God. If any principle lower than true religion do actuate a man, it will certainly waste and be exhausted; though it may carry him swiftly in a rapid motion, yet not in a steady; though it may carr)’ him high, yet not quite through. A

meteor that is exhaled from the earth by a foreign force, though it may mount high in appearance, and brave it in a blaze, enough to be envied by the poor twinkling stars, and to be admired by ordinary spectators, yet its fate is to fall down, and shamefully confess its base original. That religion which men put on only for a cloak, will wear out and drop into rags, if it be not presently thrown by as a garment of fashion. You have read of the seeming righteousness of Jehu, founded in ambition and cruelty — the piety and devotion of Joash, grounded upon a good and virtuous education — the zeal of Saul for the worship of God, and his fat sacrifices, growing upon a root of superstition, as Samuel that man of God interprets it, 1 Samuel 15:22; and you have seen the shameful issue of all these dissemblers, and the offensive snuff in which all this candle-light religion ended, very much unlike to that sun-like lustre of true and genuine goodness, “which shineth more and more unto the perfect day,”’ according to that elegant description which the Spirit of God makes of it in the writings of Solomon, whose pen hath as much adorned this great truth as his life hath blotted it: “ But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” To this purpose I might fairly allege the frequent testimonies which the Holy Ghost in scripture gives concerning such hypocritical and unprincipled professors; that, having no root, they wither away in a scorching season, that chey are again entangled in the pollutions of the world, and overcome, that, like dogs, they turn to their own vomit again, and, like sows, wallow in the mire from which they had been washed, together with many others of the same nature: as also the prophecies that are made concerning them, that that which they seemed to have shall be taken away from them, that they shall proceed no further; “for their folly shall be manifest unto all men,”“ that “ evil men and seducers,”“ and of those — self-seducers are the worst, “shall wax worse and worse,”“ with other places of the like nature. It were easy to record many histories of many men, especially of great men, who have speedily, I had almost said disdainfully, thrown off that semblance of humility, meekness, self-denial, justice, and faithfulness, which they had put on for a vizard during their probationaryship for preferment, the better to accomplish their selfish designs, and to be possessed of some base ends of their own. Still I will not deny but that a hypocrite may maintain a fair conformity to, and correspondence with the letter of the law of God; he may continue fair and specious to the very end of his life; yea, perhaps may go to his grave undiscovered either to himself or any in the world besides. I believe many men have lived and died Pharisees, have never apostatized from that righteousness which they professed, but have persevered in their formality and hypocrisy to the last. But although that counterfeit righteousness and religion may possibly not fade away, yet nevertheless, being of an earthly and selfish constitution, it is transitory and fading; and if it were soundly assaulted and battered with persecutions and temptations, no doubt, would actually vanish and disappear; on the other hand, the promise of God is pregnant and precious. ’’ They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall walk and not faint.”

Take encouragement from hence, all ye that love the Lord; go on in the strength of God; be the more lively, by how much the more you are assured that this well of water shall spring up in you into everlasting life. Make this good use of this comfortable doctrine: Will God indeed work in you “both to will and to do.^” why then so much the rather “ work out your own salvation,” according to the Apostle. Will the Lord God be “with you.?” will he “ not fail you nor forsake you till you have finished all your work?” why then “be strong and of good courage,” and do as good David infers and argues. Have you this hope, this firm ground of hope in the promise and goodness of God.’^ why then, “ purify yourselves as God is pure,” according to the Apostle. Stop the mouths of those

men that say the doctrine of perseverance is prejudicial to godliness: let them see, and be forced to acknowledge it, that the more a pious soul is assured of the infinite and unchangeable love and care of God towards him, the more he is winged with love and zeal, with speed mounting up thither daily, where he longs to arrive. They that understand the doctrine of perseverance, do also understand that they must accomplish it in a way of dutiful diligence and watchful willingness; and if any grow profane and licentious, and apostatize from the way of righteousness which they have known, it is an evident argument to them that they are no saints, and then what will the doctrine of the perseverance of saints avail them?

Chapter 25

03.07. CHAP. VII. Religion considered in the consequence, of not thirsting

CHAP. VII.

Religion considered in the consequence, of not thirsting; divine grace gives a solid satisfaction to the soul; this aphorism confirmed by some scriptures, and largely explained in six propositions: first, that there is a raging thirst in every soul of man after some ultimate and satisfactory good: second, that every natural man thirsteth principally after happiness in the creature; Paite third, that no man can find that soul- filling satisfaction in any creature-enjoyment: fourth, that grace takes not away the soul's thirst after happiness: fifth, that the pious soul thirsteth no more after rest in any worldly thing, but in God alone; how far a good man may be said to thirst after the creature: sixth, that in the enjoyment of God the soul is at rest; and this in a double sense, namely, so as that it is perfectly matched with its object: secondly, so satisfied as to have joy and pleasure in him: the chapter concludes in a passionate lamentation over the levity and earthliness of christian minds..

Hitherto we have taken a view of true religion, as it stands described in this pregnant text, by its origin, nature, and properties: we are now to consider it in the certain and genuine consequence of it; and that is, in one word, affirmatively, satisfaction; or, if you will, negatively, not thirsting: for so it is, in our Saviour's phrase, " Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst."

Whilst I address myself to the explication of this phrase, I suppose I need not be so exact and curious as to tell you in order, with a certain kind of scholastical gravity, first, what is not; and then, what is meant by it: for I presume nobody will dream of a corporeal or gross kind of thirsting to be meant here. Grace doth no more quench the thirst of the body, than elementary water can relieve the panting of the soul. Nay, he himself was subject to this gross kind of thirst, who gave to others the water whereof, if they drank, they should never thirst more. If it be understood of a spiritual thirst, yet I suppose I need not to tell you either, that then it must not be understood absolutely: for it cannot possibly be, that the thirst of a soul should be perfectly allayed till all its faculties be filled up to the brim of their respective capacities, which will never be until it be swallowed up in the infinite and unbounded ocean of the Supreme Good. But I conceive we may fairly come to the meaning of this phrase, never thirst, either by adding or distinguishing.

1. Then let us supply the sentence thus, Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst after any other water."" There is no worldly liquour can be so accommodated or attempered to the palate as to produce a universal satisfaction, as that a man should be perfectly mortified to all variety: but this heavenly water which our Saviour treats of here, is so fitted to the palate of spirits, and brings such satisfaction along with it, that the soul that is made to drink of it suspends its chase of all other delights, counts all other waters but a filthy and offensive puddle, thirsts no more after any other thing, either through necessity or for variety. The more indeed the soul drinks of this water, the more it thirsteth after fuller measures and larger portions of the same;

and does not only draw in divine virtue and influences, but even longs to be itself swallowed up in the divinity, as we shall see further in the procedure of this discourse: but its thirst after all created good, after all the waters of the cistern, is hereby extinguished, or at least mastered and mortified. Or,

2. By distinguishing upon thirst, the sense of the phrase will be clearly this, “ Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him” shall never be at a loss more, never be to seek any more, never be uncertain or unsatisfied as to his main happiness or supreme object; he shall not rove and range up and down the world in an unfixedness and suspence any more; shall not run up and down to seek satisfaction and rest any more. From an internal unsatisfiedness of the body, spring violent and restless motions and runnings up and down, by which thirst is contracted; so that, by a metonomy, thirst comes to be used for unsatisfiedness which is the remote cause of it; and, by a metaphor, the same phrase comes to be applied to the soul. I suppose I am warranted, by the sacred style, thus to interpret; especially by the use and explication of the phrase in Jeremiah 2:25, where the Prophet intimates, that by thirst is to be meant a restless and discontented running up and down to seek satisfaction “ Withhold thy foot from being unshod, and thy throat from thirst;’ which two phrases are of the same import, and signify no more than cease from gadding after your idols; and that this is the meaning of that thirsting appears by the answer that the wilful and desperate people make in the sequel of the verse: for instead of saying. No, but we will thirst; they cry, “ No, but after them will I go.” To thirst then is, in an unsatisfiedness and spiritual disquiet, to range up and down seeking something wherein ultimately to acquiesce. And, in this sense, it is most true what our Lord here pronounceth, that “ whose ver drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst.”’ Of which thirst that famous proclamation of our Saviour’s is to be understood — “ If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink;’“ in which place also we must necessarily understand what is here expressed, that then he shall never thirst more.

It matters not much by which of these two ways we explain the phrase here of not thirsting; for, according to either of them, it will result in this theological maxim, namely, that “ Divine grace, or true Christian religion, gives a real and solid satisfaction to the soul that is principled with it." This will appear plain though we apply but out of each Testament of the holy scriptures one text thereunto. I think it cannot reasonably be doubted, but that the prophecy and promise made in Isaiah 49:10, is to be performed to believers in this present life; for so must the foregoing verses necessarily be understood: and there we have the doctrine expressly asserted, “ They shall not hunger nor thirst, &c. for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.’’ To which those words of our Saviour are parallel, ’’ He that believeth on me shall never thirst f’ which doctrine of his is yet amplified and enlarged in John 7:38, “ He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” What greater security from thirst can be desired, than that one should be led by springs of water? Yes, one may be led by the springs of water, and yet not be suffered to drink of them: well therefore to put all out of fear, the pious soul shall contain within himself a spring of water; he shall have rivers of living waters in himself; and for his fuller security, these rivers shall be ever flowing too. It shall suffice at present, thus briefly to have established this conclusion. And now, having wrapt up the meaning of the words in this short position, I shall endeavour to unfold it in these six following propositions:

1. “ There is a raging thirst in every soul of man after some ultimate and satisfactory good.”’ The God of nature hath implanted in every created nature a secret but powerful tendency towards a centre, the dictates of which, arising out of the very constitution of it, it cannot disobey until it cease to be such, and utterly apostatize from the state of its creation. And the nobler any being is, the more excellent is the object assigned to it, and the more strong and potent, and uncontrollable are its raptures and motions thereunto. Wherefore the soul of man must needs also have its own proper centre, which must be something superior to, and more excellent than itself, able to fill up all its indigencies, to match all its capacities, to master all its cravings, and give a plenary and perfect satisfaction: which therefore can be no other than the uncreated goodness, even God himself. It was not possible that God should make man of such faculties, and of that capaciousness as we see them, and appoint anything below himself to be his ultimate happiness.

Now, although it be sadly true, that the faculties of the soul are miserably maimed, depraved, benighted, and distorted; yet I do not see that the soul is utterly •changed in its nature by sin, so as that any other thing should be obtruded upon it for its centre and happiness, than the same infinite good that was such from the beginning, or so as that its main and cardinal motions should be ultimately directed to any other than its natural and primitive object. The natural understanding hath not indeed any clear or distinct sight of this blessed object; but yet it retains a darker and more general apprehension of him, and may be said, even in all its pursuits of other things to be still groping in the dark after him: neither is it without some secret and latent sense of God, that the will of man chooseth or embrac€th anything for good. The Apostle hesitates not to -affirm, that the idolatrous Athenians themselves did worship God, though at that time indeed they knew not what they worshipped; their worship was secretly ^nd implicitly directed to God, and did ultimately resolve itself into him, though they were not aware of it — “ whom ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.”“ Now that he declared God to them, appears abundantly by the following verses. What he says in point of worship, the same methinks I may say in point of love, trust, delight, dependence, and apply it to all sorts of idolaters, as well as image-worshippers, and affirm that the covetous idolater, even when he most fondly hugs his bags, and most firmly confideth in his riches doth ignorantly love and trust in God; the proud idolater, in the highest acts of self-seeking and selfpleasing, doth ignorantly admire and adore God; the ambitious idolater, even in the hottest chase of secular glory, and popular applause, doth ignorantly pursue, and advance God. For that rest, contentment, peace, happiness, satisfaction, which these mistaken souls do aim at, what is it other than God, though they attribute it to something else which cannot afford it, and so commit a real blasphemy? for they that do in their hearts and course of their lives, ascribe a filling and satisfying virtue to riches, pleasures, or honours, do as truly, though not so loudly, blaspheme, as they who cried out concerning the calf of gold, Exodus 32:4, “ These be thy gods, O Israel! “ &c. And in this sense that I have been speaking, one may safely affirm, that the most professed atheist in the world doth secretly pursue the God whom he openly denies, whilst his will is catching at that which his judgment renounceth, and he allows that Deity in his lusts which he will not own in heaven. The hypocrite professes to know God, but in works denies him; on the other hand, the atheist, though in words he deny God, yet in his works he professeth him: so natural and necessary it is for all men to acknowledge a Deity, though some are so brutish and besotted as to confine him to their own bellies; of whom the Apostle speaks, “ Whose god is their belly/’’

I say natural; for it is not only some few men of better education, and more contemplative complexions, that hunt after this invisible and satisfying good; but indeed the most vulgar souls, retaining still the nature of souls, are perpetually catching at an ultimate happiness and satisfaction, and are secretly stung and tormented with the want of it.

Certainly the motions of a soul are more strong and weiglity than we arc ordinarily aware of; and, I think, one may safely conclude, that if there were no latent sense, or natural science of God, the poor man could not spend the powers of his soul so intensely for the purchasing a little food and raiment for the body, nor the covetous man so insatiably thirst after houses and land, and a larger heap of refined earth: did they not secretly imagine, some contentment, happiness, or satisfaction, were to be drunk in together with these acquirements, they would seem to be but dry and insipid morsels to a soul; which ultimate happiness and satisfaction, as I said before, can be no other than God himself, whom these mistaken souls do ignorantly adore, and feel for in the dark. Neither let any one think that this ignorant and unwary pursuit of God can pass for religion, or be acceptable in the sight of God; for, as it is impossible that ever any man should stumble into a happy state, without foresight and free choice, and be in it without any kind of sense or feeling of it, so neither can God accept the blind for sacrifice, or be pleased with anything less than reasonable service from a reasonable creature. As the Athenians, worshipping God by altars and images, are counted superstitious, not devout, so the whole generation of gross and sensual souls admiring, loving, and ignorantly coveting after God in the pictures and images of true goodness, are, indeed, truly blasphemers and idolaters, but religious they cannot be. We cannot excuse them from idolatry, who direct their worship purposely to the true God, by or through images; much less can we be favourable to them who bestow their love, joy, confidence and delight, ignorantly upon the supreme and self-sufficient good, by or through any created good, in which they, as far as they understand, do terminate their devotion. I do not say that all souls have a distinct discovery of the good they aim at, it is evident they have not; but yet the will of every man is secretly in chase of some ultimate end and happiness, and indeed in its eager tendencies outflies the understanding. All which mystery seems to be wrapped up in that short but pithy inquiry, which, if it were a little otherwise modified, would be an excellent description of the natural soul, “ Many say. Who will show us any good.’^” The nature of the object is set out in the word ^ooc?,- the eagerness of the motion, in the form of the question^ “Who will show us.^^” and the ignorance of the mover appears in the indeterminateness of this object, which is well explained by the supply of the word any; “Who will show us any good? “*”* And that this is the cry of every rational soul is insinuated by the word many; which many is also in metre multiplied into the greater sort, and must indeed necessarily be extended unto all.

2. “Every natural man thirsteth principally after happiness and satisfaction in the creature.” The fall of the soul consisteth in its sinking itself into the animal life, and the business of every unrenewed soul is in one kind or other still to gratify the same life; for although, as I have shown, God is in the bottom of these men’s cares, and loves, and desires, and implicitly in all their thirstings, yet I may well say of them, as God says of the Assyrian monarch, at what time he executed his pleasure in correcting his people Israel, “Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so.” God is not in all their thoughts, whilst they pursue that in the creature which really none but God alone can be unto them. They do ultimately direct, as to their intention, all their cares, and covetings, and thirstings, to some created object; all which are calculated for the animal life, the gratifying and

accomplishing their own base lusts. This is very apparent in the idolatry of the Pagans, whose lusts gave being to their gods; and so their deities were as many as their concupiscences and filthy passions, to sacrifice to their own revenge and sensuality, under the names of Mars, Bacchus, and Venus, what was it else but to proclaim to all the world, that they took the highest contentment and satisfaction in the fulfilHng of such kind of lusts? this was to them their god or supreme felicity. The case is the same, though not so expressly and professedly, with all carnal Christians who, although they profess the true God, yet in truth make him only a pander to their own lusts and base ends, though they name the natne of Christ, yet in very 4ee.(J deify their own passions, and sacrifice to the gratification of their animal powers. The Psalmist, as we have seen, determines the main end of all men to be good, Psalms 4:6, but, lest any man should be deceived in them, he presently tells us where this good was placed, Psalms 4:7, namely, in “corn and wine;” by which we must understand the animal life, and whatsoever administers to the delight thereof. And certainly this will go far; for not only meats and drinks, sensual pleasures, gorgeous apparel, sumptuous buildings, splendid descent, honourable preferments, popular applause, inordinate recreations, and an unwieldy bulk of earthly riches; but also orthodox opinions, philosophical, political, yea, and scholastical learning, fair professions, much pompous worship, yea, and worship industriously void of pomp, specious performances; to which we may add the most seemly exercises of undaunted valour, unshaken constancy, unbribed justice, uninterrupted temperance, unspotted chastity, and unlimited charity, if much giving may deserve so sacred a name; even all these, and as many more, may serve only as fuel for the rapacious fire of lust and self-love, to maintain and keep alive the mere animal, or at most logical, life; and are ordinarily designed as sacrifices to that which we significantly call self^ in contradistinction from God. I need not here declaim against covetous, luxurious, ambitious souls, the Apostle having so expressly prevented me by his plain and punctual arraignment of such men. Colossians 3:5, Php 3:19, where he charges them with placing a deity in their bags and bellies: otherwise I durst appeal to all the world that are not parties, yea, to the parties themselves, whether it be God or themselves that these persons do intend to serve, and please, and gratify; whether it be a real assimilation to God, and the true honour of his name, or some lust or humour of self-pleasing, self-advancing, and self-enjoying, that they sacrifice their cares and pains, and the main thirstings of their souls to. I am confident it will be easily acknowledged, that the covetous, voluptuous, and ambitious, do sacrifice all they are and do to the latter; but, alas! it is not yet agreed among men who are such; the hypothesis is granted, but the thesis is disputed: and indeed this is no wonder either; for it is as natural for the animal self-life to shift off guilt as it is to contract it; and the pride of the natural man is no less conspicuous in his wrongful endeavours to seem innocent of what he is indeed guilty, than his covetousness and voluptuousness is apparent in the matter wherein his guilt consisteth. It is not only these, and some few of the grossest and profanest sort of souls, that are guilty in this kind which I have been describing, though they indeed are grossly and most visibly guilty; but verily the whole generation of mere animal men, who have no principle of divine life implanted in them, do spend all their days, bestow all their pains, and enjoy all their comforts, in a real strain of blasphemy, from first to last. What a blasphemous kind of philosophy was that which professedly placed the supreme good and chief happiness of man in the fruition of pleasures? And indeed all those kinds of philosophy which placed it elsewhere, in things below God himself, and the enjoyment of him, were no less profane, though they may seem somewhat less beastly: for whether the Epicureans idolized their own senses, or the more exalted Stoics deified their own

faculty, placing their main contentment in their self-sufficiency, and the perpetual serenity and tranquillity of their own minds, it is too apparent that both the one and the other still moved within the narrow and low sphere of natural self, and grasped after a deity in the poor dark shadows, and glimmering representatives of him. But I am speaking to Christians: and, amongst these, let no man tell me how orthodox his opinions, how pure and spiritual his forms, how numerous and specious his performances are, how rightly he pays his homage, and prays to one living God by one living Mediator; I will willingly allow, and do with delight observe these things wherever they are; but yet all this doth not denominate a Christian: for still that of the Apostle must hold good, " His servants ye are to whom ye obey;"' and I may add by somewhat a like phraseology, "His children ye are whom ye resemble C his creatures ye are, as far as you can make yourselves so, whose sufficiency and sovereignty is most magnified in your hearts; his worshippers ye arc whom ye mostly love, trust in, delight in, depend upon; in a word, that is your god which your soul doth mainly rest, and centre, and wrap up itself in. And, alas! how visibly dear and precious is the self-central life, which is so universally pampered, cherished, and sacrificed unto, besides the invisible and more spiritual oblations that are made for this purpose. This is as true an Antichrist in the mystery as there is any literal Antichrist in the world: and of this one may as truly say, as St. John doth of the other, ''All the world wondercth after the beast." In a word then, whosoever saith in his heart concerning anything that is not God, what that rich man in the gospel said concerning his goods, " Soul, take thine ease in them and be merry," the same is an idolater and blasphemer: and this I affirm to be the language of every apostate spirit, and unregenerate soul of man.

3. " No man can find that happiness, and soulfilling satisfaction in any creature-enjoyment, which every natural man principally seeketh therein."

Here are two things to be spoken to, namely, the enjoyments of men, or what they possess, and the satisfaction which the natural man seeketh in such possessions. For the first of these, I do not believe that ever any natural man had his fill of such possessions, I mean as to the quantity of them; he never had so much of them as to be able freely to say, " It is enough." The rational soul hath a strong and insatiable appetite, and wherever it imagineth its beloved prey to be found, and filling enjoyment to be had, it is exceedingly greedy and rapacious; whether the same will ever be able to afford it or not, it matters not. The animal life is that voracious idol, not like Bel in the story, which seems only to eat up, but which doth really devour all the fat morsels, and sensual pleasures that are sacrificed unto it, and yet it is not filled therewith. The whole employment of the natural man, is nothing else but as the Apostle elegantly describes it, Romans 13:14, " To make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof;'' wherein however, to speak the truth, he loses his labour; for he sacrifices all to an insatiable idol, and pours it into a gulf that hath neither bottom nor bounds, but swalloweth up all into its barren womb, and is rather made to thirst, than to cease from thirsting by all that is or can be administered to it. I take that of Solomon, Ecclesiastes 1:8, to be a clear proof in general of what I affirm, " The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing;"" the eye of man, as little as it is, is bigger than the whole visible world, which, although it may be wearied with looking upon various objects, as the English annotators observe upon these words, yet still desires new ones, and can drink them in without surfeiting: so that, although the acts of the eye be scant and finite, yet the lusts of the eye seem to have a kind of infinity in them. And indeed by the insatiableness of the eye and ear, is meant the greediness and voracity of the flesh or animal life, as Mr. Cartwright hath well observed upon, " Hell and destruction are never

full, so the eyes of man are never satisfied;”“ where, by not being satisfied, is meant not having enough in quantity, as appears by the similitude in the former part of the verse. To the same sense he speaks, Ecclesiastes 4:8; Ecclesiastes 5:10. It would be endless to relate the monstrous and inexplicable gapings of covetous, ambitious, voluptuous, proud, vain-glorious minds after their respective idols. And indeed I need not descend to particular instances; for I suppose never any natural man could heartily say he had enough of riches, promotions, applause, sensual delights, eloquence, policy, prowess, or victory, or of any other thing which is accommodated to the gratification of the flesh, no more than any pious soul sojourning upon earth could ever yet be able to say he had enough of God and eternal life. So that, in a word, I know not how to apply any description to this insatiable and devouring principle more properly than that which the Prophet makes of hell, “ She enlargeth herself, and openeth her mouth without measure, and all glory, multitude, and pomp, descend into it.” I know there are of those men that pretend to have enough in quantity of these fleshly provisions; but I fear falsely and unjustly: for, as for the rich and honourable of the earth, it is too evident that they are still climbing higher, and grasping after more, as the great Alexander is said to have whined after more worlds, when he conceited himself to be master of all this: as for the poorer and meaner sort of people, who are as ready sometimes to lay claim to this virtue of thinking themselves to have enough, as any other people whatsoever, it is too manifest to a wise observer, that it is not a real apprehension that they have enough, but either a lowness and weakness of spirit, arising from the meanness of their education, or a downright despair of ever getting more. But be it imagined that the enjoyments of some natural men are enough in respect of quantity, yet still there is certainly wanting a true and sincere satisfaction of soul in such possessions; no man of all these finds that real happiness in those things which he so vehemently hunteth after. Solomon reduces all the pleasure and contentment that is to be found in multiplied riches to a very pitiful sum total, “ What good is there to the owners thereof, save the beholding of them with their eyes “f And, alas! what is the sight of the eye to the satisfaction of the soul! The whole visible world is utterly too scant for, and incommensurate to the wide and deep capacity of an immortal spirit; so that the same can no more satisfy than a less can fill a greater, which is surely impossible. Whatever is in the world out of God, is described by the Prophet, Isaiah 55:2, to be not bread, there is the unsuitableness; and not to satisfy, there is the insufficiency of it as to the soul of man: on the other hand, the soul of man is so vastly capacious, that though it be also ever so greedy and rapacious, snatching on the right hand, and catching on the left hand, as the Prophet describes the famishing people, Isaiah 9:20, yet still it is hungry and unsatisfied. AVhich ravenous and insatiable appetite of the sensual soul, is elegantly described by the Prophet in the similitude of a whorish woman, who prostituteth herself to all comers, and “ multiplieth her fornications,” yet is “ unsatiable, is not, cannot be satisfied.” The soul may indeed feed, yea, and surfeit upon, but it can never satisfy itself from any created good; nothing can ultimately determine and centre the motions of a soul, but something superior to its own essence; which, whilst it misses of, it is as it were divided against itself, perpetually struggling and fluctuating, and travailing in pangs with some new design or other to be at rest; like the old lioness in the parable of Ezekiel, breeding up one whelp after another to be a lion wherein to confide, but disappointed in all; or like the poor discontented butterfly, lighting and catching every where but sticking no where, adoring something for a god to-day, which it will be ready to fling into the fire to-morrow, after the manner of idolaters creating gods to themselves.

Neither the quantity, variety, nor duration of any created objects, can possibly fill up that large and noble capacity wherewith God hath endued the rational soul; but having departed from its centre, and not knowing how to return to its original, it wanders up and down as it were in a wilderness, and having an imperfect glimmering sight of something better than what itself as yet either is or hath, but not being able to attain to it, is miserably tormented, even as a man in a thirst which he cannot quench; yea, the more he runs up and down to seek water, the more is his thirst increased whilst he misses of it; so this distempered and distracted soul, whilst it seeks to quench its thirst at the creature-cistern does but inflame it, and in a continual pursuit of rest becomes most restless. That every unregenerate soul is in such a distressed, weary, restless state as I have been describing, appears most evidently by those famous gospel proclamations; one in Isaiah 55:1, Isaiah 55:3," Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters;"" where, by the thirsters are meant those unfixed, unsatisfied souls, as appears by the second verse; the other in Matthew 11:28, " Come unto me, all ye that labour," &c. where the promise of giving rest does plainly imply the restless state of the persons invited. There is a certain horror and anguish in sin and wickedness, even long before it be swallowed up in hell; a certain vanity and vexation folded up in all earthly enjoyments, though the same do not always sting and pierce the soul alike: so true is that famous aphorism of the Prophet Isaiah, " There is no peace to the wicked."" "

4. " Grace takes not away this thirst of the soul after happiness and plenary satisfaction."" love and desire, and a tendency towards blessedness, are so woven into the nature of the soul, and inlaid in its very essence, that she cannot possibly put them off: however, it is the work of grace to change and rectify them, as we shall see under the next head. The soul of man is a kind of immaterial fire, an inextinguishable activity, always necessarily catching at some object or other, in conjunction with which she thinks to be happy; and, therefore, if she be rent from herself and the world, and be mortified to the love of fleshly and animal lusts, she will certainly cleave to some higher and more excellent object, as will more clearly appear by and by.

Grace does not stupify the soul as to its sense of its own indigency and poverty, but, indeed, makes it more abundantly sensible and importunate. There are more strong emotions, and more powerful appetites in the pious soul towards its true and proper happiness, than in the ungodly and wicked. For the understanding of the regenerate soul is so enlightened, as that it doth present the will with an amiable and satisfactory object; which object, therefore, being more distinctly and perfectly apprehended, doth also apprehend, or lay hold upon, the soul, and attract her unto itself That "the eyes are leaders in love,"" is most true of the eye of the soul; I mean the understanding, that first affects the heart with fervid passions. The first and fundamental error and mistake of the rational soul, seems to lie here, even in the understanding; here lies the very root of the degenerate souPs distemper; and if this were thoroughly restored and healed, so as to present the will with pure and proper ideas and representations of God, it might be hoped that this ductile faculty would not be long before it clave unto him entirely: nay, it may be doubted whether it could possibly resist the dictates of it. Now in the regenerate soul this faculty is repaired; yea, I may say, that the spirit of regeneration first of all spreads itself into the understanding, and awakens in it a sense of self-indigency, and of the perfect, all-sufficient, suitable, and satisfactory fulness of God, in whom it sees all beauty, sweetness, and loveliness, in an infinitely ineffable manner, wrapped up and contained; which will be so far from allaying the essential thirst of the soul, and stifling its eager pantings, that it must needs give a mighty edge and ardour to its inclinations, and put it upon

a more bold and earnest contention towards this glorious object, and charm the whole soul into the very arms of God. Therefore not thirsting in the text, must not be understood absolutely, as if grace did utterly extinguish the natural activities of the soul, and its propensions: but the regenerate and gi'acious soul doth not thirst in such a sense, as thirst implies a want of a suitable good, or dissatisfaction, or includes torment properly so called. In this notion of thirst grace doth indeed quench it, as I intimated in the beginning of this discourse, and as it will further appear in the procedure of it. But as to this most essential thirst, this natural desire, or vergency of the soul after central rest and happiness, the same is so far from being extinguished or moderated by divine grace, that it is greatly improved, and mightily inflamed thereby. I suppose I need not enlarge upon so acknowledged a subject; therefore I will but present you with the instances of holy David in the Old Testament, and gracious Paul in the New.

I need not, I suppose, magnify the holy and divine frame of David's spirit by any rhetoric of mine; God himself hath given the amplest testimony, and fairest character of him that I remember to have been, at any time, given of any man, when he owns him for "a man after his own heart:" and what a longing, thirsting soul this was, I need do no more to demonstrate than to turn you to some passages and professions of his own in his devout Psalms, such as Psalms 13:1, Psalms 113:1, where he borrows the strongest inclinations that are to be found in the whole creation, to represent the devout ardours of his own soul; " As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God" — "0 God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee; my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is" — "I stretch forth my hands unto thee; my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land:" yea, he seems like one that would swoon away for very longing: "Hear me, speedily, O Lord, my spirit faileth; hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit; I lift up my soul unto thee; I flee unto thee,^ &c. The very same temper you will find in holy Paul, that chosen -vessel of God, if you peruse his Epistles, in all which you will meet with devout and strong breathe ings of the same kind; particularly Php 3:11-14, where he seems to be so thirsty after a state of heavenly perfection, that he longs after, if I mistake not the meaning of the eleventh verse, something that yet he knows he cannot arrive at whilst he is in this world, even the resurrection of the dead, or such a perfect state of purity and holiness, as belongs to the children of the resurrection.

5. "The pious soul thirsteth no more after happiness in any creature, nor rests in any worldly thing, but in God alone.'' This particular consists also of two branches: the former and negative part whereof seems to me to contain in it the scope and meaning of our Saviour, in these words which I am now interpreting. We have already seen that every unsanctified soul is restless, and craving, wavering, unsatisfied, inconstant to itself, and its choice: by reason of its natural activity, it is always spending itself in restless and giddy motions; but by reason of its ignorance, and unacquaintedness with the one supreme and all-sufficient Good, and the multiplicity of lower ends and objects, it is miserably distracted, and doth necessarily grapple with inevitable disturbances, in a continual unsteadiness, putting forth itself now towards one thing, anon to another, courting every thing, but matching with nothing; like a fickle lover, that is always enamoured with the last feature he saw; or a greedy merchant, that being equally in love with the pleasure of being at home, and the profit of being abroad, can stay long no where with any content, but has always most mind of the place where he is not. The description that our Lord gives of the unclean spirit that is " gone out of a man,^' seems very aptly to agree with that unclean spirit that is in man, that

being departed from God its proper rest and habitation, walketh through dry and desert places, I mean, empty and unsatisfying creatureenjoyments, seeking rest but finding none. It was an accidental affliction of believers, but is the natural and necessary affliction of every unbelieving and wicked soul, to wander up and down the world destitute, afflicted, tormented. Sinful self is so multiform, and that one root, the animal life, has such a world of branches, that it is impossible to administer due nourishment to them all; and yet they are all importunate and greedy suckers too: so that he must needs have a difficult task, and a painful province, that is constrained to attend upon so many, so different, and yet all of them so impatient and imperious masters. But I shall lose ground by thus going backward to what I considered under the second head, except I can make this advantage of it, to enforce that which I was going to speak of, with the greater strength and clearer evidence. The case standing thus with the unregenerate soul, as we have seen in this short review, I now say, that divine grace allays the multifarious thirst of the soul after other waters, of which it could never yet drink deep, or if it drunk ever so deep, could not be quenched; it determines the soul to one object, which before was rent in pieces amongst many. It does not destroy any of the natural powers, nor dry up the innate vigour of the soul, as I made evident under the last head, but it takes it off from the chase of all inferior ends, and inadequate objects, setting it upon a vehement pursuit of, and causing it to spend all its powers not less vigorously, but far more rationally and satisfactorily upon, that object worthy of our love, the infinitely amiable and self-sufficient God. When the soul hath once met with this glorious object, is once mastered with this Supreme Good, is, by divine grace, enlarged, it cannot, with any ease, stretch itself upon the creature any more; that is too scant and insufficient for it.

Certainly the soul that understands its own origin, nature, and capacity, and once comes to view itself in God, will see itself too large to be bounded by the narrow confines of self, or any creature, and too free to be bound down and chained to any earthly object whatever. The world indeed may, yea, and will labour to take o^’ the soul; “ What is thy beloved more than another beloved,”“ that thou art so fond of him? “ Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?” Be content, here is hay and provender; Stay with me this night; let us dally and make merry together a little longer. But these Syren songs are sung to a deaf ear; they cannot inchant the wise and devout soul that hath her senses rightly awakened, and exercised to discern between good and evil: O no, “ I am sick of love,’’ and sick of every thing that keeps me from my Beloved; and therefore, however you may go about to defile me through fraud or force, through surprise or violence, yet I will not prostitute myself to you. The gracious soul hath now discovered the most beautiful, perfect, and lovely object, even Him whose name is love itself; which glorious vision hath so blasted and withered the choicest flowers in nature’s garden, that they have now no more form or comeliness, beauty or fragrancy, so as to deserve to be desired; she hath tasted the pure and perfect sweetness of the fountain, which has so imbittered all cistern-waters, that she finds no more thirstings in herself after them; which is that which our Saviour promiseth here, “shall never thirst.” A pious soul cannot possibly be put off with anything short of God; give him his God, or he dies; give him ever so much fair usage in the world, ever so much of earthly accommodations, they are not accommodated to his wants and thirst, if they have not that God in them out of whom all worldly pleasures are even irksome and unpleasant, and all fleshly ease is tedious and painful: creature-employments are but a wearisome drudgery to a soul that is. acquainted with the work of angels; and creature-enjoyments, in themselves considered, are very insignificant, if not burdensome to a mind that is feelingly possessed of the chief good. But here it

will be seasonable to take into consideration a grand inquiry, namely. Whether a good man may not be said in some sense to desire the creature, and how far such a person may be said to thirst after it. This I shall speak to as briefly, and yet as clearly as I can, in these four following particulars: —

1. “All pious souls are not equally mortified to worldly loves, nor equally zealous and importunate lovers of God.’ This is so evident, that I need not insist upon it. Abraham seems to have been as much higher and nobler in spirit than his brother Lot, as Lot was more excellent than one of the ordinary sons of Adam, I had almost said, than one of the Sodomites amongst whom he dwelt. The one leaves all the pleasant and plentiful accommodations of his native country, at the very first call out, not knowing whither he went, only relying upon the gracious guidance of him whom he followed; he seems to reckon all soils alike for his sojourning, and the whole habitable world as his own city and home, as appears by his readiness to break up house, and quit his present habitation, rather than interfere with the conveniences of his nephew, Genesis 13:9 - The other preferred a fruitful soil before a faithful society, and so in some sense his body before his soul; and yet, as if it had not been enough to make so unadvised a choice, he rests in it too; yea, though he was so severely reproved by the captivity that befel him there, whereby he was not so much called, as indeed carried away thence, yet this will not loosen him from his earthly conveniences, but he returns to Sodom, and from thence he will not part till he be fired out, nay, and then also it is with much lingering and lothness, Genesis 19:16. It is evident I say, both from this and many other instances which I purposely omit, that it is so, that all pious souls are not equally careless of these earthly things, nor carried out with equal ardour and intemperance, as I may call it, towards the supreme and most glorious object; of which I can assign no better reason than this, because they are not all equally pious. For,

“ So far as grace prevails, and religion in the power of it actuateth the soul in which it is planted, so far earthly loves decay and wither.” For these two cannot stand together, the love of the world is inconsistent with the love of God; “ If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.’’ So far as any soul is sanctified, so far is it mortified also to all creature-enjoyments, to all things that are only fuel for the animal life, honour, ease victory, plenty, liberty, relations, recreations, all the entertainments and delights in this lower life, yea, and this very life itself. Earthly and heavenly loves arc to each other as the two scales of a pair of balances, save that they are never found equally poizing, as the one rises the other falls; just so much advantage as this gets, that loses. The more the sensual and self-central life thrives and prospers, and the creature is exalted, the more religion and the divine life faint and flag in the soul: and as certainly, on the other hand, the more divine grace prevails, and the divine life flourisheth in the soul, the more all earthly objects wither away and lose their beauty, and the soul cooleth and languisheth as to its love and desire of them. So far as a regenerate soul is unregenerate, so far will she be bustling after other lovers: which regeneration will not, I conceive, be thoroughly perfected, and therefore these passions, not utterly extinguished, till this mortal put on immortality; or, as the Apostle speaks elsewhere, till “ mortality be swallowed up of life.”“

3. For the preventing of rash and uncharitable judging, I do affirm, that “ divine and holy souls are often mistaken by them that behold their ordinary converse and actions in the body.” They are thought sometimes to take pleasure in the creature, and to gratify the flesh, when indeed it is no such matter; but they take pleasure in the image of God, or the evidence of his fatherly love, which

they contemplate therein, and do perhaps, most of all, serve a spiritual end, and an eternal design in those very actions which others may think are calculated for the gratification of the animal life, and the service of the flesh. Let not the purblind world, nor the self-befriending hypocrite, be judge, and it will appear that the truly pious soul counts nothing savoury to itself, but what represents, teaches, exhibits something of God, nothing pleasant but what hath a tendency to him: such a man doth not feel himself in his highest raptures, doth not value himself on his noblest accomplishments, doth not seek himself in his most excellent performances; be not mistaken, he doth not so much thirst after long life, riches, friends, liberties, as indeed after God in them all; these all signify nothing to him, if they bring him not nearer to his God, and conduce to his real and spiritual happiness. Yea, possibly, in his most suspected actions, and those that seem most alien from religion, and most designed to please the flesh, he may be highly spiritual and pure: so was our blessed Saviour we know, even in his conversing with scandalous sinners, eating and drinking with Publicans and notorious offenders, however he was traduced by a proud and hypocritical generation; and so I doubt not is many a good Christian, according to his measure, pure as Christ was pure. When a painted hypocrite, who can guess at the temper of others no other way but by what he finds in himself, and by what he should be and do, if he were under the same circumstances, comes to be judge of the actions or disposition of one who is transformed into the image of the divine freedom and benignity, you may easily imagine what a perverse sentence he will pass. It needs not seem very Strange, methinks, in spiritual things, any more than it is in corporeal things, that the most sound and healthful constitutions should, upon a lawful call, adventure themselves further than the crazy, and sickly, and familiarly converse with and handle, yea, and make good work with those briers and thorns, which would prove a snare, or a wound, or a pricking temptation to others. If it were possible for any man to arrive at the purity and perfection of his Saviour, and his firm and immoveable radication in true goodness, he would find himself so wholly dead to sin, and all temptations and motions thereunto, that he would be able to walk upon the most boisterous waves, without fear of being swallowed up in them, and to take up in his hands the most venemous serpent, not dreading the sting of it.

However, the apprehensions and actions of more perfect and refined souls are not rashly to be judged; for they may easily be mistaken, either by the unhallowed hypocrite, or the more imperfect and impotent saint.

4. To answer yet more fully, I do affirm, that “ no truly religious soul in the world doth so thirst after the creature, as to place its main happiness in it, or to seek satisfaction from it.” However all holy souls may not be alike weaned from the world, nor equally loving of God, however the affections and actions of some may really be, and of others may seem to be, too gross and fleshly, yet no one of all these, in whom this new and divine life is indeed found, doth erect a self-supremacy in his own soul, nor take his full and complete rest and happiness to consist in any creature-communion whatsoever.

Surely this, of not thirsting, is so far a consequence of true religion, as that no religious soul in the world can be content to exchange the presence of God, and acquaintance with him, for any thing, for all things besides; or, if you will, plainly thus, no such person could be content, no, not for all the world, the glory of heaven not excepted, if it may be supposed, to be wicked and ungodly: so that by thirsting here must not be meant some weak wishings, and fainter propensions of the soul towards created objects; for certainly there is no soul found in a body of earth, in which these are

not found, no, nor yet some more lively and stronger strugglings after them, (how strong they may be in a good Christian, and yet predominated over by grace, we cannot punctually determine;) but, by thirsting here, must be meant the most quick and powerful breathings, the highest and strongest ardencies, the predominant and victorious motions and desires of the soul, which do, as it were, fold up the whole soul, and lead all its powers and faculties with it into a grateful captivity. Thus shall he thirst no more, who hath once drunk of these waters which flow forth from the presence of the Lord of life, and which the blessed Redeemer of the world is here said to give.

But, which is the latter branch of this particular, this inspired soul which we have been describing, thirsteth after his happiness in God alone, that is, in the enjoyment of him. We have already seen that grace does not destroy the natural and essential longings of the soul after a satisfactory good, but rather enhances them, and that the pious soul is most thirsty of all, but not with a creature-thirst, as is before proved; it remains then, that his thirsting after rest and happiness is terminated upon God alone. And so indeed it appears in the instances of holy men recorded in holy writ, which I have under the last head spoken something to. But to those passages and professions which I quoted out of Psalm xh1:1, 2, &c. you may add such as Psalms 4:6, which is the voice of every pious soul; " Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us:"

Psalms 39:6-7, " Surely every man walketh in a vain show; surely they are disquieted in vain; he heapeth up riches, &c. And now. Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee;" where you have the different seekings and centrings of the ungodly, and of the godly soul, elegantly described. Lastly, You may, in Psalm I23:25, again view the term or end of the pious man's ambition; " Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee!" Which translation of the words doth in a lively manner set out the good man's end, and aim, and object, and happiness, and indeed his all: or, if we translate, perhaps more fitly, with Mollerus, yet they afford us the same doctrine, " Who will give me to be in heaven and with thee? on earth I desire nothing." And thus have we despatched the fifth proposition, namely, that the pious soul thirsteth no more after happiness in any creature, or rest in any worldly thing; and come to the sixth and last particular designed for the explication of this not thirsting of the religious soul, which is this: — In the enjoyment of God, this soul is at rest, is fully satisfied. I do not mean so satisfied as not to thirst after any more of him, as I have often hinted; but so satisfied, as to be perfectly matched with an object transcendently adequate to all its faculties, and their respective capacities; and so satisfied as to have peace, and joy, and triumph in him. To these two I will speak distinctly, and so pass on.

Now, for the better understanding of the first of these it should be noticed, that the reasonable soul and the faculties of it are of a vast, large, and noble capacity. It is universally granted by all that are not Sadducees, that the capacity of angels is very great and noble; and that the condition of the human soul is not much inferior to it, may, I think, be gathered from the Psalmist's words, " Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels:" which words, although the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews applies them to Christ, Hebrews 2:9, and indeed they have a marvellous aptness to him, according to the Dutch translation, which runs thus, " We see Jesus crowned with glory and honour, who was become a little less than the angels, by reason of the sufferings of death; that he should, by the grace of God," Sec. Yet I see nothing hindering but that they may be well applied to the excellent condition of man by creation; especially considering that many other passages of the Old Testament have a double aspect, one more ordinary and obvious, which was most clearly understood by the Prophet that wrote them; the other more abstruse and mysterious, principally

intended by the Spirit that inspired him, and only to be understood by the revelation of the same Spirit: such are those passages, I conceive, which are found in Isaiah 7:14. Hosea 11:1, interpreted by the Evangelist, Matthew 1:23, and Matthew 2:15; as also Jeremiah 31:15, with many more. But however it goes with that text, and whether or not the souls of men be so near of kindred to the angels, as to their own comprehensions; yet, that they are capable of a most noble and excellent happiness, and much allied to God himself, doth appear from such texts of scripture as doth require them to be " holy as God is holy C to be " perfect as their heavenly Father is perfect."*' Neither need it seem to any incredible, that the rational soul should be so capacious; for we are no more to judge of the angelical temper, and noble actings of the separated soul, by what we see it to be and do in this body of flesh, than one can judge of the prowess and puissance of a renowned warrior at the head of an army, by what we discern in him when he lies bound in chains, or of the ^owqr and splendour of the sun, by what we discern of it when it is eclipsed, or miserably beclouded; or, if you will, no more than we can judge of a man by the imperfections of his childhood: for so the Apostle Paul seems to state the case, 1 Corinthians 13:10-11, plainly implying, that the present and future condition of the soul is comparable to the minority and adult state of a man; as if he had said, "the soul, in its future and separate state, will act as much nobler a part than what it doth now, as the soul of the wisest man in the world acteth more nobly than what it did when he was a child:" yea, and what is still more to our present purpose, he seems clearly to intimate in the twelfth verse, that this improvement shall happen not so much by the more evident propounding of the object, as by the more ample illumination and corroboration of the faculties. In the next place it will be easily inferred, that all created good is too scant and insufficient for this capacious spirit of man; too short a bed to stretch itself upon: nay, it cannot contract itself so as to be accommodated to any worldly good, without pain and anguish. From both which it will be naturally and necessarily concluded, that God alone is that adequate object which can match the soul of man, and satisfy it, as being infinitely superior and transcendent to it. The enjoyment of God is that ultimate end, and perfect good that is only able to fix the spirit of man; which otherwise, not meeting with its chief good, would be tossed to and fro, and labour under perpetual disquietness, and restless fluctuations. God is that almighty goodness and sweetness, who alone is able to draw out all the appetites of the soul into himself, satisfy all its cravings, charm all its restless motions, and cause all its faculties, in the purest and most complacential manner, to conspire together to give up themselves wholly and entirely to himself,

Secondly, From this conjunction with omnipotent goodness, ariseth pure peace, yea, joy and triumph, to the religious soul. For the clearer understanding of this I should premise, what some have wisely observed, that there is a natural congruity between God and the soul, she being a spiritual substance, and he being a spiritual good, only suitable to her. This seems to be evident by experience; for we see how difficult, I had almost said, impossible it is, utterly to eradicate and extinguish all sense of virtue and goodness out of the soul of man; to which purpose I think our divines generally speak, when they allow of some holy relics, something of the image of God remaining in the most degenerate souls, however all men have reduced the same to a very poor and inconsiderable spark, and many have raked that very spark under ashes too, and imprisoned that remainder of truth in unrighteousness, living according to those unnatural and foreign principles and conceptions that they have unhappily drunk in. Hence it is, I suppose, that sin and wickedness are so often styled the defilement of the soul. Now, we know, that whatsoever defileth, is adventitious and improper; and hence it is, that sin many times stings and wounds the

consciences of those that take most pleasure in it, because being so perfectly contrary to this noble and inbred sense of the soul. Allowing, then, this natural sympathy that the soul of man hath with its Creator, it will be easy to give a philosophical account of that peace, joy, and triumph, of which the soul must needs be possessed, or rather indeed transported with, that finds and feels itself in conjunction with its centre, and in the dearest embraces of its Creator. It needs not seem strange, that the soul should mightily congratulate itself in its arrival at its own haven; nay, it were strange if it should not dissolve into secret joy and pleasure in the hearty entertainments of so blessed and proper a guest as God is to it; nay, indeed it were unreasonable to imagine, that the conjunction of such noble and discerning faculties with so perfect and proper an object, should not beget the truest and sincerest delight and pleasure imaginable. The delights of an earthly and sensual mind are filthy and dreggy, in comparison of those pleasures of the refined and puriiied soul, which must needs live most gracefully, triumphantly, and deliciously, when it converseth with God most intimately. Certainly if there be any innocent and well-natured self-feeling, or self-pleasing, in the world, this is it; though indeed to speak truly, it deserves a better name.

It cannot be but that a pious soul, being in its right senses, should taste a sweetness in these pure and divine accomplishments wrought in it by the eternal spirit of righteousness; which self-pleasing is no more blameable, than that natural pleasure which every creature finds in the enjoyment of that which is most aptly accommodated to its necessities, and most perfective of its happiness; which pleasure, I say, ariseth in the soul from its sensible union with God in the spirit, and enjoyment of him: by which enjoyment of God, you will easily perceive that I do not mean the bare pardon of sin, or an abstract justification; for this is not the attainment that is perfective of the soul, neither could it alone, if we could suppose it alone, fill up the capacities of the soul, or make it happy, however the rapturous joys of the unprincipled hypocrite spring principally from the opinion and false apprehension of this; which indeed I take to be a notable, though not infallible, sign of a mercenary, low-spirited, and fleshly-minded Christian: but, by it, I mean the soul's being really regenerated into the image of God, consisting in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, and her implantation into the root Christ Jesus, by which she partakes of his divine life, power, and Spirit.

\ And yet, besides this, I conceive there is a more theological account to be given of these joys and pleasures which the renewed soul doth so plentifully reap upon her return to God, from whom she had SO long straggled by sin and wickedness. For the " God of hope filleth the pious soul with all peace and joy in believing.'' Christ doth on purpose speak words to the hearts of his disciples, that " their joy may be full.' But whether the most benign and gracious Father of spirits doth immediately from himself inspire the holy soul with divine joys and pleasures, kindled, as I may say, with nothing but his own breath; or whether he bring them to his holy mountain, and into his house of prayer, and by that, or any other like means, make them joyful, and of glad heart, as in the day of a solemn festival, as he hath promised to do, Isaiah 16:7, and Isaiah 25:6, however it be, I say, sure it is that he frequently puts a gladness into their hearts beyond that of the harvest or the vintage, and makes them to rejoice with "joy unspeakable and full of glory.'"

Having now unfolded the meaning of the gracious gouFs not thirsting any more, I should pass to the last thing contained in the text; but finding myself oppressed in my spirit by the consideration of this necessary consequence of true religion, when I compare the temper of Christians with it, I must crave leave to stay a little and breathe. And what shall I breathe but a sad and bitter complaint over that low, earthly, selfish, greedy spirit which actuateth the world at this day, yea,

and the generality of professors of that sacred religion which we call Christianity. Alas! what a company of thieves and murderers, I mean, base and sensual loves and lusts, lodge in those very souls who would be taken for temples consecrated to the name, and honour, and inhabitation of the eternal God, the Spirit of truth and holiness. O what pity is it that the precious souls of men, yea, and of Christians, the best of men, that are all capable of so glorious liberty, so high and honourable a happiness, should be bound down under such vile and sordid lusts, feeding upon dust and gravel, to whom the hidden manna is freely offered, and God himself is ready to become a banquet! And O what a shame is it for those who profess themselves to be children of God, disciples of the most holy Jesus, and heirs of his pure and undefiled kingdom of heaven; for these, I say, willingly and greedily to roll themselves in filthy and brutish sensualities, to set up that on high in their souls, which was made to be under their bodies, and so to love and live as if they studied to have no affinity at all, but would be as unlike as they could, to that God, and Redeemer, and unfit for that inheritance! How often shall it be protested to the Christian world, by men of the greatest devotion and seriousness, that it is utterly mad, and perfectly vain, to dream of entering into the kingdom of heaven hereafter, except the kingdom of heaven enter into our souls during their union with these bodies? How long shall the Son of God, who came into the world on purpose to be the most glorious example of true and divine purity, exact and perfect self-denial and mortification, how long shall he lie by in his word as an antiquated pattern only cut out for the apostolical ages of the world, and only suited to some few morose and melancholy men? Is it not a monstrous spectacle, and to be hissed out of the world with the greatest indignation, a covetous, voluptuous, ambitious, sensual saint? With what face can we pretend to true religion, or a feeling acquaintance with God, and the things of his personal service and kingdom, whilst the continual bleatings and lowings of our souls after created good do bewray us so manifestly, and proclaim before all the world that the beast, the brutish life, is still powerful in us? “If ye seek me,’*’ saith Christ to his followers, as well as he did once to his persecutors, “then let these go;” let go the hold of these earthly objects, let vanish these worldly joys and toys; “ withhold your throat from thirst, and your feet from being unshod,*” and come follow me only, and ye shall have treasure in heaven; for he that will not deny all for me, is not worthy of me. Ah sad and dreadful fall, that hath so miserably cramped this royal offspring, and made the king’s son to be a lame Mephibosheth! Ah doleful apostacy! How are the sons of the morning become children of darkness, and the heirs of heaven vassals and drudges to earth! How is the King’s daughter unequally yoked with a churlish Nabal, that continually checketh her more divine and generous motions! “How unhappily art thou matched, my soul! ’’ And yet, alas! I see it is too properly a marriage; for thou hast clean forgotten “thine own people, and thy Father’s house.”

Take up, oh take up a lamentation, thou virgin daughter of the God of Zion: formerly indeed a vjrgin, but now, alas! no longer a virgin, but miserSiiy married to an unworthy mate, that can never be able to match thy faculties, nor maintain thee according to the grandeur of thy birth, or the necessary pomp of thy expenses, and way of living; nay, thou art become not only a miserable wife, but, in so being, thou art also a wicked adulteress, prostituting thyself to the very vilest of thy lawful husband’s servants; if thou be not incestuous, it is no thank to thee, there being nothing in this world so near of kin to thee, as to make way for incest.

“ Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return; put away thine adulteries from between thy breasts, and so shall the King yet again greatly desire thy beauty;” for so he hath promised, Jeremiah 3:21,

that when there shall be a voice heard upon the high places, weeping, and supplications of the children of Israel, because they have perverted their way, and forgotten the Lord their God, and the backsliding children shall return, and then he “ will heal their backslidings.’“

03.08. CHAP. VIII. The term or end of religion, eternal life

CHAP. VIII.

TAe term or end of religion, eternal life, considered in a double notion — First, As it signifies the essential happiness of the soul — Second, As it takes in many glorious appendixes — The noble and genuine breathings of the pious soul after, and springing up into, the former — The argument drarvn from the example of Christ — Moses and Paul moderated — It ends in a serious exhortation made to Christians, to live and love more spiritually, more suitably to the nature of souls, redeemed souls, resulting from the whole discourse,

I AM now come to the last thing whereby this most noble principle is described, namely, the term or end of it; and that is said here, in the text, to be “everlasting life.” This is the highest pitch of perfection, unto which the new creature is continually growing up; which the Apostle Paul hath expressed with as much grand eloquence, as words are able to magnify it, calling it, “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:” this is that unbounded ocean, which this living fountain, by so many incessant issues, and unwearied streamings, perpetually endeavours to empty itself into, or rather to embosom itself in. Now, what this is, we must confess with the Apostle John, and indeed we have more reason to make such a confession than he had, that it doth not yet appear, namely, neither fully nor distinctly: but yet, since I am thus cast upon the contemplation of it, it will be a suitable and agreeable matter to enquire into it; and though it surpass the power and skill of all created comprehensions to take the just dimensions, and faithfully give in the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of it; yet we may attempt to walk about this heavenly Jerusalem, as the Psalmist speaks of the earthly, “and tell the towers thereof, mark her walls, consider her palaces,*” that we may tell it to the generation following.

1. Then, we will consider “eternal life” in the most proper notion of it, as it implies the essential happiness of the soul; and so it is no other than the soul’s pure, perfect, and established state. By a state, I do designedly undervalue that grosser notion of a place, as that which scarcely deserves to enter into the description of such a glory, or, at best, will obtain but a very low room there: by purity, I do purposely explode that carnal ease, rest, immunity, affluence of sensual delights, accommodated only to the animal life — which last Mahometans, and the former too many professed Christians, and the Jews almost, generally dream of, and judge heaven to be. By perfection, I distinguish it from the best state which the best men upon earth can possibly be in. So then I take eternal life in the primary and most proper notion of it to be the full, perfect, and everlasting enjoyment of God, communion with him, and a most blissful conformity of all the powers and faculties of the soul to that eternal goodness, truth, and love, as far as it is or may become capable of the communications of the Divinity. This life was, at the highest rate imaginable, purchased by our ever blessed Lord and Saviour in the days of his flesh, and here in the text promised to every believing soul. Now, inasmuch as we are ignorant both of the present capacity of our own faculties, how large they are, and much more ignorant, how much more large and ample they may be made, on purpose to receive the more rich and plentiful communications

of the divine life and image, therefore can we not comprehend either the transcendent life, happiness, and glory, or that degree of sanctity and blessedness which the believing soul may be advanced to in another world. The Popish schoolmen do nicely dispute about the sight of God, and the love of God, to wit, in whether of these the formal blessedness of the soul consisteth, Ul separating those which God hath so firmly joined together, as if it were possible that either a blind love, or a jejune and unafFectionate speculation, could render a soul entirely happy, but it is much safer to say, that the happiness and eternal life of the soul standeth in the possession or fruition of God; and this doth necessarily import the proper perfection of every faculty. Nothing can be the formal happiness of a spirit that is either inferior or extrinsical to it; it must be something divine, and that wrought into the very nature and temper of it. I hesitate not to affirm, that if the soul of man could possibly be advanced, so as to receive adoration or divine power, yet if it were in the mean time void of divine dispositions, and a God-like nature; it would be 'far from being glorified, and made happy as to its capacity. What health is to the body, that is holiness to the soul; which haply the Apostle alludes to when he speaks of the " spirit of a sound mind,'"'2 Timothy 1:7.

2. There is another notion of " eternal life" which some contend for, by which they mean not barely the essential happiness of the soul, but that with the addition of many suitable and glorious circumstances — the essential happiness of the soul, a3 it is attended with the appendixes of a glorified body, the beholding of Christ, the amicable society of angels, freedom from temptations, the knowledge of the secrets of nature and providence, and such like, to which may be also added, though of a lower degree, open absolution, or a visible deliverance of the saints out of the overthrow of the wicked, at the conflagration of the world, power over devils, eminence of place, enjoyment of friends, and such like.

Now, let us briefly consider what tendencies there are in the religious soul towards each of these. And here I must crave leave to speak jointly both of the end, and of the motion thereunto; though it may be thought that the former only falls fairly under our present consideration.

(1.) Then, I suppose, that "eternal life,'" in the first sense of it, is intended here, to wit, the essential happiness of the soul, or its perfect and everlasting enjoyment of God. For the description is here made of religion itself in the abstract, or that principle of divine life, which Christ Jesus implanted in the soul; and being so considered, it is hard to conceive how that should spring up into any of these appendant circumstances, or into anything but the completion and perfection of itself; though the religious soul, taken in connection with them, possibly may. And, indeed, though we should allow, which we shall take into consideration under the next head, that many of those high scriptural phrases, which are brought to describe the future condition of believing souls, do principally respect the appendixes of its essential happiness, (as a kingdom, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, an inheritance reserved, a place prepared, and the like,) yet it seems very unnatural to interpret this phrase, "life," and "eternal hfe," any otherwise than of that which I call the essential happiness of the soul: but if we interpret it of this, the sense is very fair and easy. Thus, this principle of divine life is continually endeavouring to grow up to its just altitude, to advance itself to a triumphant state, even as all other principles of life do naturally tend towards a final accomplishment, and ultimate perfection. Carnal self, or the animal life, may be indeed said to be a well of water too, poisonous water; but that springs up into a sensual life, popular applause, self-accommodations, or, if you will, in the Apostle's phrase, into the fulfilment of the lusts of the flesh. This I speak only by way of illustrative opposition; for, to speak more

properly, this corrupt principle hath in it the central force of death and hell, and is always tumbling downward; whereas this divine principle is always climbing upward: but they do both agree in this, that they both seek their own gratifications, and study to acquire their respective perfections. The everlasting and most glorious enjoyment of God is certainly most perfective of the soul; and therefore is most properly and most deservingly said to be its " eternal life," according to that of our Saviour, John 17:3. Now, this "eternal life"" is not a thing specifically different from religion, or the image of God, or the divine life, but indeed the greatest height, and the greatest possible perfection of itself: even as the sun at noon-day is not a light really distinct from what it was in the first dawnings of the morning, but a different degree, and far more glorious state; which seems to be the very similitude whereby the Spirit of God illustrateth the matter in hand, Proverbs 4:18, or, as a man of perfect age is not a distinct species from a child, but much more complete and excellent in that species; to which the Apostle refers, treating of this subject, 1 Corinthians 13:11. Man hath not two distinct kinds of happiness in the two distinct worlds, that he is made to live in; but one and the same thing is his blessedness in both, which, as I said before, must needs be the enjoyment of God. The translation made of the text is very suitable to this notion, for this divine principle is said to spring up, not unto, but into, everlasting life, as if he should say, it springs up till it be swallowed up into the perfect knowledge, love, and enjoyment of God. Even as youth is swallowed up in manhood, so this grace is swallowed up in glory, and not so much abolished, as indeed perfected. By this phrase, the genius of true religion, and the excellent temper of the truly religious soul, is most livelily described. This is the soul, that, being in some measure delivered from its unnatural bondage, and freed from its unhappy confinement, now spreads itself in God, lifts up itself to him, stretches itself upon him, is not content with a heaven merely to come, but brings down a heaven into itself, by carrying up itself unto, and after, the God of heaven. God is become great, only great in the eye of such a Christian; he is indeed become all things to him. Whilst this principle is rightly and actually predominant in him, he knows no interest but to thrive and grow great in God; no will, but to serve the will, and comply with the mind of God; no end, but to be united to God; no business, but to display and reflect the glory and perfections of God upon the earth. The main business of his life, I say, is to serve him; the main ambition of his soul, to be like to him; and his m«im happiness in this world, to be united to him; and in the world to come, to be swallowed up in him: in this world, to know, and love, and rest, and delight in, and enjoy God more than all things, and in the world to come, to enjoy him more so. The gladsome growings up of the tender flowers to the friendly sun, being once powerfully attracted with his precious and benign influences, and the cheerful haste with which the sympathetic needle so amorously pursues the enchanting loadstone, being once rightly touched and affected with it, do a little, though but a little, resemble and represent the motions of a spirit impregnated with this divine principle, and strongly impressed with the image and stamp of God: he puts in his hand by the hole of the door, and the bowels of the espoused soul are presently moved, yea, melted for him. Song of Solomon 5:4. He casts the skirt of his garment, the mantle of his love, and presently the converted soul leaves all to follow him. Faith, hope, and love, are knitting and springing graces, and this eternal life is the end and perfection of them all; not that any one of them, I conceive, shall be utterly abolished, as some conclude concerning the two former, though without good ground, I think, from the Apostle's words, 1 Corinthians 13:13. But faith will be ripened into the most firm and undisturbed confidence, affiance, and acquiescence in God; hope will be advanced into a more cheerful, powerful, and confident expectation, having for its object the perpetuation of the souFs felicity; and love will

become much more loving, and more clearly distinguishable from the imperfect longings and languishings of this present state, when it shall flower up into pure delights and complacencies, resting and glorying in the arms of its adequate, satisfactory, and eternal object. The faith of the hypocrite, and indeed his hope too, is still springing up into self-preservation, deliverance, liberty, a splendid and pompous state of the church, (that is, of his own party) or some such thing as will gratify the animal life, and there it terminates; but the faith of the sincere and religious soul springs up into eternal life; it knows no term but " the salvation of the soul," 1 Peter 1:9, as his hope knows no accomplishment but a state of God-like purity and perfection, 1 John 3:3. The mere natural man lives within himself, within a circle of his own, and cannot get out; whether he eat, or drink, or pray, or be zealous for the popular pulling down of the political Antichrist, he is still in his own circle, he is still sacrificing in all this to that great helluo the animal life, as I have already made evident: but the pious soul is disinterested of self, and so is still contriving the advancement of a nobler life within itself, and moving towards God, as his supreme and all-sufficient good. Give him all that the whole world can afford, he cannot fix, nor settle, nor centre here: God hath put into him a holy restless appetite after a higher good, which he would rather be, than what he is. I know indeed that the soul that is thus divinely free may be hindered in its flight; but it will deliver itself from the clog at length.

You may choke and dam up the streamings of this fountain, perhaps, but they will burst out again; you may cast ashes upon this pure fire for a time, but it will flame out again: such a damp cannot arise, no, not from hell itself, as to extinguish it. The Philistines, I remember, stopped the wells of water which Abraham had digged in Gerar, " and filled them with earth,'' Genesis 26:15. But this well of water, which God diggeth in the holy and humble soul, cannot be stopped, neither by the devil, that king of Gerar, that is, of wanderings, Job 1:7, nor by any of his servants, but it will find vent upward: though you endpavour to fill it with, earth, which indeed is the likeliest to choke it, though you cast the dust and gravel of earthly pleasures, profits, or preferments into it, yet it is a well of living water, and will work its passage out. The hungerings of the pious soul are not, cannot be satisfied, till it come to feed upon the hidden manna, nor its thirstings quenched, till it come to be swallowed up in the unbounded ocean of life and love. But I find I cannot divide " springing up" from "eternal life," nor pursue the term of religion, but I must also take in the notion of the religious soul, whereby he pursues it, which I have already handled in my discourse; therefore I will quit this bead, and take a short view of the second.

(2.) The secondary and more improper notion of " eternal life," I mentioned, was that which takes in the circumstances or appendixes of it. And here we must needs allow, that the Holy Scriptures do openly avouch some of these circumstances, as those especially of the first class that I named, of some of which it seems to make great account; and possibly the Scripture may somewhere or other imply all the rest, even those of the inferior rank. Again, we will allow, that many of those phrases which the Scripture uses to describe the blessed state of the other world, do principally respect these appendixes of the souFs essential happiness; such perhaps are the "crown of righteousness*" mentioned by the Apostle Paul. " The prize of the high calling," mentioned by the same Apostle. " The house which is from heaven." "A kingdom, an incorruptible inheritance, a place prepared, mansions, a reward, praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ," 1 Peter 1:7. And that "glory, honour, and peace," spoken of by the Apostle, Romans 2:10. These are all Scripture descriptions of the other state, and I suppose we may grant them to have a

peculiar reference to this secondary essential happiness of the soul: though I know not any necessity there is to be so liberal in our concessions; for it may be fairly said concerning all, or most of them, that the design of these phrases is not so much to establish this less proper notion, or to point out the circumstances of the glorified state, as to insinuate iiow much more ample and glorious the state shall be than this in which we now are; as a prize is looked upon as somewhat more excellent than what is done or expended to acquire it, (it must needs be so esteemed by runners or wrestlers); a kingdom is a more glorious state than that of subjection, and an inheritance is incomparably more ample than the pension that is allowed the heir in his minority. But these things being conceded, it doth not appear how far, or under what notion, the religious soul, as such, doth spring up into these additional glories, and thirst after them. I know there are many that speak very highly of these appendixes, and allow the pious soul a very high and irrespective valuation of them; and this they principally infer from the example of Christ himself, as also of Moses and Paul. Give me leave, therefore, to suggest something, not to enervate, but to moderate the argument drawn from these persons; and after that, I shall briefly lay down, what I conceive to be most scriptural and rational in this matter.

1. As for the example of Christ, it seems to make not much for them in this matter. For though the text is very plain, that “for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross,”’ and this joy seems plainly to be his session “at the right hand of God;’’ yet, if by this joy we understand a moie full and glorious possession of God, and a more excellent exaltation of his human nature, to a more free fruition of the divine, then it cannot be applied to anything but the springing up of the gracious soul into its essential happiness; which I have already contended for, as being the proper genius of such a soul: or if by this joy and throne we understand the power that Christ foresaw he should be vested with, of leading captivity captive, trampling under feet the powers of hell and darkness, and procuring gifts for men, which seems to me to be most likely, then it belongs not at all to men, neither can this example be exhibited for imitation. As for the instance of Moses, who is said to have had “ respect to the recompense of the reward.”

It is not yet granted, that that “recompense of reward” relates principally to these appendants of the souPs essential happiness, neither can it, I suppose, be evinced: but, though I should also allow that, which I incline to do, yet all that can be inferred from it is but a respect that Moses had, as our translation well renders it, or some account which he in his sufferings made of this recompense; which was a very warrantable contemplation. The Apostle Paul, indeed, doth openly profess that he looked for, and desired the coming of Christ from heaven, upon the account of that glorious body which he would then clothe him with, and so he might, and yet not desire it principally and primarily, but secondarily, and with reference. And this leads me to the general answer that I was preparing to give, which is this: — some of these circumstances which I have named, especially that of the glorified body, may be reduced to the essential happiness of the soul, or included in it, so that the soul could not otherwise be perfectly happy. It is the opinion of all divines, I think, that a Christian is not completely happy, till he consist of a soul and body both glorified. And, indeed, considering the dear affection, and essential aptitude, that God hath planted in the human soul for a body, we cannot well conceive how she should be perfectly happy without one: and this earthly body is, alas! an unequal yoke-fellow, in which she is half stifled, and rather buried, than conveniently lodged; so that it seems necessary, even to her essential happiness, that she should have some more heavenly and glorious body, wherein she may commodiously

and pleasantly exert her innate powers, and whereby she may express herself in a spiritual and nobler manner, suitable to her own natural dignity and vigour, and to her infinitely amiable, and most beloved object.

Concerning the rest of the circumstances which cannot be thus reduced, I conceive that such of them as are necessary to the essential happiness of the soul, by way of subserviency, may be eyed, and desired, and thirsted after, secondarily, under this notion only, as being subservient to that essential blessedness. I confess, I do not understand under what other notion a religious soul can lift up itself to them; I mean, not so far forth as it is holy and religious, and acts suitably to that divine principle which the Father of spirits, or rather the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, hath implanted in it. And if there be any other circumstance which cannot be reduced to one of these kinds, I suppose it may be reckoned amongst the objects and gratifications of the animal life, and not to make up any part of the godly man's heaven, or that eternal life which religion springs up into: for I easily imagine, that a fleshly fancy may verily be mightily elated with the desire of such a heaven as is suitable to it; and that a mere animal man may be as heartily desirous to be in such a kingdom of God, as he hath shaped out to himself, as he is utterly unwilling that the true kingdom of God, such as the Apostle describes, Romans 14:17, consisting in "righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," should be in him. If our continual cry be after safety, self-preservation, liberty, redemption, and deliverance from those things only that oppress and grieve our fleshly interest, and our thirstings principally terminated in knowledge, though it be of God himself, freedom from condemnation, power over devils, yea, or any visible pomp, glory, or splendour, though it be of ever so ethereal and heavenly a nature, what do we more than others? what is all this more than may naturally spring up from the animal life, and may be ultimately resolved into what is carnal?

Wherefore, as a result from the whole discourse, especially from this last part of it, let me earnestly entreat of all the professors of this holy religion which the blessed Messiah, Christ Jesus, hath so dearly bought for the world, and so clearly revealed in it, not to value themselves by anything which the power of natural self-love may exert or desire, perform or expect, nor by anything below the image of God, and the internal and transforming manifestations of Christ Jesus in them; the perfection of which is eternal life, in the most proper and true notion of it. I know that I have often suggested the same lesson in this short treatise, but I know also, that I can never inculcate it often enough; nay, the eloquence of angels is not sufficient to imprint it upon the hearts of men. Possibly it may startle some hypocritical professors, and carnal gospellers, (God grant it may effectually!) and make the ears of many that hear it to tingle, but yet I will proclaim it, "It is possible for a man to desire not only the things of this world, which St. James speaks of, (James 4:3,) but even heaven itself, to consume it upon his lusts; and he may as truly be making provision for the flesh to fulfil it in the lust thereof, in longing after a kind of self-salvation, as in " eating, and drinking, and rising up to play."

Certainly a true christian spirit, rightly invigorated and actuated by this divine and potent principle, christian religion, cannot look upon heaven as merely future, or as something perfectly distinct from him; but he eyes it as life, eternal life, the perfection of the purest and divinest life communicable to a soul, and is daily thirsting after it, or rather, as it is in the text, "springing up into it." I know that heaven sometimes is called a rest, in opposition to the dissatisfaction of the uncentred and unbelieving soul; but, in opposition to a sluggish, inert, and dormant rest, it is here

said to be life, eternal life. Let us show ourselves to be living Christians, by springing up into the utmost consummation of life: let it appear that Christ Jesus, the Prince of life, who was manifested on purpose “ to take away our sins,” hath not only covered our shame, and, as it were, embalmed our dead souls, to keep them from putrefaction, and strewed them with the flowers of his merits, to take away their noisome smell from the nostrils of his Father, but hath truly advanced, reinstated, and made the souls flourish that sin had so miserably degraded and deflowered. Deliver yourselves, O immortal souls! from all those unsuitable and unseemly cares, studies, and joys; from all those low and particular ends and lusts, which do not only pinch and straiten, but even debase and degrade you. Let it not be said, that the king of Sodom made Abraham rich; that your main delight, happiness, and contentment, is derived from any prosperous, plentiful, peaceable, pompous state, anything that may be called a self-accommodation, either in the world that now is, or that which is to come; but from the righteousness of faith, and your vital union with the Father and the Son; to whom, in the unity of the Spirit, be honour and glory, world without end. Amen. ON COMMUNION WITH GOD, BY SAMUEL SHAW.

1 John 1:3.

’ Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

These words express the way of a Christian”’s living, and that kind of converse whereby a good man is distinguished from all other men. A good man is not differenced from other men by anything without him, any church privileges which are common to hypocrites and sincere Christians; any external visible performances, in which the disciples of the Pharisees may be more abundant and more specious than the disciples of Christ, much less by any corporeal or temporal enjoyment or ornament, strength, beauty, riches, descent, &c. nor by any carnal relation, though it were to Abraham, as the Jews boasted of their father Abraham, but by something internal, substantial, by a relation to God; the character of a good man must be drawn from his correspondence to the chief good, and the happiness of a soul must be judged of by its relation to life, and love, and blessedness itself.

Things external, corporeal, temporal, make some difference amongst men, but it is only nominal and titular in comparison: by these, men are said to be rich or poor, noble or ignoble; but men are really and substantially differenced by the relation that they have to God; by this, they are good or bad, godly or wicked. This is the most certain and proper criterion of a good man, namely. Communion with God: in all other things he may be like other men, but in this he differs from and excels them all. This is a character proper or peculiar to them; for it agrees to every good man, to none but a good man, and always to him, as we shall see hereafter. The ground of my discourse then shall be this short and plain proposition, namely, “ A pious man hath communion with God." In order to the more distinct handling hereof, I must premise a few things briefly.

1 “ That the gracious and loving God made nothing miserable of all that he made.”’ There are no slaves born in this great house of the world.

He made all things out of himself, and he hath no idea of evil in himself, so that it was not possible that he should make anything evil or miserable.

Every thing was good, Gen i. and so in some sense happy. He was free to make the world, but making it he could not make it evil or miserable. Every thing is the product of Almighty love and

goodness.

2. “ The happiness of every creature consists in its acting agreeably to that nature that God gave it, and those ends which he propounded to it, and suitably to those laws which he gave to all for which laws were contrived with the greatest suitableness to those natures, and subserviency to those ends. Every creature is in its khid happy, whilst it acts agreeably to that nature which the wise Creator implanted in it; as the sun runs its race without ceasing, and rejoices so to do, and is, in some sense, happy in so doing. Departing from that nature it ’ becomes miserable, as the earth bringing forth briers and thorns, instead of those good fruits which it was appointed to bring forth, is said to be cursed, Genesis 3:17-18.

3. ’ The happiness of the creature is higher or “ lower, greater or less, according as it comes nearer to God, or is farther off from him,” according as it receives more or less from him, according to what communion it hath with him. The life and happiness of the sun is much lower than that of a man, because it cannot enjoy such high and excellent communications from, or communion with God, as man doth.

4. “ There can be no communion without likeness.’“ The sun shines upon a stone wall, as well as upon man; but a stone wall has no communion with the sun, because it hath no eyes to see the light of it, as man hath; nor can receive the benign influences of its heat, as the herbs do. A log of wood lieth in the water as well as the fish, but it hath no communion with the water, nor receives any advantage by it as the fish doth. God is present, according to his infinite essence, with the devils as with the angels; but they have no likeness in nature to him, and so no communion with him, as these have.

5. “God hath given a more large and excellent capacity to man, than to any other of his creatures upon earth.”“ God hath endued man with reason, and so made him capable of a higher life, and a more excellent communion with his Maker than all the rest. Of all sublunary creatures, the rational soul only is capable to know, love, serve, enjoy, imitate God, and so to have a glorious communion with him. The sun, in all its glory and brightness, is not so excellent a being as any soul of man upon this account. And although man, by his fall, lost his actual communion with God, yet he is a reasonable creature still; he hath not lost his capacity of receiving influences from him, and enjoying communion with him. The world, when it is at the darkest, is yet capable of being enlightened.

6. “ When the nature of man is, by divine grace, healed of its distemperedness, and restored to its former rectitude, to act suitably to the end for which it was made, and to spend itself upon its proper object, then man comes to have right communion with God, and to be happy.”“ All rational souls are capable of holding communion with God, but all do not hold communion with him; but they that express the purity and holiness of the divine life, that know God, and live like him, these are his children. Matthew 5:45, and those only do rightly and really converse with him: when the Spirit of God informs these rational souls, and communicates the strength of a divine life through them, and stamps the lively impressions of divine perfections upon them, rendering our hearts, wills, and ways, conformable to that glorious pattern, that infinite good, then do we enjoy a proper communion with him, and are truly blessed; though we are not completely blessed, till this conformity be perfected according to what those souls are, or may be capable of This is the true and proper notion of man’s communion with God, and relation to him, which we cannot fully

describe, till we more fully enjoy. That soul that truly lives and feeds upon God, does taste more than it can tell; and yet it can tell this, that this is the most high, excellent, noble, glorious life in the whole world. This communion, as also the intimateness and closeness of it, are described variously in the Holy Scriptures, by the similitude of members being in the body; of branches being in the vine; by being formed according to God's image, changed into his image; by God's dwelling in the soul, and the soul in him; by Christ's being formed in the soul; by the soul's having Christ; by Christ's supping with the soul, and the soul with him. Because nothing is more our own, nor more one with us, than that which we eat and drink, being incorporated into us; therefore is this spiritual communion between God and the pious soul, ofttimes in scripture described by our eating and drinking with him. Thus God was pleased to allow his people under the law, when they had offered up a part of their beasts in sacrifice to him, to sit down and feast upon the rest, as a token of that familiarity and oneness that was between him and them. By the like action, our Saviour shadowed out the same mystery, when, in the sacrament of his supper, he appointed them to sit down to eat and drink with him, to intimate their feeding upon him, and most close communion with him: yea, the state of glory, which is the most perfect communion with God, is thus shadowed out too. Matthew 8:11. Revelation 19:9. And, which is worth noting, I think the sacramental eating and drinking hath some reference to that most intimate communion of the saints with God in glory. Our Saviour himself seems to imply as much in that speech of his, Luke 22:30, " That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom:" in which words he seems plainly to allude to the sacramental eating and drinking which he had a little before instituted. Which makes some to believe that that gesture is to be retained in that ordinance, which is most proper and usual to express familiarity and communion; and to take away that gesture, is to destroy one great end of our Saviour, in appointing this supper, which was to represent that familiar communion which is between himself and every believing soul. I will not here examine the validity of their argument, which, possibly, if pressed home, might introduce a rudeness into the worship of God, under pretence of familiarity: but it seems very plain, that the nature of that ordinance doth shadow out the intimate communion between God and a pious soul.

I have already, in part, anticipated myself, and showed you wherein the soul's communion with God consists: but yet, to give you a more distinct knowledge of this great mystery, I shall unfold it in these three following particulars: —

1. "A pious soul hath communion with God in his attributes." When the soul of man is moulded and formed into a resemblance of the divine nature, then hath it a true fellowship with him. Now, this communion with God in his attributes is to be seen two ways.

(1.) "When the soul is, in its measure, according to the capacity of a creature, all that which God is." This is the communion which the angels have with God. Their beholding the face of God, is not to be understood of a mere speculation, or an idle gazing upon Deity; but they see him, by receiving his image upon themselves, and reflecting his glory and brightness; they partake of the goodness, purity, holiness, wisdom, righteousness of God, which makes them such glorious spirits; and the want of this makes the other, whom we call devils, to be what they are. Thus, good men shall have communion with God, they shall see God. Yea, thus they have communion with him in some measure, they do not only see God in the world, as the devils do, or see him in the Word, as many hypocritical and wicked men do, but they see him in themselves, in the frame of their own souls; they find themselves moulded into his image, and a resemblance of him drawn

upon them. This is a beatifical vision of God, true and real, though not full and complete. This is set out in scripture, by being “ holy as God is holy,” “perfect as God is perfect.”“ This our Saviour exhorts us to seek after, “Take my yoke upon you, learn of me; for I am meek and lowly;’“ and the Apostle, “Be ye followers of God, as dear children.” When the nature and perfections of God, his holiness, goodness, righteousness, wisdom, kc. are copied out upon our natures, and the same spirit is in us, which was in Christ Jesus, then have we a true communion with God, which blessed communion, when the soul becomes all that which God is, is by a conformity of nature.

(2.) “ When the soul, in its actions as a creature, doth rightly answer to the attributes of the Creator.” As when the soul doth answer the goodness of God with suitable affections of love and joy, and delight; when the soul doth correspond to the sovereignty and wisdom of God by the acts of self-denial and resignation; and doth converse with the righteousness of God by patience and a holy acquiescence. When the soul doth rightly exert those acts which are proper and suitable to the nature of God, then it may be said to hold communion with him in his attributes; when the actions and motions of the soul do correspond to the divine nature and attributes.

Now, this suitableness of the soul, I mean especially with reference to the incommunicable attributes of God, where there is no place for imitation, though it hold good in the rest also.

2. “A pious soul hath communion with God in his word.”“ To read, profess, or hear his word, is not to hold a communion with God therein: many do so that are strangers to God: a man may read my letters, and yet correspond with my enemy. That son, in the gospel, that heard his father’s command, and answered, “I go, sir,’’ but went not, had no right communion with his paternal authority. But when the soul is ennobled into such a frame as this word doth require, then it holds communion with God in his word; for example, when the soul puts forth those acts of humiliation, holy fear and reverence, godly trembling, which do suit the nature of a divine threatening; when the soul answers the command of God with suitable resolutions, repentings, reformations, and real obedience; when it entertains the promise with suitable acts of holy delight, joy, refreshment, recumbency, and acquiesces in the same, then doth it truly converse with God in his Word.

3. “ A pious soul hath communion with God in his works.” And that is, when the soul doth answer the several providences of God with suitable and pertinent affections and dispositions. The pious soul doth not only eye and observe the hand of God in all things that fall out, but doth comply with those providences, and is moulded into that frame, and put upon those duties, which such providences do call for. Then doth the soul rightly hold communion with God in his works, when it is humbled under humbling providences, is refreshed, strengthened, and grows up under prosperous providences, as they did. Acts 9:31, who having rest given them, were edified, comforted, multiplied, &c. When the soul doth rightly comport with every providence, and the will is moulded into the will of God, then do we hold communion with him in his works. This theme is large, because the works of God are manifold, of creation, redemption, preservation, works towards other men, and towards ourselves, both towards our outward and inward man. A pious soul hath communion with God in all these; in the sense that I named even now, though perhaps not equally in all, yet sincerely and truly. By what hath been said, you understand that right fellowship with God is not a bare communion of names. To have the name of God called upon us, and to be called Christians, or the people of God, or to name the name of God, to profess it, to cry. Lord, Lord, doth not make any one really and truly the better man, doth not make a soul rightly

happy. It is not enough to cry, “Tlie temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord,” with those in Jeremiah 7:4, to make our “ boast in the law,’’ with those in Romans 2:23 to call ourselves “ the children of Abraham,’’ as the Jews did in John the Baptist’s time, Matthew 3:9 - These privileges and professions are extrinsical to the soul, and do nothing to the true ennobling of it. But right fellowship with God is a communion of hearts and natures, of will and affections, of interest and ends; to have one heart and will, the same interest and ends with God, is to be truly godly: a God-like man is the only godly man; a Christ-like nature brought into the soul, doth only denominate a man a true Christian. It is not speaking together, but loving and living together, that brings God and the soul into one: ’’ I live, yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me.” And thus, I suppose, you have a fair account why ths Apostle James, chap. ii. does so much prefer works before *faith, (for indeed faith is nothing worth, save only that faith which joins the soul to the object, and makes the thing believed one’s own,) as alsOy why the Apostle prefers love before a faith of miracles, 1 Corinthians 13:2. Though, indeed, a justifying faith is the most admirable, that faith which unites the soul and God together is more excellent, and, indeed, more wonderful than the faith that removes mountains. When I consider the proper happiness and perfection of a soul, and the nature of this true blissful communion with God, I cannot but wonder how it is possible, that men should take their communion with God to consist in an overly acquaintance with him, profession of him, performances to him. I am confident it is not possible, that men should have any true feeling of happiness in such acquaintance, any more than a man can be really filled with the seeing or craving of meat which he eats not.

Before I apply the doctrine, give me leave to lay down some rules or positions, tending further to explain and clear it.

1. This must be held, which I touched upon before, that “ there can be no communion between God and man^ but by a likeness of nature, a new, a divine principle planted in the soul.” A beast hath no communion with a man, because reason, the ground of such communion, is wanting. Of all the creatures, there was none found that could be a help meet for Adam, that could be taken into the human society, till Eve was made, who was a human person. So, neither can there be any conjunction of the soul with God, but by oneness of spirit, “ He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.”

2. “ There can be no communion with God but by a mediator,” and no mediator but Christ Jesus, who is God-man. “Two cannot walk together,”“nor hold communion, “ except they be agreed; and there can be no agreement made between God and man but by Christ Jesus. Therefore it is said, ** Our communion is with the Father and the Son,” with the Father by the Son: and faith, whereby the soul and God are united, is still said to be “ faith in Christ,” as we find in the scriptures.

3. “ There can be no perfect communion with God in this life.” Our communion with heaven, whilst we are upon earth, is imperfect; our resemblance to God is scant and dark in comparison of what it shall be. We know but in part, love but in part, enjoy but in part; we are but in part holy and happy. There can be no perfect communion with God, till there be a perfect reconciliation of natures as well as persons; and that cannot be whilst there is anything unlike to God in the soul, whilst any impure thing dwells in the soul which cannot truly close with God, nor God with that. The Holy Spirit can never suffer any defiled thing to unite itself with it: “ It is not lawful for any impure thing to mix itself with pure divinity,” saith Socrates the heathen. “What communion hath righteousness

with unrighteousness.'^" saith the Apostle; and so far as a righteous man is in any part unrighteous, so far is he a stranger to God. The unregenerate part of a regenerate man hath no more communion with God than a wicked man, than the devil himself hath; no more than darkness hath with light.

4. " Our communion with God must be distinguished from the sense and feeling of it." Many have run upon sad miscarriages, (and those indeed extremes,) whilst they place communion with God in the sense and feeling of it, in raptures of joy, extacies and transports of soul; which, indeed, if they be real, are not so much it, as the flower of it, something resulting and separable from it. Communion with God cannot be lost in a saint, for then he is no saint; for it is the proper characteristic of a saint to have communion with God; and a saint under desertion, hath communion with God even then as really, though not so feelingly as at any other time, so far as he is sanctified. But the sense of this communion may be very much, if not altogether lost, and oftentimes is lost.

5. "A souFs communion with God cannot be interrupted by any local mutations." It is a spiritual conjunction, and is not violated by any confinement; the walls of a prison cannot separate God and the pious soul; banishment cannot di'ive a soul from God. The blessed angels, those ministering spirits, when they are despatched into the utmost ends of the world upon the service of God, are even then beholding the face of God, and do enjoy as intimate communion with him as ever. The case is the same with all pious souls, whose communion with God does not depend upon any local situation; it is not thousands of miles that can beget a distance between God and the soul. Indeed nothing but sin does it, or can do it. " Your iniquities have separated between you and your God;"' nothing but sin is contrary to this divine fellowship, and BO nothing but that can interrupt this spiritual society. To speak properly, sin does not so much cause the souFs distance from God, as itself is that distance. Man and wife remain one, though at a hundred miles' distance; and believing souls do maintain a certain spiritual communion one with another, though in several parts of the world. The society and communion of pious souls one with another, so far as it is spiritual, cannot be interrupted by bodily distance; much less, then, the fellowship of God with the pious soul, who carries about with him, and in him, a divine nature, the image of God, a holy, God-like disposition whithersoever he goes.

S. " This communion with God which I have been speaking of, is much better than all outward acts and enjoyments, duties and ordinances whatsoever, though they be ever so many or specious."

God himself long since decided this matter, that a broken and contrite heart is better than all sacrifices.

Psalms 51:17; that to obey was better than sacrifice, 1 Samuel 15:22; that mercy was better than sacrifice, Hosea 6:6; that to do justly, love mercy, and to walk humbly with God, was to be preferred before " thousands of rams, and ten thousands of rivers of oil,"' Micah 6:7-8. It holds in reference to gospel duties, though they may seem more spiritual than the oblations of the law. A real soul-communion with God, a communion of hearts and natures, of wills and affections, of interests and ends, is infinitely more excellent than all hearing, praying, celebration of Sabbaths or sacraments, James 1:25, as the end is more excellent than the means, for so stands the case between them.

Yea, I will add, (though some proud and wanton spirits have made strange work with it, yet) it is a sure and most excellent doctrine, that this spiritual communion is a continual sabbath, (a sabbath of communion is much better than a sabbath of rest;) this is the sabbath that the angels and saints in heaven keep, though they know no such thing as a first day in the week, have no reading, preaching, or praying, amongst them. This is a continual praying, and effectual way of praying in silence. A right active appropriating faith, does virtually contain a prayer in it; right believing is powerful praying. The knees, eyes, and tongues, bear the least share in prayer, the whole of the work lies upon the soul, and particularly upon faith in the soul, which is indeed the life and soul of prayer. Faith can pray without words; but the most elegant words, the phrase of angels, is not worthy to be called prayer without faith. I speak not so much of faith inditing a prayer, or giving life to it, as of its being virtually prayer, if not something more; for, indeed, faith is a real bringing down of that God, and drawing in of those influences into the soul, which prayer only look up for.

Communion with God is a continual fast; it is that spiritual and most excellent way of fasting, whereby the soul, emptying itself of itself, and all iself-fulness, self-sufficiency, self-confidence, receives of the fulness of God alone, and is filled therewith. A soul communing rightly with God, is a soul emptied of, and, as it were, fasting from itself; which is the most excellent way of fasting.

It is a continual thanksgiving; and indeed the best way of thanksgiving in the world. To render up ourselves to God purely and entirely, to reflect the glory of God in a holy and God-like temper, is a real and living thank-offering. This is that hallelujah, so much spoken of, which the angels and saints in glory do sing perpetually: what other adjunct of it there may be, I will not here dispute. This communion of hearts and wills is a constant and most excellent celebration of sacraments. The soul that is really baptized into the Spirit of the Lord Jesus, and feeds upon God, and is one with him, keeps a continual sacrament; without which, the sacramental eating and drinking is but a jejune and dry devotion. In a word, it is not possible for anything that is extrinsical to the soul to make it happy; but the soul that is advanced into the noble state of communion with God, is made partaker of a new nature, and is truly happy.

Nay, further, I will add, that this communion with God is not only better than all duties and ordinances, but even better than all revelations, evidences, discoveries that can be made or given to the soul from without; a manifestation of God, that is, of a divine life in the soul, is much better than such a manifestation as Moses had of his glory in the cleft of the rock, Exodus 34:1-35. Many say, O if we might but be assured of the love of God, of the pardon of sin, of an interest in Christ, we should be happy! why, I will tell you, if you had a voice from heaven, saying that ye were the beloved children of God, as Christ had; an angel sent from God to tell you that ye were beloved and highly favoured of God, as his mother Mary had, yet were communion with God to be preferred before these, for these things could not make a soul happy without real communion with God, but communion with God can and doth make a soul happy without these, and to this purpose, I suppose, I may apply that famous speech of our Saviour's by way of allusion, " It is more blessed to give, than to receive,"" to give up one''s self, one''s heart, will, interests, and affections, to God, than to receive any external discoveries and manifestations from him. Why do we so earnestly seek after signs from without us, of God's presence with us, as if there were anything better or more desirable to the soul than Immanuel, God with us, or, as the Apostle speaks, " Christ in us the hope of glory?'"* He that desires any other evidence of grace, but more grace, does not only light up a candle to see the sun by, but indeed he acts like one that thinks

there is something better than God himself; though I do not say that all do think so who are covetous of such manifestations. But this I will say, and you may do well to meditate upon it, that holy longings after a true and spiritual communion with God, do certainly spring from a divine principle in the soul; whereas a thirst after assurance of God's love, and reconciliation of our persons with him, may be only the fruit of self-love and interest. — " Let me die the death of the righteous! '' you know whose wish it was.

7. " Though communion with God do concern the whole soul, and all the faculties, affections and motions of it,*" it is God's spreading his influences, and exercising his sovereignty over all the powers of the soul, and their mutual spending of themselves upon him, and conforming to him, " yet the great acts of the soul, whereby it chiefly holds communion with God, are loving and believing."" Love is the joining and knitting of the soul to God; faith is the soul's labouring after more intimate conjunction with him, a drawing in influences from him, and participations of him into the soul. We may say that faith fetches in supplies from heaven, and love enjoys them; faith draws in sweetness and virtue from Christ, and love feeds upon it. Certainly these two eminent graces grow, live, and thrive together, and are inseparable companions. It is somewhat difficult to distinguish them, or to assign to each its proper place and work in the soul; they seem mutually to act, and to be mutually acted on by each other; perhaps the Apostle might have respect to this mystery, when he speaks so doubtfully, Galatians 5:6, " Faith which worketh by love," which words may signify either 'faith acting by love,' or 'faith acted on by love."* We know, indeed, that in the state of perfect communion, which we call glory, love shall abide and flourish more abundantly, and there shall be no room for faith there, as to the principal acts of it; but which of them hath the greater part in maintaining our communion with God in this world, is not easy, nor indeed needful to determine. The pious soul is the most proper temple wherein God dwelleth, according to that, " Ye are the temple of the livhig God:" faith and love are the Jachin and Boaz, the two great pillars which keep up the soul as a temple; take away these and it remains a soul indeed, but the soul does not remain a temple to the Lord. In a word, these two are the souFs principal handmaids which she useth about this blessed guest; faith goes out and brings him in, and love entertains him; by faith she finds him whom she seeks, and by love she kisses him whom she finds, as the spouse is described. Song of Solomon 8:1.

8. " The communion that is between God and the pious soul is altogether different from that communion that is between creatures." Here I might show you how it exceeds and excels that, in many respects: but I shall not insist upon any of those particulars, nor indeed upon any of those many differences that are between them, save only upon this one: The communion that is between creature and creature is perfect in its kind, and so, consequently, gives mutual satisfaction; I mean, it terminates the expectations, so that nothhig remains to be enjoyed in them more than what is enjoyed. The creature is shallow, and soon is fathomed, we soon come to the bottom of it: a finite can grasp a finite being, and enjoy it, as I may say, all at once. A man may come so near to his friend, that he can come no nearer, enjoy him as fully as he is capable to enjoy, or the other to be enjoyed: created sweetness may be exhausted to the very bottom. But the souFs communion with God does not give it any such satisfaction, though indeed, in some sense, it gives a satisfaction of a much higher and more excellent kind. I told you before, that the soul's communion with God is imperfect in this life; and therefore it must needs follow, that it cannot satisfy; that is, not terminate and fill up the desires of it. Communion with God is maintained by faith and love,

which proves it to be very sweet; but it also admits of hope, which proves it to be not satisfactory; for where there is yet any place left for hope, there is no full or satisfactory enjoyment. This may serve as a certain mark, whereby to judge of the truth of that communion with God; it is not glutting to the soul, but will certainly manifest itself in incessant hungering, poor in the midst of riches; the soul is in the midst of plenty, and yet cries out, as if it were ready to starve for want. When I consider the temper of some perfectionists, who cry down duties and ordinances, as low and unprofitable rudiments, and boast of their full and inaccessible attainments, and compare it with the temper of the great Apostle, who did not reckon that he had attained, but still followed after that he might apprehend, who forgot the things that were behind, and reached forth unto those things that were before, pressing towards the mark, &c. I am ready to cry out, either this man is not an Apostle, or these men are not what they pretend; but an Apostle he was, and had intimate communion with his Lord; and therefore, I confess, I cannot allow these men so high a place, in my opinion, as they have in their own.

God is infinite; and, therefore, though the soul be ever grasping, yet it can never comprehend; the soul however finds him to be infinitely good, and so cannot cease grasping at him either. The pious soul sees that there is yet much more to be enjoyed of God, and in him; and, therefore, though it be very near to him, yet cries out, and complains of its distance from him; — " Oh when shall I come and appear before him! " though it be united to him, yet it longs to be still more one with him, and to be in a closer conjunction. The pious soul forgets, with Paul, what it hath received, not through disingenuity and unthankfulness, but through a holy ardour and covetousness: all that he hath of God seems little, because there is yet so much to be had. Though the pious soul do drink of the fountain, yet that is not enough, it would lie down by it; though it do lie down by it, yet it is not satisfied either, except it may bathe itself, and even be swallowed up therein.

Behold a paradox! the pious soul is most thirsty though, according to Christ's promise, it thirsts no more: it is most restless, though, according to his promise, it have rest. It is proper to God alone to rest in his love, for the creature cannot in this imperfect state: by this we know that we are not yet in heaven; for it is a state of perfect rest, not sloth, or cessation, but satisfaction. Faith is the fever of the soul, rendering it more thirsty by how much the more it drinks in of the water of life, the living streams that flow forth from the throne of God and of the Lamb. As the waters of the sanctuary are described by the prophet, growing deeper and deeper, Ezek. xlvii. so hope, which is the soul's appetite, grows larger and larger, and cannot be satisfied till the souPs capacity be filled up. The doctrinal part being thus briefly despatched, it will be easy to infer some things by way of corollary. I shall content myself with three only amongst many.

1. "All wicked men are strangers to God."

We know, indeed, that God, according to his infinite essence, is present with all his creatures; not only men, but even devils too, have their being in him, he hath spread his omnipotence, as the foundation whereupon the whole creation doth stand; he reared up the world in himself, and in him it doth subsist at this day. However angels and men have sadly fallen from God, yet they may be truly said to live in him still; and althouorh all wicked souls do straggle oii from God, as to their dispositions and affections, ingrafting themselves into another stock by sin and wickedness, yet they cannot possibly straggle from him as to their subsistence, as the Apostle teaches the Athenian philosophers, " He is not far from every one of us,"" though few feel after him or find him.

And it may be truly said, in some sense, that all the creatures, yea, the very worst of them, have a communion with God; all partake of him; no creature hath anything of its own really distinct from him. Every thing that hath a being, hath a relation to that infinite and Supreme Being; and every living thing may be rightly said to have communion with him who is life itself And all those several excellencies that are in the creatures, flow out from God, who hath impressed various prints of his own beauty and perfection upon every thing that he hath made. God's making of a thing is no other than the communicating of himself thereunto. And, therefore, when you look into the world, do not view any creature in the narrow point of its own being, but in the unbounded essence of God, and therein love and admire it.

But, upon the immortal soul of man, God hath copied out his divine perfections more clearly and gloriously, than upon any other creature in this world. God could not make a rational soul, without communicating of his own infinite wisdom, power, life, freedom to it; so that there is more of the divine nature to be seen in the understanding and will of any one man, than in the whole fabric of heaven and earth.

Notwithstanding this, wicked men are strangers to God. They live and move in God indeed, but they know it not, they consider it not; they act as if they had no dependence upon him, no relation to him. Though they have some kind of communion with God, as creatures, yet this makes them not at all happy: for they are departed from God in their affections and dispositions; they have degenerated from that subserviency and subordination to the divine will, which is the proper perfection of the creature, and are " alienated from the life of God,'' as the Apostle speaks. It is not the souFs moving in God, that makes it truly and happily nigh unto him, but its moving towards God, as the chief object, and according to the will of God, as the chief rule; and therefore wicked men, who pitch upon other objects, and walk by other laws, even the lusts and ordinances of their own flesh and fancy, are properly strangers to God, and miserable. He is not properly said to know God, who hath a notion of him formed in his head, but he whose heart and will are moulded into a conformity to God, and a delight in him; so that a wicked man though he know, and believe, and tremble, as much as any of the devils, yet not loving nor delighting in God, as his chief good, not being conformed to his image, as the highest and purest perfection, may be truly said to be estranged from him; which is a state of hell, and death, and darkness. This is the man, who, though not in words, yet, interpretatively, and really saith unto God, " Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways,'' with them in Job 21:14.

These do really exempt themselves from the dominion of Christ, and do really, though not audibly, say with them in the gospel, " We will not have this man to reign over us.'' However men pretend, and boast of their relation to, and acquaintance with God, certainly all that live a mere sensual life, nonconformists to the image of God, are truly said to be strangers to him, and in a state of non-communion with him, 1 John 1:6; 2 Corinthians 6:14

2. " The life of a true Christian is the most high and noble life in the world;" it exceeds the life of all other men, even of the greatest men. The character that is here given of the good man is the highest that can be given of any man, or indeed of any creature. It is the highest glory and excellency of the creature, to partake of the life of God, of the perfections of the Creator; and such is the description that the Spirit of God here makes of the religious man. What an unreasonable and senseless reproach is that which this wicked world doth cast upon religion, calling it a low and

despicable thing; and upon religious and pious men, calling them low-spirited, silly people. Can a man be better spirited, than with the Spirit of God? Can anything more truly ennoble a soul than a divine nature? Can a man be raised any higher than unto heaven itself.' So noble is the godly soul. " The way of life is above to the wise;" and, consequently, all wicked men lead a low life, and are bound under chains of death and darkness: the righteous man is of a high and divine original, born of God, born from above; and therefore is more excellent than his neighbour, than any of his neighbours, even a king himself being judge, Proverbs 12:26. What a hellish baseness is that sinful gallantry of spirit, what a brutishness is that sensuality of living, which the degenerate sons of Adam do so much magnify!

True goodness and excellency of spirit must be measured by the proportion that it bears to the Supreme Good, the infinite pattern of all perfection.

What excellent persons were those renowned saints of old, of whom the Apostle says, that " the world was not worthy,'"* however they were thought not worthy to live in the world! What a noble and generous spirit of true christian valour, patience, meekness, contempt of the world, and self-denial, was that, which was to be seen in the blessed apostles, however they were esteemed as the filth and sweepings of the world, the " offscouring of all things!' To which of the noble, wise, mighty men of the world, as such, did God ever say. These are the men that have fellowship with me, these are the men that lead a noble and divine life? No, no, " not many noble are called;'' and when they are called, they are made more noble than ever they were by birth or descent, by places of preferment or command. The life of every wicked man, of what rank soever he be in the world, is but a low life, a life in most things common to the very beasts with him; if the main of his business and dehght be to eat, and drink, and work, and sleep, and enjoy sensual pleasures, what doth he? what enjoyeth he more than the beasts that perish? But the life of the meanest soul, that hath true and spiritual communion with God, is a life common to him with the blessed angels, those sons of the morning, the flower of the whole creation. That life which hath self for its centre, must needs be a penurious, and indeed a painful life: for how can the soul of man possibly feed to the full upon such spare diet, such scant fare as it finds at home? Nay, indeed, how can it choose but be in pain and torture, whilst it stretcheth itself upon self-sufficiency, or creature fulness, which is not at all commensurate to it? But the jsoul that rightly stretches and spends all its facul* ties upon the infinite and blessed God, finds all its capacities filled up to the brim with that fountain of goodness, and itself perfectly matched with a suitable and satisfactory object. This is the true and only nobleness of spirit, when all the powers and faculties of this immortal soul are exalted and advanced into a true and vital sympathy and communion with the chief Good, formed according to his will, conformed to his image. And O that wisdom might be more "justified of licr children!" O that the life of God did but clearly manifest itself, and shine forth in the lives of those that call themselves Christians! Alas, that ever God himself should suffer reproach, by recason of the low-spiritedness and laziness of his servants! For this cause is religion evil spoken of The Lord awake and enable us to express and show forth the divine life with all power and vigour, to live as high as the calling wherewith we are called, and so roll away this reproach!

3. " The life of a Christian is not a heavy sluggish thing, but active and vigorous," as the phrase ' communion with God," imports. Religion is a communication of life and vigour from Him, who is life itself; which makes the truly God-like soul to be quick and powerful in its motions. Every thing is by so much the swifter and stronger in its motions, by how much the nearer it is to its centre, as

philosophy tells us. Certainly by how much the nearer any man is gotten to God, who is the centre of souls, by so much the more does he covet after more intimate communion with him, and the more eagerly lay hold upon him. Communion does necessarily imply re-action or reflection: the soul that receives of God, and his fulness, will certainly be emptying itself into him again. Communion, in the very force of the phrase, implies a mutualness; we cannot suppose a soul partaking of God, but it must needs mutually render up itself to him again.

There can be no commerce nor correspondence without returns: but what return can the pious soul make unto God? Why, it renders up its whole self to him. Faith is a giving grace as well as a receiving, it gives the soul back to Christ, as well as takes Christ into the soul; it draws in strength and grace from God, and reciprocally spends the whole powers of the soul upon him. The happiness of a real Christian doth not consist in cessation and rest; the soul itself being a powerful and active being, the happiness of it, the very rest of it, must also be active and vigorous. Where there is communion, there must needs be quick and lively returns, reciprocations, reflections, and correspondencies; the drawings of God are answered with the soul's running. The motion of Christ's fingers begets a motion in the Christian's soul: " My Beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him."" These are the divine and harmonious responses which are made and maintained in the godly soul, the temple of the living God. O shake off that lazy and drowsy spirit, which hath so benumbed many in this cold and stupid age of the world; work out your salvation with care and diligence. If your religion be nothing but a spiritual kind of sleep, your heaven will prove to be nothing but a pleasant kind of dream.

Communion with God speaks something divine, active, vigorous. The life of a Christian doth not consist only in cessation from evil, reformation from sin, or dying thereunto; mortification is but one part of regeneration. It is the conceit, and, I doubt, the deceit, of many nominal Christians, that if they can but keep up an indifferent even spirit and conversation, free, from gross and scandalous sins from day to day, they are happy enough; their utmost ambition is to be innocent and harmless. This indeed is necessary and praiseworthy; but surely the happiness of a soul lies higher: thus happy are all the creatures that keep in the station, and keep up the order prescribed them of God: thus happy is the sun in the firmament, running its race continually, and never departing from the office which is assigned to it. But the soul of man is capable of a higher kind of happiness, namely. Communion with God; which is, when the faculties thereof being awakened, refined, and acted on by the Spirit of God, do reciprocally act, and spend themselves upon him, longing to be perfectly swallowed up in him, and to be all that which God himself is, as far as the creature is capable to drink in the perfections of the Creator, and become one with his Maker. This is that truly noble and divine life, which is here called communion with God, which the high-spirited and generous soul labours yet more and more to be growing up into, and perfected in. Keep yourselves, with David, from your iniquities; it is something to be freed from the guilt and power of sin; but there is somewhat higher than this, a more excellent attainment, a more divine accomplishment: go on therefore with the same David, and aspire after this pure and blissful state, this heaven upon earth, waiting for the more ample and glorious manifcstations of God to you and in you, more than they that watch for the morning, as he did. This inference was only of instruction, but the sweetness and needfulness of the subject almost prevails with me to turn it into an earnest exhortation, but that I would not anticipate myself. Therefore I proceed to the next way of improving this doctrine, which shall be by way of conviction or reprehension.

1. Our fellowship is — it reproves them that can take up with a shall be — a heaven to come. I am now speaking, not to the worst of men, whose very souls are swallowed up in sensual enjoyments, and imprisoned in their senses: for these men either think of no heaven at all, or else they place their heaven and happiness in the enjoyment of themselves or of the creature. Nor yet do I speak to those men who, being persuaded of a future state, do indeed wish for a heaven to come, but then it is a poor kind of low and earthly heaven, consisting in ease, rest, safety, freedom from troubles or torments, which is the best happiness which most men understand, the highest heaven that any carnal mind can see or soar up to. But I am speaking to a better and finer sort of souls than these, that are verily possessed with a sense of a pure and spiritual heaven in the world to come; yea, they are so overpowered with the foresight of it, as that they do earnestly expect and wish for it; yea, the hopes of it do sustain and strengthen their hearts under the manifold temptations and persecutions of this present world; they are so verily persuaded of the truth of it, and of their own title to it too, that they are content to abide this long and disconsolate night of dimness, and anguish, and frightfulness, merely in expectation of the dawning of that day, that clear and bright day of their glorious and everlasting redemption. And herein I am far from blaming them, nay, I must needs commend their magnanimous faith and self-denial. But, in the mean time, they dwell too much upon heaven as a future state, and comfort themselves only in a happiness to come, not longing and labouring to find a heaven opened within themselves, a beginning of eternal bliss brought into themselves: they are too well content with a certain reversion, and do not eagerly enough endeavour after present possession, to be actually instated in so much of the inheritance of souls as may fall to their share even in this lower world; this slothful temper and inactivity I do condemn wherever it is found; yea, though it be in my own soul. Every thing in the world, by a natural principle, thirsts after its proper rest, and a happiness suitable to the nature of it; no creature can be content, though it may be constrained, to be at a distance from its centre, but is still carried out towards its own perfection. And why then should a pious soul, who is God's only new creature in the world, be content with a state of imperfections? why should not he as eagerly covet, and as earnestly pursue the most intimate and close communion and conjunction with his God, as they do with their respective centres? Can any earthly, sensual, unregenerate man be content with an inheritance in reversion, so as to suspend his minding and following of the world till hereafter? Can any ambitious spirit, who places his main happiness and contentment in popular estimation, and worldly greatness, be content to stand gazing at preferments; will he be willing to sit still, and wait till they drop into his mouth? No, no, there is a raging thirst in the soul, which will not suffer it to be at rest, but is still awakening and provoking all the powers of the whole man, till they arise and fetch in water to quench it. And therefore we read of men making haste to be rich, and hastening after another god; which eager and ardent passions towards earthly objects, you may see lively described in the instances of Ahab, Amnon, and Haman, in the holy scriptures. And is there any reason to be given, why that new nature and divine principle which God putteth into regenerate souls, should not carry them as hastily and forcibly to a present fruition of their proper object and happiness, (so far as at present it maybe enjoyed) as that corrupt and degenerate nature doth hurry on those in whom it ruleth, towards the satisfaction of their brutal lusts.? Divines speak sometimes of making heaven and eternal life present to ourselves, and say that this is the work of faith; which is a high and excellent doctrine, but, I doubt, not thoroughly understood by ordinary Christians. To make heaven present to one's self, is not only to insist upon a state of future happiness in frequent meditations, to think much of it, neither is this that noble employment

of saving faith; but the life and power of faith is most eminently exerted in drawing in participations of life and grace from Christ, and in a real bringing down of God and heaven into the soul. The truth is, heaven is a state of perfect communion with God, a state of love, joy, peace, purity, freedom; and as far as any soul is in such a state upon earth, so far he is above the earth, and may be said to be in heaven. Therefore a right active soul, that truly understands its proper and spiritual heaven and happiness, so far as he is thus active and sensible, cannot be content to stay for all his happiness tiU the world to come; cannot be content to be unhappy, no, not for an hour, but is still growing up in God, and springing up into everlasting life.

2. It reprehends those that make a stir about the kingdom of Christ in the world, and men's being brought into the communion of the church, but advance not his kingdom in their own souls, nor long to have their ov/n souls advanced into that noble state of communion with " the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."" There is, doubtless, a generation of such popular Christians, who, being strangers to the life, and power, and spirit of true religion, do endeavour to pass off themselves on the world, and commend themselves to the charity of their brethren, by a pretended zeal for the kingdom of Christ in the world, and the glorious manifestation of it, as they speak. I know, indeed, that it is worthy the cares, and prayers, and utmost diligence of every serious Christian, to spread and propagate the knowledge of the gospel, to pour out the ointment of Christ's name far and near. A more pure and spiritual administration of all gospel ordinances throughout the world is highly desirable; yea, and I think an indifferent and careless disposition towards the worship of God argues much of an earthly and atheistical mind. But I fear that kingdom of Christ, and those glorious manifestations and discoveries which are so much pretended to by many, if they should be thoroughly examined, would be, at length, resolved into nothing else but the advancement of some one party or interest above all the rest, or the exchanging of an old form or dress of religion for a new one; and that this zeal would be found little better than the blazings of self-love, a fire kindled not by a coal from the altar, but by a spark of their own. But, be it so, that this disposition of theirs is sincere and spiritual; should not this charity begin at home? The most proper kingdom of Christ is that whereby he ruleth in the hearts of men; the most excellent worship is when the soul itself becomes a temple for the living God to dwell in, and to receive and reflect the manifestations of his glory; when a fire of divine love is kindled in it, and therein it doth offer up, not bulls and goats, no, nor prayers and meditations, so much as itself unto God; which is a reasonable service, as the Apostle speaks, far more glorious than either the Mosaical or Evangelical dispensation, if you consider it in the letter only.

Whatever men may pretend, no man can be truly and rightly studious of the advancement of the kingdom of God in the world, that hath not first felt the mighty power and blessed effects of it in his own soul. Communion with the church is only so far to be valued, as it is in order to a real and spiritual communion with God; which communion with God, if we do indeed sincerely wish to others, we shall more abundantly labour to promote in ourselves. I cannot believe that he doth heartily seek the happiness of others, who himself sits still, and is content to be miserable, especially when their happiness and his is one and the same.

3. It condemns them as not Christians, whose fellowship is only with their fellow-creatures. We have seen that it is the character, the distinguishing character of a pious man, to have fellowship with God. It must needs follow, then, that those degenerate souls that rise no higher than the world, that converse only with self or any other creature, are verily strangers to true Christianity,

whatever their confidence or presumption may be. Christians, tell not me what you profess of Christ, what you believe of the gospel, what orthodox opinions you hold, what an honest party you side with, how many and specious duties you perform, no, nor what hopes or wishes you have of going to heaven; but, tell me where is your principal communion; what do you mainly mind, follow, converse with; what pattern do you conform to; what rule do you live by; what object do you ultimately aim at? The whole world of worldly men doth hasten after another god, as the Psalmist phrases it, though not all after the same god: they spend their souls, indeed, upon various objects, and use difierent methods to obtain rest, but yet all their happiness and contentment is ultimately resolved into creature-communion. That dreadful sentence, which the Apostle delivers universally concerning all men, is to be limited to all wicked men only, and of them it is undoubtedly true: “All seek their own, and none the things of Jesus Christ.'“

And, of all these, that of the Psalmist’s “many” is to be understood: “ There be many that say. Who will show us any good.?” that is, any creaturegood, as the words following do explain it. All unregenerate souls are bound up in the creature, some creature or other; and therefore the noblest of them, whatever boasting they may make, are low and ignoble; their main converse is but with their fellow-creatures, and indeed creatures much inferior to themselves: “ Corn and wine,"' says the Psalmist; “ earthly things,” says the Apostle, — “ who mind earthly things.” In a word, though it be true what the Apostle says in one place, that all men in the world do live in God, yet it is also true, that most of men, as the same Apostle speaks elsewhere, do “live without God in tlic world,” have their hearts staked down to one creature or other, and so fall short of this honourable character which the Apostle here gives of good men: “ Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” And now I shall conclude the remainder of this discourse, with a humble request, and earnest expostulation.

“Reckon not upon any happiness below this communion.” There are many things which a Christian may take to be comforts; but only one, this one, that he ought to take to be the happiness of his life. I design not to speak anything to the prejudice of natural or civil ornaments or accomplishments, much less to the disparagement of any of those endowments or employments which are, in a sense, spiritual, commonly called gifts and duties: but, I must confess, it is one of the great wonders of the world to me, to see such a noble and intelligent being, as the soul of man is, attending to, and pursuing after, things either extrinsical or inferior to itself, in the mean time carelessly forgetting, or wilfully rejecting its main happiness, principal end, and proper perfection. As for those sensual persons, those mere animals, whose souls are incarnate in their senses, and seem to perform no higher office in the world than the souls of beasts, that is, to carry about their bodies; who value themselves by their bodies, or, which is baser, by the apparel that clothes them or the estates that feed them: I shall not now trouble myself about them, but leave them to be chastised by Seneca or Plutarch, or indeed any ordinary philosopher. I shall rather apply myself a little to a sort of higher spirited people, whom by a condescension of charity we call Christians, who, valuing themselves by external professions, privileges, performances, may indeed be said to be somewhat more scrupulous and curious, but no less mistaken than the former: for if the grosser sort of sensualists do deny, and professedly abjure their own reason, and the finer sort of hypocrites do more cunningly bribe theirs, each method amounts to no more than a cheat, and both parties will be alike miserable, save that the latter will be somewhat more tormented in missing a happiness which he looked and hoped for. It is not proper to my present discourse, to

speak so highly and honourably of these externals of Christianity, nor to press them so zealously, as I do at all times when I have occasion; for I verily value all ordinances of Christ, and duties of God's worship, at a high rate; nay, I know not any serious and truly pious soul in the world, but is of this same opinion with me; but, I must confess, I think it is one of the greatest and most pernicious cheats in the world, for men to feed upon the dish instead of the meat, to place their happiness in those things which God hath only appointed to be means to convey it. This was the great destruction of the Jewish church; by this they perished: thus they are every where described in Scripture, as a people resting in their privileges and performances, boasting of their sacrifices and temple-service; they made account of a strange kind of flesh-pleasing heaven, something distinct from them, and reserved for them, to be given them by way of reward for the righteousness which themselves had wrought by the power of their own free will (which free will, they say, is an effect of man''s fall, but they make it a cause of man**s rise; for now he can purchase and merit a happiness, which happiness is also more illustrious than that given of mere grace;) which righteousness, if we look either into their own writings, or God''s writings concerning them, we shall find was nothing else but a strict observance of the precepts of the law, according to the letter and external dispensation of it. Such a low and legal spirit was generally found amongst the Jews; I wish the greatest part of us, who are in profession and name evangelical, be not found as truly legal in spirit and temper as they were. If we cry the gospel of Christ, the gospel of Christ, with the same spirit, as they cried, " the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord," our confidence will as surely betray us into final misery as theirs did. True, indeed, prayers, sacraments, sermons, are somewhat finer words than the old obsolete ones, the law, sacrifices, ceremonies; but, alas! they are but words; at least they are not gods, not more fit to terminate our devotions and affections than these. I beseech you, therefore, Christians, be not mistaken in this matter. True Christianity is not a notion, but a nature; that is not religion which is wrapped up in books, or laid up in men's brains, but it is laid in the very constitution of the soul, a new principle implanted by God, in the highest powers of the soul, refining and spiritualizing all the faculties thereof, and rendering them as like to God himself, as such a creature can resemble its Creator.

It is a truth, as clear as the sun is clear, that nothing can make a soul truly happy, but what is wrought into the nature of it, and that must be somewhat more excellent than itself, and be nothing less than something divine, even the image of the blessed God. If you be Christians, in deed and in truth, value all the ordinances of God, and the duties of the Christian religion, but value not yourselves by these, or your happiness by these. Attend upon them all for the maintaining and increasing of real fellowship with God; for though these be not it, yet they are the way wherein it pleases God to give it. Drink the sincere milk of the word, but let it be only with a holy design of growing thereby, of growing up into God, and a divine life. Away with those low and base thoughts of happiness; the happiness of a soul is a high and excellent, indeed a divine thing; it is in some sense common to God and the soul; God is happy in himself alone, and the soul can only be happy in him. What contentment, what real happiness. Christian, can the rising of thy party in the world, or the rising of thy name in the country, bring thee, if, in the mean time, thou thyself harbourest any carnal will, self-interest that doth rise up in opposition to the pure and perfect will and nature of God? how art thou happy in thy prayers, if thou cast sin out of thy mouth, and, in the mean time, a fountain of iniquity be springing up in thy heart! What avails it towards a state of perfection, to be of the most orthodox opinions, the most honest society, the fairest profession, the most popular and sanctimonious form, or the most plausible performances either, the soul being,

in the mean time, alienated from the life of God, and feeding upon some earthly trash or other, which destroys the native powers and vigour of it, and keeps it under a perpetual languor? even just so much as a silken stocking upon a gouty leg, or a princely diadem upon an aching head, avails towards a state of ease and soundness and good temperature of body. Let nothing limit your ambition, but a state of God-like perfection, let nothing set bounds to your loving and longing souls, but a real fruition of God himself; nay, let not that bound them either, but the more you enjoy, see, and taste, the more let your love be strengthened, after the manner of fire, which, the more it is fed, the more hungry and devouring it grows. In a word, let nothing satisfy you lower than the highest character that can be given of mortal man, to be men " after God's own heart," to have God dwelling in you, to be filled with his fulness, to have this real and excellent "commnuion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.'' To whom be all honour, praise, and glory, for ever and ever. THE ANGELICAL LIFE, BY SAMUEL SHAW.

Matthew 22:30.

'— " Are as the angels of God in heaven. The doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the great things of the christian religion, as they were accounted strange things by all the world when they were first published and preached, so indeed by none less entertained, or rather more opposed, than by the wisest of men living in that age, namely.

Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, who were the " disputers of this world,*" as the Apostle's phrase is: a thing of wonderful observation, not only to us in our day, but even to our blessed Lord himself in the days of his flesh, who fetches the cause of it from heaven, and adores the infinite wisdom of God in it — " I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."" Amongst other set disputations that the Sadducees held with our Saviour, the one in this chapter is very famous; where they dispute against the resurrection of the dead, by an absurd argument grounded upon an instance of a woman that had been married to seven husbands successively. Now, say they, if there be a resurrection, whose wife shall she be then? Our Saviour answers by destroying the ground of their argument, and showing that they disputed upon a false supposition; for, saith he, " In the resurrection there shall be no marrying; but men shall be as the angels of God." In which words this doctrine is plainly laid down, (for I shall not meddle with the controversy,)

" That the glorified saints shall be as the angels of God in heaven." The other evangelists lay down the same truths, see Mark 12:25, Luke 20:36. In the explication of which point I will shew, I. Negatively, wherein the saints shall not be like the angels. II. Affirmatively, wherein the saints shall be like unto them, or, as St. Luke hath it, equal to them.

I. Negatively.

1. " The glorified saints shall not be like the angels in essence." The angelical essence, and the rational soul are, and shall be different. Souls shall remain souls still, keep their own essence: the essence shall not be changed; souls shall not be changed into angelical essences.

2. " They shall not be wholly spirits without bodies,." as the angels. The spirits of just men now made perfect, are like to the angels in this sense than they shall be after the resurrection; for now they are spirits without bodies: but the saints shall have bodies, not such as now, corruptible, not in anything defective, not needing creature-supplies, but incorruptible, glorious bodies, in some

sense spiritual bodies; which are described by three characters — incorruptible, (somewhat more than immortal,) glorious, powerful. Neither doth their having bodies any whit abate their perfection or glory, nor render them inferior to the angels; for even the glorious Redeemer of the world hath a body, who is yet superior to the angels; and he shall change the vile bodies of the saints, and make them like unto his glorious body.

3. " Neither have we any ground to believe that the saints shall be altogether equal to the angels in dignity and glory f but rather, that as man was at first made a little lower than the angels, so that he shall never come to be exalted altogether so high as they; for it seems, that the natural capacity of an angel is greater than of a man, and so shall continue, for they are a distinct kind of creatures. As a beast cannot become so wise and intelligent as a man, for then he would cease to be a beast; so neither can a man become so powerful and capable as an angel, for then he would cease to be a man.

II. Affirmatively. The glorified saints shall be like the angels of God in heaven, 1st. In their qualities; that is,

1. " In being pure and holy." Whether they shall be equal to them in positive holiness or not, I know not; whether they shall understand, and know, and love God, in all degrees, as much as the angels; it seems rather that they shall not, because, as I said before, their capacity shall not be so large. But if in this they be not altogether equal to the angels, yet it implies no imperfection; for they shall be positively holy, as far as their nature is capable, and so shall be perfect in their kind — " The spirits of just men made perfect:*" they shall in this be like unto the angels^ if not equal to them, yea, like unto God himself in it — " Be ye holy, as I am holy." But as to negative holiness, the saints shall be even equal to the angels of God in heaven, that is, they shall have no more sin, no more corruption than they have: they shall be as perfectly freed from all iniquities, imperfections, and infirmities, as the ang-els. What can be cleaner than that which hath no uncleanness at all in it? Why, so clean shall all the saints be — " No unclean thing shall enter into heaven." They shall be without all kind of spot or blemish, which is a perfect negative holiness; more cannot be said of the angels in this respect. As branches of this: —

2. " As the holy angels do reverence the divine Majesty; they cover their faces with their wings, crying, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, so shall the glorified saints." You may see what sweet harmony they make, consenting together to give the glory pf all to God, The saints stood and cried.

Salvation to our God who sittetli upon the throne, and to the Lamb;'' the angels stood round about, saying, " Amen, amen."'

3. "In their readiness to do the will of God, and execute his commands;"*' therefore the angels are described to have wirig^ — "with twain they did fly."

How God shall please to employ angels or saints in the world to come, is not for us to enquire; but they shall be alike ready to do his will, and serve his pleasure, whatever it shall be. Even whilst the saints are imperfect on earth, they can cry, " Here am I, send me:'"" how much more ready shall they be then, when all their fetters are knocked off!

4. They shall be as the angels, “ in their cheerful and unwearied execution of the will of God.” So the angels are, and so shall the saints be. The spirit shall then be more willing, and the flesh shall be no more weak, as it is now; for when it is raised again, it shall be in power. More things of this nature might be added, but 1 pass lightly over them; because, although they be true, yet they are not principally looked at in this text: therefore I come to the second thing wherein the glorified saints shall be like unto the angels, and that is. In their way of living. They shall be like the angels, that is, saith one truly, living like the angels. How is that? our Saviour tells us, neither marrying, nor being given in marriage; it is added presently in Luke 20:36, “ For neither can they die any more.’’ If there be no dying, there will be no need of propagation; and if no need of propagation, then why should they marry? The angels are single, and know no other conjunction but with God in a spiritual manner; no more shall the saints. But what great matter is that to be like the angels in what perfection is that? Many saints, yea, and sinners too upon earth, are so like the angels, nay, and the devils too. Therefore you must know that our Saviour under this phrase of not marrying, doth comprehend all manner of creature-converse, all kind of living upon, and delighting in the creature, by a synecdoche of the part, as is ordinary in scripture; “I have not given upon usury,” saith the prophet, “ yet the people curse me,’”“ that is, I have had no dealing in the world, no negociation. By one kind he understands the whole, Ezekiel 25:4, where, by eating their fruits, and drinking their milk, is understood the possession of all that was theirs; and in many other places the Spirit of God uses this tropical way of speaking. The angels of God neither marry, nor are given in marriage, that is, they live not upon any created good, delight not in any created comfort, but live entirely upon God, converse with him, are everlastingly beholding his glory, and delighting themselves in him. Thus shall the glorified saints live for ever: their bodies shall not need nor use created supplies, food, physic, raiment, &c. which things in this animal state they stand in need of, Matthew 6:32. But that is not all: for their souls shall not any longer desire, nor hanker after any created thing, but, as the angels, shall be possessed of God, filled with the fulness of God; all their powers and faculties are perfectly refined and spiritualized, abstracted from all created things, eternally rejoicing and delighting themselves in the contemplation and participation of the supreme and infinite Good: for during this earthly and imperfect state, not only the bodies of good men feed upon, and are sustained by the creatures, in common with other men, but even their souls do taste too much of worldly contentments, and drink too deep of earthly pleasures and creature comforts: even the most refined souls upon earth, though they do not properly feed upon any thing below God, yet do oft dip the end of their rod in this honey that lies upon the earth, with Jonathan; do use their earthly enjoyments, and delight in them in a way too unspiritual, having abstracted them from God, and loving them with a distinct love. But in the resurrection it shall not be so; for the holy souls shall be perfectly conformed to the holy God, shall feed upon him singly, live upon him entirely, be wrapt up in him wholly, and be satisfied with him solely and everlastingly, and so shall they be equal to the angels. The creature, although it does not fill any truly sanctified soul upon earth, yet it hath some room there; but then it shall be perfectly cast out, and the soul shall be filled with all the fulness of God. The crcature is now much in some pious souls, and something in all of them; but then it shall be nothing at all to them, or in them, but God shall be all in all, all things in all of them; as the way of the saints’* living, and their glorified state is described — “ that God may be all in all.’’ “ They shall inherit all things:”’ but how is that? why, see the explication of it in the following words, “ He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God.’“ God will be their God; God shall be unto them instead of all things. In that *tate there shall no need of sun or

moon; by which excellent and useful creatures the whole creation seems to be understood; for they that shall live above the sun and moon, shall certainly live above all things that are below these: but how then? why it follows, “ The glory of God shall enlighten them, and the Lamb shall be their light.” “ And there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun: for the Lord giveth them light.*”

All happiness is derived into them from God, and therefore there shall be no night, no want of any creature comfort to them; neither shall they desire anything more of the creature whether small or great, whether candle or sun. For explication of this their blessed life, let me allude to that of our Saviour — “ The fowls of heaven neither sow nor reap, yet God feedeth them;” so the saints in heaven neither want nor desire any created good, for they feed upon God the supreme and infinite Good: and again, “ The lilies neither toil nor spin, and yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these/’ These blessed souls have no respect at all to things terrene and created; yet they are so filled and adorned with the glory of the infinite Majesty, that Solomon in all his glory was nothing in comparison of them. In a word, the state of the glorified saints and angels is set out by our Saviour in the same manner, by one and the same description, and that is the seeing of God: the life of angels is called a continual beholding of the face of God, and the state of the saints’ glory and happiness is also a seeing of God — “ They shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads.” Now, this phrase, the seeing of God, applied both to the saints and angels, doth place their happiness in God alone, excluding the creature; and it doth import the fulness and clearness, and certainty of their bliss.

Thus I have showed you, in what sense, though I am not able to show you in what degree, the glorified saints shall be like the angels of God in heaven: their way of living upon the blessed God alone, shall be the same with that of the holy angels.

APPLICATION. From the discovery of the future state of the saints, I find myself furnished with reasons for,

1. Reproof against the carnal conceits that many Christians have of heaven. Christians do I call them! nay, herein they seem rather Mahometans, who place heaven in the full and lasting enjoyment of all creature-comforts, nay, indeed of sinful and abominable pleasures, as one may read in their Alcoran. It may be, few Christians are altogether so sensual; but, sure I am, the far greater sort of Christians, so called, are very gross and carnal, at least, very low in their conceits of the state of future happiness. Heaven is a word as little understood as holiness; and that, I am sure, is the greatest mystery in the world. It would be tedious to run through the various apprehensions of men in this matter, and indeed impossible to know them. The common sort of people understand by heaven either just nothing but a glorious name, or at best but a freedom from bodily torment: as nothing of hell affects them but that dreadful word Jire^ so nothing of heaven but the comfortable word rest or safety.

Others, it may be, think there is something positive in heaven, and they dream of an honourable, easy, pleasant life, free from such kind of toils, labours, pains, persecutions, reproaches, and penuries, which men are subject to in this life; this is a true notion, but much below the nature of that happy state. Others are yet more highly affected with the words of glory and glorious, and seem to be much ravished with them, but are like men in a maze or wonderment, who admire something that they understand not, and are altogether confounded m their own apprehensions of

it; as if a man should be mightily taken with such a fine name as Arabia the Happy, and by a blind fervour of mind should desire to go and visit it. Others rise yet higher in their apprehensions of heaven, and look upon it as a holy state, but that holiness is negative, a perfect freedom from sin, and all temptations to it: and indeed this is a precious consideration, and that wherein many a weary soul finds much rest: but yet this amounts not to the life of angels; it is a lower consideration of heaven than what our Saviour here presents us with. The state of the glorified saints shall not only be a state of freedom from temporal pains, or eternal pains, or a freedom from spiritual pains and imperfections, but a state of perfect positive holiness, pure light, ardent love, spiritual liberty, holy delights; when all created good shall perfectly vanish, all created love shall be swallowed up, the soul shall become of a most God-like disposition, shining forth in the glory that he shall put upon it, glorying in nothing but the blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in his divine image and perfections, and wrapt up entirely into his infinite fulness to all eternity: which hath made me oft times to nauseate, and indeed to blame the poor low descriptions of the kingdom of heaven which I have found in books and sermons, for too dry, yea, and gross; which describe heaven principally as a place, and give it such circumstances of beauty, firmness, security, light, and splendour, pleasant society, good neighbourhood, as they think will most commend an earthly habitation. True indeed the Holy Ghost in scripture is pleased to condescend so far to our weak capacities, as to describe that glorious state to us by such things as we do best understand, and are apt to be most taken with, and do most gratify our senses in this world; as a kingdom, paradise, a glorious city, a crown, an inheritance; but yet it is not the will of God that his enlightened people should rest in such low notions of eternal life; for in other places God speaks of the state of glory according to the nature and excellency of it, and not according to the weakness of our understanding, and describes it at another rate, calling it the life of angels; as the beholding of God — a coming unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ — God's being all things in us — it is called a knowing of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ. In a word, which is as high as can be spoken, higher indeed than can be perfectly understood, it is called a being like unto God — "We shall be like unto him." But this use is not so much for reproof, as it is for information.

2. Here is matter of reproof, yea, and of just indignation, against the gross, low, sensual, earthly life of professors, who yet hope to be the children of the resurrection, and to be as the angels of God in heaven. What! hope to be like them then, and yet altogether unlike them now! I speak not in a passion, but out of a just indignation that I have conceived against myself, and against the generality even of saints themselves. I am not going to speak of covetousness commonly so called; there is a sin much like to it, which is not indeed a single sin, but an evil and unseemly temper, which is earthlymindedness, or minding of earthly things; or if you will, because I would not be misunderstood, a living upon the creature, or a loving of the creature with a distinct love. Oh! the insensible secrecy, and insuperable power of this creature-love! I cannot sufficiently exclaim against it. Why do we spend noble affections upon such low and empty nothings? Are we called with such a high calling, think you, that our conversation should be so low.? Is the fulness of the fountain yours, and do ye yet delight to sit down by and bathe yourselves in the shallow streams? Is your life hid with Christ with God? why then do you converse as if your life were bound up in the creature? Have you laid lip your treasure in the blessed God.? what do your hearts, then, so far from it? Is your happiness in heaven? why then is not your conversation there too? Do ye count it your bliss to see God? what then mean those fond glances that ye cast upon created

comforts, and that impure love which you bestow on things below? I mean not only the “ bleatings of the sheep, and the lowings of the oxen,’’ I speak not of the grosser sort of earthly-mindedness, sensuality, or covetousness, hut of that more refined and hidden creature-love, a loving of friends, relations, health, liberty, life, and that not in God, but with a love distinct from that love wherewith we love God. To love all these in God, and for his sake, and as flowing from him, and partaking of him, and with the same love wherewith we love God himself, is allowed us; but to love them with a particular love, as things distinct from God, to delight in them merely as creatures, and to follow them as if some good, or happiness, or pleasure, were to be found in them, distinct from what is in God, this is a branch of spiritual adultery, I had almost said idolatry. To taste a sweetness in the creature, and to see a beauty and goodness in it, is our duty; but then, it must be the sweetness of God in it, and the goodness of God which we ought alone to taste and see in it. As we say, “ the wife shines with the rays of her husband;”“ so more truly every creature shines but by a borrowed light, and commends to us the goodness, and sweetness, and fulness of the blessed Creator. You have heard that the glorified souls shall live upon God alone entirely, wholly, eternally; and should not the less glorious souls, I mean gracious souls, do so too, in some degree? yea, even we who are upon earth, and do yet use creatures, should behold all the scattered beams of goodness, sweetness, perfection, that are in these creatures, all united and gathered up in God, and so feeding upon them only in God, and upon God in all of them. It is the character of wicked and godless men, that they set up and drive a trade for themselves; live in a way distinct from God, as though they had no dependence upon him; they love the world with a predominant love; they enjoy creature-comforts in a gross, unspiritual manner; they dwell upon the dark side of their mercies; they treasure up riches, not only in their chests, but in their hearts; they feed upon the creature, not only with their bodies, but their very souls do feed upon them: and thus, in a word, they “live without God in the world.” All this is no wonder; for that which is of the earth must needs be earthly; but is it iiot a monstrous thing, that a heavenly soul should feed upon earthly trash? I speak without any hyperbole; the famous king of Babylon, forsaking the society of men, and herding himself with the beasts of the earth, and eating grass with the oxen, was not so absurd a thing, nor half so monstrous or unseemly, as the children of the Most High God forsaking the true bread of souls, and feeding upon the low fare of carnal men, even created sweetness, worldly goods: nay, a glorious star falling from its own sphere, and choking itself in the dust, would not be such an eminent piece of baseness; for what is said of the true God in one sense, is true of the truly godly in this sense — “ He that cometh from heaven is above all;’“ that is, above all things that are below God himself

3. Shall this life of angels be also the life of saints? this may then serve as a powerful consideration to mortify in us the love of this animal life, to make us weary of this low kind of living, and quicken us to long after so blessed a change. Well might the Apostle say indeed, that to die was gain; for is not this gain, to exchange an animal for an angelical life? a life which is in some sense common to the very beasts with us, for that which in some sense may be called the life of God? For as the blessed and holy God lives upon his own infinite and selfsufficient fulness, whithout being beholden to anything without himself, so shall the saints live upon him, and upon the self-same infinite fulness, and shall not need any creature-contributions. The Apostle indeed saith, that “ the last enemy to be destroyed is death;” which is true of enemies without us; and it is true with respect to Christ, who shall make a general resurrection from the dead, for that is the proper meaning of it; but it is true also, that the last enemy to be overcome within us is the love of

life, therefore it is said, that a man will part with anything to keep his life, Job 2:4; and we do generally excuse the matter, and cry. Oh! life is sweet, life is precious. It must be confessed, and it may be granted; I believe that there is an inclination of the soul to the body, arising from that dear and inconceivable union that God himself hath made of them, which is purely natural, some say altogether necessary for the maintaining of man in this complex state, and not in itself sinful: possibly there may not be found a man upon earth so holy and mortified, in whom this is not found; certainly it is the last hinderance to be removed out of the wiiy of our perfect happiness. This, although in itself natural, yea necessary, and without blame, yet in the inordinateness of it, ordinarily, if not constantly, becomes sinful. I count him the most perfect man in the world, who loves not his own life with an inordinate sinful love; who loves it only in God, and not with a creature-love distinct from God.

There are two ways whereby this natural and lawful love of life becomes sinful — immoderateness and inordinateness. Immoderateness is, when men love their lives at that rate, that they are filled with unreasonable and distracting fears, cares, and thoughts about them; when the whole business of life is almost nothing else but a studiousness to preserve the being of life. Inordinateness is, when men, though they do not love their lives at that excessive rate, yet do love hfe as a creature-good, not in God, nor in order to him, but love it for itself, as something out of God. Every carnal man in the world is guilty of the latter, and I doubt but few saints are altogether free from the guilt of it. Now, that this immoderate love of life ought to be subdued in Christians, all men almost will grant: if any will not grant it, we can easily prove it from the command of God — " Take no thought for your life." —

" Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.""* Both which words in the most favourable interpretation that can be given of them, do, in the judgment of all, forbid immoderation: nay, a mere philosopher would inforce this from mere moral considerations, which I cannot now stand upon. But this inordinate love of life, as it is a more secret evil, a more refined corruption, is harder to be discovered, and men are loth to be convinced of the evil of it. Now, this particular distinct loving of life not as in God, but in itself, as a creature-good, is clearly condemned in that first and great commandment — " Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind;'" as if he should say, God the supreme, infinite, perfect, original, essential, self-sufficient Good, is to be loved in the highest, and purest, and strongest manner, that the heart of men is capable to love; and all other things only in him, and under him, and as being of him, and for his sake. Let it be allowed that life is good; yet it must be added, that it is but a created good: let it be allowed that life is comfortable; yet it must be acknowledged, that man's chief comfort and happiness doth not stand in this animal life. So then, life itself is to be loved in God, who is the fountain and spring of life; it is to be loved in the quality of a created good, and no otherwise.

Now, created goods are to be loved only in the Creator, as coming from him, as partaking of him, as leading to him. Argue the case a little thus: The soul of man is allowed to love its body with which the great God hath united it, and to love union with this body, which union we call life; but this body being a creature, and a creature much inferior to itself, and much more ignoble than itself, cannot in reason be judged to be the fit and adequate object of its strongest and best affections: that must needs be something more excellent than itself; and that cannot be anything in this world, for this world hath nothing so noble, so excellent in it as the soul of man; it must needs

be the Creator himself Well, seeing God is the supreme, self-sufficient, perfect Good, he is to be loved with all the strength and powers of the soul, singly and entirely: and the will of God being God himself, is not only to be submitted to, or rested in, but to be chosen and loved above all created things, yea, even above life itself, the best of creatures. So then, if it be the will of God to call for our lives, we ought readily to give them up; because we ought to love the will of God much "more than our lives. I pray you be impressed with this, that the will of God being pure, holy, and perfect, should not only be submitted to, or rested in, but even loved and chosen above all creatures. Now, the will of God is not that only whereby he teaches men, and prescribes laws to them, but that whereby he rules and governs the world, and disposes of men in any condition of life, or takes away their lives from them. The eternal Fountain of goodness can send forth nothing but what is perfectly good; and that which is perfectly good ought to be loved with a universal, pure, and, as far as possible, perfect love. This you will say, perhaps, is a high and a hard saying; but let it not seem impossible for a man to love his own life only in God, and in subordination to him; for this God requires, and he requires not things impossible —

" If any man come after me, and hate not his own life, he cannot be my disciple;" that is, not simply hate it, but in comparison of me and my will. It is not then impossible, nay, you see it is a necessary duty, without which we cannot be Christ's disciples. The saints of old found it possible. Holy Paul gives this answer readily — " I am ready to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus;" and "' I count not my life dear unto me, so that I might finish my course with joy.'"" It is witnessed of the whole army of martyrs that ''they loved not their lives unto the death:'' that is, they did not value them in respect of God and his truth. Neither let any one flatter himself, and say. Yea, if I were called to die for God, I would rather do it than deny him; for the will of God is as much to be eyed in his sending for us by a natural death as by martyrdom, and a not giving up our lives to him at any time, is as truly to deny him and his will, as not to give them up at the stake when we are called to it. Besides, how shall we imagine that he that is unwilling to die in his bed should be willing to die at a stake.

Now, this duty of being mortified to the love of this animal life, being so difficult, yet so necessary, and so noble, how doth it become every saint to study to attain to this perfection? which, that we may, let us press upon ourselves this consideration, this doctrine, that the glorified saints shall live as angels of God in heaven. We know that if this body were broken down, this low Ufe cut off, we should live like angels, not being beholden any more to poor creatures for help or comfort, but should be filled with the fulness of God, filled with his image and glory, and live upon him entirely for evermore.

Yea, I may add, that this very living above our own lives merely at the will of God, is a participation of the angelical life even in this world; therefore labour to be mortified to that love of this life which is here upon earth, yea, to be weary of it, yea, almost ashamed of it.

4. Shall we thus live the lives of the angels, subsisting in God, feasting upon him, filled with him to all eternity? this may moderate our sorrow which we conceive for the loss of any created good, houses, lands, husband, wife, children, &c.; yet a little while and we shall not miss them, shall not need them, shall not desire them any more. The blessed angels live a glorious life, and they have none of these, but are perfectly satisfied in the enjoyment of God alone; they have no wives nor children, yet they want none; and yet a little while, and we shall have none either, neither shall we

want them, having all things in the God of all things: they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are in conjunction with the Father, with love, and goodness, and truth itself; and so they have no want of anything. If you have no candles left in the house, yet it is towards day-break, and the sun will rise upon you, and you shall need none, and yet have light enough too. In a word, learn to live independent of them whilst you have them, and you will be the better able to live without them when they are removed.

5. I come now to the fifth and last use that I shall make of this doctrine; and oh that you and I may make this happy use of it! Shall the saints be as the angels of God in their way of living upon God, and enjoying all happiness in him alone for ever? shall this certainly be our life in heaven? oh! then, labour to begin this life upon earth. If you cannot perfectly transcribe, yet, at least, imitate that angelical kind of life. Though you are here imprisoned in a body of earth, and oft cumbered and clogged with bodily infirmities, and called to tend upon bodily necessities, yet, as far as this animal state will permit, live upon God. Do not excuse nor vindicate that low kind of earthly life, do not justify your living below and besides God, but stir up yourselves to behold where your happiness lies, and live not willingly below it. Certainly a pious soul hath more than bare hope in this world. God the blessed, infinite, and communicative Good, hath not locked himself so far out of sight, but that he gives his people a comfortable beholding of him even whilst they are in their pilgrimage; and what Solomon saith of the life of the godly, he means of their present life. “ The way of life is above to the wise f their living not only shall be, but is now above; it is a high way of livings, They are certainly a puny sort of meclianical Christians, that think and talk only of a heaven to come, and dream of a happiness without them, and distinct from them. The truly religious and God-like soul cannot so content himself, but being spirited and principled from above, is carried out after the infinite and almighty Good, as a thing is carried towards its centre; and hastens into his embraces as the iron hastens to the loadstone, and longs to be in conjunction with it.

If therefore ye be from heaven, live above all earthly things: “ If ye be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above.”’ If ye be born of God, live upon God. Deny self, live besides self, that is, live not to the service of your senses, to the lust of the flesh, to the lust of the eye, to the pride of life; let not your souls be servants to your sins, no, nor to your senses; that were for servants to ride on horseback, and princes to walk on foot. Live above self, that is, let your souls quit all their own interest in themselves, and entirely resign themselves to God, as to all points of duty and service. But that is not all; neither is that it which I urge you to from these words; but live above the creature, and whatsoever is in it, namely, delighting in God, conversing and communing with him alone as the chief Good; desire not any creature any further than as it may help you forward to the Creator; neither delight in it any further than as it either represents some of the divine perfections, witnesses something of divine love, or leads to some divine participation or communion. Seeing we shall come to live upon God, and delight in God alone, without any creature, let us now live upon, love God alone in very creature.

Now, to give you a more distinct knowledge of this high and noble life, I will explain it in some particulars, negatively and affirmatively.

I. Negatively.

1. “ Live not upon self I speak not of living unto self, but live not upon self, self-excellencies, self-sufficiencies, any created accomplishments, which was the life of the Stoics, those great

philosophers, who placed happiness in the enjoyment of themselves, which they called " independence of all things." To enjoy one's self indeed is a high duty, a noble privilege, a duty of the gospel — " Possess ye your souls." But how must we enjoy ourselves, why, only in God. He enjoys himself,

(1.) Not who, in a sullen melancholy, retires to a solitary and monastic life, as many of the sourer sort of Papists do.

(2.) Nor he who, in a proud mood, disdains the perfections of God shining forth in other men; and hiding himself from them through envy, contents himself to sit and admire his own personal accomplishments, as many humourists do.

(3.) Nor he who finding nothing without him, and knowing nothing above him to give his soul her full rest, settles upon a foundation of his own, and admires a self-sufficiency in the temper of his own spirit, a little subdued by philosophical precepts, as the Stoics did — But he who enjoys himself in God, that is, who doth not view himself in the narrow point of his own being, but, taking a view of himself in the unbounded essence of God, loves, and enjoys, and values himself, and all his personal excellencies as he is in God, and partakes of his perfections. To live in a way of self-converse is below the end of man's creation, who was made for a hiorher s:ood; and hereby a man shall never obtain true happiness, for it is peculiar to God alone to be happy in himself " In a word, a soul that confines itself to itself, and lives, and moves, and rejoices only within the narrow cell of its own particular being, deprives itself of that almighty and original goodness and glory that fills the world, and shines through the whole creation."

2. " Live not upon any creature without yourselves." Self indeed is a creature; but yet for clearness in proceeding we shall distinguish them.

Now, this is the life of the greatest part of men, they live beside God, and move only within the sphere of the creature. You will easily understand that I speak not of the body's living upon the creature, for so God hath appointed that it shall live; and yet as to this too, I say with our Saviour, " Man liveth not by bread alone;" but I speak of the soul of man living upon the creature as its highest, good, and feeding upon it as its best fare: they rise up early, and sit up late, and God is not in all their thoughts: they are filled with domestic and foreign comforts, but behold not the Father of lights from whom all these descend: they live upon the good things of the world, yet live without God in the world. Now, by these men,

(1.) I do not mean those heathens that in the most idolatrous manner do, in the literal sense, set up the creatures for gods.

(2.) Nor those Christians that in a most gross manner make idols of the creatures, and place their happiness in them.

(3.) No, nor only those earthly professors, who follow the world too eagerly, and have such a deep and rooted respect for it, that they can be ordinarily content to suffer creature-employments to justle God and duties out of their hearts and houses, whose worldliness is apparently too hard for their religion. Who then? shall we come any nearer? yes.

(4.) Those are guilty of creature-converse who do not enjoy all creatures in God; who love anything in any creature with a distinct love, who do not love it only in God; who love silver, gold,

houses, lands, trading, friends, with a particular over-weening love. Oh take heed of this creaturelove, of valuing any created thing any otherwise than in God, any otherwise than as being from God, partaking of him, and leading to him.

3. “ Live not upon ordinances.’^ These are God’s institutions, love them, cleave unto them, attend upon them, let no temptation cause you to leave them; but live not upon them, place not your religion, place not your hope, your happiness in them, but love them only in God; attend upon them, yet not so much upon them, as upon God in them; lie by the pool, but wait for the angel; love not, no, not a divine ordinance for its own sake. Why, who doth so? alas! who almost doth not?

(1.) Thus did they in Ezekiel 33:32, who delighted in the prophet’s eloquence, and in the rhetoric of his sermons, as much as in a well-tuned voice and harmonious music: and so do thousands in England, who read the Bible for the style or the story’s sake, and love to sit under learned and elegant discourses, more for accomplishment than for conversion: and swarms of priests, who preach themselves more than Christ Jesus, even in his own ordinances; as a proud boy rides a horse into the market, to set forth himself more than his m-aster’s goods.

(2.) But there are many not so gross as these, who do yet use ordinances in a way very gross and unspiritual, placing their devotion in them, and sinking their religion into a settled course of hearing or praying; who will wait upon God, as they call it, at some set and solemn times, new moons, and Sabbaths, it may be evening and morning; but religion must not be too busy with them, nor intermeddle in their ordinary affairs, or worldly employments; it hath no place there; they do not count it a garment for every day’s wear.

(3.) And not only these, but even almost all men are too apt to seek rest in duties and ordinances, or, at least, to be pretty well satisfied with the work done, whether they have conversed with God there or not. Oh, if you love youi souls, seek your happiness higher! Conversing with divine ordinances, I confess, is honourable and amiable, but it is too low a life for an immortal soul.

II. Affirmatively.

Let nothing satisfy you but God himself; take up with no pleasure, no treasure, no portion, no paradise, nay, no heaven, no happiness, below the infinite, supreme, and self-sufficient Good. Let your eye be upon him, and his all-filling fulness; let your desire be unto him, and to the remembrance of his name; follow hard after to know the Lord, and to enjoy the Father through his Son Jesus Christ; let your fellowship be with the Father, and with the Son, by the Spirit, “ O love the Lord, all ye his saints;”” “ love him with all your soul, and with all your strength;”“ “ yea, and keep yourselves always in the love of God; persevere and increase in the love of God;’’ “ Keep yourselves in the love of God.” Oh sweet duty! Oh amiable, pleasant task! Oh^ sweet and grateful command! Away, ye crowd of creatures, I must keep my heart for my God: away, ye gaudy suitors, away, ye glittering toys, there is no room for you; my whole soul, if its capacity were ten thousand times larger than it is, were too scant to entertain the supreme Good, to let in infinite goodness and fulness. Oh charge it upon yourselves with the greatest vehemence! Love the Lord, O my soul, keep thyself in the love of God; let the love of God constrain you, and keep yourselves under the most powerful constraints of it. In a word, live upon God as upon uncreated life itself, drink at the fountain, feed upon infinite fulness, depend upon almighty power, refer yourselves to unsearchable wisdom, and unbounded love; see nothing but God in the creature, taste nothing but

God in the world, delight yourselves in him, long for communion with him, and communications from him, to receive of his fulness grace for grace. Then do we live most like angels, when we live most purely in God, and find all the powers of our souls spending themselves upon him; and oiurselves, our life, and all the comforts of it, flowing from him, and again swallowed up in him. But because we are yet in the body, I shall explain it in these following particulars: —

1. " Converse with God in all your self-excellencies." I bade you before not converse with these; now, I say, converse with God in these. Thus do the angels; they know nothing that they have of their own, they enjoy nothing distinct from God, they are excellent creatures, excellent in knowledge, power, hoHness, &c.; yet they enjoy all their excellencies in God, and ascribe them all to him, and so let us labour to do.

(1.) View yourselves not in your own particular beings, but in the essence of God; look upon yourselves as being and subsisting in the midst of an infinite essence, in which the whole creation is, as it were, wrapt up, and doth subsist.

(2.) And whatever excellency you find in your souls or bodies, look not upon it as your own; maintain'not a mine and thine, a distinction of interests between God and yourselves, but look upon all as God's, and enjoy it in him.

(3.) When you find yourselves tempted to cast a fond and unchaste look upon the beauty, strength, activity, or temper of your own bodies, upon the ingenuity, wisdom, constancy, courage, composedness of your own souls, take heed of settling into a selfish admiration of any of them, but enjoy them in God, and say, This, O my body, this, O my soul, is no other than the portraitiu-e of the blessed God; these created excellencies are broken beams of the infinite, unspotted, uncreated perfections. Having once attained to this, we shall no longer covet to be admired, desire to be commended, fret at being undervalued; I mean, not in a selfish manner, but rather break out in a spiritual passion with the Psalmist, " O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! "

(4.) Nay, let me add, when you find yourselves ready to put your own stamp upon God's best coin, to look upon supernatural gifts and graces with a sinfijl, selfish admiration, remember that you have them only in Christ Jesus, and enjoy them in your head; labour to enjoy grace itself only in Christ, as the Apostle, " I, yet not I, but Christ in me;"" " I labour, yet not I, but the grace of God.'' So ought we to glory: I believe, I love, I am patient, penitent, humble; yet not I, but the grace of God that is with me, Christ Jesus that dwelleth in me. And indeed a pious man, who thus lives at the very height of his own being, yea, and above it too, knows best how to reverence himself, yea, and to love himself too, and yet without any self-love: for he loves himself in God, and his own endowments as divine ornaments.

2. " Converse with God, and live upon him in the excellencies of all other creatures, and in all your creature-enjoyments." We cannot live without creatures, as the angels do indeed, but let us come as near them as we can, which is by living above creatures: place your happiness in God, and your hearts upon him; labour to find God all things to you, and in you, and to be filled with his fulness; labour to get your understandings filled with the knowledge of God, your wills filled with his divine will, your hearts filled with his infinite goodness and sweetness, your memories filled with the remembrance of his name, your whole souls filled with his holy and pure image, filled with the

fruits of his Holy Spirit: nay, let these very bodies be filled not only with his good creatures, but more especially with his good-will in the creatures. It is said indeed of the sensual epicures of the world, that their bellies are filled with God's hid treasures, that is, with rare and precious delicacies: but how much better doth God fill the souls of his saints with his hid treasures, when he feedeth them with his divine favour, and dippeth his hand with them in the dish? This is meat indeed which the saints eat of, which other men, though they feed at the same table, know not of. The glorified saints shall be satisfied wholly and perfectly with the divine image shining gloriously on them, and in them; to which purpose that of the Psalmist may be accommodated, " I shall be satisfied when I awake with his likeness." Well, we cannot be so satisfied in this life it seems: however, though we cannot be so satisfied with it, yet let us not be satisfied without it, nor satisfied with anything besides it. Resolve, holy soul. Well, if I must not be fully satisfied with the image of my heavenly Father till I awake, I will lie down, and fall asleep hungry as I am then; for I will not fill my mouth with chaff, nor my soul with the husks that the swine do eat. But, in the mean time, get what you can of God out of creature-eny oyments.

(1.) Enjoy all things for God, and that these two ways:

(i.) Use all for him. Those riches, honours, interest, friends, which are clogs upon the heels of others, let them be as heels to you to carry you heaven-ward; let your souls be winged with those very enjoyments, wherewith the wings of others are pinioned; and that which is fuel to their worldly lusts, let it be as fuel to feed and nourish your spiritual love. To use what we have for God, is the only way of not abusing it; this is one way of enjoying all for God, to use all for him: and yet there is something higher in that phrase of enjoying all for God, than this, namely, (ii.) Value no creature-comfort any further than as it leads to God; and this in a double sense too.

1. Value things to -be good only by this, by their leading you unto God. Now, God being the supreme and infinite Good, anything is so far good as it leads to the enjoyment of him. Now, the enjoyment of God is only in being like to him; holiness is his image; so then, every thing is good that tends to sanctification, and to make men partakers of a divine nature. We are usually mistaken in the true notion of good and evil, of mercies and judgments, judging according to the taste, as foolish patients do; but God's thoughts are not as our thoughts. Measure all things by the proportion they bear, and the tendency they have to the supreme Good: and call not anything evil that brings nearer to him, nor anything good that draws off from him. 2. When you have found a thing that is really good, tending and leading to the chief Good, and to the possession of him; labour to enjoy it, and rejoice in it only under this notion, as such; when you love it, let it be with a pure spiritual love; and so order your delight in it, that it may be said, you do rather rejoice in the end of it, than in the enjoyment of it.

(2.) Another way of living upon God in the creature is, to enjoy all things as partaking of him.

" Every good and perfect gift is from above."

Every beam of created light floweth out of the Father of lights. When the blessed and glorious God framed this stately fabric of the visible world, because there was nothing better in the world than himself, he was pleased to copy out himself in it, and to spread his own infinite perfections over it, and through it, so that every particular good is a blossom of the first goodness; every created excellency is a dark draught of God, and a broken beam of this infinite Sun of righteousness. Oh

labour to do so! look upon the perfections which you find here below, not so much as the perfections of this or that particular being, but as they are so many drops risen out of the Fountain of all perfections, in whom they all meet, and are concentrated. It is well expressed by one, “ In a particular being, love the imiversal Goodness;” let the whole world be as the garden of God to you, where every creature is a flower, from which you may drink something of the divine sweetness. Alas! at what a low and sensual rate do we live, when we rejoice in creatures, either as they are excellent, or as they are ours? whereas indeed neither of these is true; for they are not excellent, but God is £xcellent in them; and how can we call anything our own, when God made both us and all things for himself? Oh! how injurious it is to the blessed God, when we rob him of his own perfections that he hath imprinted upon the creature, by loving it, and delighting in it, not as in him, but as something distinct from him! nay, we are then injurious to ourselves, as we shall see by and by. Labour to enjoy and to converse with God in the creatures. “ O how precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God! cried David, when he had been meditating of the creature’’s excellencies.

Labour to abstract your minds from terrene things even in the enjoyment of them, and call upon yourselves to love, and live, and feed upoil God in them; live not upon the dark side of your mercies, but upon the representations of God in them. Is there anything good? oh, this is a taste of infinite goodness! Is there anything sweet? oh, how sweet is the God that made it so! Is there anything lovely? it is a picture of him whose name is Love. Is anything firm, stable, lasting? it is a shadow of that glorious Essence with whom there is no shadow of change. Have you anything strong? it arises out of that God with whom is everlasting strength. Doth any creature give rest, ease, refreshment? it springs out of the all-satisfying fulness of God. In a word, labour to climb up by every created excellency, as by so many beams, to the Father of lights: let all the world be to you as God^s temple, and be ready to say of every place as Jacob, “ How dreadful is this place! surely this is none other but the house of God;” that God who runs through all created beings, and from himself derives several prints of beauty and excellency all the world over. But especially take heed of your own created comforts, that they do not insensibly lead away your hearts, and ensnare you into a sinful, particular, distinct love of them; which is a sin soon committed, hardly discerned, and most hardly reformed. If any be freed from these inordinate affections, sure they are but few; and those few have come dearly by it; as one said in another case. With a great sum they have obtained this freedom; they have paid for it, not with the foreskins of the Philistines, but with the lives of what they so loved, there being no way to cure this evil distemper, but cutting off the member infected with it, the part that it fed upon. As a branch of this head, let me add, Labour to live upon God in the excellencies of other men; value them, and all their accomplishments, only in God, as he that did admire God, and enjoy God in them. Wherever you see wisdom, goodness, ingenuity, holiness, justice, or any other accomplishment, say, here and there is God. And this is the honest way of making ourselves masters of whatever is another man’s, and enjoying it, as truly as he himself doth, yea, as truly as if it were our own; when we behold all these beams, as coming from the same Fountain of lights, and do love them all in him, with a universal love. This is the rare art of having nothing, yet possessing all things; of being rich, though one have nothing; and of being wise, though one know nothing.

(3.) The last way of living upon God in the creature is, to taste and feed upon the love of God in them, not only his common bounty, but his special love in Christ. The good will of God gives a sweet relish to every morsel, as I hinted before.

Even in the midst of all your delightful, pleasant, sweet enjoyments, let your souls be more affected with this than with them; let this be as the manna lying upon the top of all your outward comforts, which your spirits may gather up and feed upon. But this I touched upon before, therefore I shall add no more concerning it. Thus I have shown you how you may imitate the life of angels, in living upon God, even whilst you live in the body. To this I may add another particular or two.

3. “Converse with God, and live upon him in all his ordinances.” Let communion with God be your drift in every duty, and the very life and soul and sweetness of every ordinance. You never read of a soul more thirsty after ordinances than David, as might appear abundantly; yet if you look well into the expressions, you will find, that it was not so much after them, as after God in them; not after the dead letter, but after the livinj? God — “ Mv soul thirsteth for God, for the living God;” “ My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God,’ Let the word, preached or read, be as a voice from heaven talking with you; let your conference be a comment upon that word; let meditation be as a kind of bringing down God into your souls, and prayer as a raising up of your souls into God, nothing but faith and love put into praises. And so of all the rest.

4. “ Converse with God in all his providences; prosperity, adversity, plenty, penury, health, sickness, peace, and perplexity. This is a large theme, but as to prosperity, I have spoken something already, under that head of conversing with God in creature-enjoyments; as for adversity, I have said much more in a large discourse to describe and commend the art of conversing with God in afflictions.

Briefly at this time, converse not with losses, wants, afflictions, but with God in them; and that not only with the justice, righteousness, severity, and sovereignty of God in them, but with the goodness and mercy of God in them. They are dark providences, we had not need to dwell altogether on the dark side of them. If all the ways of the Lord towards his people be mercy and truth, then his roughest and most dark ways are so too: if God be wholly love, then his very corrections proceed not from hatred: if it be his name to be good, and to do good, where have we learned then to call his afflicting providences evils, and to divide evil, which is but one, even as God is one, into sin and affliction?

Surely we speak as men; and if God call them so, he speaks after the manner of men, as he often doth. If the governing will of God be pure, perfect, and infinitely good and righteous, ought we not to converse with it in a free and cheerful manner, yea, and to love it too? In a word, pore not upon creature-changes, nor the uncertain wheels of motion, that are turning, up and down we know not how, nor how oft; but fix yourselves upon that all-seeing Eye, that imbounded Understanding, that unsearchable and infinite Goodness, which pervades the whole universe, and sits in all the wheels of motion, governing all the strange motions of the creatures in a wonderful and powerful manner, and carrying them all in their several orbs to one last and blessed end.

Thus imitate the angelical life, even whilst you are in the body: converse with God in self-excellencies, in the creature excellencies, ordinances, providences; and yet labour to be more like him still, to abstract your mind from all these, and all material and sensible things, and to converse with God without the help of any creature, I mean in the Spirit, and by a secret feeling of his almighty goodness, and energy of grace, and the communications of a divine life in your souls. In a word, if you would taste of heaven, whilst you are upon earth, labour above all things for a true

conjunction of your hearts with God, in a secret feeling of his goodness, and a reciprocation of love to him; and to find the holy and blessed God exercising his grace and power upon all the faculties of your souls, and rendering them like unto himself, and all these powers of tlic soul mutually spending themselves upon him freely and entirely, as upon the chief Good, which is their proper and full object. Seeing the saints in glory shall be like unto the angels of God in their way of living in and upon God alone, receive, I pray, this exhortation, which I have so largely prosecuted, and labour to begin that life, as far as you can, upon earth. Is there not reason for such an inference? doth it not now flow naturally from the doctrine? If you think it does not, I will add two or three particulars to strengthen this inference, or at least to clear it.

(1.) It is highly reasonable that we begin to be that which we expect to be for ever, to learn that way of living in which we hope to live to all eternity, so that I infer, upon as strong ground as the Apostle, " He that hath this hope purifieth himself even as Christ is pure."

(2.) If this be the life of angels, then it is the highest and noblest life that any created being is capable of. As by the bread of angels, and the tongue of angels, the most excellent food, and the most excellent language is understood in scripture, so must we understand this life of angels. Now, it is very suitable to the reasonable soul, that immortal, noble being, to aim at the highest and noblest life, " What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?''

(S.) This shall not only be our life in heaven, but itself is something of heaven, a beginning of heaven. This life is not a thing really distinct from life eternal — " This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." " Ye have eternal life." Therefore we read of eternal life abiding in men, and not abiding in them — " Whoso eateth my flesh hath eternal life." A holy soul thus deified, thus living in and upon God, is as truly glorified upon earth, in some degree, as the world is enlightened by the morningsun, which is as truly enlightened, though not so gloriously, as by the sun in its greatest height. Oh low and ignoble spirits, who can be satisfied with a happiness which shall only be in the world to come!

Certainly it is true and proper speech to say, that a participation of God, is an anticipation of heaven; and to be like unto him, is to be with him. You see what reason I have to make such an inference, and to form it unto such an earnest exhortation; oh, therefore, I beseech you before God, and his holy angels, to endeavour to be like him, and to live like them?

Oh. Say not, How can men on earth live like angels.? Aiis. 1. But fall on and imitate them, though it be — with unequal steps; labour to be as angels, if you cannot be altogether equal to angels.

2. We are bidden to live the life of God — " Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." " Be ye holy as I am holy." If I speak high, how high speak these texts.

Oh. Say not. But how can this animal life permit this? Ans. 1. Thus men have lived in the body; thus lived Enoch, thus lived Paul, thus lived David, that man after God's own heart, the greatest and most divine character that can be given of a mortal man, " There is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." 2. Cannot we live in the body, except we live to the body? You see saints upon earth live above other men upon earth; and yet a little more pains, take the other flight, and you may live above yourselves too, higher than you do.

I will only add a motive or two to this duty of living upon God.

1. “ The last enemy to be overcome is creaturelove. This is the last enemy that keeps the field, by which alone the greatest part of men do perish everlastingly: beat down this, and you win the day, and shall wear the crown; nay, the very conquest of it is a crown, as I said before.

2. “ To live upon God in the creature, is to enjoy the creature in the best sense.” You will lose nothing of the creature by this means, but shall enjoy it more fully than ever you did: for the creature is ten thousand times sweeter in God than it is in itself. Yea, in a word, this is the way to enjoy all the world, and to enjoy the accomplishments of all men, and all things, as much as if they were your own.

3. “ It is the way never to lose anything.” He that lives upon God, spends upon a stock that cannot be wasted, drinks at a fountain that cannot be exhausted. So much as we enjoy of God in the creature, we do not lose with it; and that which we do not so enjoy, we deserve to lose. This then is the secure and honourable life, in comparison of which the life of a prince is but a wallowing in the mire. “ Lord, give us evermore this bread,” and hearts to feed upon it. Amen.

COMMUNION WITH CHRIST, BY THE REV. JOHN FLAVEL.

Communion with Christ is frequent in the lips of many men, but a hidden mystery to the souls of most men. This atheistical age scoffs at, and ridicules it as enthusiasm and fanaticism; but the saints find that reality and incomparable sweetness in it,that they would not part with it for ten thousand worlds. When the Roman soldiers entered the temple at Jerusalem, and found no image there, as they used to have in their own idolatrous temples; they gave out in a jeer, that the Jews worshipped the clouds.

Thus profane atheists scoff at the most solemn, awful, and sweetest part of internal religion as a mere fancy; but the thing is real, sure, and sensible: if there be truth in anything in the world, there is truth in this, that there are real intercourses between the visible and invisible world; between Christ and the souls of believers, which we here call communion: “ Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Christ Jesus.’’ It is really and truly so, we impose not upon the world, we tell you no more than we have felt. The life of Enoch is called “ his walking with God.’’ O sweet and pleasant walk! all pleasures, all joys are in that walk with God. “ Blessed are the people that hear the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance.’’ The joyful sound there spoken of was the sound of the trumpet, which called the people to the solemn assemblies, where they walked in the light of God’s countenance, the sweet manifestations of his favour; and because the world is so apt to suspect the reality and certainty of this doctrine, the Apostle again asserts it, “Truly our conversation is in heaven.” We breathe below, but we live above; we walk on earth, but our conversation is in heaven. To open this point, three things must come under consideration.

I. What communion with Christ is.

II. That there is such a communion between him and believers.

III. The excellency of this communion.

First, What communion with Christ is, in the general nature of it. To open this it must be considered that there is a twofold communion.

1. A state of communion.

2. Actual communion. The first is fundamental to the second; we can have no actual communion with the Father, Son, or Spirit, till we be first brought into a state of communion. This state of communion is in scripture called jcotvovm, our fellowship or partnership with Christ: such a fellowship as merchants have in one and the same ship and cargo; where one hath more and another less, but, however, a joint, though unequal interest; one lives in one kingdom, another in another kingdom, but they are jointly interested in the same goods. This comparison must not be stretched beyond its intention, which is to show nothing but this, that Christ and believers are co-partners, or co-heirs in the same inheritance: hence they are called, his fellows; " God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." And again, " If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."' Christ states his people, gives them a right and title not only to himself, but to those good things purchased by him, yea, and the very glory he now enjoys in heaven — " The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them."

It is true, there are some things in Christ which are peculiar to himself, and incommunicable to any creature, as his eternity, consubstantiality with his Father, &c. neither have we fellowship in his mediatorial works; we have the fruits and benefits of them, but no partnership with him in the glory and honour of them; that is peculiarly his own: and though it be said in the scriptures, that believers " are righteous as he is righteous,'*'' yet the meaning is not that they can justify others as Christ doth; no, they are justified by him, but cannot communicate righteousness to others as Christ doth to them. But there are other tilings wherein there is a partnership between Christ and his people; among others, they partake with him in the spirit of sanctification on earth, and glory in heaven: the same spirit of holiness which dwells in Christ without measure, is communicated by him to the saints in measure, " He hath given us of his Spirit." And as Christ communicates his Spirit to the saints, so he communicates the glory of heaven to them; not that they shall be as glorious in heaven as Christ is: no, he will be known among the saints in glory, as the sun is known from the lesser stars. Thus briefly of the state of communion, which is called in scripture " our being made nigh,' and indeed we must be made nigh before we can actually draw nigh. We must be put into a state of fellowship before ever we can have actual communion with God.

2. Beside this state of communion, there is also an actual communion which the saints have in this world wiUi the Father and the Son in the duties of religion. This is what I am here engaged to open, this is our supping with Christ, and his with us, and, for clearness"* sake, I shall open it.

First, Negatively, what it is not.

Secondly, Positively, what it is.

First, Negatively, what it is not; for I find persons are hugely apt to mistake in this matter, taking that for communion with God which is not so: and here l^t it be noted,

(1.) That communion with God doth not consist in the bare performance of religious duties. I do not say that men may have communion with God in this world without duties, it is a delusion of Satan to think so; but this is what I say, that communion with God consisteth not in the mere performance of duties. Communion and duties of religion are two things, separable one from the other.

Men may multiply duties, and yet be strangers to communion with God in them; even humiliation and fasting days may be kept by souls that are estranged from communion with the Lord — " Speak unto all the people of the land, and unto the priests, saying. When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even these seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me,? " as if he should say. Had your souls pure intentions and respects in those duties to my glory? Had you special communion with me, or I with you in those duties? Did you ever feel your souls in these days w^ounded for sin? Or did you not fast out of custom, and mourn for company? God may be near in men''s mouths, and at the same time far from their reins.

Religious words may flow cut of men's lips when not one drop of religion touches their reins and hearts; that is, the secret, inward powers of their souls: you cannot therefore safely depend upon this, Christ rejects this plea. Get a better evidence of communion with God than this, or you will certainly come short of your expectation. " I know you not,'' saith Christ; there was never any spiritual acquaintance between your souls and me; I know you not in a way of approbation.

(2.) Neither do all stirrings and workings of the affections in duties infallibly evidence and prove communion between Christ and that soul; for it is possible, yea, common, to have the affections raised in a natural way, and by external motives in the duties of religion; this you see in that example, " And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not.'' The sweet modulation of the prophets voice was like the skilful touch of a rare musical instrument, which in a natural way, moved and excited their affections. Thus John"'s hearers rejoiced in his ministry for a season. I confess this is very apt to cast souls into a mistake of their condition. They distinguish not between the influences that come upon their affections from without, from extrinsic things, and those that are purely inward, divine, and spiritual. But then.

Secondly, To show you positively what communion with God is. Here we must consider two things,
1. What things it presupposes in us.

2. Wherein the nature of it consists.

1. There are divers things prerequired and presupposed unto all actual communion with God in duties; and where these things are wanting, men have no communion with God. You may have pommunion with his people, and communion with his ordinances, but not communion with God and Christ in them. And these prerequisites are three:

(1.) Union with Christ is fundamentally necessary to all communion with him. All communion is founded in union; and where there is no union, there can be no communion. ' You know," saith an excellent person, ' the member receives nothing from the head unless it be united to it; nor the branch from the root.' " All is yours, and ye are Christ's;"' 'here is a vast possession, but all founded upon union: as all communion is founded upon union, so all union terminates in communion: and the closer the union the fuller is the communion.'

Before our union with Christ we are strangers unto God — " We live withovit God in the world; it is in Christ that we are made nigh; it is in the beloved we are made accepted. Whilst we are in the state of alienation from Christ, we have no more to do with the communications of joy and peace, with the seals and earnests of the Spirit, than a native Indian hath with the privileges of London. " If any man open to me, (saith Christ) I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with me."

(2.) Communion with God presupposes the habits of grace implanted in the soul by sanctifi cation; a sound and sincere change of heart. No sanctification, no communion; “ If we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.” The Apostle gives the lie such bold pretenders. “ The Lord is nigh to all that call upon him, unto all that call upon him in truth;*” the latter clause restrains all spiritual communion unto upright souls. “ For an hypocrite shall not come before him.”

(S.) Communion with God doth not only suppose grace implanted, but also implanted grace excited, grace in act; for a man may have the habits of faith, love, and delight in him, and yet be without actual communion with God; for by this grace is awakened and put into act. A believer when he is asleep, and acts no grace, is in a state of communion with God; but if he will have actual communion, his faith, love, and delight must be awakened; they must not lie asleep in the habit. “ Thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee. Thy face. Lord, will I seek.”“ It was in order to actual communion with Christ that the church so earnestly begs fresh influences of the Spirit to excite her graces into act —

“ Awake, O north wind, and come thou south, blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.’“ And though believers are not so to wait for the influences of the Spirit, as in the mean time to neglect all proper outward means of exciting their own graces, engaging their hearts to approach unto God; yet certainly it is the work of God’s Spirit, and without him we can do nothing to any purpose. The seamen may trim the sails, weigh the anchor, put all into a sailing posture; but till a gale come from heaven there is little or no motion. The same Spirit that plants the habits, is he also that excites the acts of grace. These three things therefore are prerequisites unto all communion with God

2. Next let us consider wherein this heavenly privilege of communion with God doth consist; and more generally it will be found to lie in a spiritual correspondence between Christ and the soul. God lets forth influences upon our souls, and we, by the assistance of his Spirit, make returns again unto God. Communion is a mutual action; so in the text, “ I will sup with him, and he with me.” We cry to God, and God answers that cry by the incomes of spiritual grace upon the soul: “ In the day that I cried, thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.’“’ More particularly, there are many ways and methods wherein men have this spiritual correspondence or communion with God, namely: —

First, In the contemplation of his attributes.

Secondly, In the exercises of our graces in religious duties.

Thirdly, In his various providences. In all these the saints have communion with him.

1. There is a sweet and sensible communion between God and his people, in the contemplation of the Divine attributes, and the impressions God makes by them upon our souls, whilst we meditate on them. As for instance.

(1.) Sometimes the Lord discovers and manifests to the souls of his people his immense greatness; the manifestation of which attribute makes an awful, humbling impression upon the soul, makes them seem as nothing to themselves. Thus when Abraham, that great believer, considered the greatness of that God with whom he had to do; that sight of God seems to reduce

him to his first principles, to crumble him, as it were, into dust and ashes again —

“ I that am but dust and ashes have taken upon me to speak unto God.” He now looks upon himself as a heap of vileness and unworthiness; so David, “ When I consider the heavens, the work of thy hands, the moon and the stars which thou hast made,’^ (from hence he inferred the greatness of the Creator,) “ Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him? “ as if he should say: When I consider what a great God the Creator of the world is, I am justly astonished that ever he should set his heart upon so vile a thing as man. When men compare themselves among themselves, and measure themselves by themselves, their spirits are apt to swell with pride; but would they look up to God, as these holy men did, they would admire his condescension. And this is communion with God in the meditation of his immense greatness.

(2.) The representations and meditations of the purity mid holiness of Gorf, working shame and deep abasement in the soul, for the pollutions and sinful filthincss that are in it. This is communion with God, and an excellent way of fellowship with him.

Thus, when a representation of God, in his holiness, was made unto the prophet, there we^e the seraphims, covering their faces with their wings, and crying one to another, saying, “ Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.” The effect this produced, or the return made by the prophet to this manifestation of God in his holiness, was deep abasement of the soul for his unsuitableness to so holy a God; “ Then said I, woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips,” &c. And this is real communion with God in his holiness. Thus Job who had stiffly defended his own integrity against men, yet when God enters the lists with him, and he saw what a great and holy God he had to do with, cried out, “ Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further C as if he should say, I have done, Lord, I have done; I could answer men, but I cannot answer thee: thou art holy, but I am vile.

(3.) There are sometimes representations of the goodness and mercy of God, made unto the souls of his people; when these produce an ingenuous thaw and melting of the heart, into an humble, thankful admiration of it, and an answerable care of pleasing him in the ways of obedience, then have men communion with God in his goodness. The goodness of God runs down to men in a double channel: his goodness to their bodies in external providences; his goodness to their souls in spiritual mercies. When thcrgoodness of God, either way, draws forth the love and gratitude of the soul to the God of our mercies, then have we real communion with him! Thus Jacob, “ And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac; which saidst unto me, return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee. I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant, for with my stafl* I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands.” Ah, Lord, I see a multitude of mercies round about me, and the least of them is greater than I. So David, “ And David the king came and sat before the Lord, and said, Who am I, O Lord God, and what is mine house, that thou hast brought me hither? And yet this was a small thing in thine eyes, O God, &c. what can David speak more to thee? ’’ You see in these instances, what effects the goodness of God, even in inferior, outward mercies useth to produce in sanctified hearts. But then, if you come to spiritual mercies, and ponder the goodness of God to your souls, in pardoning, accepting, and saving such vile, sinful creatures as you have been; this much more affects the heart, and overwhelms it with

holy astonishment; as you see in Paul: “ The grace of our Lord was abundant: I was a persecutor, a blasphemer, yet I obtained mercy.’’ So Mary, that notorious sinner, when pardoning grace appeared to her, into what a flood of tears, into what transports of love did the sight of mercy cast her soul! She wept, and washed her Saviour’s feet with tears of joy and thankfulness. No terrors of the law, no frights of hell, thaw the heart like the apprehensions of pardoning mercy.

(4.) Sometimes there are special representations of the veracity and faithfulness of God, made unto his people, begetting trust and holy confidence in their souls; and when they do so, then have men communion with God in his faithfulness. Thus —

’ I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” There is a discovery of the faithfulness of God, and what follows upon this.’ “So that we may boldly say, the Lord is our God; we will not fear what man can do unto us.” Here is faithfulness in God, producing trust and confidence in the believer; this is that reciprocation, that sweet fellowship and communion between God and a believer, with respect to his fidelity. “ Behold, God is my salvation: I will trust, and not be afraid.” And truly, friend, this is what the Lord justly expects from thee, even thy trust and confidence in him, thy steady dependence on him, in return for all the discoveries of his faithfulness to thee both in his word and providences.

(5.) There are manifestations of the ange) and displeasure of God, by the hiding of his face from them, and the frowns of his providence: when these produce repentance, and deep humiliation for sin, an unquietness, a restlessness of spirit, till he restore his favour, and manifest his reconciliation to the soul; even here also, is a real communion between God and the soul: “ Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.” Nor will a gracious soul rest there, but will take pains to sue out a fresh pardon—

“ Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice; restore unto me the joys of thy salvation.’“’

I cannot here omit to detect a great mistake even amongst God’s own people; many of them understand not what communion there should be with God under the manifestations of his displeasure for sin: they know the affectionate meltings of their souls into love, praise, &c. to be communion with God; but that in the shame, grief, and sorrow produced in them by the manifestations of God’s displeasure, I say that even in these things there may be communion with God they understand not. But let me tell thee, that even such things as these are the choice fruits of the spirit of adoption, and that in them thy soul hath as real and beneficial communion with God as in the greatest transports of spiritual joy and comfort. O it is a blessed frame to be before the Lord, as Ezra was, after conviction of thy looseness, carelessness, and spiritual defilements, the consequence of those sins; saying with him — “ O my God, I am ashamed, and even blush to lift up my face unto thee.” Shame and blushing are as excellent signs of communion with God as the sweetest smiles.

Lastly, Tliere are representations and special contemplations of the omniscience of God, producing sincerity, comfort in appeals, and recourse to it in doubts of our own uprightness: And this also is a choice and excellent method of communion with God. (1.) When the omniscience of God strongly obliges the soul to sincerity and uprightness, as it did David, Psalms 139:11-12, compared with Psalms 18:23, “ I was also upright before him.”“ The consideration that he was

always before the eye of God was his preservative from iniquity, yea, from his own iniquity. (2.) When it produceth comforts in appeals to it, as it did Hezekiah — '^ Remember now, O Lord, that I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart." So Job also appeals to this attribute — " Thou knowest that I am not wicked."" So did Jeremiah — " But thou, O Lord, knowest me, thou hast seen me, and tried my heart towards thee."" (3.) When we have recourse to it under doubts and fears of our own uprightness. Thus did David — " Search me, O God, and try my heart; prove me, and see my reins: see if there be any way of wickedness in me."" In all these attributes of God, Christians have real and sweet communion with him. Which was the first thing to be opened, to wit, communion with God in the meditation of his attributes.

2. The next method of communion with God is in the exercises of our graces in the various duties of religion; in prayer, hearing, sacraments, &c. in all which the Sph-it of the Lord influences the graces of his people, and they return the fruits thereof in some measure to him. As God hath planted various graces in regenerate souls, so he hath appointed various duties to exercise and draw forth those graces; and when they do so, then have his people sweet actual communion with him. And,

(1.) To begin with the first grace that shows itself in the soul of a Christian, to wit, repentance, and sorrow for sin. In the exercise of this grace of repentance, ^the soul pours out itself before the Lord with much bitterness and brokenness of heart; casts forth its sorrows; which sorrows are as so much seed sown, and, in return thereto, the Lord usually sends an answer of peace — " I said, I will confess my transgression, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."" Here is a voice of sorrow sent up, and a voice of peace coming down, which is real communion between God and man in the exercises of repentance.

(2.) As there are seasons in duty wherein the saints exercise their repentance, and the Lord returns peace; so likewise the Lord helps them in their duties to act i\\e\x faWi, in return whereunto, they find from the Lord inward support, rest, and refresliment. " I had fainted unless I had believed." And ofttimes an assurance of the mercies they have acted their faith about.

(3.) The Lord many times draws forth eminent degrees of our love to him, in the course of our duties; the licart is filled witli love to Christ. The strength of the soul is drawn forth to Christ in love, and this the Lord repays in kind, love for love —

" He that loveth me, my Father will love him; and we will come and make our abode with him.*" Here is sweet communion with God in the exercise of love. O what a rich trade do Christians drive this way in their duties and exercises of graces?

(4.) To mention no more in the duties of passive obedience, Christians are enabled to exercise their patience, meekness, and long-suffering for Christ, in return for which, the Lord gives them the singular consolations of his Spirit, double returns of joy.

" The Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon them.*" The Lord strengthens them with passive fortitude, with all might in the inner man, unto all long-suffering; but the reward of that long-suffering is joyfulness. This is the trade they carry on with heaven.

3. Beside communion with God in the contemplation of his attributes, and graces exercised in the course of duties, there is another method of communion with God in the way of his providences,

for therein also his people walk with him. To give a taste of this, let us consider providence in a fourfold aspect upon the people of God: —

(1.) There are afflictive providences, rods and rebukes wherewith the Lord chastens his children, this is the discipline of his house; in answer whereunto gracious souls return meek and child-like submission, a fruit of the spirit of adoption; they are brought to accept the punishment of their iniquities. And herein lies communion with God under the rod; this return to the rod may not be presently made, for there is much stubbornness unmortified in the best hearts; but this is the fruit it shall yield; and when it doth, there is a real communion with God and the afflicted soul. Let not Christians mistake themselves, if when God is smiting, they are humbled, searching their hearts, and blessing God for the discoveries of sin made by their afflictions; admiring his wisdom in timing, moderating, and choosing the rod; kissing it with a child-like submission, and saying, it is good for me that I have been afflicted: that soul hath real communion with God, though it may be for a time without joy.

(2.) There are times when providefice straitejis the people of God; when the waters of comfort ebb and run very low, wants pinch; if then the soul returns fdial dependence upon fatherly care, saying with David, " The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want;'' it belongs to him to provide, and to me to depend: I will trust my father's care and love.

Here now is sweet communion with God under pinching wants. The wants of the body enrich the soul, outward straitenings are the occasions of inward enlargements. O see from lience how good it is to have an interest in God as a Father whatever changes of providence may come upon you.

(3.) Tliere are seasons wherein the Lord exposes his people to imminent and visible dangers, when to the eye of sense there is no way of escape. Now when this produces trust in God, and resignation to the pleasure of his will, here is communion with God in times of distress and difficulty. Thus David, " At what time I am afraid I will trust in thee as if he should say. Father, I see a storm rising, thy poor child comes under his Father ''s roof for shelter; for whither should a distressed child go but to his Father? And then, as to the issues and events of doubtful providences, when the soul resigns and leaves itself to the wise disposal of the will of God, as David — " Here am I, let him do with me as seemeth good in his sight.'" This is real and sweet communion with God in his providences. And so much for the nature of communion with God.

Secondly, In the next place I shall evidence the reality of communion with God, and prove it to be no fancy. I confess it grieves me to be put upon the proof of this, but the atheism and profaneness of the age we live in seems to make it necessary; for many men will allow nothing for certain but what falls under the cognizance of sense. And O that they had their spiritual senses exercised! then they would sensibly discern the reality of these things. But to put the matter out of question, I shall evidence the truth and reality of the saints' communion with God divers ways.

Evidence 1. From the saints' union with Christ.

If there be a union between Christ and believers, then of necessity there must be n communion between them also. Now the Avhole word of God which you profess to be the rule of your faith, plainly asserts this union between Christ and believers; a union like that between the branches and the root, or that between the head and the members.

Now if Christ be to believers as the root to the branches, and as the head to the members; then of necessity there must be a communion between them, for if there were not a communion, there could be no communications; and if no communications, no life. For it is by the communication of vital sap and spirits, from the root and from the head, that the branches and members subsist and live.

Evid. There is a cohabitation of Christ with believers; he dwells with them, yea, he dwells in them — " I will dwell in them, and walk in them." The soul of a believer is the temple of Christ: yea, his living temple. And if Christ dwell with them; yea, if he dwell in them and walk in them, then certainly there must be communion between him and them; if they live together they must converse together. A man indeed may dwell in his house, and yet cannot be said to have communion with it; but the saints are a living house, they are the living temples of Christ; and he cannot dwell in such temples, capable of communion with him, and yet have no communion with them.

Evid. 3. The reality of communion between God and the saints is undeniably evinced from all the spiritual relations into which God hath taken them.

Every believer is the child of God and the spouse of Christ. God is the believer's Father, and the church is the Lamb's wife. Christ calls the believer not only his servant, but friend; henceforth I call you not servants, but friends, &c. Now, if God be the believer's Father, and the believer be God's own child, certainly there must be communion between them. If Christ be the believer's husband, and the believer be Christ's spouse, there must be communion between him and them. What, no communion between the Father and his children, the husband and the wife.^ We must either renounce and deny all such relations to him, and therein renounce our Bibles; or else yield the conclusion, that there is a real communion between Christ and believers.

Evid. 4. The reality of communion with God evidently appears from the institution and appointment of so many ordinances and duties of religion, on purpose to maintain daily communion between Christ and his people. As to instance but in that one institution of prai/er, a duty appointed on purpose for the soul's meeting with God, and communion with him: " Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." Now, to what purpose can it be conceived such an ordinance is appointed for the soul's drawing nigh to God, and God to it; if there be no such thing as communion to be enjoyed with him? If communion with God were a mere phantom, as the carnal world thinks it to be, what encouragement have the saints to bow their knees to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? But surely there is an access to God in prayer — " In whom we have boldness, and access with confidence." Access to what? If God be not there, and that there can be no communion with him, what means that access?

" I will meet with you, saith the Lord, and I will commune with you in every place where I record my name." Certainly duties had never been appointed, but for the sake of God's communing with us, and we with him.

Evid. 5. This is yet further evidenced from the mutual desires both of Christ and his people to be in sweet and intimate communion one with the other. The scripture speaks much of the saints' vehement desires of communion with Christ, and of Christ's desires after communion with the saints, and of both jointly. The saints' desires after communion with him are frequent in all the scriptures, see Psalms 113:1-3; Psalms 119:20; and the like throughout the New Testament. And

Christ is no less desirous, yea, he is much more desirous of communion with us than we are with him. Consider that expression of his to the spouse — " O thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it." As if he should say, O my people, you frequently converse one with another, you talk daily together; why shall not you and I converse one with another: you speak often to men, O that you would speak more frequently to me! " Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for thy voice is sweet, and thy countenance is comely."" And then these desires are mutually expressed one to another — " Surely ""' (saith Christ) " I come quickly, amen: even so come, Lord Jesus,'" saith the church. Now if there be such vehement mutual desires after communion between Christ and his people in this world; then certainly there is such a thing as real communion between them, or else both must live a very restless and dissatisfied life.

Evid. 6. The mutual complaints that are found on both sides of the interruption of communion, plainly prove there is such a thing. If God complain of his people for their estrangements from him, and the saints complain to God about his silence to them, and the hidings of his face from them; surely then there must be a communion between them, or else there could be no ground of complaint for the interruptions of it. But it is manifest God doth complain of his people for their estrangements from him — " Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, and the love of thy espousals.

What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me?'"* as if he should say, You and I have been better acquainted in days past; what cause have I given for your estrangements from me? And thus Christ in like manner complains of the church of Ephesus; after he had commended many things in her, yet one thing grieves and troubles him — "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. And then on the other side, when the Lord hides his face, and seems to estrange himself from his people; what sad lamentations and moans do they make about it, as an affliction they know not how to bear? Thus Heman, " Lord, why castest thou off my soul? Why hidest thou thy face from me? So David, " Hide not thy face from me: put not thy servant away in anger.^' This is what they cannot bear.

Emd. 7. The reality of communion with God is made visible to others, in the sensible effects of it upon the saints that enjoy it. There are visible signs and tokens of it appearing to the conviction of others. Thus that marvellous change that appeared upon the very countenance of Hannah, after she had poured out her heart in prayer, and the Lord had answered her; it is noted, " She went away, and her countenance was no more sad.^' You might have read in her face that God had spoken peace and satisfaction to her heart. Thus, when the disciples had been with Christ, the mark of communion with him was visible to others — " Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, they marvelled, and took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.'' It is sweet, Christian, when the heavenly cheerfulness, and spirituality of thy conversations with men, shall convince others that thou hast been with Jesus.

Evid. 8. We may prove the reality of communion with God, from the impossibility of sustaining those troubles the saints do without it. If prayers did not go up, and answers come down, there were no living for a Christian in this world. Prayer is the out-let of the saints' sorrows, and the in-let of their supports and comforts. Say not, other men have their troubles as well as the saints, and yet they make a shift to bear them without the help of communion with God. It is true, carnal men

have their troubles, and those troubles are often too heavy for them. “ The sorrows of the world work death;” but carnal men have no such troubles as the saints have, for they have their inward, spiritual troubles, as well their outward troubles. And inward troubles are the sinking troubles; but this way the strength of God comes in to succour them: and except they had a God to go to, and fetch comfort from, they could never bear them: “ I had fainted unless I had believed.” Paul had sunk under the buifetings of Satan, unless he had gone once and again to his God, and received this answer, “ My grace is sufficient for thee.”

Evid. 9. We conclude the reality of communion with God, from the end of the saint’s vocation.

We read frequently in scripture of effectual calling; ROW what is that to which God calls his people, out of the state of nature, but unto fellowship and comniunion with Jesus Christ? “ God is faithful, by whom ye are called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.’ They are called, you see, into a life of communion with Christ; therefore certainly there is such a communion, else the saints are called to the enjoyment of a fancy, instead of a privilege, which is the greatest reproach that can be cast upon the faithful God that called them.

Evid. 10. Lastly, In a word, the characters and descriptions given to the saints in scripture, evidently prove their life of communion with God. The men of this world are manifestly distinguished from the people of God in scripture; they are called, “ The children of this world;’ ’ the saints, “ The children of light.” They are said to be “after the flesh,” saints to be “ after the Spirit.” They “ mind earthly things,” but the saint’s “ conversation is in heaven.” By all which it undeniably appears that there is a reality in the doctrine of communion between Christ and his people. We are not imposed upon, it is no cunningly devised fable; but a thing whose foundation is as sure as its nature is sweet.

Thirdly, In the last place, I shall show you the transcendent excellency of this life of communion with God: it is the life of our life, the joy of our hearts; a heaven upon earth, as will appear by these twenty excellencies thereof following: —

1 Excellency. It is the assimilating instrument whereby the soul is moulded and fashioned after the image of God. This is the excellency of commanion with God, to make the soul like him. There is a twofold assimilation, or conformity of the soul to God, the one perfect and complete, the other inchoate and in part. Perfect assimilation is the privilege of the perfect state, resulting from the immediate vision and perfect communion the soul hath with God in glory — “When he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”

Perfect vision produceth perfect assimilation; but the soul’’s assimilation or imperfect conformity to God in this world, is wrought and gradually carried on, by daily communion with him. And as our communion with God here, grows up more and more into spirituality and power, so in an answerable degree doth our conformity to him advance: “ But we all, with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.

All sorts of communion among men have an assimilating efficacy; he that walks in vain company is made vainer than he was before; and he that walks in spiritual, heavenly company, will be ordinarily more serious than he was before. But nothing so transforms the spirit of a man as communion with God doth. Those are most like unto God that converse most frequently with him.

The beauty of the Lord is upon those souls; it forms the spirit of a man after the divine pattern. That is the first excellency of communion with God, it assimilates them to God.

2 Ecellency. It is the beauty of the soul, in the eyes of God and all good men; it makes the face to shine. No outward splendor attracts like this; it makes a man the most desirable companion in the whole world: " These things have I written unto you, that you might have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.'" This was the great and only inducement the Apostle makes use of to draw the world into fellowship with the saints, that their fellowship is with God. And if there were ten thousand other inducements, yet none like this. You read of a blessed time, Zechariah 8:1-23. when the earth shall be full of holiness; when the Jews, that are now as a lost generation to the eye of sense, shall be called, and an eminent degree of sanctification shall be visible in them; and then see the effect of this, Zechariah 8:23, " In those days, ten men shall take hold, out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirts of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'" This is the powerful attractive, " the Lord is with you C it is the effect of communion with God, which makes the righteous more excellent than his neighbour. What a vast and visible difference doth this make between one man and another! How heavenly, sweet, and desirable are the conversations and company of some men! How frothy, burdensome, and unprofitable is the company of others! and what makes the difference but only this, the one walks in communion with God, the other is alienated from the life of God.

3 Excellency. It is the centre which rests the motions of a weary soul: it is the rest and refreshment of a man"'s spirits — " Return unto thy rest, O my soul.'" When we attain perfect communion with God in heaven, we attain to perfect rest, and and all the rest the spirit of man finds on earth, is found in communion with God. Take a sanctified person, who hath intermitted for some time his communion with the Lord, and ask him. Is your soul at rest and ease ''^ He will tell you, no! The motions of his soul are like those of a member out of joint, neither comely nor easy. Let that man recover his spiritual frame again, and, with it, he recovers his rest and comfort. Christians, you meet with variety of troubles in this world; many a sweet comfort is cut off, many a hopeful project dashed by the hand of providence; and what think you is the meaning of those blasting, disappointing providences? Surely this is their design and errand, to disturb your false rest in the bosom of the creature; to pluck away those pillows you were laying your heads upon, that thereby you might be reduced unto God, and recover your lost communion with him; and say, with David, " Return unto thy rest, O my soul." Sometimes we are settling ourselves to rest in an estate, in a child, or the like; at this time it is usual with God to say, go, losses, smite and blast such a man''s estate; go, death, and take away the desire of his eyes with a stroke, that my child may find rest no where but in me. God is the ark; the soul, like the dove Noah sent forth, let it fly where it will, it shall find no rest till it come back to God.

4 Excellency. It is the desire of all gracious souls throughout the world. Wherever there is a gracious soul, the desires of that soul are working after communion with God. As Christ was called, " The desire of all nations,'" so communion with him is " the desire of all saints;" and this speaks the excellency of it — " One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I might dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to see the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple; that is, to enjoy communion with him in the public duties of his worship. " One thing have I desired," that is, one thing above all other things; such a one, as, (if God shall

give me,) I can comfortably bear the want of all other things. Let him deny me what he will, if so be he will not deny me this one thing; this one thing shall richly recompense the want of all other things. Hence the desires of the saints are so intense and fervent after this one thing, in such expressions as the following — " My soul panteth after thee, O God f' and " My soul fainteth for thy salvation.'" No duties can satisfy without it, the soul cannot bear the delays, much less the denials of it. They reckon their lives worth nothing without it. Ministers may come, ordinances and sabbaths may come; but there is no satisfaction to the desires of a gi-acious heart, till God comes too; " O when wilt thou come unto me?"

5 Eoocelleficy. As it is the desire, so it is the delight of all the children of God, both in heaven and earth. As communion with the saints is the dclisht of Christ — " Let me hear thy voice:"" and again —

" The companions hearken to thy voice; cause me to hear it:" so communion with Christ is the delight of his people. " I sat under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet unto my taste.""'

It is the pleasure of Christ to see the yearning countenances, the blushing cheeks, the dropping eyes of his people upon their knees; and it is the delight of the saints to see a smile upon his face, to hear a voice of pardon and peace from his lips. I must tell you, Christians, you must look for no such delights as these, in any earthly enjoyment, none better than these, till you come home to glory; communion with God then appears most excellent, in as much as it is found to be the desire and delight of all gracious souls.

6 Excellency. It is the envy of Satan that which cuts and grates that wicked spirit. O how it grates, and galls that proud and envious spirit, to see men and women enjoying the felicity and pleasure of that communion with God, from which he himself is fallen and cut off for ever! to see the saints imbosomed in delightful communion with Christ, whilst himself feels the pangs of horror, and despair! this is what he cannot endure to behold. And therefore you should find in your experience, that times of communion with God are usually busy times of temptation from the devil. " And he showed me Joshua the high-priest standing before the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him." It is well for thee. Christian, that thou hast an Advocate standing at God's right hand to resist, and frustrate his attempts upon thee; otherwise Satan would this way destroy your communion with God, and make that which is now your delight, to be your terror. Many ways doth the devil oppose the saint''s communion with God; sometimes he labours to divert them from it: this business shall fall in, or that occasion fall out, on purpose to divert thy soul's approach to God; but if he cannot prevail there, then he labours to distract your thoughts, and break them into a thousand vanities; or if he succeed not there, then he attacks you in your return from duty, with spiritual pride, security, &c. these fierce oppositions of hell discover the worth, and excellency of communion with God.

7 Exccellency. It is the end of all ordinances, and duties of religion. God hath instituted every ordinance and duty, whether public or private, to beget and maintain communion between himself and our souls. What are ordinances, duties, and graces, but perspective glasses to give us a sight of God, and help us to communion with him? God never intended his ordinances to be our rest, but mediums, and instruments of communion with himself, what is our true rest. When we go into a boat, it is not with an intention to dwell, and rest there, but to ferry us over the water, where our

business lies. If a man miss of communion with God in the best ordinances, or duty, it yields him little comfort. He comes back from it, like a man that hath travelled a great many miles to meet a dear friend, upon special and important business; but met with disappointment, and returns sad and dissatisfied. God appoints ordinances to be meeting-places with himself in this world — " Thou shall put the mercy-seat above upon the ark, and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee; and there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee, from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubims." It was not the sight of the golden cherubims, or of the ark overlaid with pure gold, that could have satisfied Moses, had not the special presence of God been there, and he had had communion with him. " O God, (saith David) my soul thirsteth for thee, that I might see thy beauty, and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.'^]\Iagnificent structures, artificial ornaments of the places of worship, are of little account with a gracious soul; it is the presence of God, and communion with him, which is the beauty and glory the saints desire to behold,

8 Excellency, It is the evidence of our union with Christ and interest in him. All union with Christ must evidence itself by a life of communion with him, or our pretensions to it are vain and groundless. There be many of you (I wish there were more) enquiring after evidences and signs of your union with Christ; why here is an evidence that can never fail you: do you live in communion with him? May your life be called a walking with God, as Enoch's was? Then you may be sure you have union with him, and this is so sure a sign, as death itself (which uses to discover the vanity of false signs) will never be able to destroy. " Remember now, O Lord, (saith Hezekiah) that I have walked before thee in truth, and in a perfect heart."" professors! it will be a dreadful thing (whatever ungrounded hopes and false comforts you now have) to find them shrinking away from you, as certainly as they will do at death; and all upon this account:

1 have been a man of knowledge, I have been frequent in the external duties of religion, but my heart was not in them; I had no communion with the Lord in them, and now God is a terror to my soul. I am going to his awful bar, and have not one sound evidence to carry along with me. This is a remarkable place — " If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit;" that is, let us evidence the life of grace in us by exercising that grace in a life of communion with God. When all is said, this is the surest evidence of our union with Christ; and no gifts or performances whatsoever can amount to an evidence of our union with Christ without it.

9 Excellency. It is ease in all pains, sweet and sensible ease to a troubled soul. Look, as the bleeding of a vein cools, eases, and refreshes a feverish body; so the opening of the soul by acts of communion with God, gives sensible ease to a burdened soul: griefs are eased by groans heavenward.]\Iany souls are deeply laden with their own fears, cares, and distresses; no refreshment for such a soul, no such anodyne in the whole world as communion with God is. How did troubles boil in David's soul? night and day God's hand was heavy on him; his soul, as Elihu speaks, was like bottles full of new wine; he must speak to God that he may be refreshed: and so he did, and was refreshed by it.

" I said, I will confess uiy transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.'

It would grieve one to see how many poor distressed souls carry their troubles up and down the world, making their complaints to one another; but no ease. Away to thy God, poor Christian, get thee into thy closet, pour out thy soul before him; and that ease which thou seekest in vain

elsewhere, will there be found, or no where.

10 Excellency. It is food to the soul, and the most delicious, pleasant, proper, and satisfying food that ever it tasted; it is hidden manna. “ By these things, O Lord, do men live, and in them is the life of their soul.” A regenerate soul cannot live without it; their bodies can live as well without bread or breath as their souls without communion with God: it is more than their necessary food. Here they imd what they truly call marrow and fatness.

O the satisfaction and support they draw out of spiritual things by thoughts and meditations upon them! — “ To be spiritually minded is life and peace/’ The delicacies upon princes’ tables are husks and chaff to this. Crows and vultures can live upon the carrion of this world, but a renewed soul cannot subsist long without God. Let such a soul be diverted for a time from its usual refreshments this way, and he shall find something within paining him like the sucking and drawing of an empty stomach. It is angeFs food, it is that your souls must live upon throughout eternity, and most happily too.

11 EoDcellency. It is the guard of the soul against the assaults of temptation. It is like a shield advanced against the fiery darts of that wicked one. Your safety and security lie in drawing nigh to God — “ They that are far from thee shall perish: but it is good for me to draw near to God.” It is good indeed; not only the good of comfort, but the good of safety is in it — “ The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him.’“* You know the gracious presence of God is your shield and safety; and if you will have the Lord thus present with you in all your fears, straits, and dangers, see that you keep near to him in the duties of communion: “ For the Lord is with you whilst you are with him.

12 Excellency. It is the honour of the soul, and the greatest honour that ever God conferred on any creature. It is the glory of the holy angels in heaven, to be always beholding the face of God. O that God should admit poor dust and ashes unto such a nearness to himself! to walk with a king, and have frequent converse with him, put a great deal of honour upon a subject; but the saints walk with God; so did Enoch, so do all the saint?.

“ Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Christ Jesus.’’ They have liberty and access with confidence; the Lord, as it were, delivers them the golden key of prayers by which they may come into his presence on all occasions with the freedom of children to a father.

13 Excellency. It is the instrument of mortification, and the most excellent and successful instrument for that purpose in all the world — “ This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the works of the flesh.” Walking in the Spirit is the same thing with walking in communion with God. Now, saith that apostle, if you thus walk in the Spirit, in the actings of faith, love, and obedience, throughout the course of holy duties, the effect of this will be, that ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. He doth not say. You shall not feel the motions of sin in you, or temptations to sin assaulting you; but he saith. You shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh, sin shall not have dominion over you; this will let out the life-blood of sin. A temptation overcome this way is more effectually subdued than by all the vows, resolutions, and external means in the world: as a candle that is blown out with a puff of breath may be rekindled by another puff, but if it be quenched in water it is not so easily lighted again; so it is here: you never find that power or success in temptations when your hearts are up with God in their exercises of faith and love, as you do when your hearts hang

loose from him, and dead towards him. The schoolmen assign this as one reason why the saints in heaven are impeccable, no sin can fasten upon them, because, say they, they there enjoy the beatifical vision of God. This is sure, the more communion any man hath with God on earth, the freer he lives from the power of his corruptions.

14 Excellency. It is the kernel of all duties and ordinances: words, gestures, &c. are but the integuments, husks, and shells of duties. Communion with God is the sv/eet kernel, the pleasant and nourishing food which lies within them: you see the fruits of the earth are covered and defended by husks, shells, and such like integuments; within which lie the pleasant kernels and grains, and these are the food. The hypocrite who goes no further than the externals of religion, is therefore said to feed on ashes, to spend his money for that which is not bread, and his labour for that which satisfieth not. He feeds but upon husks, in which there is but little pleasure or nourishment. What a poor house doth a hypocrite keep? Words, gestures, ceremonies of religion, will never fill the soul; but communion with God is substantial nourishment.

“ My soul (saith David) shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, whilst I think and meditate on thee. It would grieve one’s heart to think what airy things many souls satisfy themselves with; feeding like Ephraim upon the wind, well contented if they can but shufHe over a few heartless, empty duties; whilst the saints, feeding thus upon hidden manna, are feasted, as it were, with angel’s food.

15 Excellency. It is the light of the soul in darkness; and the pleasantest light that ever shone upon the soul of man. There is many a soul which walketh in darkness; some in the darkness of ignorance and unbelief, the most dismal of all darkness, except that in hell. There are others who are children of light in a state of reconciliation, yet walk in the darkness of outward afflictions, and inward desertions and temptations; but as soon as ever the light of God’s countenance shines upon the soul in the duties of communion with him, that darkness is dissipated and scattered; it is all light within him and round about him — “ They looked unto him and were enlightened;” they looked, there is faith acted in duty; and were enlightened, there is the sweet effect of faith. The horrors and troubles of gracious souls shrink away upon the rising of this cheerful light. As wild beasts come out of their dens in the darkness of the night, and shrink back again into them when the sun ariseth; so do the fears and inward troubles of the people of God when this light shines upon their souls. Nay more, this is a light which scatters the very darkness of death itself It was the saying of a worthy divine of Germany upon his death-bed, when his eye-sight was gone, being asked how it was within? “ Why,” said he, “ though all be dark about me,’’ yet, pointing as well as he could to his breast, “ Mc sat hicis, here is light enough.’’

16 Excellency. It is liberty to the straitened soul, and the most comfortable and excellent liberty in the whole world. He only walks at liberty that walks with God — “ I will walk at liberty, for I seek thy precepts.”

Wicked men cry out of bands and cords in religion, they look upon the duties of godliness as the greatest bondage and thraldom in the whole world — “ Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us;” as if he should say, away with this strictness and preciseness, it extinguishes the joy and pleasure of our lives; give us our cups instead of Bibles, our profane songs instead of spiritual psalms, our sports and pastimes instead of prayers and sermons.

Alas, poor creatures, how do they dance in their shackles and chains! when, in reality, the sweetest liberty is enjoyed in those duties at which they thus snuff. The law of Christ is the law of liberty; the soul of man never enjoys more liberty than when it is bound with the strictest bands of duty to God.

Here is liberty from enthralling lusts, and from enslaving fears: “ The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.’’ And here is freedom indeed: “ If the Son make you free, then are ye free indeed.” And here is freedom from fears, Luke 1:74-75. Those that will not endure any restraint from their lusts, will have their freedom to sin; a freedom they shall have, such as it is: “ When ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.” Let none therefore be prejudiced at the ways of duty and strict godliness — “ The law of Christ is the perfect law of liberty;” not liberty to sin, but liberty from sin.

17 Excellency. It is a mercy purchased by the blood of Christ for believers, and one of the principal mercies settled upon them by the new covenantgrant. A peculiar mercy, which none but the redeemed of the Lord partake of; a mercy which cost the blood of Christ to purchase it. I do not deny but there are thousands of other mercies bestowed upon the unregenerate; they have health, wealth, children, honours, pleasures, and all the delights of this life; but for communion with God, and the pleasures that result therefrom, they are incapable of these. No supping with Christ, upon such excellent privileges and mercies as these, till the heart be opened to him by faith; you cannot come nigh to God, until you be first made nigh by reconciliation.

What would your lives. Christians, be worth to you, if this mercy were cut off from you? There would be little sweetness or savour in all your outward mercies, were it not for this mercy that sweetens them all. And there is this difference, among many others, between this mercy and all outward mercies: you may be cut off from the enjoyment of those, you cannot from this; no prison can keep out the Comforter. O bless God for this invaluable mercy.

18 Excellency. It is natural to the new creature; the inclination and instinct of the new creature leadeth to communion with God. It is as natural to the new creature to desire it, and work after it, as it is to the new-born babe to make to the breast — “ As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.”

There is a law upon the regenerate part, which inwardly and powerfully obliges it to acts of duty, and converse with God in them. Communion with God is a thing that ariseth out of the principles of grace. You know all creatures in this lower world act according to the laws of nature; the sun will rise, and the sea will flow at their appointed times; and the gracious soul will make towards its God in the times and seasons of communion with him.

They are not forced on to those duties by the frights of conscience, and the fears of hell, so much as by the natural inclination of the new creature.

Two things demonstrate communion with God to be congenial with the regenerate part, called the hidden man of the heart, namely: (1.) The restlessness of a gracious soul without it, Song of Solomon 3:2. The church, in the first verse, had sought her beloved, but found him not. Doth she sit down satisfied in his absence? No; “I will rise now, and go about the city, in the streets, and in the broad ways; I will seek him whom my soul loveth.” (2.) The satisfaction and pleasure, the rest and delight which the soul finds and feels in the enjoyment of communion with God, plainly show it

to be agreeable to the new nature — “ My soul shall be satisfied when I think on thee.’“ And when it is thus, then duties become easy and pleasant to the soul: “ His commandments are not grievous.” Yea, and such a soul will be constant and assiduous in those duties. That which is natural, is constant as well as pleasant. What is the reason hypocrites throw up the duties of religion in times of difficulty, but because they have not an inward principle agreeable to them? The motives to duty lie without them, not within them.

19 Excellency. It is the occupation and trade of all sanctified persons, and the richest trade that was ever carried on by men. This way they grow rich in spiritual treasures; the revenues of it are better than silver and gold. There be many of you have traded long for this world, and it comes to little; and had you gained your designs you had gained but trifles. This is the rich and profitable occupation — “ Our conversation is in heaven.” Our commerce and trade lies that way, so that word signifies.

There be few Christians that have carried on this soul-enriching trade any considerable time, but can sliow some spiritual treasures which they have gotten by it — “ This 1 had, because I kept thy precepts.” As merchants can show the gold and silver, the lands and houses, the rich goods and furniture, which they have gotten by their successful adventures abroad; and tell their friends, so much I got by such a voyage, and so much by another: so Christians have invaluable treasures, though their humility conceals them, which they have gotten by this heavenly trade of communion with God. Their souls are weak, and by communion with God they have gotten strength: “I cried, and thou strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.” They have gotten peace by it, a treasure inestimable: “ Great peace have they that love thy law and nothing shall offend them.” They have gotten purity by it, “ They do no iniquity that walk in thy ways.” O what rich returns are here! nay, they get sometimes full assurance by it. The riches of both the Indies will not purchase from a Christian the least of these mercies. These are the rich rewards of our pains in the duties of religion; “In keeping thy commandments there is great reward.”

20 Excellency. It is oil to the wheels of obedience, which makes the soul go on cheerfully in the ways of the Lord — “ Then will I run the ways of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.” No7i tardat uncta rota^ — Oiled wheels run nimbly. How prompt and ready for any duty of obedience, is a soul under the influence of communion with God! Then, as Isaiah, having gotten a sight of God, “Here am I, Lord, send me.”

Now the soul can turn its hand to the duties of, First, Active; and Secondly, Passive obedience.

First, Hereby the soul is prepared and fitted for the duties of active obedience, to which it applies itself with pleasure and delight — “ Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy;” or, as it is in the Hebrew, “ the gladness of my joy.’“ It goes to prayer as a hungry man to a feast, or as a covetous man to his treasures — “ I have rejoiced in the way of thy commandments as much as in all riches.”

Secondly, It prepares the soul for passive ohedience: makes a man to rejoice in his sufferings. It will make a Christian stand ready to receive any burden or load that God shall lay upon his shoulders, and even be thankful to be so employed —

“ This joy of the Lord is their strength.” A Christian, under the cheerful influences of near communion with God, can, with more cheerfulness, lay down his neck for Christ, than other men

can lay out a shilling for him. In all these twenty particulars, you have an account of the excellency of this privilege; but O how short an account have I given of it! What remains, is the application of this point, in a double use: —

I. Of information.

II. Of exhortation.

I. For information in the following inferences: —

Inference 1. How sure and certain a thing it is, that there is a God, and a state of glory prepared in heaven for sanctified souls.

These things are undeniable. God hath set them before our spiritual eyes and senses: beside the revelation of it in the gospel, which singly makes it infallible; the Lord, for our abundant satisfaction, hath brought these things down to the touch and test of our spiritual senses and experiences. You that have had so many sights of God by faith, so many sweet tastes of heaven in the duties of religion, O what a confirmation and seal have you of the reality of invisible things! You may say of heaven, and the joys above, as the Apostle did of him that purchased it — " That which our eyes have seen, and our ears have heard, and our hands have handled,'' &c. For God hath set these things in some degree before your very eyes, and put the first-fruits of them into your own hands. The sweet relish of the joy of the Lord is upon the very palate of your souls. To this spiritual sense of the believing Hebrews, the Apostle appealed, when he said, " Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better, and an enduring substance.'"" This knowing in ourselves is more certain and sweet than all the traditional reports we can get from the reports of others — " Whom having not seen ye love; whom, though now you see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.'"

There is more of heaven felt and tasted in this world than men are aware of; it is one thing to hear of such countries as Spain, Italy, Smyrna, by the discourses and reports we heard of them in our childhood, and another thing, to understand those countries by the rich commodities imported from them, in the way of our trade and commerce. O did we but know what other Christians have felt and tasted, we should not have such staggering thoughts about invisible things! but the secret comforts of religion are, and ought to be for the most part inclosed things. Religion lays not all open; the Christian life is a hidden life.

Infer. 9,. If such a height of communion with God be attainable on earth, then most Christians live below the duties and comforts of Christianity.

Alas, the best of us are but at the foot of this pleasant mount Pisgah. As we are but in the infancy of our graces, so we are but in the infancy of our comforts. What a poor house is kept by many of God's own children; living between hopes and fears, seldom tasting the riches and pleasures, the joys and comforts of assurance! and will you know the reasons of it? There are five things which usually keep them poor and low as to spiritual joys and comforts. (1.) The incumbrances of the world, which divert them from, or distract them in their duties of communion with God, and so keep them low in their spiritual comforts: they have so much to do on earth, that they have little time for heavenly employments. O what a noise and din do the trifles of this world make in the heads and hearts of many Christians! How dear do we pay for such trifles as these? (2.) A spirit of formality

creeping into the duties of religion, impoverishes the vital spirit thereof, like the wanton embraces of the ivy, which binds and starves the tree it clasps about. Religion cannot thrive under formality; and it is difficult to keep out formality in a settled course of duty, and much more when duties are intermitted. (3.) The business of temptations pestering the minds of many Christians, especially such as are of melancholy constitutions. How importunate and restless are these temptations with some Christians? They can make little comfort or advantage out of duty, by reason of them. (4.) Heart-apostacy, inward decays of our first love, is another reason why our duties prosper so little — " Thou hast left thy first love." You were not wont to serve God with such coldness. (5.) In a word, spiritual pride impoverishes our comforts; the joys of the Spirit, like brisk wines, are two strong for our weak heads. For these causes, many Christians are kept low in spiritual comforts.

Infer. 3. How sweet and desirable is the society of the saints! it must needs be desirable to walk with them, who walk with God. No such companions as the saints. What benefit, or pleasure can we find in converses with sensual worldlings? All we can carry out of such company is guilt or grief. " All my delight (saith David) is in the saints, and in the excellent of the earth, which excel in virtue;" and their society would certainly be much more sweet, and desirable, than it is, did they live more in communion with God than they do.

There was a time when the communion of the saints was exceeding lovely: the Lord restore it to its primitive glory and sweetness.

Infer. 4. What an unspeakable mercy is conversion, which lets the soul into such a state of spiritual pleasure?

Here is the beginning of your acquaintance with God, the first tale of spiritual pleasures, of which there shall never be an end. All the time men have spent in the world in an unconverted state, hath been a time of estrangement and alienation from God; when the Lord brings a man to Christ, in the way of conversion, he then begins his first acquaintance with God. " Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace, thereby good shall come unto thee." This is your first acquaintance with the Lord, which will be a growing thing; every visit you give him in prayer, increaseth your acquaintance, and begets more intimacy, and humble, holy familiarity between him and you. And, O what a paradise of pleasure doth this let the soul into! the life of religion abounds with pleasures, '* All his ways are ways of pleasantness, and his paths are peace." Now you know where to go, and unload any trouble that presseth your hearts, whatever prejudices and scandals Satan and his instruments, cast upon religion; this I will affirm of it, that that man must necessarily be a stranger to true pleasure, and empty of real comfort, who is a stranger to Christ, and the duties of communion with him.

It is true, here is no allowance for sinful pleasures, nor any want of spiritual pleasures. Bless God, therefore, for converting grace, you that have it, and lift up a cry to heaven for it, you that want it.

Infer. 5. Lastly, If there be so much delight, and pleasure in our imperfect, and often interrupted communion with God here; O then, what is lieaven! what are the immediate visions of his face in the perfect state?

" Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.'" You have heard glorious, and ravishing reports in the gospel, of that blessed future state, things which the angels desire to look into. You have felt, and

tasted joys unspeakable, and full of glory, in the actings of your faith and love upon Christ; yet all that you have heard, and all that you have felt and tasted in the way to glory, falls so short of the perfection and blessedness of that state, that heaven will, and must be a great surprise to them that have now the greatest acquaintance with it.

Though the present comforts of the saints are sometimes as much as they can bear, for they seem to reel and stagger under the weight of them — “•’ Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, I am sick of love.” Yet, I say, these high tides of pleasant joy, are but shallows to the joys of his immediate presence. And as they run not so deep, so they are not constant and continued as they shall be above — “ Ever with the Lord.” And thus much for information.

II. Use, for exhortation. The last improvement of this point will be by way of exhortation.

First, To believers.

Secondly, To unbelievers.

First, Is this the privileged state, into which all believers are admitted by conversion? Then strive to come up to the highest attainment of communion with God in this world, and be not contented with just so much grace as will secure you from hell; but labour after such a height of grace and communion with God, in the exercise thereof, as may bring you into the suburbs of heaven on earth.

Forget the things that are behind you, as to satisfaction in them, and press toward the mark, for the prize of your high calling. It is greatly to your loss, that you live at such a distance from God, and are so seldom with him; think not the ablest ministers, or choicest books will ever be able to satisfy your doubts and comfort your hearts, whilst you let down your communion with God to so low a degree. O that you might be persuaded now to hearken obediently to three or four necessary words of counsel.

1 Counsel. Make communion with God the very scope and aim of your souls in all your approaches to him in the ordinances and duties of religion.

Set it upon the point of your compass, let it be the very thing your souls design; let the desires and hopes of communion with God be the thing that draws you to every sermon and prayer. “ One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may see the beauty of the Lord, and enquire after him in his temple.” That was the mark David aimed at; and men’s success in duties is usually according to the spiritual aims and intentions of their hearts in them: both sincerity and comforts lie much in men’’s ends.

2 Counsel. In all your approaches to God, beg and plead hard with him for the manifestations of his love, and further communications of his grace.

“ Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice; have mercy also upon me, and answer me. When thou saidst, seek ye my face, my heart said unto thee, Thy face. Lord, will I seek. Hide not thy face far from me, put not thy servant away in anger.”*”

How full and thick of pleas and arguments for communion with God was this prayer of David? Lord, I am come, in obedience to thy command; thou saidst, “ Seek ye my face,’’ thou biddest me

come to thee, and wilt thou put away thy servant in anger? Thou hast been my help, I have had sweet experience of thy goodness, thou dost not use to put me off, and turn me away empty.

3 Counsel. Desh-e not comfort for comforfs sake; but comforts and refreshments for service and obedience"' sake; that thereby you may be strengthened to go on in the ways of your duty with more cheerfulness — " Then will I run the ways of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.'"' As if he should say, O Lord, the comforts thou shalt give me, shall be returned again in cheerful services to thee. I desire them as oil to the wheels of obedience, not food for my pride.

4 Counsel. As ever you expect to be owners of much comfort in the ways of your communion with God, see that you are strict and circumspect in the course of your conversation. It is the looseness and carelessness of our hearts and lives which impoverishes our spiritual comforts. A little pride, a little carelessness, dashes and frustrates a great deal of comfort, which was very near us, almost in our hands; to allude to that, Hosea 7:1, " When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered." So here, just when the desire of thy heart was come to the door, some sin stept in the way of it. " Your iniquities (saith God) have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you." The Comforter, the Holy Spirit, is sensible and tender; he hatli quick resentments of your unkindnesses and offences. As ever, therefore, you expect comfort from him, beware of him, and grieve him not.

Secondly, In the last place, this point speaks necessary counsel and advice to unbelievers; to all that live estranged from the life of God, and have done so from the womb. To you the voice of the Redeemer sounds a summons once more —

" Behold, I stand at the door and knock." O that at last you might be prevailed on to comply with the merciful terms propounded by him. Will you shut out a Saviour bringing salvation, pardon, and peace with him! Christ is thy rightful owner, and demands possession of thy soul, if thou wilt now hear his voice, thy former refusals shall never be objected. If thou still reject his gracious offers, mercy may never more be tendered to thee; there is a call of Christ which will be the last call, and after that no more. Take heed what you do; if you still demur and delay, your damnation is just, inevitable, and inexcusable.

Hear me, therefore, you unregenerated souls, in what rank or condition soever providence hath placed you in this world, whether you be rich or poor, young or old, masters or servants, whether there be any stirrings of conviction in your consciences or not. For however your conditions in this world differ from each other at present, there is one common misery hanging over you all, if you continue in that state of unbelief you are now fixed in. And 1. Hearken to the voice and call of Christ, you that are exalted by providence above your poorer neighbours; you that have your heads, hands, and hearts full of the world; men of trade and business, I have a few solemn questions to ask you this day.

(1.) You have made many gainful bargains in your time, but what will all profit you if the agreement be not made between Christ and your souls? Christ is a treasure which only can enrich you, Matthew 13:44. Thou art a poor and miserable wretch, whatever thou hast gained of this world, if thou hast not gained Christ, thou hast heaped up guilt with thy riches, which will more torment thy conscience hereafter, than thy estate can yield thee comfort here.

(2.) You have made many insurances to secure your floating estates, which you call policies; but what insurance have you made for your souls? Are not they exposed to eternal hazards? O impolitic man! to be so provident to secure trifles, and so negligent in securing the richest treasure.

(3.) You have adjusted many accounts with men, but who shall make up your accounts with God, if you be Christless? " What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul.^" Say not, you have much business under your hands, and cannot allow time; you will have space enough hereafter to reflect upon your folly.

2. You that are poor, and mean in the world, what say you, will you have two hells, one here, and another hereafter? No comfort in this world, nor hope for the next? Your expectations here laid m the cUisfc, and your hopes for heaven built upon the sand? O if you were once in Christ, how happy were you, though you knew not where to fetch your next bread! " Poor in the world, but rich in faith; and heirs of the kingdom which God hath promised." O blessed state! If you had Christ, you had then a right to all things; you had then a father to take care for you. But to be poor and Christless, no comfort from this world, nor hopes from the next; this is to be truly miserable indeed. Your very straits and wants, should prompt you to the great duty I am now pressing on you; and methinks it should be matter of encouragement that the greatest number of Christ's friends and followers, come out of that rank and order of men to which 3''ou belong.

S. You that are seamen, floating so often upon the great deeps, you are reckoned a third sort of persons between the living and the dead; you belong not to the dead, because you breathe, and scarcely to the living, because you are continually so near death. What think you, friends, have you no need of a Saviour? Do you live so secure from the reach and danger of death? Have your lives been so pure, righteous, and innocent, who have been in the midst of temptations in the world abroad?

Ponder that scripture, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, "Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,"' &c. ponder it, I say, and think whether you have not as great and pressing a necessity of Jesus Christ, as any poor souls under heaven?

You have had many temporal salvations from God, great and eminent deliverances, and will these satisfy you? Is it enough that your bodies are delivered from the danger of the sea, though your souls sink, and perish in the ocean of God's wrath for ever? If you will yet accept Christ upon his terms, all that you have done shall be forgiven. The Lord now calls to you in a still voice; if you hear his voice, well; if not, you may shortly hear his voice in the tempestuous storms without you, and a roaring conscience within you. Poor man, think what an interest in Christ will be worth, wert thou now (as shortly thou mayest be) floating upon a piece of wreck, or shivering upon a cold and desolate rock, crying, Mercy, Lord, mercy! Well, mercy is now offered thee, but in vain wilt thou expect to find it, if thou continue thus to despise and reject it.

4. You that are aged and full of days, hearken to the voice of Christ, God hath called upon you a long time: when you were young you said, it is time enough yet, we will mind these things when we are old, and come nearer to the borders of eternity. Well, now you are old, and just upon the borders of it; will you indeed mind it now. You have left the great concernments of your souls to this time, this short, very short time: and do the temptations of your youth take hold upon your

age?

What I delay and put off Christ still as you were wont to do? Poor creatures, you are almost gone out of time, you have but a short time to deliberate; what you do must be done quickly, or it can never be done. Your night is even come upon you when no man can work.

5. You that are young, in the bud or flower of your time, Christ is a suitor for your first love; he desires the kindness of your youth; your spirits are vigorous, your hearts tender, your affections flowing and impressive, you are not yet entered into the incumbrances and distracting cares of the world.

Hereafter a crowd and thick succession of earthly employments and engagements will come on; sin will harden you by custom and continuance. Now is your time; you are in the convertible age; few that pass the season of youth (comparatively speaking) are brought over to Christ afterwards. It is a rarity, the wonder of an age, to hear of the conversion of aged sinners. Besides, you are the hopes of the next generation: should you be Christ-neglecting and despising souls; how bad soever the present age is, the next will be worse. Say not we have time enough before us, we will not quench the sprightly vigour of our youth in melancholy thoughts, remember there are skulls of all sizes in Golgotha; graves of all lengths in the church-yard: you may anticipate those that stand nearer the grave than you seem to do. O you cannot be happy too soon. As young as you are, did you but taste the comforts that be in Christ, nothing would grieve you more than that you knew him no sooner. Behold he standeth at thy door in the morning of thy age, knocking this day for admission into thy heart.

6. You that have had some slight, ineffectual and vanishing convictions upon you formerly; the Lord Jesus once more renews his call: Will you now at last hear his voice? It is an infinite mercy to have a second call. I doubt not but there are many among you, whilst you have sat under the word, have had such thoughts as these in your hearts, Sure my condition is not right, nor safe; there must another manner of work pass upon my soul, or I am lost for ever. External duties of religion I do perform, but I am a stranger to regeneration. Such inward convictions as these were the knocks and calls of Christ, but they passed away and were forgotten. your convictions are dead, and your hearts the more hardened; for it is in putting a soul under conviction as it is in putting iron into the fire, and quenching it again, which hardens it the more. You have been near the kingdom of God, but the more miserable for that, if you be shut out at last. The quickening of your convictions is the right way to the saving of your souls. The Lord make you this day to hear his voice.

7. Such as have come hither upon vain or vile accounts, for mere novelty or worse ends; to catch advantages, or reproach the truths of God; scoffing at the most solemn and awful voice of Christ. The word that you have slighted and reproached, the same shall judge you in that great day, except the Lord will give you repentance unto life, and make the heart tremble under it that hath scoffed at it.

“ Be not mockers, lest your bands be made strong.”

8. To conclude; let all whose hearts the Lord hath opened this day, for the enjoyments of the gospel, the blessed instrument of their salvation, bless the Lord that hath made it a key by regeneration to open the door of salvation to your souls. And as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.

04.00. Keeping the Heart

Keeping the Heart

John Flavel Table of Contents Chapter 1 Proverbs 4:23, The Text Explained Chapter 2 Duties Included in Keeping the Heart Chapter 3 Reasons Why this Should be the Great Business of Life Chapter 4 The Time of Prosperity Chapter 5 Keeping the Heart in the Time of Adversity Chapter 6 Keeping the Heart in the Time of Zion's Troubles Chapter 7 Keeping the Heart in Time of danger and Public Distraction Chapter 8 Keeping the Heart in the Time of Outward Wants Chapter 9 Keeping the Heart in the Time of Duty Chapter 10 Keeping the Heart When We Meet With Great Trials Chapter 11 Keeping the Heart When the Hour of Temptation Comes Chapter 12 Keeping the Heart in the Time of Doubting and Spiritual Darkness Chapter 13 Keeping the Heart When Sufferings for Religion are Laid on Us Chapter 14 Keeping the Heart When Sickness Warns of Death Approaching Chapter 15 A Special Warning to Hypocrites and Formal Professors Chapter 16 A Special Encouragement to the People of God Chapter 17 Ten Motives Exhorting to a Hearty Engagement in Keeping the Heart Reformatted for e-Sword by Stored on http://www.davidcox.com.mx/

04.01a. Proverbs 4:23, The Text Explained

Proverbs 4:23, The Text Explained “KEEP THY HEART WITH ALL DILIGENCE, FOR OUT OF IT ARE THE ISSUES OF LIFE.”—Proverbs 4:23. THE heart of man is his worst part before it is regenerated, and the best afterward; it is the seat of principles, and the fountain of actions. The eye of God is, and the eye of the Christian ought to be, principally fixed upon it. The greatest difficulty in conversion, is to win the heart to God; and the greatest difficulty after conversion, is to keep the heart with God. Here lies the very force and stress of religion; here is that which makes the way to life a narrow way, and the gate of heaven a strait gate. Direction and help in this great work are the scope of the text: wherein we have, I. An exhortation, “Keep thy heart with all diligence.”

II. The reason or motive enforcing it, “For out of it are the issues of life.” In the exhortation I shall consider, First, The matter of the duty. Secondly, The manner of performing it.

I. The matter of the duty: Keep thy heart. Heart is not here taken properly for the noble part of the body, which philosophers call “the first that lives and the last that dies ;“ but by heart, in a metaphor, the Scripture sometimes represents some particular noble faculty of the soul. In Romans 1:21, it is put for the understanding; their foolish heart, that is, their foolish understanding was darkened. Psalms 119:11, it is put for the memory; “Thy word have I hid in my heart ;“ and 1 John 3:10, it is put for the conscience, which includes both the light of the understanding and the recognitions of the memory; if our heart condemn us, that is, if our conscience, whose proper office it is to condemn. But in the text we are to take it more generally, for the whole soul, or inner man. What the heart is to the body, that the soul is to the man; and what health is to the heart, that holiness is to the soul. The state of the whole body depends upon the soundness and vigor of the heart, and the everlasting state of the whole man upon the good or ill condition of the soul. By keeping the heart, understand the diligent and constant use of all holy means to preserve the soul from sin, and maintain its sweet and free communion with God. [I say constant, for the reason added in the text extends the duty to all the states and conditions of a Christian’s life, and makes it binding always. If the heart must be kept, because out of it are the issues of life, then as long as these issues of life do flow out of it, we are obliged to keep it.] Lavater on the text will have the word taken from a besieged garrison, beset by many enemies without, and in danger of being betrayed by treacherous citizens within, in which danger the soldiers, upon pain of death, are commanded to watch; and though the expression, Keep thy heart, seems to put it upon us as our work, yet it does not imply a sufficiency in us to do it. We are as able to stop the sun in its course, or to make the rivers run backward, as by our own skill and power to rule and order our hearts. We may as well be our own saviors as our own keepers; and yet Solomon speaks properly enough when he says, Keep thy heart, because the duty is ours, though the power is of God; what power we have depends upon the exciting and assisting strength of Christ. Grace within us is beholden to grace without us. “Without me ye can do nothing.” So much for the matter of the duty.

2. The manner of performing it is with all diligence. The Hebrew is very emphatical; keep with all keeping, or, keep, keep, set double guards. This vehemency of expression with which the duty is urged, plainly implies how difficult it is to keep our hearts, how dangerous to neglect them! The motive to this duty is very forcible and weighty: “For out of the heart are the issues of life.” That is, the heart is the source of all vital operations; it is the spring and original of both good and evil, as the spring in a watch that sets all the wheels in motion. The heart is the treasury, the hand and tongue but the shops; what is in these, comes from that; the hand and tongue always begin where the heart ends. The heart contrives, and the members execute: “a good man, out of the good treasure of his, heart, bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.” So then, if the heart err in its work, these must miscarry in theirs; for heart errors are like the errors of the first concoction, which cannot be rectified afterward; or like the misplacing and inverting of the stamps and letters in the press, which must cause so many errata in all the copies that are printed. O then how important a duty is that which is contained in the following:

PROPOSITION.— The keeping and right managing of the heart in every condition, is one great business of a Christian’s life.

What the philosopher says of waters, is as properly applicable to hearts; it is hard to keep them within any bounds, God has set limits to them, yet how frequently do they transgress not only the bounds of grace and religion, but even of reason and common honesty? This is that which affords the Christian matter of’ labor and watchfulness, to his dying day. It is not the cleaning of the hand that makes the Christian, for many a hypocrite can show as fair a hand as he; but the purifying, watching, and right ordering of the heart; this is the thing that provokes so many sad complaints, and costs so many deep groans and tears. It was the pride of Hezekiah’s heart that made him lie in the dust, mourning before the Lord. It was the fear of hypocrisy’s invading the heart that made David cry, “Let my heart be sound in thy statutes, that I be not ashamed.” It was the sad experience he had of the divisions and distractions of his own heart in the service of God, that made him pour out the prayer, “Unite my heart to fear thy name.” The method in which I propose to improve the proposition is this:

First, I shall inquire what the keeping of the heart supposes and imports.

Secondly, Assign divers reasons why Christians must make this a leading business of their lives.

Thirdly, Point out those seasons which especially call for this diligence in keeping the heart.

Fourthly, Apply the whole.

First, I am to consider what the keeping of the heart supposes and imports. To keep the heart, necessarily supposes a previous work of regeneration, which has set the heart right, by giving it a new spiritual inclination, for as long as the heart is not set right by grace as to its habitual frame, no means can keep it right with God. Self is the poise of the unrenewed heart, which biasses and moves it in all its designs and actions; and as long as it is so, it is impossible that any external means should keep it with God.

Man, originally, was of one constant, uniform frame of spirit, held one straight and even course; not one thought or faculty was disordered: his mind had a perfect knowledge of the requirements

of God, his will a perfect compliance therewith; all his appetites and powers stood in a most obedient subordination.

Man, by the apostacy, is become a most disordered and rebellious creature, opposing his Maker, as the First Cause, by self-dependence; as the Chief Good, by self-love; as the highest Lord, by self-will; and as the Last End, by self-seeking. Thus he is quite disordered, and all his actions are irregular. But by regeneration the disordered soul is set right; this great change being, as the Scripture expresses it, the renovation of the soul after the image of God, in which self-dependence is removed by faith; self-love, by the love of God; self-will, by subjection and obedience to the will of God; and self-seeking by self-denial. The darkened understanding is illuminated, the refractory will sweetly subdued, the rebellious appetite gradually conquered. Thus the soul which sin had universally depraved, is by grace restored. This being presupposed, it will not be difficult to apprehend what it is to keep the heart, which is nothing but the constant care and diligence of such a renewed man to preserve his soul in that holy frame to which grace has raised it. For though grace has, in a great measure, rectified the soul, and given it an habitual heavenly temper; yet sin often actually discomposes it again; so that even a gracious heart is like a musical instrument, which though it be exactly tuned, a small matter brings it out of tune again; yea, hang it aside but a little, and it will need setting again before another lesson can be played upon it. If gracious hearts are in a desirable frame in one duty, yet how dull, dead, and disordered when they come to another! Therefore every duty needs a particular preparation of the heart. “If thou prepare thine heart and stretch out thine hands toward him,” &c. To keep the heart then, is carefully to preserve it from sin, which disorders it; and maintain that spiritual frame which fits it for a life of communion with God. This includes in it six particulars: To keep the heart then, is carefully to preserve it from sin, which disorders it; and maintain that spiritual frame which fits it for a life of communion with God. This includes in it six particulars:

1. Frequent observation of the frame of the heart. Carnal and formal persons take no heed to this; they cannot be brought to confer with their own hearts: there are some people who have lived forty or fifty years in the world, and have had scarcely one hour’s discourse with their own hearts. It is a hard tiling to bring a man and himself together on such business; but saints know those soliloquies to be very salutary. The heathen could say, “the soul is made wise by sitting still in quietness.” Though bankrupts care not to look in. to their accounts, yet upright hearts will know whether they go backward or forward. “I commune with mine own heart,” says David. The heart can never be kept until its case be examined and understood.

2. It includes deep humiliation for heart evils and disorders; thus Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart. Thus the people were ordered to spread forth their hands to God in prayer, realizing the plague of their own hearts. Upon this account many an up-right heart has been laid low before God; ‘O what an heart have I.’ Saints have in their confession pointed at the heart, the pained place: ‘Lord, here is the wound.’ It is with the heart well kept, as it is with the eye; if a small dust get into the eye it will never cease twinkling and watering till it has wept it out: so the upright heart cannot be at rest till it has wept out its troubles and poured out its complaints before the Lord.

3. It includes earnest supplication and instant prayer for purifying and rectifying grace when sin has defiled and disordered the heart. “Cleanse thou me from secret faults.” “Unite my heart. to fear

thy name." Saints have always many such petitions before the throne of God's grace; this is the thing which is most pleaded by them with God. When they are praying for outward mercies, perhaps their spirits may be more remiss; but when it comes to the heart's case, they extend their spirits to the utmost, fill their mouths with arguments, weep and make supplication: 'O for a better heart! O for a heart to love God more; to hate sin more; to walk more evenly with God. Lord! deny not to me such a heart, whatever thou deny me: give me a heart to fear thee, to love and delight in thee, if I beg my bread in desolate places.' It is observed of an eminent saint, that when he was confessing sin, he would never give over confessing until he had felt some brokenness of heart for that sin; and when praying for any spiritual mercy, would never give over that suit till he had obtained some relish of that mercy.

4. It includes the imposing of strong engagements upon ourselves to walk more carefully with God, and avoid the occasions whereby the heart may be induced to sin. Well advised and deliberate vows are, in some cases, very useful to guard the heart against some special sin. "I have made a covenant with mine eyes," says Job. By this means holy men have overawed their souls, and preserved themselves from defilement.

5. It includes a constant and holy jealousy over our own hearts. Quick sighted self-jealousy is an excellent preservative from sin. He that will keep his heart, must have the eyes of the soul awake and open upon all the disorderly and tumultuous stirrings of his affections; if the affections break loose, and the passions be stirred, the soul must discover it, and suppress them before they get to a height. 'O my soul, dost thou well in this? my tumultuous thoughts and passions, where is your commission?' Happy is the man that thus feareth always. By this fear of the Lord it is that men depart from evil, shake off sloth, and preserve themselves from iniquity. He that will keep his heart must eat and drink with fear, rejoice with fear, and pass the whole time of his sojourning here in fear. All this is little enough to keep the heart from sin.

6. It includes the realizing of God's presence with us, and setting the Lord always before us. This the people have found a powerful means of keeping their hearts upright, and awing them from sin. When the eye of our faith is fixed upon the eye of God's omniscience, we dare not let out our thoughts and affections to vanity. Holy Job durst not suffer his heart to yield to an impure, vain thought, and what was it that moved him to so great circumspection? He tells us, "Doth not He see my ways, and count all my steps ?" In such particulars as these do gracious souls express the care they have of their hearts. They are careful to prevent the breaking loose of the corruptions in time of temptation; careful to preserve the sweetness and comfort they have got from God in any duty. This is the work, and of all works in religion it is the most difficult, constant, and important work. In such particulars as these do gracious souls express the care they have of their hearts. They are careful to prevent the breaking loose of the corruptions in time of temptation; careful to preserve the sweetness and comfort they have got from God in any duty. This is the work, and of all works in religion it is the most difficult, constant, and important work.

1. It is the hardest work. Heart-work is hard work indeed. To shuffle over religious duties with a loose and heedless spirit, will cost no great pains; but to set thyself before the Lord, and tie up thy loose and vain thoughts to a constant and serious attendance upon him; this will cost thee something. To attain a facility and dexterity of language in prayer, and put thy meaning into apt and decent expressions, is easy; but to get thy heart broken for sin, while thou art confessing it;

melted with free grace while thou art blessing God for it; to be really ashamed and humbled through the apprehensions of God's infinite holiness, and to keep thy heart in this frame; not only in, but after duty, will surely cost thee some groans and pains of soul. To repress the outward acts of sin, and compose the external part of thy life in a laudable manner, is no great matter; even carnal persons, by the force of common principles, can do this: but to kill the root of corruption within, to set and keep up an holy government over thy thoughts, to have all things lie straight and orderly in the heart, this is not easy.

2. It is a constant work. The keeping of the heart is a work that is never done till life is ended. There is no time or condition in the life of a Christian which will suffer an intermission of this work. It is in keeping watch over our hearts, as it was in keeping up Moses' bands while Israel and Amalek were fighting. No sooner do the hands of Moses grow heavy and sink down, than Amalek prevails. Intermitting the watch over their own hearts for but a few minutes, cost David and Peter many a sad day and night.

3. It is the most important business of a Christian's life. Without this we are but formalists in religion: all our professions, gifts and duties signify nothing. "My son, give me thine heart," is God's request. God is pleased to call that a gift which is indeed a debt; he will put this honor upon the creature, to receive it from him in the way of a gift; but if this be not given him, ho regards not whatever else you bring to him. There is only so much of worth in what we do, as there is of heart in it. Concerning the heart, God seems to say, as Joseph of Benjamin, "If you bring not Benjamin with you, you shall not see my face." Among the Heathen, when the beast was cut up for sacrifice, the first thing the priest looked upon was the heart; and if that was unsound and worthless the sacrifice was rejected. God rejects all duties (how glorious soever in other respects) which are offered him without the heart. He that performs duty without the heart, that is, heedlessly, is no more accepted with God than he that performs it with a double heart, that is, hypocritically.

Thus I have briefly considered what the keeping of the heart supposes and imports. I proceed, Secondly, To assign some reasons why Christians must make this the great business of their lives. The importance and necessity of making this our great business will manifestly appear from several considerations:

1. The glory of God is much concerned. Heart-evils are very provoking evils to the Lord. The Schools correctly observe, that outward sins are "sins of great infamy;" but that the heart sins are "sins of deeper guilt." How severely has the great God declared his wrath from heaven against heart-wickedness! The crime for which the old world stands indicted is heart-wickedness! "God saw that every imagination of their hearts was only evil, and that continually;" for which he sent the most dreadful judgments that were ever inflicted since time began. We find not their murders, adulteries, blasphemies, (though they were defiled with these) particularly alleged against them; but the evils of their hearts. That by which God was so provoked as to give up his peculiar inheritance into the enemy's hand, was the evil of their hearts. "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved; how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?" Of the wickedness and vanity of their thoughts God took particular notice; and because of this the Chaldeans. must come upon them, "as a lion from his thicket and tear them to pieces." For the sin of thoughts it was that God threw down the fallen, angels from heaven and still keeps them in "everlasting chains." to the judgment of the great day; by which expression is not obscurely

intimated some extraordinary judgment to which they are reserved; as prisoners that have most irons laid upon them may be supposed to be the greatest malefactors. And what was their sin? Spiritual wickedness. Merely heart-evils are so provoking to God, that for them he rejects with indignation all the duties that some men perform. “He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrifices a lamb, as if he cut off a dog’s neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine’s blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol.” In what words could the abhorrence of a creature’s actions be more fully expressed by the holy God? Murder and idolatry are not more vile in his account, than, their sacrifices, though materially such as himself appointed. And what made their sacrifices so vile? The following words inform us: “Their soul delighteth in their abominations.”

Such is the vileness of mere heart-sins, that the Scriptures sometimes intimate the difficulty of pardon for them. The heart of Simon Magus was not right, he had base thoughts of God, and of the things of God: the apostle bade him “repent and pray, if perhaps the thoughts of his heart might be forgiven him.” O then never slight heart evils! for by these God is highly wronged and provoked. For this reason let every Christian keep his heart with all diligence.

2. The sincerity of our profession much depends upon the care we exercise in keeping our hearts. Most certainly, that man who is careless of the frame of his heart, is but a hypocrite in his profession, however eminent he be in the externals of religion. We have a striking instance of this in the history of Jehu. “But Jehu took no heed to walk in the ways of the Lord God of Israel with his heart.” The context gives an account of the great service performed by Jehu against the house of Ahab and Baal, and also of the great temporal reward given him by God for that service, even that his children, to the fourth generation, should sit upon the throne of Israel. Yet in these words Jehu is censured as a hypocrite: though God approved and re warded the work, yet he abhorred and rejected the person that did it, as hypocritical. Wherein lay the hypocrisy of Jehu? In this; he took no heed to walk in the ways of the Lord with his heart; that is, he did all insincerely and for selfish ends: and though. the work he did was materially good, yet he, not purging his heart from those unworthy selfish designs in doing it, was a hypocrite. And though Simon Magus appeared such a person that the apostle could not regularly reject him, yet his hypocrisy was quickly discovered. Though he professed piety and associated himself with the saints, he was a stranger to the mortification of heart-sins. “Thy heart is not right with God.” It is true, there is great difference between Christians themselves in their diligence and dexterity about heart work; some are more conversant with, and more successful in it than others but he that takes no heed to his heart, that is not careful to order it aright before God, is but a hypocrite. “And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.” Here was a company of formal hypocrites, as is evident from that expression, as my people; like them, but not of them. And what made them so? Their outside was fair; here were reverent postures, high professions, much seeming delight in ordinances; “thou art to them as a lovely song:” yea, but for all that they kept not their hearts with God in those duties; their hearts were commanded by their lusts, they went after their covetousness. Had they kept their hearts with God, all had been well: but not regarding which way their hearts went in duty, there lay the essence of their hypocrisy.

If any upright soul should hence infer, I am a hypocrite too, for many times my heart departs from God in duty; do what I can, yet I cannot hold it close with God; I answer, the very objection carries in it its own solution. Thou sayest, Do what I can, yet! cannot keep my heart with God. Soul, if thou doest what thou canst, thou hast the blessing of an upright, though God sees good to exercise thee under the affliction of a discomposed heart.

There still remains some wildness in the thoughts and fancies of the best to bumble them; but if you find a care before to prevent them, and opposition against them when they come, and grief and sorrow afterward, you find enough to clear you from the charge of reigning hypocrisy. This precaution is seen partly in laying up the word in thy heart to prevent them. “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.” Partly in your endeavors to engage your heart to God; and partly in begging preventing grace from God in. your commencement of duty. It is a good sign to exercise such precaution. And it is an evidence of uprightness, to oppose these sins in their first rise. “I hate vain thoughts.” “The spirit lusteth against the flesh.” Thy grief also discovers the uprightness of thy heart. If with Hezekiah thou art humbled for the evils of thy heart, thou hast no reason, from those disorders, to question the integrity of it; but to suffer sin to lodge quietly in the heart, to let thy heart habitually and without control wander from God, is a sad, a dangerous symptom indeed.

3. The beauty of our conversation arises from the heavenly frame of our spirits. There is a spiritual lustre and beauty in the conversation of saints. “The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor;” saints shine as the lights of the world; but whatever lustre and beauty is in their lives, comes from the excellency of their spirits; as the candle within puts lustre upon the lantern in which it shines. It is impossible that a disordered and neglected heart should ever produce well ordered conversation; and since (as the text observes) the issues or streams of life flow out of the heart as their fountain, it must follow, that such as the heart is, the life will be. Hence 1 Peter 2:12, “Abstain from fleshly lusts—having your conversation honest,” or beautiful, as the Greek word imports. So Isaiah 55:7. “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts.” His way, denotes the course of his life; his thoughts, the frame of his heart: and therefore since the course of his life flows from his thoughts, or the frame of his heart, both, or neither will be forsaken. The heart is the source of all actions; these actions are virtually and radically contained in our thoughts; these thoughts being once made up into affections, are quickly made out into suitable actions. If the heart be wicked, then, as Christ says, “Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders,” &c. Mark the order: first, wanton or revengeful thoughts then unclean, or murderous practices. And if the heart be holy, then it is as with David: “My heart is inditing a good matter—I speak of the things which I have made. my tongue is as the pen of a ready writer.” Here is a life richly beautified with good works, some ready made— I will speak of the things which I have made; others making—my heart is inditing; both proceed from the heavenly frame of his heart. Put the heart in frame and the life will quickly discover that it is so. It is not very difficult to discern, by the performances and converse of Christians, what frames their spirits are in. Take a Christian in a good frame, and how serious, heavenly and profitable will his conversation and religious exercises be! what a lovely companion is he during the continuance of it! it would do any one’s heart good to be with him at such a time. “The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment; the law of his God is in his heart.” When the heart is up with God, and full of God how dexterously will he insinuate spiritual discourse, improving every occasion and advantage to some

heavenly purpose! Few words then run to waste. And what can be the reason that the discourses and duties of many Christians are become so frothy and unprofitable, their communion both with God and with one another becomes as a dry stalk, but this, their hearts are neglected? Surely this must be the reason of it, and it is an evil greatly to be bewailed. Thus the attracting beauty that was wont to shine, from the conversation of the saints, upon the faces and consciences of the world, (which, if it did not allure and bring them in love with the ways of God, at least left a testimony in their consciences of the excellency of those men and of their ways,) is in a great measure lost, to the unspeakable detriment of religion. Time was, when Christians conducted in such a manner that the world stood gazing at them. Their life and language were of a different strain from those of others, their tongues discovered them to be Galileans wherever they came. But now, since vain speculations and fruitless controversies have so much obtained, and heart-work, practical godliness is so much neglected among professors, the case is sadly altered: their discourse is become like other men's; if they come among you now, they may "hear every man speak in his own language." And I have little hope to see this evil redressed, and the credit of religion repaired, till Christians do their first works, till they apply again to heart-work: when the salt of heavenly-mindedness is cast into the spring, the streams will run more clear and more sweet.

4. The comfort of our souls much depends upon the keeping of our hearts; for he that is negligent in attending to his own heart, is, ordinarily, a great stranger to assurance, and the comforts following from it. Indeed if The Antinomian doctrine were true, which teaches you to reject all marks and signs for the trial of your condition, telling you that it is the Spirit that immediately assures you, by witnessing your adoption directly, without them; then you might be careless of your hearts, yea, strangers to them, and yet no strangers to comfort: but since both Scripture and experience confute this, I hope you will never look for comfort in this unscriptural way. I deny not that it is the work and office of the Spirit to assure you; yet I confidently affirm, that if ever you attain assurance in the ordinary way wherein God dispenses it, you must take pains .with your own hearts. You may expect your comforts upon easier terms, but I am mistaken if ever you enjoy them upon any other: give all diligence; prove yourselves; this is the scriptural method. A distinguished writer, in his treatise on the covenant, tells us that he knew a Christian who, in the infancy of his Christianity, so vehemently panted after the infallible assurance of God's love, that for a long time together he earnestly desired some voice from heaven; yea, sometimes walking in the solitary fields, earnestly desired some miraculous voice from the trees and stones there: this, after many desires and longings, was denied; but in time a better was afforded in the ordinary way of searching the word and his own heart. An instance of the like nature another learned person gives us of one that was driven by temptation upon the very borders of despair; at last, being sweetly settled and assured, one asked him how he attained it; he answered, "Not by any extraordinary revelation, but by subjecting my understanding to the Scriptures, and comparing my heart with them." The Spirit, indeed, assures by witnessing our adoption; and he witnesses in two ways. One way is, objectively, that is, by producing those graces in our souls which are the conditions of the promise.; and so the Spirit, and his graces in us, are all one: the Spirit of God dwelling in us, is a mark of our adoption. Now the Spirit can be discerned, not in his essence, but in his operations; and to discern these, is to discern the Spirit; and how these can be discerned without serious searching and diligent watching of the heart I cannot imagine. The other way of the Spirit's witnessing is effectively, that is, by irradiating the soul with a grace discovering light, shining upon his own work; and this, in order of nature, follows the former work: he first infuses the grace, and

then opens the eye of the soul to see it. Now, since the heart is the subject of that infused grace, even this way of the Spirit's witnessing includes the necessity of carefully keeping our own hearts. For,

1. A neglected heart is so confused and dark, that the little grace which is in it is not ordinarily discernible: the most accurate and laborious Christians sometimes find it difficult to discover the pure and genuine workings of the Spirit in their hearts. How then shall the Christian who is comparatively negligent about heart-work, be ever able to discover grace? Sincerity! which is the thing sought, lies in the heart like a small piece of gold on the bottom of a river; he that would find it must stay till the water is clear, and then he will see it sparkling at the bottom. That the heart may be clear and settled, how much pains and watching, care and diligence, are requisite!

4. God does not usually indulge negligent souls with the comforts of assurance; he will not so much as seem to patronize sloth and carelessness. He will give assurance, but it shall be in his own way; his command hath united our care and comfort together. Those are mistaken who think that assurance may be obtained without labor. Ah! how many solitary hours have the people of God spent in heart-examination! how many times have they looked into the word, and then into their hearts! Sometimes they thought they discovered sincerity, and were even ready to draw forth the triumphant conclusion of assurance; then comes a doubt they cannot resolve, and destroys it all: many hopes and fears, doubtings and reasonings, they have had in their own breasts before they arrived at a comfortable settlement. But suppose it possible for a careless Christian to attain assurance, yet it is impossible for him long to retain it; for it is a thousand to one if those whose hearts are filled with the joys of assurance, long retain those joys, unless extraordinary care be used. A little pride, vanity, or carelessness will dash to pieces all that for which they have been a long time laboring in many a weary duty. Since then the joy of our life, the comfort of our souls, rises and falls with our diligence in this work, keep your heart with all diligence.

5. The improvement of our graces depends on the keeping of our hearts. I never knew grace to thrive in a careless soul. The habits and roots of grace are planted in the heart; and the deeper they are rooted there, the more flourishing grace is. In Ephesians 3:17, we read of being " rooted" in grace; grace in the heart is the root of every gracious word in the mouth, and of every holy work in the hand. It is true, Christ is the root of a Christian, but Christ is the originating root, and grace a root originated, planted, and influenced by Christ; accordingly, as this thrives under divine influences, the acts of grace are more or less fruitful or vigorous. Now, in a heart not kept with care and diligence, these fructifying influences are stopt and cut off—multitudes of vanities break in upon it, and devour its strength; the heart is, as it were, the inclosure, in which multitudes of thoughts are fed every day; a gracious heart, diligently kept, feeds many precious thoughts of God in a day. "How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee." And as the gracious heart nourishes them, so they refresh and feast the heart. "My soul is filled as with marrow and fatness while I think upon thee," &c. But in the disregarded heart, multitudes of vain and foolish thoughts are perpetually working, and drive out those spiritual thoughts of God by which the soul should be refreshed. Besides, the careless heart profits nothing by any duty or ordinance it performs or attends upon, and yet these are the conduits of heaven, whence grace is watered and made fruitful. A man may go with a heedless spirit from ordinance to ordinance, abide all his days under the choicest teaching, and yet never he improved by them; for heart-neglect is a

leak in the bottom—no heavenly influences, however rich, abide in that soul. When the seed falls upon the heart that lies open and common, like the highway, free for all passengers, the fowls come and devour it. Alas! it is not enough to hear, unless we take heed how we hear; a man may pray, and never be the better, unless he watch unto prayer. In a word, all means are blessed to the improvement of grace, according to the care and strictness we use in keeping our hearts in them.

6. The stability of our souls in the hour of temptation depends upon the care we exercise in keeping our hearts. The careless heart is an easy prey to Satan in the hour of temptation; his principal batteries are raised against the heart; if he wins that he wins all, for it commands the whole man: and alas! how easy a conquest is a neglected heart! It is not more difficult to surprise such a heart, than for an enemy to enter that city whose gates are open and unguarded. It is the watchful heart that discovers and suppresses the temptation before it comes to its strength. Divines observe this to be the method in which temptations are ripened and brought to their full strength. There is the irritation of the object, or that power it has to provoke our corrupt nature; which is either done by the real presence of the object, or by speculation when the object (though absent) is held out by the imagination before the soul. Then follows the motion of the appetite, which is provoked by the fancy representing it as a sensual good. Then there is a consultation in the mind about the best means of accomplishing it. Next follows the election, or choice of the will. And lastly, the desire, or full engagement of the will to it. All this may be done in a few minutes, for the debates of the soul are quick and soon ended: when it comes thus far, the heart is won, Satan hath entered victoriously and displayed his colors upon the walls of that royal fort; but, had the heart been well guarded at first, it had never come to this—the temptation had been stopped in the first or second act. And indeed there it is stopped easily; for it is in the motion of a soul tempted to sin, as in the motion of a stone falling from the brow of a hill—it is easily stopped at first, but when once it is set in motion “it acquires strength by descending.” Therefore it is the greatest wisdom to observe the first motions of the heart, to check and stop sin there. The motions of sin are weakest at first; a little care and watchfulness may prevent much mischief now; the careless heart not heeding this, is brought within the power of temptation, as the Syrians were brought blind-fold into the midst of Samaria, before they knew where they were.

I hope that these considerations satisfy my readers that it is important to keep the heart with all diligence. I proceed,

I proceed,

Thirdly, To point out those special seasons in the life of a Christian which require our utmost diligence in keeping the heart. Though (as was observed before) the duty is always binding, and there is no time or condition of life in which we may be excused from this work; yet there are some signal seasons, critical hours, requiring more than common vigilance over the heart.

1. The first season is the time of prosperity, when Providence smiles upon us. Now, Christian, keep thy heart with all diligence; for it will be very apt to grow secure, proud and earthly. “To see a man humble in prosperity,”(says Bernard,) “is one of the greatest rarties in the world.” Even a good Hezekiah could not hide a vain-glorious temper in his temptation; hence that caution to Israel: “And it shall be, when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he aware to thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities which thou bulkiest not, and houses full of all good things which thou filledst not,” &c. “then beware lest thou

forget the Lord." So indeed it happened: for "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked?' How then may a Christian keep his heart from pride and carnal security under the smiles of Providence and the confluence of creature-comforts?

There are several helps to secure the heart from the dangerous snares of prosperity.

1. Consider the dangerous ensnaring temptations attending a pleasant and prosperous condition. Few, very few of those that live in the pleasures of this world, escape everlasting perdition. "It is easier" (says Christ) "for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." "Not many mighty, not many noble are called."

We have great reason to tremble, when the Scripture tells us in general that few shall be saved; much more when it tells us, that of that rank of which we are, but few shall be saved. When Joshua. called all the tribes of Israel to cast lots for the discovery of Achan, doubtless Achan feared; when the tribe of Judah was taken, his fear increased; but when the family of the Zarhites was taken, it was time to tremble. So when the Scriptures come so near as to tell us that of such a class of men very few shall escape, it is time to be alarmed.. "I should woner" (says Chrysostom) "if any of the rulers be saved." O how many have been wheeled to hell in the chariots of earthly pleasures, while others have been whipped to heaven by the rod of affliction! How few, like the daughter of Tyre, come to Christ with a gift! How few among the rich entreat his favor!

2. It may keep one more humble and watchful in prosperity, to consider that among Christians many have been much the worse for it. How good had it been for some of them, if they had never known prosperity! When they were in a low condition, how humble, spiritual and heavenly they were but when advanced, what an apparent alteration has been upon their spirits! It was so with Israel; when they were in a low condition in the wilderness, then Israel was "holiness to the Lord;" but when they came into Canaan and were richly fed, their language was, "We are lords, we will come no more unto thee." Outward gains are ordinarily attended with inward losses; as in a low condition their civil employments were wont to have a savor of their religious duties, so in an exalted condition their duties commonly have a savor of the world. He, indeed, is rich in grace whose graces are not hindered by his riches. There are but few Jehosaphats in the world, of whom it is said, "He had silver and gold in abundance, and his heart was lifted up in the way of God's commands." Will not this keep thy heart humble in prosperity, to think how dearly many godly men have paid for their riches; that through them they have lost that which all the world cannot purchase?

3. Keep down thy vain heart by this consideration; God values no man the more for these things. God values no man by outward excellencies, but by inward graces; they are the internal ornaments of the Spirit, which are of great price in God's sight. God despises all worldly glory, and accepts no man's person; "but in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him." Indeed, if the judgment of God went by the same rule that man's does, we might value ourselves by these things, and stand upon them: but so much every man is, as he is in the judgment of God. Does thy heart yet swell, and will neither of the former considerations keep it humble?

4. Consider how bitterly many dying persons have bewailed their folly in setting their hearts upon these things, and have wished that they had never known them. How dreadful was the situation of

Pius Quintus, who died crying out despairingly, “When I was in a low condition I had some hopes of salvation, when I was advanced to be a cardinal, I greatly doubted; but since I came to the popedom I have no hope at all.” An author also tells us a real, but sad story of a rich oppressor, who had scraped up a great estate for his only son: when he came to die he called his son to him, and said, “Son, do you indeed love me?” The son answered that “Nature, besides his paternal, indulgence, obliged him to that.” “Then (said the father) express it by this: hold thy finger in the candle as long as I am saying a prayer.” The son attempted, but could not endure it. Upon that the father broke out into these expressions: “Thou canst not suffer the burning of thy finger for me; but to get this wealth I have hazarded my soul for thee and must burn, body and soul, in hell, for thy sake; thy pains would have been but for a moment, but mine will be unquenchable fire.”

5. The heart may be kept humble by considering of what a clogging nature earthly things are to a soul heartily engaged in the way to heaven. They shut out much of heaven from us at present, though they may not shut us out of heaven at last. If thou consider thyself as a stranger in this world, traveling for heaven, thou hast then as much reason to be delighted with these things as a weary horse has to be pleased with a heavy burden. There was a serious truth in the atheistical scoff of Julian: when taking away the Christians’ estates, he told them “it was to make them more fit for the kingdom of heaven.”

6. Is thy spirit still vain and lofty? Then urge upon it the consideration of that awful day of reckoning, wherein, according to our receipts of mercies shall be our account for them. Methinks this should awe and humble the vainest heart that ever was n the breast of a saint. Know for a certainty that the Lord records all the mercies that ever he gave thee, from the beginning to the end of thy life. “Remember, O my people, from Shittim unto Gilgal,” &c. Yes, they are exactly numbered and recorded in order to an account; and thy account will be suitable: “To whomsoever much is given, of him shall, much be required.” You are but a steward, and your Lord will come and take an account of you; and what a great account have you to make, who have much of this world in your hands.! What swift witnesses will your mercies be against you, if this be the best fruit of them!

7. It is a very humbling reflection, that the mercies of God should work otherwise upon my spirit than they used to do upon the spirits of others to whom they come as sanctified mercies from the love of God. Ah, Lord! what a sad consideration is this! enough to lay me in the dust, when I consider:

(1.) That their mercies have greatly humbled them, the higher God has raised them, the lower they have laid themselves before him. Thus did Jacob when God had given him much substance. “And Jacob said, I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, and all the truth which thou hast showed thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and am now become two bands.” Thus also it was with holy David; when God had confirmed the promise to him, to build him a house, and not reject him as he did Saul, he goes in before the Lord and says, “Who am I, and what is my father’s house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?” So indeed God required. When Israel brought to him the first fruits of Canaan, they were to say, “A Syrian ready to perish was my father,” &c. Do others raise God the higher for his raising them? and the more God raises me, the more shall I abuse him and exalt myself? O how wicked is such conduct as this!

(2.) Others have freely ascribed the glory of all their enjoyments to God, and magnified not themselves, but him, for their mercies. Thus says David, “Let thy name be magnified and the house of thy servant be established.” He does not fly upon the mercy and suck out its sweetness, looking no further than his own comfort: no, he cares for no mercy except God be magnified in it. So when God had delivered him from all his enemies, he says, “The Lord is my strength and my rock, he is become my salvation.” Saints of old did not put the crown upon their own heads as I do by my vanity.

(3.) The mercies of God have been melting mercies unto others, melting their souls in love to the God of their mercies. When Hannah received the mercy of a son, she said, “My soul rejoiceth in the Lord;” not in the mercy, but in the God of the mercy. So also Mary: “My soul doth magnify the Lord; my spirit rejoiceth in God my Savior.” The word signifies to make more room for God; their hearts were not contracted, but the more enlarged to God.

(4.) The mercies of God have been great restraints to keep others from sin. “Seeing thou, our God, hast given us such a deliverance as this, should we again break thy commandments?” Ingenuous souls have felt the force of the obligations of love and mercy upon them.

(5.) The mercies of God to others have been as oil to the wheels of their obedience, and made them more fit for service. Now if mercies work contrarily upon my heart, what cause have I to be afraid that they come not to me in love! It is enough to damp the spirits of any saint, to see what sweet effects mercies have had upon others, and what bitter effects upon him.

II. The second season in the life of a Christian, requiring more than common diligence to keep his heart, is the time of adversity. . .

II. The second season in the life of a Christian, requiring more than common diligence to keep his heart, is the time of adversity. When Providence frowns upon you, and blasts your outward comforts, then look to your heart; keep it with all diligence from repining against God, or fainting under his hand; for troubles, though sanctified, are troubles still. Jonah was a good man, and yet how fretful was his heart under affliction! Job was the mirror of patience, yet how was his heart discomposed by trouble! You will find it hard to get a composed spirit under great afflictions. O the hurries and tumults which they occasion even in the best hearts I—Let me show you, then, how a Christian under great afflictions may keep his heart from repining or desponding, under the hand of God.

I will here offer several helps to keep the heart in this condition.

1. By these cross providences God is faithfully pursuing the great design of electing love upon the souls of his people, and orders all these afflictions as means sanctified to that end. Afflictions come not by casualty, but by counsel. By this counsel of God they are ordained as means of much spiritual good to saints. “By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged,” &c. “But he for our profit,” &c. “All things work together for good,” &c. They are God’s workmen upon our hearts, to pull down the pride and carnal security of them; and being so, their nature is changed; they are turned into blessings and benefits. “It is good for me that I have been afflicted,” says David. Surely then thou hast no reason to quarrel with God, but rather to wonder that he should concern himself so much in thy good as to use any means for accomplishing it. Paul could bless God if by any means he might attain the resurrection of the dead. “My brethren,” says James, “count it all joy when you fall

into divers temptations." 'My Father is about a design of love upon my soul, and do I well to be angry with him? All that he does is in pursuance of, and in reference to some eternal, glorious ends upon my soul. It is my ignorance of God's design that makes me quarrel with him.' He says to thee in this case, as he did to Peter, "What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

2. Though God has reserved to himself a liberty of afflicting his people, yet he has tied up his own hands by promise never to take away his loving kindness from them. Can I contemplate this scripture with a repining, discontented spirit: "I will be his Father, and be shall be my son: if he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of man, and with the stripes of the children of men nevertheless my mercy shall not depart away from him." O my heart, my haughty heart! dost thou well to be discontent, when God has given thee the whole tree, with all the clusters of comfort growing on it, because he suffers the wind to blow down a few leaves? Christians have two kinds of goods, the goods of the throne and the goods of the footstool; immoveables and moveables. If God has secured those, never let my heart be troubled at the loss of these: indeed, if he had cut off his love or discovenanted my soul; I had reason to be cast down; but this he hath not done, nor can he do it.

3. It is of great efficacy to keep the heart from sinking under afflictions, to call to mind that thine own Father has the ordering of them. Not a creature moves hand or tongue against thee but by his permission. Suppose the cup be bitter, yet it is the cup which thy Father hath given thee; and canst thou suspect poison to be in it? Foolish man, put home the case to thine own heart; canst thou give thy child that which would ruin him? No! thou wouldst as soon hurt thyself as him. "If thou then, being evil, knowest how to give good gifts to thy children," how much more does God! The very consideration of his nature as a God of love, pity, and tender mercies; or of his relation to thee as a father, husband, friend, may be security enough, if he had not spoken a word to quiet thee in this case; and yet you have his word too, by the prophet Jeremiah: "I will do you no hurt." You lie too near his heart for him to hurt you; nothing grieves him more than your groundless and unworthy suspicions of his designs. Would it not grieve a faithful, tender-hearted physician, when he had studied the case of his patient, and prepared the most excellent medicines to save his life, to hear him cry out, 'O he has undone me! he has poisoned me!' because it pains him in the operation?. O when will you be ingenuous?

4. God respects you as much in a low as in a high condition; and therefore it need not so much trouble you to be made low; nay, he manifests more of his love, grace and tenderness in the time of affliction than in the time of prosperity. As God did not at first choose you because you were high, he will not now forsake you because you are low. Men may look shy upon you, and alter their respects as your condition is altered; when Providence has blasted your estate, your summer-friends may grow strange, fearing you may be troublesome to them; but will God do so? No, no: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." says he. If adversity and poverty could bar you from access to God, it were indeed a deplorable condition: but, so far from this, you may go to him as freely as ever. "My God will hear me," says the church. Poor David, when stripped of all earthly comforts, could encourage himself in the Lord his God; and why cannot you? Suppose your husband or son had lost all at sea, and should come to you in rags; could you deny the relation, or refuse to entertain him? If you would not, much less will God. Why then are you so troubled? Though your condition be changed, your Father's love is not changed.

5. What if by the loss of outward comforts God preserves your soul from the ruining power of temptation? Surely then you have little cause to sink your heart by such sad thoughts. Do not earthly enjoyments make men shrink and warp in times of trial? For the love of these many have forsaken Christ in such an hour. The young ruler “went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.” If this is God’s design, how ungrateful to murmur against him for it! We see mariners in a storm can throw overboard the most valuable goods to preserve their lives. We know it is usual for soldiers in a besieged city to destroy the finest buildings without the walls in which the enemy may take shelter; and no one doubts that it is wisely done. Those who have mortified limbs willingly stretch them out to be cut off, and not only thank, but pay the surgeon. Must God be murmured against for casting over that which would sink you in a storm; for pulling down that which would assist your enemy in the siege of temptation; for cutting off what would endanger your everlasting life? O, inconsiderate, ungrateful man! are not these things for which thou grievest, the very things that have ruined thousands of souls?

6. It would much support thy heart under adversity, to consider that God by such humbling providences maybe accomplishing that for which you have long prayed and waited. And should you be troubled at that? Say, Christian, hast thou not many prayers depending before God upon such accounts as these; that he would keep thee from sin; discover to thee the emptiness of the creature; that he would mortify and. kill thy lusts; that thy. heart may never find rest in any enjoyment but Christ? By such humbling and impoverishing strokes God may be fulfilling thy desire. Wouldst thou be kept from sin? Lo, he hath hedged up thy way with thorns. Wouldst thou see the creature’s vanity? Thy affliction is a fair glass to discover it; for the vanity of the creature is never so effectually and sensibly discovered, as in our own experience. Wouldst thou have thy corruptions mortified? This is the way: to have the food and fuel removed that maintained them; for as prosperity begat and fed them, so adversity, when sanctified, is a means to kill them. Wouldst thou have thy heart rest no where but in the bosom of God? What better method could Providence take to accomplish thy desire than pulling from under thy head that soft pillow of creature-delights on which you rested before? And yet you fret at this: peevish child, how dost thou try thy Father’s patience! If he delay to answer thy prayers, thou art ready to say he regards thee not; if he does that which really answers the end of them, though not in the way which you expect, you murmur against him for that; as if, instead of answering, he were crossing all thy hopes and aims. Is this ingenuous? Is it not enough that God is so gracious as to do what thou desirest: must thou be so impudent as to expect him to do it in the way which thou prescribest?

7. It may support thy heart, to consider that in these troubles God is performing that work in which thy soul would rejoice, if thou didst see the design of it. We are clouded with much ignorance, and are not able to discern how particular providences tend to the fulfillment of God’s designs; and therefore, like Israel in the wilderness, are often murmuring, because Providence leads us about in a howling desert, where we are exposed to difficulties; though then he led them, and is now4eading us, by the right way to a city of habitations. If you could but see how God in his secret counsel has exactly laid the whole plan of your salvation, even to the smallest means and circumstances; could you but discern the admirable harmony of divine dispensations, their mutual relations, together with the general respect they all have to the last end; had you liberty to make your own choice, you would, of all conditions in the world, choose that in which you now are. Providence is like a curious piece of tapestry made of a thousand shreds, which, single, appear

useless, but put together, they represent a beautiful history to the eye. As God does all things according to the counsel of his own will, of course this is ordained as the best method to effect your salvation. Such an one has a proud heart, so many humbling providences appoint for him; such an one has an earthly heart, see many impoverishing providences for him. Did you but see this, I need say no more to support the most dejected heart.

8. It would much conduce to the settlement of your heart, to consider that by fretting and discontent you do yourself more injury than all your afflictions could do. Your own discontent is that which arms your troubles with a sting; you make your burden heavy by struggling under it. Did you but lie quietly under the hand of God, your condition would be much more easy than it is. “Impatience in the sick occasions severity in the physician.” This makes God afflict the more, as a father a stubborn child that receives not correction. Beside, it unfits the soul to pray over its troubles, or receive the sense of that good which God intends by them. Affliction is a pill, which, being wrapt up in patience and quiet submission, may be easily swallowed; but discontent chews the pill, and so embitters the soul. God throws away some comfort which he saw would hurt you, and you will throw away your peace after it; he shoots an arrow which sticks in your clothes, and was never intended to hurt, but only to drive you from sin, and you will thrust it deeper, to the piercing of your very heart, by despondency and discontent.

9. If thy heart (like that of Rachel) still refuses to be comforted, then do one thing more: compare the condition thou art now in, and with which thou art so much dissatisfied, with the condition in which others are, and in which thou deservest to be. ‘Others are roaring in flames, howling under the scourge of vengeance; and among them I deserve to be. O my soul is this hell? is my condition as bad as that of the damned? what would thousands now in hell give to exchange conditions with me!’ I have read (says an author) that when the Duke of Conde had voluntarily subjected himself to the inconveniences of poverty, he was one day observed and pitied by a lord of Italy, who from tenderness wished him to be more careful of his person. The good duke answered, “Sir, be not troubled, and think not that I suffer from want; for I send a harbinger before me, who makes ready my lodgings and takes care that I be royally entertained.” The lord asked him who was his harbinger? He answered, “The knowledge of myself, and the consideration of what I deserve for my sins, which is eternal torment; when with this knowledge I arrive at my lodging, however unprovided I find it, methinks it is much better than I deserve. Why doth the living man complain?” Thus the heart may be kept from desponding or repining under adversity.

III. The third season calling for more than ordinary diligence to keep the heart is the time of Zion’s troubles. . . .

III. The third season calling for more than ordinary diligence to keep the heart is the time of Zion’s troubles. When the Church, like the ship in which Christ and his disciples were, is oppressed and ready to perish in the waves of persecution, then good souls are ready to be shipwrecked too, upon the billows of their own fears. It is true, most men need the spur rather than the reins in this case; yet some men sit down discouraged under a sense of the Church’s troubles. The loss of the ark cost Eli his life; the sad posture in which Jerusalem lay made good Nehemiah’s countenance change in the midst of all the pleasures and accommodations of the court. But though God allows, yea, commands the most awakened apprehensions of these calamities, and in “such a day calls to mourning, weeping, and girding with sackcloth,” and severely threatens the insensible; yet it will

not please him to see you sit like pensive Elijah under the juniper tree. “Ah, Lord God! it is enough, take away my life also.” No: a mourner in Zion you may and ought to be, but a self-tormentor you must not be; complain to God you may, but complain of God (though but by the language of your actions) you must not.

Now let us inquire how tender hearts may be relieved and supported, when they are even overwhelm-ed with the burdensome sense of Zion’s troubles? I grant it is hard for him who preferreth Zion to his chief joy, to keep his heart that it sink not below the due sense of its troubles; yet this ought to, and may be done, by the use of such heart-establishing directions as these:

04.01b. Proverbs 4:23, The Text Explained

1. Settle this great truth in your heart, that no trouble befalls Zion but by the permission of Zion's God; and he permits nothing out of which he will not ultimately bring much good to his people. Comfort may be derived from reflections on the permitting as well as on the commanding will of God. "Let him alone, it may be God hath bidden him." "Thou couldst have no power against me, except it were given thee from above." It should much calm our spirits, that it is the will of God to suffer it; and that, had he not suffered it, it could, never have been as it is. This very consideration quieted Job, Eli, David, and Hezekiah. That the Lord did it was enough to them: and why should it not be so to us? If the Lord will have Zion ploughed as a field, and her goodly stones lie in the dust; if it be his pleasure that Anti-Christ shall rage yet longer and wear out the saints of the Most High; if it be his will that a day of trouble, and of treading down, and of perplexity by the Lord God of Hosts,, shall be upon the valley of vision, that the wicked shall devour the man that is more righteous than he; what are we that we should contend with God? It is fit that we should be resigned to that Will whence we proceeded, and that He that made us should dispose of us as he pleases: he may do what seemeth him good without our consent. Doth poor man stand upon equal ground, that he may capitulate with his Creator; or that God should render him an account of any of his matters? That we be content, however God may dispose of us, is as reasonable as that we be obedient, whatever he may require of us. But if we pursue this argument farther, and. consider that God's permissions all meet at last in the real good of his people, this will much more quiet our spirits. Do the enemies carry away the best among the people into captivity? This looks like a distressing providence; but God sends them thither for their good. Does God take the Assyrian as a staff in his hand to beat his people with? The end of his so doing is, "that he may accomplish his whole work upon Mount Zion." If God can bring much good out of the greatest evil of sin, much more out of temporal afflictions; and that he will, is as evident as that he can do so. For it is inconsistent with the wisdom of a common agent to permit any thing (which he might prevent if he pleased) to cross his great design; and can it be imagined that the most wise God should do so? As, then, Luther said to Melancthon, so say I to you: "Let infinite wisdom, power and love alone" for by these all creatures are swayed, and all actions guided, in reference to the church. It is not our work to rule the world, but to submit to Him that does. The motions of Providence are all judicious, the wheels are full of eyes: it is enough that the affairs of Zion are in a good hand.

2. Ponder this heart-supporting truth: how many troubles soever are upon Zion, yet her King is in her. What! hath the Lord forsaken his churches? has he sold them into the enemy's hands? Does he not regard what evil befalls them that our hearts sink thus? Is it not shamefully undervaluing the great God, and too much magnifying poor impotent man, to fear and tremble at creatures while God is in the midst of us? The church's enemies are many and mighty: let that be granted, yet that argument with which Caleb and Joshua strove to raise their own hearts, is of as much force now as it was then: "The Lord is with, us, fear them not." A historian tells us, that when Antigonus overheard his soldiers reckoning how many their enemies were, and so discouraging one another, he suddenly stepped in among them with this question, "And how many do you reckon me for?"

Discouraged souls, how many do you reckon the Lord for? Is he not an overmatch for all his enemies? Is not one Almighty more than many mighties? “If God be for us, who can be against us?” What think you was the reason of that great examination Gideon made? He questions, he desires a sign, and after that, another: and what was the end of all this, but that he might be sure the Lord was with him, and that he might but write this motto upon his ensign: The sword of the Lord and of Gideon. So if you can be well assured the Lord is with his people, you will thereby rise above all your discouragements: and that he is so, you need not require a sign from heaven; lo, you have a sign before you, even their marvellous preservation amidst all their enemies. If God be not with his people, how is it that they are not swallowed up quickly? Do their enemies want malice, power, or opportunity? No, but there is an invisible hand upon them. Let then his presence give us rest; and though the mountains be hurled into the sea, though heaven and earth mingle together, fear not; God is in the midst of Zion, she shall not be moved.

3. Consider the great advantages attending the people of God in an afflicted condition. If a low and an afflicted state in the world be really best for the church, then your dejection is not only irrational, but ungrateful. Indeed if you estimate the happiness of the church by its worldly ease, splendor and prosperity, then such times of affliction will appear to be unfavorable; but if you reckon its glory to consist in its humility, faith, and heavenly-mindedness, no condition so much abounds with advantages for these as an afflicted condition. It was not persecutions and prisons, but worldliness and wantonness that poisoned the church: neither was it the earthly glory of its professors, but the blood of its martyrs that was the seed of the church. The power of godliness did never thrive better than in affliction, and was never less thriving than in times of greatest prosperity: when “we are left a poor and an afflicted people, then we learn to trust in the name of the Lord.” It is indeed for the saints’ advantage to be weaned from love of, and delight in, ensnaring earthly vanities; to be quickened and urged forward with more haste to heaven; to have clearer discoveries of their own hearts; to be taught to pray more fervently, frequently, spiritually; to look and long for the rest to come more ardently. If these be for their advantage, experience teaches us that no condition is ordinarily blessed with such fruits as these, like an afflicted condition. Is it well then to repine and droop, because your Father consults the advantage of your soul rather than the gratification of your humors? because he will bring you to heaven by a nearer way than you are willing to go? Is this a due requital of his love, who is pleased so much to concern himself in your welfare—who does more for you than he will do for thousands in the world, upon whom he will not lay a rod, dispense an affliction to them for their good? But alas! we judge by sense, and reckon things good or evil, according to our present taste.

4. Take heed that you overlook not the many precious mercies which the people of God enjoy amidst all their trouble. It is a pity that our tears on account of our troubles should so blind our eyes that we should not see our mercies. I will not insist upon the mercy of having your life given you for a prey; nor upon the many outward comforts which you enjoy, even above what were enjoyed by Christ and his precious servants, of whom the world was not worthy. But what say you to pardon of sin; interest in Christ; the covenant of promise; and an eternity of happiness in the presence of God, after a few days are over? O that a people entitled to such mercies as these should droop under any temporal affliction, or be so much concerned for the frowns of men and the loss of trifles. You have not the smiles of great men, but you have the favor of the great God; you are perhaps diminished in temporal, but you are thereby increased in spiritual and eternal goods. You

cannot live so plentifully as before; but you may live as heavenly as ever. Will you grieve so much for these circumstances as to forget your substance? Shall light troubles make you forget weighty mercies? Remember the true riches of the church are laid out of the reach of all enemies. What though God do not in his outward dispensations distinguish between his own and others? Yea, what though his judgments single out the best, and spare the worst? What though an Abel be killed in love, and a Cain survive in hatred; a bloody Dionysius die in his bed, and a good Josiah fall in battle? What though the belly of the wicked be filled with hidden treasures, and the teeth of the saints with gravel-stones? Still there is much matter of praise; for electing love has distinguished, though common providence has not: and while prosperity and impunity slay the wicked, even slaying and adversity shall benefit and save the righteous.

5. Believe that how low soever the church be plunged under the waters of adversity, she shall assuredly rise again. Fear not; for as surely as Christ arose the third day, notwithstanding the seal and watch upon him; so surely Zion shall arise out of all her troubles, and lift up her victorious head over all her enemies. There is no reason to fear the ruin of that people who thrive by their losses and multiply by being diminished. Be not too hasty to bury the church before she is dead; stay till Christ has tried his skill, before you give her up for lost. The bush may be all in a flame, but shall never be consumed; and that because of the good will of Him that dwelleth in it.

6. Remember the instances of God's care and tenderness over his people in former difficulties. For above eighteen hundred years the Christian church has been in affliction, and yet it is not consumed; many a wave of persecution has gone over it, yet it is not drowned; many devices have been formed against it, hitherto none of them has prospered. This is not the first time that Hamans and Ahithophels have plotted its ruin; that a Herod has stretched out his hand to vex it; still it has been preserved from, supported under, or delivered out of all its troubles. Is it not as dear to God as ever? Is he not as able to save it now as formerly? Though we know not whence deliverance should arise, "yet the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations."

7. If you can derive no comfort from any of these considerations, try to draw some out of your very trouble. Surely this trouble of yours is a good evidence of your integrity. Union is the ground of sympathy: if you had not some rich, adventure in that ship, you would not tremble as you do when it is in danger. Beside this framer of spirit may afford you this consolation, that if you are so sensible of Zion's trouble, Jesus Christ is much more sensible of and solicitous about it than you can be, and he will have an eye of favor upon them that mourn for it.

IV. The fourth season, requiring our utmost diligence to keep our hearts, is the time of danger and public distraction. . . .

IV. The fourth season, requiring, our utmost diligence to. keep our hearts, is the time of danger and public distraction. In such times the best hearts are too apt to be surprised by slavish: fear. If Syria be confederate with Ephraim, how do the hearts of the house of David shake, even as the trees of the wood which are shaken with the wind. When there are ominous signs in the heavens, or the distress of nations with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; then the hearts of men fail for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth. Even a Paul may sometimes complain of "fightings within, when there are fears without."

But, my brethren, these things ought not so to be; saints should be of a more elevated spirit; so was David when his heart was kept in a good frame: “The Lord is my light and my salvation whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?” Let none but the servants of sin be the slaves of fear; let them that have delighted in evil fear evil. Let not that which God has threatened as a judgment upon the wicked, ever seize upon the hearts of the righteous. “I will send faintness into their hearts in the land of their enemies, and the sound of a shaking leaf shall chase them.” What poor spirited men are those, to fly at a shaking leaf! A leaf makes a pleasant, not a terrible noise; it makes indeed a kind of natural music: but to a guilty conscience even the whistling leaves are drums and trumpets! “But God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of love and of a sound mind.” A sound mind, as it stands there in opposition to fear, is an unwounded conscience not weakened by guilt: and this should make a man as bold as a lion. I know it cannot be said of a saint, as God said of leviathan, that he is made without fear; there is a natural fear in every man, and it is as impossible to remove it wholly, as to remove the body itself. Fear is perturbation of the mind, arising from the apprehension of approaching danger; and as long as dangers can approach us, we shall find some perturbations within us. It is not my purpose to commend to you a stoical apathy, nor yet to dissuade you from such a degree of cautionary preventive fear as may fit you for trouble and be serviceable to your soul. There is a provident, fear that opens our eyes to foresee danger, and quickens us to a prudent and lawful use of means to prevent it: such was Jacob’s fear, and such his prudence when expecting to meet his angry brother Esau. But it is the fear of diffidence, from which I would persuade you to keep your heart; that tyrannical passion which invades the heart in times of danger, distracts, weakens and unfits it for duty, drives men upon unlawful means, and brings a snare with it.

Now let us inquire how a Christian may keep his heart from distracting and tormenting fears in times of great and threatening dangers. There are several excellent rules for keeping the heart from sinful fear when imminent dangers threaten us:

1. Look upon all creatures as in the band of God, who manages them in all their motions, limiting, restraining and determining them at his pleasure. Get this great truth well settled by faith in your heart, and it will guard you against slavish fears. Ezekiel 1:1-28 contains an admirable draught of Providence: there you see the living creatures who move the wheels (that is, the great revolutions of things here below) coming unto Christ, who sits upon the throne, to receive new instructions from him. In Revelation 6:1-17, you read of white, black, and red horses, which are but the instruments God employs in executing judgments in the world, as wars, pestilence, and death. When these horses are prancing and trampling up and down in the world, here is a consideration that may quiet our hearts; God has the reins in his hand. Wicked men are sometimes like mad horses, they would stamp the people of God under their feet, but that the bridle of Providence is in their mouths. A lion at liberty is terrible to meet, but who is afraid of a lion in the keeper’s hand?’

2. Remember that this God in whose hand are all creatures, is your Father, and is much more tender of you than you are, or can be, of yourself. “He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye.” Let me ask the most timorous woman whether there be not a great difference between the sight of a drawn sword in the hand of a bloody ruffian, and of the same sword in the hand of her own tender husband? As great a difference there is between looking upon creatures by an eye of sense, and looking on them, as in the hand of your God, by an eye of faith. Isaiah 54:5, is here very appropriate: “Thy Maker is thine husband, the Lord of hosts is his name;” he is Lord of all the

hosts of creatures. Who would be afraid to pass through an army, though all the soldiers should turn their swords and guns toward him, if the commander of that army were his friend or father? A religious young man being at sea with many other passengers in a great storm, and they being half dead with fear, lie only was observed to be very cheerful, as if he were but little concerned in that danger: one of them demanding the reason of his cheerfulness, “O,” said he, “it is because the pilot of the ship is my Father!” Consider Christ first as the King and supreme Lord over the providential kingdom, and then as your head, husband and friend, and you will quickly say, “Return unto thy rest, O my soul.” This truth will make you cease trembling, and cause you to sing in the midst of danger, “The Lord is King of all the earth, sing ye praise with understanding.” That is, ‘Let every one that has understanding of this heart-reviving and establishing doctrine of the dominion of our Father over all creatures, sing praise.’

3. Urge upon your heart the express prohibitions of Christ in this case, and let your heart stand in awe of the violation of them. He hath charged you not to fear: “When we shall hear of wars and commotions, see that ye be not terrified.” “In nothing be terrified by your adversaries.” In Matthew 10:1-42, and within the compass of six verses, our Savior commands us thrice, “not to fear man.” Does the voice of a man make thee to tremble, and shall not the voice of God? If thou art of such a timorous spirit, how is it that thou fearest not to disobey the commands of Jesus Christ? Methinks the command of Christ should have as much power to calm, as the voice of a poor worm to terrify thy heart. “I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man that shall be made as the grass, and forgettest the Lord thy Maker?” We cannot fear creatures sinfully till we have forgotten God: did we remember what he is, and what he has said, we should not be of such feeble spirits. Bring thyself then to this reflection in times of danger: ‘If I let into my heart the slavish fear of man, I must let out the reverential awe and fear of God; and dare I cast off the fear of the Almighty for the frowns of a man I shall I lift up proud dust above the great God I shall I run upon a certain sin, to shun a probable danger?’—O keep thy heart by this consideration!

4. Remember how much needless trouble your vain fears have brought upon you formerly: “And hast feared continually because of the oppressor, as if he were ready to devour; and where is the fury of the oppressor?” He seemed ready to devour, yet you are not devoured. I have not brought upon you the thing that you. feared; you have wasted your spirit, disordered your soul, and weakened your hands to no purpose: you might have all this while enjoyed your peace, and possessed your soul in patience. And here I cannot but observe a very deep policy of Satan in managing a design against the soul by these vain fears. I call them vain, with reference to the frustration of them by Providence; but certainly they are not in vain as the end at which Satan aims in raising them; for herein he acts as soldiers do in the siege of a garrison, who to wear out the besieged by constant watchings, and thereby unfit them to make resistance when they storm it in earnest, every night rouse them with false alarms, which though they come to nothing yet remarkably answer the ultimate design of the enemy.—O when will you beware of Satan’s devices?

5. Consider solemnly, that though the things you fear should really happen, yet there is more evil in your own fear than in the things feared: and that, not only as the least evil of sin is worse than the greatest evil of suffering; but as this sinful fear has really more trouble in it than there is in that condition of which you are so much afraid. Fear is both a multiplying and a tormenting passion; it

represents troubles as much greater than they are, and so tortures the soul much more than the suffering itself. So it was with Israel at the Red Sea; they cried out and were afraid, till they stepped into the water, and then a passage was opened through those waters which they thought would have drowned them. Thus it is with us; we, looking through the glass of carnal fear upon the waters of trouble, the swellings of Jordan, cry out, 'O they are unfordable; we must perish in them!' But when we come into the midst of those floods indeed, we find the promise made good: "God will make a way to escape." Thus it was with a blessed martyr; when he would make a trial by putting his finger to the candle, and found himself not able to endure that, he cried out, "What! cannot I bear the burning of a finger? How then shall I be able to bear the burning of my whole body to-morrow?" Yet when that morrow came he could go cheerfully into the flames with this scripture in his mouth: "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine; when thou passest through the waters I will be with you; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt."

6. Consult the many precious promises which are written for your support and comfort in all dangers. These are your refuges to which you may fly and be safe when the arrows of danger fly by night, and destruction wasteth at noon-day. There are particular promises suited to particular cases and exigencies; there are also general promises reaching all cases and conditions. Such as these: "All things shall work together for good," &c. "Though a sinner do evil an hundred times and his days be prolonged, yet it shall be well with them that fear the Lord," &c. Could you but believe the promises your heart should be established. Could you but plead them with God as Jacob did, ("Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good," &c.) they would relieve you in every distress.

7. Quiet your trembling heart by recording and consulting your past experiences of the care and faithfulness of God in former distresses. These experiences are food for your faith in a wilderness. By this David kept his heart in time of danger, and Paul his. It was answered by a saint, when one told him that his enemies waylaid him to take his life: "If God take no care of me, how is it that I have escaped hitherto?" You may plead with God old experiences for new ones: for it is in pleading with God for new deliverances, as it is in pleading for new pardons. Mark how Moses pleads of that account with God. "Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people, as thou hast forgiven them from Egypt until now." He does not say as men do, 'Lord, this is the first fault, thou hast not been troubled before to sign their pardon:' but, 'Lord, because thou hast pardoned them so often, I beseech thee pardon them once again.' So in new difficulties let the saint say, 'Lord, thou hast often heard, helped and saved, in former years; therefore now help again, for with thee there is plenteous redemption and thine arm is not shortened.'

8. Be well satisfied that you are in the way of your duty, and that will beget holy courage in times of danger. "Who, will harm you if you be a follower of that which is good?" Or if any dare attempt to harm you, "you may boldly commit yourself to God in well-doing." It was this consideration that raised Luther's spirit above all fear: "in the cause of God (said he) I ever am, and ever shall be stout: herein I assume this title, "I yield to none." A good cause will bear up a man's spirit. Hear the saying of a hea-then, to the shame of cowardly Christians: when the emperor Vespasian had commanded Fluidus Priseus not to come to the senate, or if he did come, to speak nothing but what 'he would have him; the senator returned this noble answer, "that he was a senator, it was fit he should be at the senate; and if being there, he were required to give his advice, he would freely speak that which his conscience commanded him." The emperor threatening that then he should

die; he answered, “Did I ever tell you that I was immortal? Do what you will, and I will do what I ought. It is in your power to put me to death unjustly, and in my power to die with constancy.” Righteousness is a breastplate: let them tremble whom danger finds out of the way of duty.

9. Get your conscience sprinkled with the blood of Christ from all guilt, and that will set your heart above all fear. It is guilt upon the conscience that softens and makes cowards of our spirits: “the righteous are bold as a lion.” It was guilt in Cain’s conscience that made him cry, “Every one that findeth me will slay me.” A guilty conscience is more terrified by imagined dangers, than a pure conscience is by real ones. A guilty sinner carries a witness against himself in his own bosom. It was guilty Herod cried out, “John Baptist is risen from the dead.” Such a conscience is the devil’s anvil, on which he fabricates all those swords and spears with which the guilty sinner pierces himself. Guilt is to danger, what fire is to gun-powder: a man need not fear to walk among many barrels of powder, if he have no fire about him.

10. Exercise holy trust in times of great distress. Make it your business to trust God with your life and comforts, and then your heart will be at rest about them. So did David, “At what time I am afraid I will trust in thee;” that is, ‘Lord, if at any time a storm arise, I will shelter from it under the covert of thy wings.’ Go to God by acts of faith and trust, and never doubt that he will secure you. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee,” says Isaiah. God is pleased when you come to him thus: ‘Father, my life, my liberty and my estate are exposed, and I cannot secure them; O let me leave them in, thy hand. The poor leaveth himself with thee; and does his God fail him? No, thou art the helper of the fatherless: that is, thou art the helper of the destitute one, that has none to go to but God. This is a comforting passage, “He shall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord;” he does not say, his ear shall be preserved from the report of evil tidings, he may hear as sad tidings as other men, but his heart shall be kept from the terror of those tidings; his heart is fixed.

11. Consult the honor of religion more, and your personal safety less. Is it for the honor of religion (think you) that Christians should be as timorous as bores to start at every sound? Will not this tempt the world to think, that whatever you talk, yet your principles are no better than other men’s? What mischief may the discovery of your fears before them do! It was nobly said by Nehemiah, “Should such a man as I flee? and who, being as I am, would flee?” Were it not better you should die than that the world should be prejudiced against Christ by your example? For alas! how apt is the world (who judge more by what they see in your practices than by what they understand of your principles) to conclude from your timidity, that how much soever you commend faith and talk of assurance, yet you dare trust to those things no more than they, when it comes to the trial. O let not your fears lay such a stumbling-block before the blind world.

12. He that would secure his heart from fear, must first secure the eternal interest of his soul in the hands of Jesus Christ., When this is done, you may say, ‘Now, world, do thy worst!’ You will not be very solicitous about a vile body, when you are once assured it shall be well to all eternity with your precious soul. “Fear not them (says Christ) that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.” The assured Christian may smile with contempt upon all his enemies, and say, ‘Is this the worst that you can do?’ What say you, Christian? Are you assured that your soul is safe; that within a few moments of your dissolution it shall be received by Christ into an everlasting habitation? If you be sure of that, never trouble yourself about the instrument and means of your

death.'

13. Learn to quench all slavish creature-fears in the reverential fear of God. This is a cure by diversion. It is an exercise of Christian wisdom to turn those passions of the soul which most predominate, into spiritual channels; to turn natural anger into spiritual zeal, natural mirth into holy cheerfulness, and natural fear into a holy dread and awe of God. This method of cure Christ prescribes in the 10th of Matthew; similar to which is Isaiah 8:12-13, "Fear not their fear." 'But how shall we help it?' "Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." Natural fear may be allayed for the present by natural reason, or the removal of the occasion; but then it is like a candle blown out by a puff of breath, which is easily blown in again: but if the fear of God extinguish it, then it is like a candle quenched in water, which cannot easily be rekindled.'

14. Pour out to God in prayer those fears which the devil and your own unbelief pour in upon you in times of danger. Prayer is the best outlet to fear: where is the Christian that cannot set his seal to this direction? I will give you the greatest example to encourage you to compliance, even the example of Jesus Christ. When the hour of his danger and death drew nigh, he went into the garden, separated from his disciples, and there wrestled mightily with God in prayer, even unto agony; in reference to which the apostle says, "who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong cries and tears, to him that was able to save from death, and was heard in that he feared." He was heard as to strength and support to carry him through it; though not as to deliverance, or exemption from it. O that these things may abide with you, and be reduced to practice in these evil days, and that many trembling souls may be established by them.'

V. The fifth season, requiring diligence in keeping the heart, is the time of outward wants. . . .

V. The fifth season, requiring diligence in keeping the heart, is the time of outward wants. Although at such times we should complain to God, not of God, (the throne of grace being erected for a "time of need,") yet when the waters of relief run low, and want begins to press, how prone are the best hearts to distrust the fountain! When the meal in the barrel and the oil in the cruse are almost spent, our faith and patience too are almost spent. It is now difficult to keep the proud and unbelieving heart in a holy quietude and sweet submission at the foot of God. It is an easy thing to talk of trusting God for daily bread, while we have a full barn or purse; but to say as the prophet, "Though the fig-tree should not blossom, neither fruit be in the vine, &c. yet will I rejoice in the Lord:" surely this is not easy. Would you know then how a Christian may keep his heart from distrusting God, or repining against him, when outward wants are either felt or feared?—The case deserves to be seriously considered, especially now, since it seems to be the design of Providence to empty the people of God of their creature fullness, and acquaint them with those difficulties to which hitherto they have been altogether strangers. To secure the heart from the dangers attending this condition, these considerations may, through the blessing of the Spirit, prove effectual:

1. If God reduces you to necessities, he therein deals no otherwise with you than he has done with some of the holiest men that ever lived. Your condition is not singular; though you have hitherto been a stranger to want, other saints have been familiarly acquainted with it. Hear what Paul says, not of himself only, but in the name of other saints reduced to like exigencies: "Even to the present hour, we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain

dwelling-place." To see such a man as Paul going up and down the world naked, and hungry, and houseless; one that was so far above thee in grace and holiness; one that did more service for God in a day than perhaps thou hast done in all thy days may well put an end to your repining. Have you forgotten how much even a David has suffered? How great were his difficulties! "Give, I pray thee," says he to Nabal, "whatsoever cometh to thy hand, to thy servants, and to thy son David." But why speak I of these? Behold a greater than any of them, even the Son of God, who is the heir of all things, and by whom the worlds were made, sometimes would have been glad of any thing, having nothing to eat. "And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry; and seeing a fig-tree, afar off, having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon."

Hereby then God has set no mark of hatred upon you, neither can you infer want of love from want of bread. When thy repining heart puts the question, 'Was there ever sorrow like unto mine?' ask these worthies, and they will tell thee that though they did not complain as thou dost, yet their condition was as necessitous as thine is.

2. If God leave you not in this condition without a promise, you have no reason to repine or despond under it. That is a sad condition indeed to which no promise belongs. Calvin in his comment on Isaiah, 9:1, explains in what sense the darkness of the captivity was not so great as that of the lesser incursions made by Tiglath Pileser. In the captivity, the city was destroyed and the temple burnt with fire: there was no comparison in the affliction, yet the darkness was not so great, because, says he, "there was a certain promise made in this case, but none in the other." It is better to be as low as hell with a promise, than to be in paradise without one. Even the darkness of hell itself would be no darkness comparatively at all, were there but a promise to enlighten it. Now, God has left many sweet promises for the faith of his poor people to live upon in this condition; such as these: "O fear the Lord, ye his saints, for there is no want to them that fear him; the lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that fear the Lord shall not want any good thing." "The eye of the Lord is upon the righteous to keep them alive in famine." "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" "When the poor and the needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them." Here you see their extreme wants, water being put for their necessaries of life; and their certain relief, "I the Lord will hear them;" in which it is supposed that they cry unto him in their distress, and he hears their cry. Having therefore these promises, why should not your distrustful heart conclude like David's, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want?"

'But these promises imply conditions: if they were absolute, they would afford more satisfaction.' What are those tacit conditions of which you speak but these, that he will either supply or sanctify your wants; that you shall have so much as God sees fit for you? And does this trouble you? Would you have the mercy, whether sanctified or not? whether God sees it fit for you or not? The appetites of saints after earthly things should not be so ravenous as to seize greedily upon any enjoyment without regarding circumstances.

'But when wants press, and I see not whence supplies should come, my faith in the promise shakes, and I, like murmuring Israel, cry, "He gave bread, can he give water also?"' O unbelieving heart! when did his promises fail? who ever trusted them and was ashamed? May not God upbraid

thee with thine unreasonable infidelity, as in Jeremiah 2:31, “Have I been a wilderness unto you?” or as Christ said to his disciples, “Since I was with you, lacked ye any thing?” Yea, may you not upbraid yourself; may you not say with good old Polycarp, “These many years I have served Christ, and found him a good Master?”

Indeed he may deny what your wantonness, but not what your want calls for. He will not regard the cry of your lusts, nor yet despise the cry of your faith: though he will not indulge your wanton appetites, yet he will not violate his. own faithful promises. These promises are your best security for eternal life; and it is strange they should not satisfy you for daily bread. Remember the words of the Lord, and solace your heart with them amidst all your wants. It is said of Epicurus, that in dreadful paroxysms of the cholic he often refreshed himself by calling to mind his inventions in philosophy; and of Possodonius the philosopher, that in an acute disorder he solaced himself with discourses on moral virtue; and when distressed, he would say, “O pain, thou dost nothing; though thou art a little troublesome, I will never confess thee to be evil.” If upon such grounds as these they could support themselves under such racking pains, and even deluded their diseases by them; how much rather should the promises of God, and the sweet experiences which have gone along step by step with them, make you forget all your wants, and comfort you in every difficulty?

3. If it be bad now, it might have been worse. Has God denied thee the comforts of this life? He might have denied thee Christ, peace, and pardon also; and then thy case had been woful indeed.

You know God has done so to millions. How many such wretched objects max your eyes behold every day, that have no comfort in hand, nor yet in hope; that are miserable here, and will be so to eternity; that have a bitter cup, and nothing to sweeten it—no, not so much as any hope that it will be better. But it is not so with you: though you be poor in this world, yet you are “rich in faith, and an heir of the kingdom which God has promised.” Learn to set spiritual riches over against temporal poverty. Balance all your present troubles with your spiritual privileges. Indeed if God has denied your soul the robe of righteousness to clothe it, the hidden manna to feed it, the heavenly mansion to receive it, you might well be pensive; but the consideration that he has not may administer comfort under any outward distress. When Luther began to be pressed by want, he said, “Let us be contented with our hard fare; for do not we feast upon Christ, the bread of life?“ “Blessed be God (said Paul) who hath abounded to us in all spiritual blessings.”

4. Though this affliction be great, God has far greater, with which he chastises the dearly beloved of his soul in this world. Should he remove this and inflict those, you would account your present state a very comfortable one, and bless God to be as you now are. Should God remove your present troubles, supply all your outward wants, give you the desire of your heart in creature-comforts; but hide his face from you, shoot his arrows into your soul, and cause the venom of them to drink up your spirit: should he leave you but a few days to the buffetings of Satan: should he hold your eyes but a few nights waking with horrors of conscience, tossing to and fro till the dawning of the day:—should he lead you through the chambers of death, show you the visions of darkness, and make his terrors set themselves in array against you: then tell me if you would not think it a great mercy to be back again in your former necessitous condition, with peace of conscience; and account bread and water, with God’s favor, a happy state? O then take heed of repining. Say not that God deals hardly with you, lest you provoke him to convince you by your own sense that he has worse rods than these for unsubmissive and froward children.

5. If it be had now, it will be better shortly. Keep thy heart by this consideration, ‘the meal in the barrel is almost spent; well, be it so, why should that trouble me, if I am almost beyond the need and use of these things?’ The traveler has spent almost all his money; ‘well,’ says he, ‘though my money be almost spent, my journey is almost finished too: I am near home, and shall soon be fully supplied.’ If there be no candles in the house, it is a comfort to think that it is almost day, and then there will be no need of them. I am afraid, Christian, you misreckon when you think your provision is almost spent, and you have a great way to travel, many years to live and nothing to live upon; it may be not half so many, as you suppose In this be confident, if your provision be spent, either fresh supplies are coining, though you see not whence, or you are nearer your journey’s end than you reckon yourself to be. Desponding soul, does it become a man traveling upon the road to that heavenly city, and almost arrived there, within a few days’ journey of his Father’s house, where all his wants shall be supplied, to be so anxious about a little meat, or drink, or clothes, which he fears he shall want by the way? It was nobly said by the forty martyrs when turned out naked in a frosty night to be starved to death, “ The winter indeed is sharp and cold, but heaven is warm and comfortable; here we shiver for cold, but Abraham’s bosom will make amends for all.”

‘But,’ says the desponding soul, ‘I may die for want.’ Who ever did so? When were the righteous forsaken? If indeed it be so, your journey is ended, and you fully supplied.

‘But I am not sure of that; were I sure of heaven, it would be another matter.’ Are you not sure of that? then you have other matters to trouble yourself about than these; methinks these should be the least of all your cares. I do not find that souls perplexed about the want of Christ, pardon of sin, &c. are usually very solicitous about these things. He that seriously puts such questions as these, ‘What shall I do to be saved? how shall I know my sin is pardoned?’ does not trouble himself with, “What shall I eat, what shall I drink, or wherewithal shall I be clothed?”

6. Does it become the children of such a Father to distrust his all-sufficiency, or repine at any of his dispensations? Do you well to question his care and love upon every new exigency? Say, have you not formerly been ashamed of this? Has not your Father’s seasonable provision for you in former difficulties put you to the blush, and made you resolve never more to question his love and care? And yet will you again renew your unworthy suspicions of him? Disingenuous child! reason thus with yourself: “If I perish for want of what is good and needful for me, it must be either because my Father knows not my wants, Or has not wherewith to supply them, or regards not what becomes of me. Which of these shall I charge upon him? Not the first: for my Father knows what I have need of Not the second: for the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof; his name is God All-sufficient. Not the last: for as a Father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him; the Lord is exceeding pitiful and of tender mercy; he hears the young ravens when they cry:—and will he not hear me? Consider, says Christ, the fowls of the air; not the fowls at the door, that are fed every day by hand, but the fowls of the air that have none to provide for them. Does he feed and clothe his enemies, and will he forget his children? he heard even the cry of Ishmael in distress. O my unbelieving heart, dost thou yet doubt?”

7. Your poverty is not your sin, but your affliction. If you have not by sinful means brought it upon yourself, and if it be but an affliction, it may the more easily be borne. It is hard indeed to bear an affliction coming upon us as the fruit and punishment of sin. When men are under trouble upon that account; they say, ‘O if it were but a single affliction, coming from the hand of God by way of

trial, I could bear it; but I have brought it upon myself by sin, it comes as the punishment of sin; the marks of God's displeasure are upon it: it is the guilt within that troubles and galls more than the want without.' But it is not so here; therefore you have no reason to be cast down under it.

'But though there be no sting of guilt, yet this condition wants not other stings; as, for instance, The discredit of religion. I cannot comply with my engagements in the world, and thereby religion is likely to suffer.' It is well you have a heart to discharge every duty; yet if God disable you by providence, it is no discredit to your profession that you do not that which you cannot do, so long as it is your desire and endeavor to do what you can and ought to do; and in this case God's will is, that lenity and forbearance be toward you.

'But it grieves me to behold the necessities of others, whom I was wont to relieve and refresh, but now cannot.' If you cannot, it ceases to be your duty, and God accepts the drawing out of your soul to the hungry in compassion and desire to help them, though you cannot draw forth a full purse to relieve and supply them.

'But I find such a condition full of temptations, a great hinderance in the way to heaven.' Every condition in the world has its hinderances and attending temptations; and were you in a prosperous condition, you might there meet with more temptations and fewer advantages than you now have; for though I confess poverty as well as prosperity has its temptations, yet I am confident prosperity has not those advantages that poverty has. Here you have an opportunity to discover the sincerity of your love to God, when you can live upon him, find enough in him, and constantly follow him, even when all external inducements and motives fail.

Thus I have shown you how to keep your heart from the temptations and dangers attending a low condition in the world. When want oppresses and the heart begins to sink, then improve, and bless God for these helps to keep it.

VI. The sixth season requiring this diligence in keeping the heart, is the season of duty. . . .

VI. The sixth season requiring this diligence in keeping the heart, is the season of duty. Our hearts must be closely watched and kept when we draw nigh to God in public, private, or secret duties; for the vanity of the heart seldom discovers itself more than at such times. How often does the poor soul cry out, 'O Lord, how gladly would I serve thee, but vain thoughts will not let me: I come to open my heart to thee, to delight my soul in communion with thee, but my corruptions oppose me: Lord, call off these vain thoughts, and suffer them not to estrange the soul that is espoused to thee.' The question then is this: How may the heart be kept from distractions by vain thoughts in time of duty? There is a two-fold distraction, or wandering of the heart in duty: First, voluntary and habitual, They set not their hearts aright, and their spirit was not steadfast with God." This is the case of formalists, and it proceeds from the want of a holy inclination of the heart to God; their hearts are under the power of their lusts, and therefore it is no wonder that they go after their lusts, even when they are about holy things. Secondly, involuntary and lamented distractions: "I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me; O wretched man that I am," &c. This proceeds not from the want of a holy inclination or aim, but from the weakness of grace and the want of vigilance in opposing indwelling sin. But it is not my business to show you how these distractions come into the heart but rather how to get them out, and prevent their future admission:

1. Sequester yourself from all earthly employments, and set apart some time for solemn preparation to meet God in duty. You cannot come directly from the world into God's presence without finding a savor of the world in your duties. It is with the heart (a few minutes since plunged in the world, now in the presence of God) as it is with the sea after a storm, which still continues working, muddy and disquiet, though the wind be laid and the storm be over. Your heart must have some time to settle. Few musicians can take an instrument and play upon it without some time and labor to tune it; few Christians can say with David, "My heart is fixed, O God, it is fixed." When you go to God in any duty, take your heart aside and say, 'O my soul, I am now engaged in the greatest work that a creature was ever employed about; I am going into the awful presence of God upon business of everlasting moment. O my soul, leave trifling now; be composed, be watchful, be serious; this is no common work, it is soul-work; it is work for eternity; it is work which will bring forth fruit to life or death in the world to come.' Pause awhile and consider your sins, your wants, your troubles; keep your thoughts awhile on these before you address yourself to duty. David first mused, and then spake with his tongue.

2. Having composed your heart by previous meditation, immediately set a guard upon your senses. How often are Christians in danger of losing the eyes of their mind by those of their body! Against this David prayed, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou me in thy way." This may serve to expound the Arabian proverb: "Shut the windows that the house may be light." It were well if you could say in the commencement, as a holy man once said when he came from the performance of duty: "Be shut, O my eyes, be shut; for it is impossible that you should ever discern such beauty and glory in any creature as I have now seen in God." You must avoid all occasions of distraction from without, and imbibe that intenseness of spirit in the work of God which locks up the eye and ear against vanity.

3. Beg of God a mortified fancy. A working fancy, (saith one,) how much soever it be extolled among men, is a great snare to the soul, except it work in fellowship with right reason and a sanctified heart. The fancy is a power of the soul, placed between the senses and the understanding; it is that which first stirs itself in the soul, and by its motions the other powers of the soul are brought into exercise; it is that in which thoughts are first formed, and as that is, so are they. If imaginations be not first cast down, it is impossible that every thought of the heart should be brought into obedience to Christ. The fancy is naturally the wildest and most untameable power of the soul. Some Christians have much to do with it; and the more spiritual the heart is, the more does a wild and vain fancy disturb and perplex it. It is a sad thing that one's imagination should call off the soul from attending on God, when it is engaged in communion with him. Pray earnestly and perseveringly that your fancy may be chastened and sanctified, and when this is accomplished your thoughts will be regular and fixed.

4. If you would keep your heart from vain excursions when engaged in duties, realize to yourself, by faith, the holy and awful presence of God. If the presence of a grave man would compose you to seriousness, how much more should the presence of a holy God? Do you think that you would dare to be gay and light if you realized the presence and inspection of the Divine Being? Remember where you are when engaged in religious duty, and act as if you believed in the omniscience of God. "All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." Realize his infinite holiness, his purity, his spirituality.

Strive to obtain such apprehensions of the greatness of God as shall suitably affect your heart; and remember his jealousy over his worship. “This is that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified.” “A man that is praying (says Bernard) should behave himself as if he were entering into the court of heaven, where he sees the Lord upon his throne, surrounded with ten thousand of his angels and saints ministering unto him.”—When you come from an exercise in which your heart has been wandering and listless, what can you say? Suppose all the vanities and impertinences which have passed through your mind during a devotional exercise were written down and interlined with your petitions, could you have the face to present them to God? Should your tongue utter all the thoughts of your heart when at tending the worship of God, would not men abhor you? Yet your thoughts are perfectly known to God. O think upon this scripture: “God is greatly to be feared in the assemblies of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are round about him.” Why did the Lord descend in thunderings and lightnings and dark clouds upon Sinai? why did the mountains smoke under him, the people quake and tremble round about him, Moses himself not excepted? but to teach the people this great truth: “Let us have grace, whereby we may serve Him acceptably, with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire.” Such apprehensions of the character and presence of God will quickly reduce a heart inclined to vanity to a more serious frame.

04.01c. Proverbs 4:23, The Text Explained

5. Maintain a prayerful frame of heart in the intervals of duty. What reason can be assigned why our hearts are so dull, so careless, so wandering, when we hear or pray, but that there have been long intermissions in our communion with God? If that divine unction, that spiritual fervor, and those holy impressions, which we obtain from God while engaged in the performance of one duty, were preserved to enliven and engage us in the performance of another, they would be of incalculable service to keep our hearts serious and devout. For this purpose, frequent ejaculations between stated and solemn duties are of most excellent use: they not only preserve the mind in a composed and pious frame, but they connect one stated duty, as it were, with another, and keep the attention of the soul alive to all its interests and obligations.

6. If you would have the distraction of your thoughts prevented, endeavor to raise your affections to God, and to engage them warmly in your duty. When the soul is intent upon any work, it gathers in its strength and bends all its thoughts to that work; and when it is deeply affected, it will pursue its object with intenseness, the affections will gain, an ascendancy over the thoughts and guide them. But deadness causes distraction, and distraction increases deadness. Could you but regard your duties as the medium in which you might walk in communion with God in which your soul might be filled with those ravishing and matchless delights which his presence affords, you might have no inclination to neglect them. But if you would prevent the recurrence of distracting thoughts, if you would find your happiness in the performance of duty, you must not only be careful that you engage in what is your duty, bat labor with patient and persevering exertion to interest your feelings in it. Why is your heart so inconstant, especially in secret duties; why are you ready to be gone, almost as soon as you are come into the presence of God, but because your affections are not engaged?

7. When you are disturbed by vain thoughts, humble yourself before God, and call in assistance from Heaven. When the messenger of Satan buffeted St. Paul by wicked suggestions, (as is supposed) he mourned before God on account of it. Never slight wandering thoughts in duty as small matters; follow every such thought with a deep regret. Turn to God with such words as these: ‘Lord, I came hither to commune with thee, and here a busy adversary and a vain heart, conspiring together, have opposed me. O my God what a heart have I! shall I never wait upon thee without distraction? when shall I enjoy an hour of free communion with thee? Grant me thy assistance at this time; discover thy glory to me, and my heart will quickly be recovered. I came hither to enjoy thee, and shall I go away without thee? Behold my distress, and help me!’ —Could you but sufficiently be wail your distractions, and repair to God for deliverance from them, you would gain relief.

8. Look upon the success and the comfort of your duties, as depending very much upon the keeping of your heart close with God in them. These two things, the success of duty and the inward comfort arising from the performance of it, are unspeakably dear to the Christian; but both of these will be lost if the heart be in a listless state. “Surely God heareth not vanity, nor doth the

Almighty regard it." The promise is made to a heart engaged: "Then shall ye seek for me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your hearts." When you find your heart under the power of deadness and distraction, say to yourself, 'O what do I lose by a careless heart now! My praying seasons , are the most valuable portions of my life: could I but raise my heart to God, I might now obtain such mercies as would be matter of praise to all eternity.'

9. Regard your carefulness or carelessness in this matter as a great evidence of your sincerity, or hypocrisy. Nothing will alarm an upright heart more than this. 'What shall I give way to a customary wandering of the heart from God? Shall the spot of the hypocrite appear upon my soul? Hypocrites, indeed, can drudge on in the round of duty, never regarding the frame of their hearts; but shall I do so? Never— never let me be satisfied with empty duties. Never let me take my leave of a duty until my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.'

10. It will be of special use to keep your heart with God in duty, to consider what influence all your duties will have upon your eternity. Your religious seasons are your seed times, and in another world you must reap the fruits of what you sow in your duties here, If you sow to the flesh, you will reap corruption; if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap life everlasting. Answer seriously these questions: Are you willing to reap the fruit of vanity in the world to come? Dare you say, when your thoughts are roving to the ends of the earth in duty, when you scarce mind what you say or hear, 'Now, Lord, I am sowing to the Spirit; now I am providing and laying up for eternity; now I am seeking for glory, honor and immortality; now I am striving to enter in at the strait gate; now I am taking the kingdom of heaven by holy violence!' Such reflections are well calculated to dissipate vain thoughts.

VII. The seventh season, which requires more than common diligence to keep the heart, is when we receive injuries and abuses from men. Such is the depravity and corruption of man, that one is become as a wolf or a tiger to another. And as men are naturally cruel and oppressive one to another, so the wicked conspire to abuse and wrong the people of God, "The wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he." Now when we are thus abused and wronged, it is hard to keep the heart from revengeful motions; to make it meekly and quietly commit the cause to Him that judgeth righteously; to prevent the exercise of any sinful affection. The spirit that is in us lusteth to revenge; but it must not be so. We have choice helps in the Gospel to keep our hearts from sinful motions against our enemies, and to sweeten our embittered spirits. Do you ask how a Christian may keep his heart from revengeful motions under the greatest injuries and abuses from men? I reply: When you find your heart begin to be inflamed by revengeful feelings, immediately reflect on the following things

1. Urge upon your heart the severe prohibitions of revenge contained in the law of God. However gratifying to your corrupt propensities revenge may be, remember that it is forbidden. Hear the word of God: "Say not, I will recompense evil." Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me. "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Avenge not yourselves, but give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." On the contrary. "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink." It was an argument urged by the Christians to prove their religion to be supernatural and pure, that it forbids revenge, which is so agreeable to nature; and it is to be wished that such an argument might not be laid aside. Awe your heart, then, with the authority of God in the Scriptures; and when carnal reason says, 'My enemy deserves to be

hated,' let conscience reply, 'But doth God deserve to be disobeyed?' 'Thus and thus hath he done, and so hath he wronged me;' 'But what hath God done that 1 should wrong him? If my enemy dares boldly to break the peace, shall I be so wicked as to break the precept? if he fears not to wrong me, shall not I fear to wrong God?' Thus let the fear of God restrain and calm your feelings.

2. Set before your eyes the most eminent patterns of meekness and forgiveness, that you may feel the force of their example. This is the way to cut off the common pleas of flesh and blood for revenge: as thus, 'No man would bear such an affront;' yes, others have borne as bad, and worse ones. 'But I shall be reckoned a coward, a fool, if I pass by this:' no matter, so long as you follow the examples of the wisest and holiest of men. Never did any one suffer more or greater abuses from men than Jesus did, nor did any one ever endure insult and reproach and every kind of abuse in a more peaceful and forgiving manner; when he Was reviled he reviled not again; when he suffered. he threatened not when his murderers. crucified him he prayed Father, forgive them; and herein he hath set us an example, that we should follow his steps. Thus his apostles imitated him: "Being reviled," say they, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat." I have often heard it reported of the holy Mr. Dod, that when a man, enraged at his close, convincing doctrine, assaulted him, smote him on the face and dashed out two of his teeth; that meek servant of Christ spit out the teeth and blood into his hand, and said, "See here, you have knocked out two of my teeth, and that without any just provocation; but on condition that I might do your soul good, I would give you leave to knock out all the rest." Here was exemplified the excellency of the Christian spirit. Strive then for this spirit, which constitutes the true excellence of Christians. Do what others cannot do, keep this spirit in exercise, and you will preserve peace in your own soul and gain the victory over your enemies.

2. Consider the character of the person who has wronged you. He is either a good or a wicked man. If he is a good man, there is light and tenderness in his conscience, which sooner or later will bring him to a sense of the evil of what he has done. If he is a good man, Christ has forgiven him greater injuries than he has done to you; and why should not you forgive him? Will Christ not upbraid him for any of his wrongs, but frankly forgive them all; and will you take him by the throat for some petty abuse which he has offered you?

3. But if a wicked man has injured or insulted you, truly you have more reason to exercise pity than revenge toward him. He is in a deluded and miserable state; a slave to sin and an enemy to righteousness. If he should ever repent, he will be ready to make you reparation; if he continues impenitent, there is a day coming when .he will be punished to the extent of his deserts. You need not study revenge, God will execute vengeance upon him.

4. Remember that by revenge you can only gratify a sinful passion, which by forgiveness you might conquer. Suppose that by revenge you might destroy one enemy; yet, by exercising the Christian's temper you might conquer three—your own lust, Satan's temptation, and your enemy's heart. If by revenge you should overcome your enemy, the victory would be unhappy and inglorious, for in gaining it you would be overcome by your own corruption; but by exercising a meek and forgiving temper, you will always come off with honor and success. It must be a very disingenuous nature indeed upon which meekness and forgiveness will not operate; that must be a flinty heart which this fire will not melt. Thus David gained such a victory over Saul his

persecutor, that “Saul lifted up his voice and wept, and he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I.”

5. Seriously propose this question to your own heart: ‘Have I got any good by means of the wrongs and injuries which I have received?’ If they have done you no good, turn your revenge upon yourself. You have reason to be filled with shame and sorrow that you should have a heart which can deduce no good from such troubles; that your temper should be so unlike that of Christ. The patience and meekness of other Christians have turned all the injuries offered to them to a good account; their souls have been animated to praise God when they have been loaded with reproaches from the world. “I thank my God,” said Jerome, “that I am worthy to be hated of the world.” But if you have derived any benefit from the reproaches and wrongs which you have received, if they have put you upon examining your own heart, if they have made you more careful how you conduct, if they have convinced you of the value of a sanctified temper; will you not forgive them? will you not forgive one who has been instrumental of so much good to you? What though he meant it for evil? if through the Divine blessing your happiness has been promoted by what he has done, why should you even have a hard thought of him?

6. Consider by whom all your troubles are ordered. This will be of great use to keep your heart from revenge; this will quickly calm and sweeten your temper. When Shimei railed at David and cursed him, the spirit of that good man was not at all poisoned by revenge; for when Abishai offered him. if he pleased, the head of Shimei, the king said, “Let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David: who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?” It may be that God uses him as his rod to chastise me, because by my sin I gave the enemies of God occasion to blaspheme; and shall I be angry with the instrument? how irrational were that! Thus Job was quieted; he did not rail and meditate revenge upon the Chaldeans and Sabeans, but regarded God as the orderer of his troubles, and said, “The Lord hath taken away, blessed be his name.”

7. Consider how you are daily and hourly wronging God, and you will not be so easily inflawed with revenge against those who have wronged you. You are constantly affronting God, yet he does not take vengeance on you, but bears with you and forgives; and will you rise up and avenge yourself upon others? Reflect on this cutting rebuke: “O thou wicked and slothful servant! I forgave thee all that debt because thou desiredst me; shouldst thou not also have compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?” None should be so filled with forbearance and mercy to such as wrong them, as those who have experienced the riches of mercy themselves. The mercy of God to us should melt our hearts into mercy toward others. It is impossible that we should be cruel to others, except we forget how kind and compassionate God hath been to us. And if kindness cannot prevail in us, methinks fear should:—“If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

8. Let the consideration that the day of the Lord draweth nigh, restrain you from anticipating it by acts of revenge. Why are you so hasty? is not the Lord at hand to avenge all his abused servants? “Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth, &c. Be ye also patient, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned. Behold, the Judge standeth at the door. Vengeance belongeth unto God, and will you wrong yourself so much as to assume his work?

VIII. The next season in which special exertion is necessary to keep the heart, is when we meet with great trials. . . .

VIII. The next season in which special exertion is necessary to keep the heart, is when we meet with great trials. In such cases the heart is apt to be suddenly transported with pride, impatience, or other sinful passions. Many good people are guilty of hasty and very sinful conduct in such instances; and all have need to use diligently the following means to keep their hearts submissive and patient under great trials:

1. Get humble and abasing thoughts of yourself. The humble is ever the patient man. Pride is the source of irregular and sinful passions. A lofty, will be an unyielding and peevish spirit. When we over-rate ourselves, we think that we are treated unworthily, that our trials are too severe: thus we cavil and repine. Christian, you should have such thoughts of yourself as would put a stop to these murmurings. You should have lower and more humiliating views of yourself than any other one can have of you. Get humility, and you will have peace whatever be your trial.

2. Cultivate a habit of communion with God. This will prepare you for whatever may take place. This will so sweeten your temper and calm your mind as to secure you against surprisals. This will produce that inward peace which will make you superior to your trials. Habitual communion with God will afford you enjoyment, which you can never be willing to interrupt by sinful feeling. When a Christian is calm and submissive under his afflictions, probably he derives support and comfort in this way; but he who is discomposed, impatient, or fretful, shows that `all is not right within—he cannot be supposed to practise communion with God.

3. Let your mind be deeply impressed with an apprehension of the evil nature and effects of an unsubmissive and restless temper. It grieves the Spirit of God, and induces his departure. His gracious presence and influence are enjoyed only where peace and quiet submission prevail. The indulgence of such a temper gives the adversary an advantage. Satan is an angry and discontented spirit. He finds no rest but in restless hearts. He bestirs himself when the spirits are in commotion; sometimes he fills the heart with ungrateful and rebellious thoughts; sometimes he inflames the tongue with indecent language. Again, such a temper brings great guilt upon the conscience, unfits the soul for any duty, and dishonors the Christian name. O keep your heart, and let the power and excellence of your religion be chiefly manifested when you are brought into the greatest straits.

4. Consider how desirable it is for a Christian to overcome his evil propensities. How much more present happiness it affords; how much better it is in every respect to mortify and subdue unholy feelings, than to give way to them. When upon your death-bed you come calmly to review your life, how comfortable will it be to reflect on the conquest which you have made over the depraved feelings of your heart. It was a memorable saying of Valentinian the emperor, when he was about to die: “Amongst all my conquests, there is but one that now comforts me” Being asked what that was, he answered, “I have overcome my worst enemy, my own sinful heart!”

5. Shame yourself, by contemplating the character of those who have been most eminent for meekness and submission. Above all, compare your temper with the Spirit of Christ. “Learn of me,” saith he, “for I am meek and lowly.” It is said of Calvin and Ursin, though both of choleric natures, that they had so imbibed and cultivated the meekness of Christ as not to utter an unbecoming

word under the greatest provocations. And even many of the heathens have manifested great moderation and forbearance under their severest afflictions. Is it not a shame and a reproach that you should be outdone by them?

6. Avoid every thing which is calculated to irritate your feelings. It is true spiritual valor to keep as far as we can out of sins way. If you can but avoid the excitements to impetuous and rebellious feelings, or check them in their first beginnings, you will have but little to fear. The first workings of common sins are comparatively weak, they gain their strength by degrees; but in times of trial the motions of sin are strongest at first, the unsubdued temper breaks out suddenly and violently. But if you resolutely with. stand it at first, it will yield and give you the victory.

IX. The ninth season wherein the greatest diligence and skill are necessary to keep the heart, is the hour of temptation, when Satan besets the Christians heart, and takes the unwary by surprise. . . .

IX. The ninth season wherein the greatest diligence arid skill are necessary to keep the heart, is the hour of temptation, when Satan besets the Christians heart, and takes the unwary by surprise. To keep the heart at such times, is not less a mercy than a duty. Few Christians are so skillful in detecting the fallacies, and repelling the arguments by which the adversary incites them to sin, as to come off safe and whole in these encounters. Many eminent saints have smarted severely for their want of watchfulness and diligence at such times. How then may a Christian keep his heart from yielding to temptation? There are several principal ways in which the adversary insinuates temptation, and urges compliance:

1. Satan suggests that here is pleasure to be enjoyed; the temptation is presented with a smiling aspect and an enticing voice: `What, are you so dull and phlegmatic as not to feel the powerful charms of pleasure? Who can withhold himself from such delights? Reader, you may be rescued from the danger of such temptations by repelling the proposal of pleasure. It is urged that the commission of sin will afford you pleasure. Suppose this were true, will the accusing and condemning rebukes of conscience and the flames of hell be pleasant too? Is there pleasure in the scourges of conscience? If so why did Peter weep so bitterly? why did David cry out of broken bones? You hear what is said of the pleasure of sin, and have you not read what David said of the effects of it? “Thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore; there is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger, neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin,” &c. If you yield to temptation, you must feel such inward distress on account of it, or the miseries of hell. But why should the pretended pleasure of sin allure you, when you know that unspeakably more real pleasure will arise from the mortification than can arise from the commission of sin. Will you prefer the gratification of some unhallowed passion, with the deadly poison which it will leave behind, to that sacred pleasure which arises from fearing and obeying God, complying with the dictates of conscience, and maintaining inward peace? Can sin afford any such delight as he feels who, by resisting temptation, has manifested the sincerity of his heart, and obtained evidence that he fears God, loves holiness, and hates sin?

2. The secrecy with which you may commit sin is made use of to induce compliance with temptation. The tempter insinuates that this indulgence will never disgrace you among men, for no one will know it. But recollect yourself. Does not God behold you? Is not the divine presence every where? What if you might hide your sin from the eyes of the world, you cannot hide it from God. No

darkness nor shadow of death can screen you from his inspection. Besides have you no reverence for yourself? Can you do that by yourself which you dare not have others observe? Is not your conscience as a thousand witnesses? Even a heathen could say, “When thou art tempted to commit sin, fear thyself without any other witness.”

3. The prospect of worldly advantage often enforces temptation. It is suggested, `Why should you be so nice and scrupulous? Give yourself a little liberty, and you may better your condition: now is your time. This is a dangerous temptation, and must be promptly resisted. Yielding to such a temptation will do your soul more injury than any temporal acquisition can possibly do you good. And what would it profit you, if you should gain the whole world and lose your own soul? What can be compared with the value of your spiritual interests? or what can at all compensate for the smallest injury of them?

4. Perhaps the smallness of the sin is urged as a reason why you may commit it; thus: `It is but a little one, a small matter, a trifle; who Would stand upon such niceties? But is the Majesty of heaven little too? If you commit this sin you will offend a great God. Is there any little hell to torment little sinners in? No; the least sinners in hell are full of misery. There is great wrath treasured up for those whom the world regard as little sinners. But the less the sin, the less the inducement to commit it. Will you provoke God for a trifle? will you destroy your peace, wound your conscience, and grieve the Spirit, all for nothing? What madness is this!

5. An argument to enforce temptation is sometimes drawn from the mercy of God and the hope of pardon —God is merciful, he will pass by this as an infirmity, he will not be severe to mark it. But stay: where do you find a promise of mercy to presumptuous sinners? Involuntary reprisals and lamented infirmities may be pardoned, “but the soul that doth aught presumptuously, the same reproacheth the Lord, and that soul shall be cut off from among his people.” If God is a being of so much mercy, how can you affront him? How can you make so glorious an attribute as the divine mercy an occasion of sin? Will you wrong him because he is good? Rather let his goodness lead you to repentance, and keep you from transgression.

6. Sometimes Satan encourages to the commission of sin, from the examples of holy men. Thus and thus they sinned, and were restored; therefore you may commit this sin, and yet. be a saint and be saved. Such suggestions must be instantly repelled. If good men have committed sins similar to that with which you are beset, did any good man ever sin upon such ground and from such encouragement as is here presented? Did God cause their examples to be recorded for your imitation, or for your warning? Are they not set up as beacons that you may avoid the rocks upon which they split? Are you willing to feel what they felt for sin? Dare you follow them in sin, and plunge yourself into such distress and danger as they incurred?—Reader, in these ways learn to keep your heart in the hour of temptation.

X. The time of doubting and of spiritual darkness constitutes another season when it is very difficult to keep the heart. . . .

X. The time of doubting and of spiritual darkness constitutes another season when it is very difficult to keep the heart. When the light and comfort of the divine presence is withdrawn; when the believer, from the prevalence of indwelling sin in one form or other, is ready to renounce his hopes, to infer desperate conclusions with respect to himself, to regard his former comforts as vain

delusions, and his professions as hypocrisy; at such a time much diligence is necessary to keep the heart from despondency. The Christian's distress arises from his apprehension of his spiritual state, and in general he argues against his possessing true religion, either from his having relapsed into the same sins from which he had formerly been recovered with shame and sorrow; or from the sensible declining of his affections from God; or from the strength of his affections toward creature enjoyments; or from his enlargement in public, while he is often confined and barren in private duties; or from some horrible suggestions of Satan, with which his soul is greatly perplexed; or, lastly, from God's silence and seeming denial of his long depending prayers. Now in order to the establishment and support of the heart under these circumstances, it is necessary that you be acquainted with some general truths which have a tendency to calm the trembling and doubting soul; and that you be rightly instructed with regard to the above-mentioned causes of disquiet. Let me direct your attention to the following general truths:

1. Every appearance of hypocrisy does not prove the person who manifests it to be a hypocrite. You should carefully distinguish between the appearance and the predominance of hypocrisy. There are remains of deceitfulness in the best hearts; this was exemplified in David and Peter; but the prevailing frame of their hearts being upright, they were not denominated hypocrites for their conduct.

2. We ought to regard what can be said in our favor, as well as what may be said against us. It is the sin of upright persons sometimes, to exercise an unreasonable severity against themselves. They do not impartially consider the state of their souls. To make their state appear butter than it really is, indeed is the damning sin of self-flattering hypocrites; and to make their state appear worse than it really is, is the sin and folly of some good persons. But why should you be such an enemy to your own peace? Why read over the evidences of God's love to your soul, as a man does a book which he intends to confute? Why do you study evasions, and turn off those comforts which are due to you?

3. Every thing which may be an occasion of grief to the people of God, is not a sufficient ground for their questioning the reality of their religion. Many things may trouble, which ought not to stumble you. If upon every occasion you should call in question all that had ever been wrought upon you, your life would be made up of doubtings and fears, and you could never attain that settled inward peace, and live that life of praise and thankfulness which the Gospel requires.

4. The soul is not at all times in a suitable state to pass a right judgment upon itself. It is peculiarly unqualified for this in the hour of desertion or temptation. Such seasons must be improved rather for watching and resisting, than for judging and determining.

5. Whatever be the ground of one's distress, it should drive him to, not from God. Suppose you have sinned thus and so, or that you have been thus long and sadly deserted, yet you have no right to infer that you ought to be discouraged, as if there was no help for you in God. When you have well digested these truths, if your doubts and distress remain, consider what is now to be offered:

1. Are you ready to conclude that you have no part in the favor of God, because you are visited with some extraordinary affliction? If so, do you then rightly conclude that great trials are tokens of God's hatred? Does the Scripture teach this? And dare you infer the same with respect to all who

have been as much or more afflicted than yourself? If the argument is good in your case, it is good in application to theirs, and more conclusive with respect to them, in proportion as their trials were greater than yours. Wo then to David, Job, Paul, and all who have been afflicted as they were! But had you passed along in quietness and prosperity; had God withheld those chastisements with which he ordinarily visits his people, would you not have had far more reason for doubts and distress than you now have?

2. Do you rashly infer that the Lord has no love to you, because he has withdrawn the light of his countenance? Do you imagine your state to be hopeless, because it is dark and uncomfortable? Be not hasty in forming this conclusion. If any of the dispensations of God to his people will bear a favorable as well as a harsh construction, why should they not be construed in the best sense? And may not God have a design of love rather than of hatred in the dispensation under which you mourn? May he not depart for a season, without departing for ever? You are not the first that have mistaken the design of God in withdrawing himself. “Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, my Lord hath forgotten me.” But was it so? What saith the answer of God? “Can a woman forget her sucking child?” &c. But do you sink down under the apprehension that the evidences of a total and final desertion are discoverable in your experience? Have you then lost your conscientious tenderness with regard to sin? and are you inclined to forsake God? If so, you have reason indeed to be alarmed. But if your conscience is tenderly alive; if you are resolved to cleave to the Lord; if the language of your heart is, I cannot forsake God, I cannot live without his presence; though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: then you have reason to hope that he will visit you again. It is by these exercises that he still maintains his interest in you.

Once more. Are sense and feelings suitable to judge of the dispensations of God by? Can their testimony be safely relied on? Is it safe to argue thus: ‘If God bad any love for my soul, I should feel it now as well as in former times; but I cannot feel it, therefore it is gone?’ May you not as well conclude, when the sun is invisible to you, that he has ceased to exist? Read Isaiah 1:10.

Now if there is nothing in the divine dealings with you which is a reasonable ground of your despondency and distress, let us inquire what there is in your own conduct for which you should be so cast down:

1. Have you committed sins from which you were formerly recovered with shame and sorrow? And do you thence conclude that you sin allowedly and habitually, and that your oppositions to sin were hypocritical? But do not too hastily give up all for lost. Is not your repentance and care renewed as often as you commit sin? Is it not the sin itself which troubles you, and is it not true, that the oftener you sin the more you are distressed? It is not so in customary sinning; of which Bernard excellently discourses thus: “When a man accustomed to restrain, sins grievously, it seems insupportable to him, yea he seems to descend alive into hell. In process of time it seems not insupportable, but heavy, and between insupportable and heavy there is no small descent. Next, such sinning becomes light, his conscience smites but faintly, and he regards not her rebukes. Then he is not only insensible to his guilt, but that which was bitter and displeasing has become in some degree sweet and pleasant. Now it is made a custom, and not only pleases, but pleases habitually. At length custom becomes nature; he cannot be dissuaded from it, but defends and pleads for it.” This is allowed and customary sinning, this is the way of the wicked. But is not your way the contrary of this?

2. Do you apprehend a decline of your affections from God and from spiritual subjects? This may be your case, and yet there may be hope. But possibly you are mistaken with regard to this. There are many things to be learnt in Christian experience; it has relation to a great variety of subjects. You may now be learning what it is very necessary for you to know as a Christian. Now, what if you are not sensible of so lively affections, of such ravishing views as you had at first; may not your piety be growing more solid and consistent, and better adapted to practical purposes? Does it follow from your not always being in the same frame of mind, or from the fact that the same objects do not at all times excite the same feelings, that you have no true religion? Perhaps you deceive yourself by looking forward to what you would be, rather than contemplating what you are, compared with what you once were.

3. If the strength of your love to creature-enjoyments is the ground of desperate conclusions respecting yourself, perhaps you argue thus: “I fear that I love the creature more than God, if so, I have not true love to God. I sometimes feel stronger affections toward earthly comforts than I do toward heavenly objects, therefore my soul is not upright within me.” If, indeed, you love the creature for itself, if you make it your end, and religion but a means, then you conclude rightly; for this is incompatible with supreme love to God. But may not a man love God more ardently and unchangeably than he does any thing, or all things else, and yet, when God is not the direct object of his thoughts, may he not be sensible of more violent affection for the creature than he has at that time for God? As rooted malice indicates a stronger hatred than sudden though inure violent passion; so we must judge of our love, not by a violent motion of it now and then, but by the depth of its root and the constancy of its exercise. Perhaps your difficulty results from bringing your love to some foreign and improper test. Many persons have feared that when brought to some eminent trial they should renounce Christ and cleave to the creature; but when the trial came, Christ was every thing, and the world as nothing in their esteem. Such were the fears of some martyrs whose victory was complete. But you may expect divine assistance only at the time of, and in proportion to your necessity. If you would try your love, see whether you are willing to forsake Christ now.

4. Is the want of that enlargement in private which you find in public exercises an occasion of doubts and fears? Consider then whether there are not some circumstances attending public duties which are peculiarly calculated to excite your feelings and elevate your mind, and which cannot affect you in private. If so, your exercises in secret, if performed faithfully and in a suitable manner, may he profitable, though they have not all the characteristics of those in public. If you imagine that you have spiritual enlargement and enjoyment in public exercises while you neglect private duties, doubtless you deceive yourself. Indeed if you live in the neglect of secret duties, or are careless about them, you have great reason to fear. But if you regularly and faithfully perform them, it does not follow that they are vain and worthless, or that they are not of great value, because they are not attended with so much enlargement as you sometimes find in public. And what if the Spirit is pleased more highly to favor you with his gracious influence in one place and at one time than another, should this be a reason for murmuring and unbelief, or for thankfulness?

5. The vile or blasphemous suggestions of Satan sometimes occasion great perplexity and distress.— They seem to lay open an abyss of corruption in the heart, and to say there can be no grace here. But there may be grace in the heart where such thoughts are injected, though not, in the heart which consents to and cherishes them. Do you then abhor and oppose them? do you utterly refuse to give up yourself to their influence, and strive to keep holy and reverend thoughts

of God, and of all religious objects? If so, such suggestions are involuntary, and no evidence against your piety.

6. Is the seeming denial of your prayers an occasion of despondency? Are you disposed to say, “If God had any regard for my soul he would have heard my petitions before now; but I have no answer from him, and therefore no interest in him?” But stay: though God’s abhorring and finally rejecting prayer is an evidence that he rejects the person who prays, yet, dare you conclude that he has rejected you, because an answer to your prayers is delayed, or because you do not discover it if granted? “May not God bear long with his own elect, that cry unto him day and night?”

Others have stumbled upon the same ground with you: “I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardst the voice of my supplication.” Now are there not some things in your experience which indicate that your prayers are not rejected, though answer to them is deferred? Are you not disposed to continue praying though you do not discover an answer? Are you not disposed still to ascribe righteousness to God, while you consider the cause of his silence as being in yourself? Thus did David: “O my God, I cry in the day time, and thou hearest not; and in the night, and am not silent: but thou art holy,” &c. Does not the delay of an answer to your prayers excite you to examine your own heart and try your ways, that you may find and remove the difficulty? If so, you may have reason for humiliation, but not for despair.

Thus I have shown you how to keep your heart in dark and doubting seasons. God forbid that any false heart should encourage itself from these things. It is lamentable, that when we give saints and sinners their proper portions, each is so prone to take up the other’s part.

XI. Another season, wherein the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when sufferings for religion are laid upon us. . . .

XI. Another season, wherein the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when sufferings for religion are laid upon us. Blessed is the man who in such a season is not offended in Christ. Now, whatever may be the kind or degree of your sufferings, if they are sufferings for Christ’s sake and the Gospel’s, spare no diligence to keep your heart. If you are tempted to shrink or waver under them, let what follows help you to repel and to surmount the instigation:

1. What reproach would you cast upon the Redeemer and his religion by deserting him at such a time as this! You would proclaim to the world, that how much soever you have boasted of the promises when you are put to the proof you dare hazard no thing upon your faith in them; and this will give the enemies of Christ an occasion to blaspheme. And will you thus furnish the triumphs of the uncircumcised? Ah, if you did but value the name of Christ as much as many wicked men value their names, you could never endure that his should be exposed to contempt. Will proud dust and ashes hazard death or hell rather than have their names disgraced, and will you endure nothing to maintain the honor of Christ?

2. Dare you violate your conscience out of complaisance to flesh and blood? Who will comfort you when your conscience accuses and condemns you? What happiness can there be in life, liberty or friends, when inward peace is taken away? Consider well what you do.

3. Is not the public interest of Christ and his cause infinitely more important than any interest of your own, and should you not prefer his glory and the welfare of his kingdom before every thing

else? Should any temporary suffering, or any sacrifice which you can be called to make, be suffered to come into competition with the honor of his name?

4. Did the Redeemer neglect your interest and think lightly of you, when for your sake he endured sufferings between which and yours there can be no comparison? Did he hesitate and shrink back? No: “He endured the cross, despising the shame.” And did he with unbroken patience and constancy endure so much for you; and will you flinch from momentary suffering in his cause?

5. Can you so easily cast off the society and the privileges of the saints and go over to the enemy’s side? Are you willing to withhold your support from those who are determined to persevere, and throw your influence in the scale against them? Rather let your body and soul be rent asunder. “If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”

6. How can you stand before Christ in the day of judgment, if you desert him now? “He that is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” Yet a little while, and the Son of man will come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, to judge the world. He will sit upon the throne of judgment, while all the nations are brought before him. Imagine yourself now to be witnessing the transactions of that day. Behold the wicked; behold the apostates; and hear the consuming sentence which is pronounced upon them, and see them sinking in the gulf of infinite and everlasting wo! And will you desert Christ now, will you forsake his cause to save a little suffering, or to protract an unprofitable life on earth, and thus expose yourself to the doom of the apostate? Remember, that if you can silence the remonstrances of conscience now, you cannot hinder the sentence of the Judge then. By these means keep your heart, that it depart not from the living God.

XII. The last season which I shall mention, in which the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when we are warned by sickness that our dissolution is at hand. . . .

XII. The last season which I shall mention, in which the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when we are warned by sickness that our dissolution is at hand. When the child of God draws nigh to eternity, the adversary makes his last effort; and as he cannot win the soul from God, as he cannot dissolve the bond which unites the soul to Christ, his great design is to awaken fears of death, to fill the mind with aversion and horror at the thoughts of dissolution from the body. Hence, what shrinking from a separation, what fear to grasp death’s cold hand, and unwillingness to depart, may sometimes be observed in the people of God. But we ought to die, as well as live, like saints.

I shall offer several considerations calculated to help the people of God in time of sickness, to keep their hearts loose from all earthly objects, and cheerfully willing to die:

1. Death is harmless to the people of God; its shafts leave no sting in them. Why then are you afraid that your sickness may be unto death? If you were to die in your sins; if death were to reign over you as a tyrant, to feed upon you as a lion doth upon his prey; if death to you were to be the precursor of hell, then you might reasonably startle and shrink back from it with horror and dismay. But if your sins are blotted out; if Christ has vanquished death in your behalf, so that you have nothing to encounter but bodily pain, and possibly not even that; if death will be to you the harbinger of heaven, why should you be afraid? why not bid it welcome? It cannot hurt you; it is

easy and harmless; it is like putting off your clothes, on taking rest.

2. It may keep your heart from shrinking back, to consider that death is necessary to fit you for the full enjoyment of God. Whether you are willing to die or not, there certainly is no other way to complete the happiness of your soul. Death must do you the kind office to remove this veil of flesh, this animal life which separates you from God, before you can see and enjoy him fully. “Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.” And who would not be willing to die for the perfect enjoyment of God? Methinks one should look and sigh, like a prisoner, through the grates of this mortality: “O that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest.” Indeed most men need patience to die; but a saint, who understands what death will introduce him to, rather needs patience to live. On his death-bed he should often look out and listen to his Lord’s coming; and when he perceives his dissolution to be near, he should say, “The voice of my beloved; behold he cometh, leaping over the mountains, skipping over the hills.”

3. Consider that the happiness of heaven commences immediately after death. That happiness will not be deferred till the resurrection; but as soon as death has passed upon you, your soul will be swallowed up in life. When you have once loosed from this shore, you shall be quickly wafted to the shore of a glorious eternity. And can you not say, I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ? Did the soul and body die together, or did they sleep till the resurrection, as some have fancied, it would have been folly for Paul to desire a dissolution for the enjoyment of Christ; because he would have enjoyed more in the body than he could have enjoyed out of it. The Scripture speaks of but two ways in which the soul can properly live: viz, by faith and vision. These two comprehend its present and future existence.

Now, if when faith fails, sight should not immediately succeed, what would become of the soul? But the truth on this subject is clearly revealed in Scripture. See Luke 23:3; John 14:3, &c. What a blessed change then will death make in your condition! Rouse up, dying saint, and rejoice; let death do his work, that the angels may conduct your soul to the world of light.

4. It may increase your willingness to die, to reflect that by death God often removes his people out of the way of great troubles and temptations. When some extraordinary calamity is coming upon the world, God sometimes removes his saints out of the way of the evil. Thus Methuselah died the year before the flood; Augustine a little before the sacking of Hippo; Pareus just before the taking of Heidelburg. Luther observes that all the apostles died before the destruction of Jerusalem; and Luther himself died before the wars broke out in Germany. Now it may be that by death you will escape some grievous trial, which you could not and need not endure. But if no extraordinary trouble would come upon you in case your life were prolonged, yet God designs by death to relieve you from innumerable evils and burdens which are inseparable from the present state. Thus you will be delivered from indwelling sin, which is the greatest trouble; from all temptations from whatever source; from bodily tempers and embarrassments; and from all the afflictions and sorrows of this life. The days of your mourning will be ended, and God will wipe away all tears from your eyes. Why then should you not hasten to depart?

5. If you still linger, like Lot in Sodom, what are your pleas and pretences for a longer life? Why are you unwilling to die? Are you concerned for the welfare of your relations? If so, are you anxious for their temporal support? Then let the word of God satisfy you: “Leave thy fatherless children to me, I will keep them alive, and let thy widows trust in me.” Luther says, in his last will, “Lord, thou hast

given inc a wife and children, I have nothing to leave them, but I commit them unto thee. O Father of the fatherless and Judge of widows, nourish, keep and teach them." But are you concerned for the spiritual welfare of your relations? Remember that you cannot convert them, if you should live; and God can make your prayers and counsels effectual when you are dead.

Perhaps you desire to serve God longer in this world. But if he has nothing further for you to do here, why not say with David, "Here am I, let him do what seemeth him good." He is calling you to higher service in heaven, and can accomplish by other hands what you desire to do further here.—Do you feel too imperfect to go to heaven? Consider that you must be imperfect until you die; your sanctification cannot be complete until you get to heaven.

'But,' you say, 'I want assurance; if I had that I could die easily.' Consider, then, that a hearty willingness to leave all the world to be freed from sin, and to be with God, is the direct way to that desired assurance; no carnal person was ever willing to die upon this ground.

Thus I have shown how the people of God, in the most difficult seasons, may keep their hearts with alt diligence.

I now proceed to improve and apply the subject: . . .

You have seen that the keeping of the heart is the great work of a Christian, in which the very soul and life of religion consists, and without which all other duties are of no value in the sight of God. Hence, to the consternation of hypocrites and formal professors, I infer:

1. That the pains and labors which many persons have undergone in religion are of no value, and will turn to no good account. Many splendid services have been performed by men, which God will utterly reject: they will not stand on record in order to an eternal acceptance, because the performers took no heed to keep their hearts with God. This is that fatal rock on which thousands of vain professors dash and ruin themselves eternally; they are exact about the externals of religion, but regardless of their hearts. O how many hours have some professors spent in hearing, praying, reading and conferring! and yet, as to the main end of religion, they might as well have sat still and done nothing, the great work, I mean heart-work, being all the while neglected. Tell me, vain professor, when did you shed a tear for the deadness, hardness, unbelief or earthliness of your heart? And do you think your easy religion can save you? If so, you must invert Christ's words, and say, Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to life, and many there be that go in thereat! Hear me, ye self-deluding hypocrite; you who have put off God with heartless duties; you who have acted in religion as if you had been blessing an idol; you who could not search your heart, and regulate it, and exercise it in your performances; how will you abide the coming of the Lord? how will you hold up your head before him, when he shall say. 'O you dissembling, false-hearted man! how could you profess religion? with what face could you so often tell me that you loved me, when you knew in your conscience that your heart was not with me?' O tremble to think what a fearful judgment it is to be given over to a heedless and careless heart, and then to have religious duties instead of a rattle to quiet and still the conscience!

2. I infer for their humiliation, that unless the people of God spend more time and pains about their hearts than they ordinarily do, they are never like to do God much service, or to possess much comfort in this world. I may say of that Christian who is remiss and careless in keeping his heart, as Jacob said of Reuben, Thou shalt not excel. It grieves me to see how many Christians there are

who live at a poor, low rate, both of service and comfort, and who go up and down dejected and complaining. But how can they expect it should be otherwise, while they live so carelessly?

O how little of their time is spent in the closet, in searching, humbling, and quickening their hearts!

Christian, you say your heart is dead, and do you wonder that it is, so long as you keep it not with the fountain of life? If your body had been dieted as your soul has, that would have been dead too. And you may never expect that your heart will be in a better state until you take more pains with it.

O Christians! I fear your zeal and strength have run in the wrong channel; I fear that most of us may take up the Church's complaint: "They have made me the keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vine-yard have I not kept." Two things have eaten up the time and strength of the professors of this generation, and sadly diverted them from heart-work.

First:—Fruitless controversies, started by Satan, I doubt not for the very purpose of taking us off from practical godliness, to make us puzzle our heads when we should be inspecting our hearts. How little have we regarded the observation: "It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, and not with meats," (that is, with disputes and controversies about meats,) "which have not profited them that have been occupied therein." How much better it is to see men live exactly, than to hear them dispute with subtlety! These unfruitful questions, how have they rent the churches, wasted time and spirits, and taken Christians off from their main business! 'What think you, would it not have been better if the questions agitated among the people of God of late had been such as these:—"How shall a man distinguish the special from the common operations of the Spirit? How may a soul discern its first backslidings from God? How may a backsliding Christian recover his first love? How may the heart be preserved from unseasonable thoughts in duty? How may a bosom-sin be discovered and mortified?" &c. Would not this course have tended more to the honor of religion and the comfort of souls? I am ashamed that the professors of this generation are yet insensible of their folly. O that God would turn their disputes and contentions into practical godliness!

Second:—Worldly cares and incumbrances have greatly increased the neglect of our hearts. The heads and hearts of multitudes have been filled with such a crowd and noise of worldly business that they have lamentably declined in their zeal, their love, their delight in God, and their heavenly, serious, and profitable way of conversing with men. How miserably have we entangled ourselves in this wilderness of trifles! Our discourses, our conferences, nay, our very prayers are tinged with it. We have had so much to do without, that we have been able to do but little within. And how many precious opportunities have we thus lost? How many admonitions of the Spirit have passed over unfruitfully? How often has the Lord called to us, when our worldly thoughts have prevented us from hearing? But there certainly is a way to enjoy God even in our worldly employments. If we lose our views of him when engaged in our temporal affairs, the fault is our own. Alas! that Christians should stand at the door of eternity, having more work upon their hands than their time is sufficient for, and yet be filling their heads and hearts with trifles!

3. I infer, lastly, for the awakening of all, that if the keeping of the heart be the great work of a Christian, then there are but few real Christians in the world. If every one who has learned the dialect of Christianity, and who can talk like a saint; if every one who has gifts and parts, and who can make shift to preach, pray, or discourse like a Christian: in a word, if all such as associate with

the people of God and partake of ordinances may pass for Christians, then indeed the number is great. But alas! how few can he found, if you judge them by this rule,—how few are there who conscientiously keep their hearts, watch their thoughts and look scrupulously to their motives! Indeed there are few closet-men among professors. It is easier for men to be reconciled to any other duties in religion than to these. The profane part of the world will not so much as meddle with the outside of any religious duties, and least of all with these; and as to the hypocrite, though he may be very particular in externals, you can never persuade him to undertake this inward, this difficult work; this work, to which there is no inducement from human applause; this work, which would quickly discover what the hypocrite cares not to know: so that by general consent this heart-work is left to the hands of a few retired ones, and I tremble to think in how few hands it is.

II. If the keeping of the heart be so important a business; if such great advantages result from it; if so many valuable interests be wrapt up in it, then let me call upon the people of God every where to engage heartily in this work. O study your hearts, watch your hearts, keep your hearts! Away with fruitless controversies and all idle questions; away with empty names and vain shows; away with unprofitable discourse and bold censures of others, and turn in upon yourselves. O that this day, this hour, you would resolve upon doing so!

Reader, methinks I shall prevail with you. All that I beg for is this, that you would step aside oftener to talk with God and your own heart; that you would not suffer every trifle to divert you; that you would keep a more true and faithful account of your thoughts and affections; that you would seriously demand of your own heart at least every evening, ‘O my heart, where hast thou been today, and what has engaged thy thoughts?’

If all that has been said by way of inducement be not enough, I have yet some motives to offer you:

If all that has been said by way of inducement be not enough, I have yet some motives to offer you:

1. The studying, observing, and diligently keeping your own heart, will surprisingly help you to understand the deep mysteries of religion. An honest, well-experienced heart is an excellent help to the head. Such a heart will serve for a commentary on a great part of the Scriptures. By means of such a heart you will have a better understanding of divine things than the most learned (graceless) man ever had, or call have; you will not only have a clearer, but a more interesting and profitable apprehension of them. A man may discourse orthodoxy and profoundly of the nature and effects of faith, the troubles and comforts of conscience, and the sweetness of communion with God, who never felt the efficacy and sweet impression of these things upon his own soul. But how dark and dry are his notions compared with those of an experienced Christian!

2. The study and observation of your own heart will powerfully secure you against the dangerous and infecting errors of the times in which you live. For what think you is the reason why so many professors have departed from the faith, giving heed to fables? why have so many been led away by the error of the wicked? why have those who have sown corrupt doctrines had such plentiful harvests among us, but because they have met with a race of professors who never knew what belongs to practical godliness and the study and keeping of their hearts?

3. Your care and diligence in keeping your heart will prove one of the best evidences of your sincerity. I know no external act of religion which truly distinguishes the sound from the unsound professor. It is marvellous how far hypocrites go in all external duties; how plausibly they can order the outward man, hiding all their indecencies from the observation of the world. But they take no heed to their hearts; they are not in secret what they appear to be in public; and before this test no hypocrite can stand. They may, indeed, in a fit of terror, or on a death-bed, cry out of the wickedness of their hearts; but such extort ed complaints are worthy of no regard. No credit, in law, is to be given to the testimony of one upon the rack, because it may be supposed that the extremity of his torture will make him say any thing to get relief. But if self-jealousy, care and watchfulness be the daily workings and frames of your heart, you have some evidence of your sincerity.

4. How comfortable and how profitable would all ordinances and duties be to you, if your heart was faithfully kept. What lively communion might you have with God every time you approach him, if your heart was in a right frame! You might then say with David, “My meditation of Him shall be sweet.” It is the indisposition of the heart which renders ordinances, and secret duties so comfortless to some. They strive to raise their hearts to God, now pressing this argument upon them, then that, to quicken and affect them; yet they often get nearly through the exercise before their hearts begin to be interested in it; and some times they go away no better than they came. But the Christian whose heart is prepared by being constantly kept, enters immediately and heartily into his duties; he outstrips his sluggish neighbor, gets the first sight of Christ in a sermon, the first seal from Christ in a sacrament, the first communication of grace and love in secret prayer. Now if there be any thing valuable and comfortable in ordinances and private duties, look to your heart and keep it, I beseech you.

5. An acquaintance with your own heart will furnish you a fountain of matter in prayer. The man who is diligent in heart-work, will be richly supplied with matter in his addresses to God. He will not be confused for want of thoughts; his tongue will not falter for want of expressions.

6. The most desirable thing in the world, viz, the revival of religion among a people, may be effected by means of what I am urging upon you.

O that I might see the time when professors shall not walk in a vain show; when they shall please themselves no more with a name to live, while they are spiritually dead; when they shall be no more a company of frothy, vain persons; but when holiness shall shine in their conversation, and awe the world, and command reverence from all that are around them; when they shall warm the heart of those who come near them, and cause it to be said, God is in these men of a truth. And may such a time be expected? Until heart-work becomes the business of professors, I have no hope of seeing a time so blessed! Does it not grieve you to see how religion is contemned and trampled under foot, and the professors of it ridiculed and scorned in the world? Professors, would you recover your credit? would you obtain an honorable testimony in the consciences of your very enemies? Then keep your hearts.

7. By diligence in keeping our hearts we should prevent the occasions of fatal scandals and stumbling-blocks to the world. Wo to the world because of offences!

Keep your heart faithfully, and you will be prepared for any situation or service to which you may be called. This, and this only can properly fit you for usefulness in any station; but with this you can endure prosperity or adversity; you can deny yourself, and turn your hand to any work. Thus Paul turned every circumstance to good account, and made himself so eminently useful. When he preached to others, he provided against being cast away himself: he kept his heart; and every thing in which lie excelled seems to have had a close connection with his diligence in keeping his heart.

9. If the people of God would diligently keep their hearts, their communion with each other would be unspeakably more inviting and profitable. Then “how goodly would be thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!” It is the fellowship which the people of God have with the Father and with the Son that kindles the desires of others to have communion with them. I tell you, that if saints would be persuaded to spend more time and take more pains about their hearts, there would soon be such a divine excellence in their conversation that others would account it no small privilege to be with or near them. It is the pride, passion and earthliness of our hearts, that has spoiled Christian fellowship. Why is it that when Christians meet they are often jarring and contending, but because their passions arc unmortified? Whence come their uncharitable censures of their brethren, but from their ignorance of themselves? Why are they so rigid and unfeeling toward those who have fallen, but because they do not feel their own weakness and liability to temptation? Why is their discourse so light and unprofitable when they meet, but because their hearts are earthly and vain? But now, if Christians would study their hearts more and keep them better, the beauty and glory of communion would be restored. They would divide no more, contend no more, censure rashly no more. They will feel right one toward another, when each is daily humbled under

04.02a. Duties Included in Keeping the Heart

Duties Included in Keeping the Heart To keep the heart then, is carefully to preserve it from sin, which disorders it; and maintain that spiritual frame which fits it for a life of communion with God. This includes in it six particulars: To keep the heart then, is carefully to preserve it from sin, which disorders it; and maintain that spiritual frame which fits it for a life of communion with God. This includes in it six particulars:

1. Frequent observation of the frame of the heart. Carnal and formal persons take no heed to this; they cannot be brought to confer with their own hearts: there are some people who have lived forty or fifty years in the world, and have had scarcely one hour's discourse with their own hearts. It is a hard tiling to bring a man and himself together on such business; but saints know those soliloquies to be very salutary. The heathen could say, "the soul is made wise by sitting still in quietness." Though bankrupts care not to look in. to their accounts, yet upright hearts will know whether they go backward or forward. "I commune with mine own heart," says David. The heart can never be kept until its case be examined and understood.

2. It includes deep humiliation for heart evils and disorders; thus Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart. Thus the people were ordered to spread forth their hands to God in prayer, realizing the plague of their own hearts. Upon this account many an up-right heart has been laid low before God; 'O what an heart have I.' Saints have in their confession pointed at the heart, the pained place: 'Lord, here is the wound.' It is with the heart well kept, as it is with the eye; if a small dust get into the eye it will never cease twinkling and watering till it has wept it out: so the upright heart cannot be at rest till it has wept out its troubles and poured out its complaints before the Lord.

3. It includes earnest supplication and instant prayer for purifying and rectifying grace when sin has defiled and disordered the heart. "Cleanse thou me from secret faults." "Unite my heart. to fear thy name." Saints have always many such petitions before the throne of God's grace; this is the thing which is most pleaded by them with God. When they are praying for outward mercies, perhaps their spirits may be more remiss; but when it comes to the heart's case, they extend their spirits to the utmost, fill their mouths with arguments, weep and make supplication: 'O for a better heart! O for a heart to love God more; to hate sin more; to walk more evenly with God. Lord! deny not to me such a heart, whatever thou deny me: give me a heart to fear thee, to love and delight in thee, if I beg my bread in desolate places.' It is observed of an eminent saint, that when he was confessing sin, he would never give over confessing until he had felt some brokenness of heart for that sin; and when praying for any spiritual mercy, would never give over that suit till he had obtained some relish of that mercy.

4. It includes the imposing of strong engagements upon ourselves to walk more carefully with God, and avoid the occasions whereby the heart may be induced to sin. Well advised and deliberate vows are, in some cases, very useful to guard the heart against some special sin. "I have made a covenant with mine eyes," says Job. By this means holy men have overawed their souls, and

preserved themselves from defilement.

5. It includes a constant and holy jealousy over our own hearts. Quick sighted self-jealousy is an excellent preservative from sin. He that will keep his heart, must have the eyes of the soul awake and open upon all the disorderly and tumultuous stirrings of his affections; if the affections break loose, and the passions be stirred, the soul must discover it, and suppress them before they get to a height. ‘O my soul, dost thou well in this? my tumultuous thoughts and passions, where is your commission?’ Happy is the man that thus feareth always. By this fear of the Lord it is that men depart from evil, shake off sloth, and preserve themselves from iniquity. He that will keep his heart must eat and drink with fear, rejoice with fear, and pass the whole time of his sojourning here in fear. All this is little enough to keep the heart from sin.

6. It includes the realizing of God’s presence with us, and setting the Lord always before us. This the people have found a powerful means of keeping their hearts upright, and awing them from sin. When the eye of our faith is fixed upon the eye of God’s omniscience, we dare not let out our thoughts and affections to vanity. Holy Job durst not suffer his heart to yield to an impure, vain thought, and what was it that moved him to so great circumspection? He tells us, “Doth not He see my ways, and count all my steps ?” In such particulars as these do gracious souls express the care they have of their hearts. They are careful to prevent the breaking loose of the corruptions in time of temptation; careful to preserve the sweetness and comfort they have got from God in any duty. This is the work, and of all works in religion it is the most difficult, constant, and important work. In such particulars as these do gracious souls express the care they have of their hearts. They are careful to prevent the breaking loose of the corruptions in time of temptation; careful to preserve the sweetness and comfort they have got from God in any duty. This is the work, and of all works in religion it is the most difficult, constant, and important work.

1. It is the hardest work. Heart-work is hard work indeed. To shuffle over religious duties with a loose and heedless spirit, will cost no great pains; but to set thyself before the Lord, and tie up thy loose and vain thoughts to a constant and serious attendance upon him; this will cost thee something. To attain a facility and dexterity of language in prayer, and put thy meaning into apt and decent expressions, is easy; but to get thy heart broken for sin, while thou art confessing it; melted with free grace while thou art blessing God for it; to be really ashamed and humbled through the apprehensions of God’s infinite holiness, and to keep thy heart in this frame; not only in, but after duty, will surely cost thee some groans and pains of soul. To repress the outward acts of sin, and compose the external part of thy life in a laudable manner, is no great matter; even carnal persons, by the force of common principles, can do this: but to kill the root of corruption within, to set and keep up an holy government over thy thoughts, to have all things lie straight and orderly in the heart, this is not easy.

2. It is a constant work. The keeping of the heart is a work that is never done till life is ended. There is no time or condition in the life of a Christian which will suffer an intermission of this work. It is in keeping watch over our hearts, as it was in keeping up Moses’ bands while Israel and Amalek were fighting. No sooner do the hands of Moses grow heavy and sink down, than Amalek prevails. Intermitting the watch over their own hearts for but a few minutes, cost David and Peter many a sad day and night.

3. It is the most important business of a Christian's life. Without this we are but formalists in religion: all our professions, gifts and duties signify nothing. "My son, give me thine heart," is God's request. God is pleased to call that a gift which is indeed a debt; he will put this honor upon the creature, to receive it from him in the way of a gift; but if this be not given him, ho regards not whatever else you bring to him. There is only so much of worth in what we do, as there is of heart in it. Concerning the heart, God seems to say, as Joseph of Benjamin, "If you bring not Benjamin with you, you shall not see my face." Among the Heathen, when the beast was cut up for sacrifice, the first thing the priest looked upon was the heart; and if that was unsound and worthless the sacrifice was rejected. God rejects all duties (how glorious soever in other respects) which are offered him without the heart. He that performs duty without the heart, that is, heedlessly, is no more accepted with God than he that performs it with a double heart, that is, hypocritically.

Thus I have briefly considered what the keeping of the heart supposes and imports. I proceed, Secondly, To assign some reasons why Christians must make this the great business of their lives. The importance and necessity of making this our great business will manifestly appear from several considerations:

1. The glory of God is much concerned. Heart-evils are very provoking evils to the Lord. The Schools correctly observe, that outward sins are "sins of great infamy;" but that the heart sins are "sins of deeper guilt." How severely has the great God declared his wrath from heaven against heart-wickedness! The crime for which the old world stands indicted is heart-wickedness! "God saw that every imagination of their hearts was only evil, and that continually;" for which he sent the most dreadful judgments that were ever inflicted since time began. We find not their murders, adulteries, blasphemies, (though they were defiled with these) particularly alleged against them; but the evils of their hearts. That by which God was so provoked as to give up his peculiar inheritance into the enemy's hand, was the evil of their hearts. "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved; how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?" Of the wickedness and vanity of their thoughts God took particular notice; and because of this the Chaldeans. must come upon them, "as a lion from his thicket and tear them to pieces." For the sin of thoughts it was that God threw down the fallen, angels from heaven and still keeps them in "everlasting chains." to the judgment of the great day; by which expression is not obscurely intimated some extraordinary judgment to which they are reserved; as prisoners that have most irons laid upon them may be supposed to be the greatest malefactors. And what was their sin? Spiritual wickedness. Merely heart-evils are so provoking to God, that for them he rejects with indignation all the duties that some men perform. "He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrifices a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol." In what words could the abhorrence of a creature's actions be more fully expressed by the holy God? Murder and idolatry are not more vile in his account, than, their sacrifices, though materially such as himself appointed. And what made their sacrifices so vile? The following words inform us: "Their soul delighteth in their abominations."

Such is the vileness of mere heart-sins, that the Scriptures sometimes intimate the difficulty of pardon for them. The heart of Simon Magus was not right, he had base thoughts of God, and of the things of God: the apostle bade him "repent and pray, if perhaps the thoughts of his heart might be forgiven him." O then never slight heart evils! for by these God is highly wronged and

provoked. For this reason let every Christian keep his heart with all diligence.

2. The sincerity of our profession much depends upon the care we exercise in keeping our hearts. Most certainly, that man who is careless of the frame of his heart, is but a hypocrite in his profession, however eminent he be in the externals of religion. We have a striking instance of this in the history of Jehu. “But Jehu took no heed to walk in the ways of the Lord God of Israel with his heart.” The context gives an account of the great service performed by Jehu against the house of Ahab and Baal, and also of the great temporal reward given him by God for that service, even that his children, to the fourth generation, should sit upon the throne of Israel. Yet in these words Jehu is censured as a hypocrite: though God approved and re warded the work, yet he abhorred and rejected the person that did it, as hypocritical. Wherein lay the hypocrisy of Jehu? In this; he took no heed to walk in the ways of the Lord with his heart; that is, he did all insincerely and for selfish ends: and though. the work he did was materially good, yet he, not purging his heart from those unworthy selfish designs in doing it, was a hypocrite. And though Simon Magus appeared such a person that the apostle could not regularly reject him, yet his hypocrisy was quickly discovered. Though he professed piety and associated himself with the saints, he was a stranger to the mortification of heart-sins. “Thy heart is not right with God.” It is true, there is great difference between Christians themselves in their diligence and dexterity about heart work; some are more conversant with, and more successful in it than others but he that takes no heed to his heart, that is not careful to order it aright before God, is but a hypocrite. “And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.” Here was a company of formal hypocrites, as is evident from that expression, as my people; like them, but not of them. And what made them so? Their outside was fair; here were reverent postures, high professions, much seeming delight in ordinances; “thou art to them as a lovely song:” yea, but for all that they kept not their hearts with God in those duties; their hearts were commanded by their lusts, they went after their covetousness. Had they kept their hearts with God, all had been well: but not regarding which way their hearts went in duty, there lay the essence of their hypocrisy.

If any upright soul should hence infer, I am a hypocrite too, for many times my heart departs from God in duty; do what I can, yet I cannot hold it close with God; I answer, the very objection carries in it its own solution. Thou sayest, Do what I can, yet! cannot keep my heart with God. Soul, if thou doest what thou canst, thou hast the blessing of an upright, though God sees good to exercise thee under the affliction of a discomposed heart.

There still remains some wildness in the thoughts and fancies of the best to bumble them; but if you find a care before to prevent them, and opposition against them when they come, and grief and sorrow afterward, you find enough to clear you from the charge of reigning hypocrisy. This precaution is seen partly in laying up the word in thy heart to prevent them. “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.” Partly in your endeavors to engage your heart to God; and partly in begging preventing grace from God in. your commencement of duty. It is a good sign to exercise such precaution. And it is an evidence of uprightness, to oppose these sins in their first rise. “I hate vain thoughts.” “The spirit lusteth against the flesh.” Thy grief also discovers the uprightness of thy heart. If with Hezekiah thou art humbled for the evils of thy heart, thou hast no reason, from those disorders, to question the integrity of it; but to suffer sin to lodge quietly in the

heart, to let thy heart habitually and without control wander from God, is a sad, a dangerous symptom indeed.

3. The beauty of our conversation arises from the heavenly frame of our spirits. There is a spiritual lustre and beauty in the conversation of saints. “The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor;” saints shine as the lights of the world; but whatever lustre and beauty is in their lives, comes from the excellency of their spirits; as the candle within puts lustre upon the lantern in which it shines. It is impossible that a disordered and neglected heart should ever produce well ordered conversation; and since (as the text observes) the issues or streams of life flow out of the heart as their fountain, it must follow, that such as the heart is, the life will be. Hence 1 Peter 2:12, “Abstain from fleshly lusts—having your conversation honest,” or beautiful, as the Greek word imports. So Isaiah 55:7. “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts.” His way, denotes the course of his life; his thoughts, the frame of his heart: and therefore since the course of his life flows from his thoughts, or the frame of his heart, both, or neither will be forsaken. The heart is the source of all actions; these actions are virtually and radically contained in our thoughts; these thoughts being once made up into affections, are quickly made out into suitable actions. If the heart be wicked, then, as Christ says, “Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders,” &c. Mark the order: first, wanton or revengeful thoughts then unclean, or murderous practices. And if the heart be holy, then it is as with David: “My heart is inditing a good matter—I speak of the things which I have made. my tongue is as the pen of a ready writer.” Here is a life richly beautified with good works, some ready made— I will speak of the things which I have made; others making—my heart is inditing; both proceed from the heavenly frame of his heart. Put the heart in frame and the life will quickly discover that it is so. It is not very difficult to discern, by the performances and converse of Christians, what frames their spirits are in. Take a Christian in a good frame, and how serious, heavenly and profitable will his conversation and religious exercises be! what a lovely companion is he during the continuance of it! it would do any one’s heart good to be with him at such a time. “The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment; the law of his God is in his heart.” When the heart is up with God, and full of God how dexterously will he insinuate spiritual discourse, improving every occasion and advantage to some heavenly purpose! Few words then run to waste. And what can be the reason that the discourses and duties of many Christians are become so frothy and unprofitable, their communion both with God and with one another becomes as a dry stalk, but this, their hearts are neglected? Surely this must be the reason of it, and it is an evil greatly to be bewailed. Thus the attracting beauty that was wont to shine, from the conversation of the saints, upon the faces and consciences of the world, (which, if it did not allure and bring them in love with the ways of God, at least left a testimony in their consciences of the excellency of those men and of their ways,) is in a great measure lost, to the unspeakable detriment of religion. Time was, when Christians conducted in such a manner that the world stood gazing at them. Their life and language were of a different strain from those of others, their tongues discovered them to be Galileans wherever they came. But now, since vain speculations and fruitless controversies have so much obtained, and heart-work, practical godliness is so much neglected among professors, the case is sadly altered: their discourse is become like other men’s; if they come among you now, they may “hear every man speak in his own language.” And I have little hope to see this evil redressed, and the credit of religion repaired, till Christians do their first works, till they apply again to heart-work: when the salt of heavenly-mindedness is cast into the spring, the streams will run more clear and more sweet.

4. The comfort of our souls much depends upon the keeping of our hearts; for he that is negligent in attending to his own heart, is, ordinarily, a great stranger to assurance, and the comforts following from it. Indeed if The Antinomian doctrine were true, which teaches you to reject all marks and signs for the trial of your condition, telling you that it is the Spirit that immediately assures you, by witnessing your adoption directly, without them; then you might be careless of your hearts, yea, strangers to them, and yet no strangers to comfort: but since both Scripture and experience confute this, I hope you will never look for comfort in this unscriptural way. I deny not that it is the work and office of the Spirit to assure you; yet I confidently affirm, that if ever you attain assurance in the ordinary way wherein God dispenses it, you must take pains .with your own hearts. You may expect your comforts upon easier terms, but I am mistaken if ever you enjoy them upon any other: give all diligence; prove yourselves; this is the scriptural method. A distinguished writer, in his treatise on the covenant, tells us that he knew a Christian who, in the infancy of his Christianity, so vehemently panted after the infallible assurance of God's love, that for a long time together he earnestly desired some voice from heaven; yea, sometimes walking in the solitary fields, earnestly desired some miraculous voice from the trees and stones there: this, after many desires and longings, was denied; but in time a better was afforded in the ordinary way of searching the word and his own heart. An instance of the like nature another learned person gives us of one that was driven by temptation upon the very borders of despair; at last, being sweetly settled and assured, one asked him how he attained it; he answered, "Not by any extraordinary revelation, but by subjecting my understanding to the Scriptures, and comparing my heart with them." The Spirit, indeed, assures by witnessing our adoption; and he witnesses in two ways. One way is, objectively, that is, by producing those graces in our souls which are the conditions of the promise.; and so the Spirit, and his graces in us, are all one: the Spirit of God dwelling in us, is a mark of our adoption. Now the Spirit can be discerned, not in his essence, but in his operations; and to discern these, is to discern the Spirit; and how these can be discerned without serious searching and diligent watching of the heart I cannot imagine. The other way of the Spirit's witnessing is effectively, that is, by irradiating the soul with a grace discovering light, shining upon his own work; and this, in order of nature, follows the former work: he first infuses the grace, and then opens the eye of the soul to see it. Now, since the heart is the subject of that infused grace, even this way of the Spirit's witnessing includes the necessity of carefully keeping our own hearts. For,

1. A neglected heart is so confused and dark, that the little grace which is in it is not ordinarily discernible: the most accurate and laborious Christians sometimes find it difficult to discover the pure and genuine workings of the Spirit in their hearts. How then shall the Christian who is comparatively negligent about heart-work, be ever able to discover grace? Sincerity! which is the thing sought, lies in the heart like a small piece of gold on the bottom of a river; he that would find it must stay till the water is clear, and then he will see it sparkling at the bottom. That the heart may be clear and settled, how much pains and watching, care and diligence, are requisite!

4. God does not usually indulge negligent souls with the comforts of assurance; he will not so much as seem to patronize sloth and carelessness. He will give assurance, but it shall be in his own way; his command hath united our care and comfort together. Those are mistaken who think that assurance may be obtained without labor. Ah! how many solitary hours have the people of God spent in heart-examination! how many times have they looked into the word, and then into

their hearts! Sometimes they thought they discovered sincerity, and were even ready to draw forth the triumphant conclusion of assurance; then comes a doubt they cannot resolve, and destroys it all: many hopes and fears, doubtings and reasonings, they have had in their own breasts before they arrived at a comfortable settlement. But suppose it possible for a careless Christian to attain assurance, yet it is impossible for him long to retain it; for it is a thousand to one if those whose hearts are filled with the joys of assurance, long retain those joys, unless extraordinary care be used. A little pride, vanity, or carelessness will dash to pieces all that for which they have been a long time laboring in many a weary duty. Since then the joy of our life, the comfort of our souls, rises and falls with our diligence in this work, keep your heart with all diligence.

5. The improvement of our graces depends on the keeping of our hearts. I never knew grace to thrive in a careless soul. The habits and roots of grace are planted in the heart; and the deeper they are rooted there, the more flourishing grace is. In Ephesians 3:17, we read of being " rooted" in grace; grace in the heart is the root of every gracious word in the mouth, and of every holy work in the hand. It is true, Christ is the root of a Christian, but Christ is the originating root, and grace a root originated, planted, and influenced by Christ; accordingly, as this thrives under divine influences, the acts of grace are more or less fruitful or vigorous. Now, in a heart not kept with care and diligence, these fructifying influences are stopt and cut off—multitudes of vanities break in upon it, and devour its strength; the heart is, as it were, the inclosure, in which multitudes of thoughts are fed every day; a gracious heart, diligently kept, feeds many precious thoughts of God in a day. "How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee." And as the gracious heart nourishes them, so they refresh and feast the heart. "My soul is filled as with marrow and fatness while I think upon thee," &c. But in the disregarded heart, multitudes of vain and foolish thoughts are perpetually working, and drive out those spiritual thoughts of God by which the soul should be refreshed. Besides, the careless heart profits nothing by any duty or ordinance it performs or attends upon, and yet these are the conduits of heaven, whence grace is watered and made fruitful. A man may go with a heedless spirit from ordinance to ordinance, abide all his days under the choicest teaching, and yet never he improved by them; for heart-neglect is a leak in the bottom—no heavenly influences, however rich, abide in that soul. When the seed falls upon the heart that lies open and common, like the highway, free for all passengers, the fowls come and devour it. Alas! it is not enough to hear, unless we take heed how we hear; a man may pray, and never be the better, unless he watch unto prayer. In a word, all means are blessed to the improvement of grace, according to the care and strictness we use in keeping our hearts in them.

6. The stability of our souls in the hour of temptation depends upon the care we exercise in keeping our hearts. The careless heart is an easy prey to Satan in the hour of temptation; his principal batteries are raised against the heart; if he wins that he wins all, for it commands the whole man: and alas! how easy a conquest is a neglected heart! It is not more difficult to surprise such a heart, than for an enemy to enter that city whose gates are open and unguarded. It is the watchful heart that discovers and suppresses the temptation before it comes to its strength. Divines observe this to be the method in which temptations are ripened and brought to their full strength. There is the irritation of the object, or that power it has to provoke our corrupt nature; which is either done by the real presence of the object, or by speculation when the object (though absent) is held out by the imagination before the soul. Then follows the motion of the appetite,

which is provoked by the fancy representing it as a sensual good. Then there is a consultation in the mind about the best means of accomplishing it. Next follows the election, or choice of the will. And lastly, the desire, or full engagement of the will to it. All this may be done in a few minutes, for the debates of the soul are quick and soon ended: when it comes thus far, the heart is won, Satan hath entered victoriously and displayed his colors upon the walls of that royal fort; but, had the heart been well guarded at first, it had never come to this—the temptation had been stopped in the first or second act. And indeed there it is stopped easily; for it is in the motion of a soul tempted to sin, as in the motion of a stone falling from the brow of a hill—it is easily stopped at first, but when once it is set in motion "it acquires strength by descending." Therefore it is the greatest wisdom to observe the first motions of the heart, to check and stop sin there. The motions of sin are weakest at first; a little care and watchfulness may prevent much mischief now; the careless heart not heeding this, is brought within the power of temptation, as the Syrians were brought blind-fold into the midst of Samaria, before they knew where they were.

I hope that these considerations satisfy my readers that it is important to keep the heart with all diligence. I proceed,

I proceed,

Thirdly, To point out those special seasons in the life of a Christian which require our utmost diligence in keeping the heart. Though (as was observed before) the duty is always binding, and there is no time or condition of life in which we may be excused from this work; yet there are some signal seasons, critical hours, requiring more than common vigilance over the heart.

1. The first season is the time of prosperity, when Providence smiles upon us. Now, Christian, keep thy heart with all diligence; for it will be very apt to grow secure, proud and earthly. "To see a man humble in prosperity,"(says Bernard,) "is one of the greatest rarties in the world." Even a good Hezekiah could not hide a vain-glorious temper in his temptation; hence that caution to Israel: "And it shall be, when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he aware to thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities which thou bulkiest not, and houses full of all good things which thou filledst not," &c. "then beware lest thou forget the Lord." So indeed it happened: for "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked?' How then may a Christian keep his heart from pride and carnal security under the smiles of Providence and the confluence of creature-comforts?

There are several helps to secure the heart from the dangerous snares of prosperity.

1. Consider the dangerous ensnaring temptations attending a pleasant and prosperous condition. Few, very few of those that live in the pleasures of this world, escape everlasting perdition. "It is easier" (says Christ) "for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." "Not many mighty, not many noble are called."

We have great reason to tremble, when the Scripture tells us in general that few shall be saved; much more when it tells us, that of that rank of which we are, but few shall be saved. When Joshua. called all the tribes of Israel to cast lots for the discovery of Achan, doubtless Achan feared; when the tribe of Judah was taken, his fear increased; but when the family of the Zarhites was taken, it was time to tremble. So when the Scriptures come so near as to tell us that of such a class of men very few shall escape, it is time to be alarmed.. "I should woner" (says Chrysostom)

“if any of the rulers be saved.” O how many have been wheeled to hell in the chariots of earthly pleasures, while others have been whipped to heaven by the rod of affliction! How few, like the daughter of Tyre, come to Christ with a gift! How few among the rich entreat his favor!

2. It may keep one more humble and watchful in prosperity, to consider that among Christians many have been much the worse for it. How good had it been for some of them, if they had never known prosperity! When they were in a low condition, how humble, spiritual and heavenly they were but when advanced, what an apparent alteration has been upon their spirits! It was so with Israel; when they were in a low condition in the wilderness, then Israel was “holiness to the Lord;” but when they came into Canaan and were richly fed, their language was, “We are lords, we will come no more unto thee." Outward gains are ordinarily attended with inward losses; as in a low condition their civil employments were wont to have a savor of their religious duties, so in an exalted condition their duties commonly have a savor of the world. He, indeed, is rich in grace whose graces are not hindered by his riches. There are but few Jehosaphats in the world, of whom it is said, “He had silver and gold in abundance, and his heart was lifted up in the way of God’s commands.” Will not this keep thy heart humble in prosperity, to think how dearly many godly men have paid for their riches; that through them they have lost that which all the world cannot purchase?

3. Keep down thy vain heart by this consideration; God values no man the more for these things. God values no man by outward excellencies, but by inward graces; they are the internal ornaments of the Spirit, which are of great price in God’s sight. God despises all worldly glory, and accepts no man’s person; “but in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him.” Indeed, if the judgment of God went by the same rule that man’s does, we might value ourselves by these things, and stand upon them: but so much every man is, as he is in the judgment of God. Does thy heart yet swell, and will neither of the former considerations keep it humble?

4. Consider how bitterly many dying persons have bewailed their folly in setting their hearts upon these things, and have wished that they had never known them. How dreadful was the situation of Pius Quintus, who died crying out despairingly, “When I was in a low condition I had some hopes of salvation, when I was advanced to be a cardinal, I greatly doubted; but since I came to the popedom I have no hope at all.” An author also tells us a real, but sad story of a rich oppressor, who had scraped up a great estate for his only son: when he came to die he called his son to him, and said, “Son, do you indeed love me?” The son answered that “Nature, besides his paternal, indulgence, obliged him to that.” “Then (said the father) express it by this: hold thy finger in the candle as long as I am saying a prayer.” The son attempted, but could not endure it. Upon that the father broke out into these expressions: “Thou canst not suffer the burning of thy finger for me; but to get this wealth I have hazarded my soul for thee and must burn, body and soul, in hell, for thy sake; thy pains would have been but for a moment, but mine will be unquenchable fire.”

5. The heart may be kept humble by considering of what a clogging nature earthly things are to a soul heartily engaged in the way to heaven. They shut out much of heaven from us at present, though they may not shut us out of heaven at last. If thou consider thyself as a stranger in this world, traveling for heaven, thou hast then as much reason to be delighted with these things as a weary horse has to be pleased with a heavy burden. There was a serious truth in the atheistical

scoff of Julian: when taking away the Christians' estates, he told them "it was to make them more fit for the kingdom of heaven."

6. Is thy spirit still vain and lofty? Then urge upon it the consideration of that awful day of reckoning, wherein, according to our receipts of mercies shall be our account for them. Methinks this should awe and humble the vainest heart that ever was n the breast of a saint. Know for a certainty that the Lord records all the mercies that ever he gave thee, from the beginning to the end of thy life. "Remember, O my people, from Shittim unto Gilgal," &c. Yes, they are exactly numbered and recorded in order to an account; and thy account will be suitable: "To whomsoever much is given, of him shall, much be required." You are but a steward, and your Lord will come and take an account of you; and what a great account have you to make, who have much of this world in your hands.! What swift witnesses will your mercies be against you, if this be the best fruit of them!

7. It is a very humbling reflection, that the mercies of God should work otherwise upon my spirit than they used to do upon the spirits of others to whom they come as sanctified mercies from the love of God. Ah, Lord! what a sad consideration is this! enough to lay me in the dust, when I consider:

(1.) That their mercies have greatly humbled them, the higher God has raised them, the lower they have laid themselves before him. Thus did Jacob when God had given him much substance. "And Jacob said, I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, and all the truth which thou hast showed thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and am now become two bands." Thus also it was with holy David; when God had confirmed the promise to him, to build him a house, and not reject him as he did Saul, he goes in before the Lord and says, "Who am I, and what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" So indeed God required. When Israel brought to him the first fruits of Canaan, they were to say, "A Syrian ready to perish was my father," &c. Do others raise God the higher for his raising them? and the more God raises me, the more shall I abuse him and exalt myself? O how wicked is such conduct as this!

(2.) Others have freely ascribed the glory of all their enjoyments to God, and magnified not themselves, but him, for their mercies. Thus says David, "Let thy name be magnified and the house of thy servant be established." He does not fly upon the mercy and suck out its sweetness, looking no further than his own comfort: no, he cares for no mercy except God be magnified in it. So when God had delivered him from all his enemies, he says, "The Lord is my strength and my rock, he is become my salvation." Saints of old did not put the crown upon their own heads as I do by my vanity.

(3.) The mercies of God have been melting mercies unto others, melting their souls in love to the God of their mercies. When Hannah received the mercy of a son, she said, "My soul rejoiceth in the Lord;" not in the mercy, but in the God of the mercy. So also Mary: "My soul doth magnify the Lord; my spirit rejoiceth in God my Savior." The word signifies to make more room for God; their hearts were not contracted, but the more enlarged to God.

(4.) The mercies of God have been great restraints to keep others from sin. "Seeing thou, our God, hast given us such a deliverance as this, should we again break thy commandments?" Ingenuous souls have felt the force of the obligations of love and mercy upon them.

(5.) The mercies of God to others have been as oil to the wheels of their obedience, and made them more fit for service. Now if mercies work contrarily upon my heart, what cause have I to be afraid that they come not to me in love! It is enough to damp the spirits of any saint, to see what sweet effects mercies have had upon others, and what bitter effects upon him.

II. The second season in the life of a Christian, requiring more than common diligence to keep his heart, is the time of adversity. . .

II. The second season in the life of a Christian, requiring more than common diligence to keep his heart, is the time of adversity. When Providence frowns upon you, and blasts your outward comforts, then look to your heart; keep it with all diligence from repining against God, or fainting under his hand; for troubles, though sanctified, are troubles still. Jonah was a good man, and yet how fretful was his heart under affliction! Job was the mirror of patience, yet how was his heart discomposed by trouble! You will find it hard to get a composed spirit under great afflictions. O the hurries and tumults which they occasion even in the best hearts I—Let me show you, then, how a Christian under great afflictions may keep his heart from repining or desponding, under the hand of God.

I will here offer several helps to keep the heart in this condition.

1. By these cross providences God is faithfully pursuing the great design of electing love upon the souls of his people, and orders all these afflictions as means sanctified to that end. Afflictions come not by casualty, but by counsel. By this counsel of God they are ordained as means of much spiritual good to saints. “By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged,” &c. “But he for our profit,” &c. “All things work together for good,” &c. They are God’s workmen upon our hearts, to pull down the pride and carnal security of them; and being so, their nature is changed; they are turned into blessings and benefits. “It is good for me that I have been afflicted,” says David. Surely then thou hast no reason to quarrel with God, but rather to wonder that he should concern himself so much in thy good as to use any means for accomplishing it. Paul could bless God if by any means he might attain the resurrection of the dead. “My brethren,” says James, “count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations.” ‘My Father is about a design of love upon my soul, and do I well to be angry with him? All that he does is in pursuance of, and in reference to some eternal, glorious ends upon my soul. It is my ignorance of God’s design that makes me quarrel with him.’ He says to thee in this case, as he did to Peter, “What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.”

2. Though God has reserved to himself a liberty of afflicting his people, yet he has tied up his own hands by promise never to take away his loving kindness from them. Can I contemplate this scripture with a repining, discontented spirit: “I will be his Father, and be shall be my son: if he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of man, and with the stripes of the children of men nevertheless my mercy shall not depart away from him.” O my heart, my haughty heart! dost thou well to be discontent, when God has given thee the whole tree, with all the clusters of comfort growing on it, because he suffers the wind to blow down a few leaves? Christians have two kinds of goods, the goods of the throne and the goods of the footstool; immoveables and moveables. If God has secured those, never let my heart be troubled at the loss of these: indeed, if he had cut off his love or discovenanted my soul; I had reason to be cast down; but this he hath not done, nor can he do it.

3. It is of great efficacy to keep the heart from sinking under afflictions, to call to mind that thine own Father has the ordering of them. Not a creature moves hand or tongue against thee but by his permission. Suppose the cup be bitter, yet it is the cup which thy Father hath given thee; and canst thou suspect poison to be in it? Foolish man, put home the case to thine own heart; canst thou give thy child that which would ruin him? No! thou wouldst as soon hurt thyself as him. “If thou then, being evil, knowest how to give good gifts to thy children,” how much more does God! The very consideration of his nature as a God of love, pity, and tender mercies; or of his relation to thee as a father, husband, friend, may be security enough, if he had not spoken a word to quiet thee in this case; and yet you have his word too, by the prophet Jeremiah: “I will do you no hurt.” You lie too near his heart for him to hurt you; nothing grieves him more than your groundless and unworthy suspicions of his designs. Would it not grieve a faithful, tender-hearted physician, when he had studied the case of his patient, and prepared the most excellent medicines to save his life, to hear him cry out, ‘O he has undone me! he has poisoned me!’ because it pains him in the operation?. O when will you be ingenuous?

4. God respects you as much in a low as in a high condition; and therefore it need not so much trouble you to be made low; nay, he manifests more of his love, grace and tenderness in the time of affliction than in the time of prosperity. As God did not at first choose you because you were high, he will not now forsake you because you are low. Men may look shy upon you, and alter their respects as your condition is altered; when Providence has blasted your estate, your summer-friends may grow strange, fearing you may be troublesome to them; but will God do so? No, no: “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” says he. If adversity and poverty could bar you from access to God, it were indeed a deplorable condition: but, so far from this, you may go to him as freely as ever. “My God will hear me,” says the church. Poor David, when stripped of all earthly comforts, could encourage himself in the Lord his God; and why cannot you? Suppose your husband or son had lost all at sea, and should come to you in rags; could you deny the relation, or refuse to entertain him? If you would not, much less will God. Why then are you so troubled? Though your condition be changed, your Father’s love is not changed.

5. What if by the loss of outward comforts God preserves your soul from the ruining power of temptation? Surely then you have little cause to sink your heart by such sad thoughts. Do not earthly enjoyments make men shrink and warp in times of trial? For the love of these many have forsaken Christ in such an hour. The young ruler “went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.” If this is God’s design, how ungrateful to murmur against him for it! We see mariners in a storm can throw overboard the most valuable goods to preserve their lives. We know it is usual for soldiers in a besieged city to destroy the finest buildings without the walls in which the enemy may take shelter; and no one doubts that it is wisely done. Those who have mortified limbs willingly stretch them out to be cut off, and not only thank, but pay the surgeon. Must God be murmured against for casting over that which would sink you in a storm; for pulling down that which would assist your enemy in the siege of temptation; for cutting off what would endanger your everlasting life? O, inconsiderate, ungrateful man! are not these things for which thou grievest, the very things that have ruined thousands of souls?

6. It would much support thy heart under adversity, to consider that God by such humbling providences maybe accomplishing that for which you have long prayed and waited. And should you be troubled at that? Say, Christian, hast thou not many prayers depending before God upon

such accounts as these; that he would keep thee from sin; discover to thee the emptiness of the creature; that he would mortify and. kill thy lusts; that thy. heart may never find rest in any enjoyment but Christ? By such humbling and impoverishing strokes God may be fulfilling thy desire. Wouldst thou be kept from sin? Lo, he hath hedged up thy way with thorns. Wouldst thou see the creature's vanity? Thy affliction is a fair glass to discover it; for the vanity of the creature is never so effectually and sensibly discovered, as in our own experience. Wouldst thou have thy corruptions mortified? This is the way: to have the food and fuel removed that maintained them; for as prosperity begat and fed them, so adversity, when sanctified, is a means to kill them. Wouldst thou have thy heart rest no where but in the bosom of God? What better method could Providence take to accomplish thy desire than pulling from under thy head that soft pillow of creature-delights on which you rested before? And yet you fret at this: peevish child, how dost thou try thy Father's patience! If he delay to answer thy prayers, thou art ready to say he regards thee not; if he does that which really answers the end of them, though not in the way which you expect, you murmur against him for that; as if, instead of answering, he were crossing all thy hopes and aims. Is this ingenuous? Is it not enough that God is so gracious as to do what thou desirest: must thou be so impudent as to expect him to do it in the way which thou prescribest?

7. It may support thy heart, to consider that in these troubles God is performing that work in which thy soul would rejoice, if thou didst see the design of it. We are clouded with much ignorance, and are not able to discern how particular providences tend to the fulfillment of God's designs; and therefore, like Israel in the wilderness, are often murmuring, because Providence leads us about in a howling desert, where we are exposed to difficulties; though then he led them, and is now4eading us, by the right way to a city of habitations. If you could but see how God in his secret counsel has exactly laid the whole plan of your salvation, even to the smallest means and circumstances; could you but discern the admirable harmony of divine dispensations, their mutual relations, together with the general respect they all have to the last end; had you liberty to make your own choice, you would, of all conditions in the world, choose that in which you now are. Providence is like a curious piece of tapestry made of a thousand shreds, which, single, appear useless, but put together, they represent a beautiful history to the eye. As God does all things according to the counsel of his own will, of course this is ordained as the best method to effect your salvation. Such an one has a proud heart, so many humbling providences appoint for him; such an one has an earthly heart, see many impoverishing providences for him. Did you but see this, I need say no more to support the most dejected heart.

8. It would much conduce to the settlement of your heart, to consider that by fretting and discontent you do yourself more injury than all your afflictions could do. Your own discontent is that which arms your troubles with a sting; you make your burden heavy by struggling under it. Did you but lie quietly under the hand of God, your condition would be much more easy than it is. "Impatience in the sick occasions severity in the physician." This makes God afflict the more, as a father a stubborn child that receives not correction. Beside, it unfits the soul to pray over its troubles, or receive the sense of that good which God intends by them. Affliction is a pill, which, being wrapt up in patience and quiet submission, may be easily swallowed; but discontent chews the pill, and so embitters the soul. God throws away some comfort which he saw would hurt you, and you will throw away your peace after it; he shoots an arrow which sticks in your clothes, and was never intended to hurt, but only to drive you from sin, and you will thrust it deeper, to the

piercing of your very heart, by despondency and discontent.

9. If thy heart (like that of Rachel) still refuses to be comforted, then do one thing more: compare the condition thou art now in, and with which thou art so much dissatisfied, with the condition in which others are, and in which thou deservest to be. ‘Others are roaring in flames, howling under the scourge of vengeance; and among them I deserve to be. O my soul is this hell? is my condition as bad as that of the damned? what would thousands now in hell give to exchange conditions with me!’ I have read (says an author) that when the Duke of Conde had voluntarily subjected himself to the inconveniences of poverty, he was one day observed and pitied by a lord of Italy, who from tenderness wished him to be more careful of his person. The good duke answered, “Sir, be not troubled, and think not that I suffer from want; for I send a harbinger before me, who makes ready my lodgings and takes care that I be royally entertained.” The lord asked him who was his harbinger? He answered, “The knowledge of myself, and the consideration of what I deserve for my sins, which is eternal torment; when with this knowledge I arrive at my lodging, however unprovided I find it, methinks it is much better than I deserve. Why doth the living man complain?” Thus the heart may be kept from desponding or repining under adversity.

III. The third season calling for more than ordinary diligence to keep the heart is the time of Zion’s troubles. . . .

III. The third season calling for more than ordinary diligence to keep the heart is the time of Zion’s troubles. When the Church, like the ship in which Christ and his disciples were, is oppressed and ready to perish in the waves of persecution, then good souls are ready to be shipwrecked too, upon the billows of their own fears. It is true, most men need the spur rather than the reins in this case; yet some men sit down discouraged under a sense of the Church’s troubles. The loss of the ark cost Eli his life; the sad posture in which Jerusalem lay made good Nehemiah’s countenance change in the midst of all the pleasures and accommodations of the court. But though God allows, yea, commands the most awakened apprehensions of these calamities, and in “such a day calls to mourning, weeping, and girding with sackcloth,” and severely threatens the insensible; yet it will not please him to see you sit like pensive Elijah under the juniper tree. “Ah, Lord God! it is enough, take away my life also.” No: a mourner in Zion you may and ought to be, but a self-tormentor you must not be; complain to God you may, but complain of God (though but by the language of your actions) you must not.

Now let us inquire how tender hearts may be relieved and supported, when they are even overwhelm-ed with the burdensome sense of Zion’s troubles? I grant it is hard for him who preferreth Zion to his chief joy, to keep his heart that it sink not below the due sense of its troubles; yet this ought to, and may be done, by the use of such heart-establishing directions as these:

1. Settle this great truth in your heart, that no trouble befalls Zion but by the permission of Zion’s God; and he permits nothing out of which he will not ultimately bring much good to his people. Comfort may be derived from reflections on the permitting as well as on the commanding will of God. “Let him alone, it may be God hath bidden him.” “Thou couldst have no power against me, except it were given thee from above.” It should much calm our spirits, that it is the will of God to suffer it; and that, had he not suffered it, it could, never have been as it is. This very consideration quieted Job, Eli, David, and Hezekiah. That the Lord did it was enough to them: and why should it not be so to us? If the Lord will have Zion ploughed as a field, and her goodly stones lie in the

dust; if it be his pleasure that Anti-Christ shall rage yet longer and wear out the saints of the Most High; if it be his will that a day of trouble, and of treading down, and of perplexity by the Lord God of Hosts,, shall be upon the valley of vision, that the wicked shall devour the man that is more righteous than he; what are we that we should contend with God? It is fit that we should be resigned to that Will whence we proceeded, and that He that made us should dispose of us as he pleases: he may do what seemeth him good without our consent. Doth poor man stand upon equal ground, that he may capitulate with his Creator; or that God should render him an account of any of his matters? That we be content, however God may dispose of us, is as reasonable as that we be obedient, whatever he may require of us. But if we pursue this argument farther, and. consider that God's permissions all meet at last in the real good of his people, this will much more quiet our spirits. Do the enemies carry away the best among the people into captivity? This looks like a distressing providence; but God sends them thither for their good. Does God take the Assyrian as a staff in his hand to beat his people with? The end of his so doing is, "that he may accomplish his whole work upon Mount Zion." If God can bring much good out of the greatest evil of sin, much more out of temporal afflictions; and that he will, is as evident as that he can do so. For it is inconsistent with the wisdom of a common agent to permit any thing (which he might prevent if he pleased) to cross his great design; and can it be imagined that the most wise God should do so? As, then, Luther said to Melancthon, so say I to you: "Let infinite wisdom, power and love alone" for by these all creatures are swayed, and all actions guided, in reference to the church. It is not our work to rule the world, but to submit to Him that does. The motions of Providence are all judicious, the wheels are full of eyes: it is enough that the affairs of Zion are in a good hand.

04.02b. Duties Included in Keeping the Heart

2. Ponder this heart-supporting truth: how many troubles soever are upon Zion, yet her King is in her. What! hath the Lord forsaken his churches? has he sold them into the enemy's hands? Does he not regard what evil befalls them that our hearts sink thus? Is it not shamefully undervaluing the great God, and too much magnifying poor impotent man, to fear and tremble at creatures while God is in the midst of us? The church's enemies are many and mighty: let that be granted, yet that argument with which Caleb and Joshua strove to raise their own hearts, is of as much force now as it was then: "The Lord is with, us, fear them not." A historian tells us, that when Antigonus overheard his soldiers reckoning how many their enemies were, and so discouraging one another, he suddenly stepped in among them with this question, "And how many do you reckon me for?" Discouraged souls, how many do you reckon the Lord for? Is he not an overmatch for all his enemies? Is not one Almighty more than many mighties? "If God be for us, who can be against us?" What think you was the reason of that great examination Gideon made? He questions, he desires a sign, and after that, another: and what was the end of all this, but that he might be sure the Lord was with him, and that he might but write this motto upon his ensign: The sword of the Lord and of Gideon. So if you can be well assured the Lord is with his people, you will thereby rise above all your discouragements: and that he is so, you need not require a sign from heaven; lo, you have a sign before you, even their marvellous preservation amidst all their enemies. If God be not with his people, how is it that they are not swallowed up quickly? Do their enemies want malice, power, or opportunity? No, but there is an invisible hand upon them. Let then his presence give us rest; and though the mountains be hurled into the sea, though heaven and earth mingle together, fear not; God is in the midst of Zion, she shall not be moved.

3. Consider the great advantages attending the people of God in an afflicted condition. If a low and an afflicted state in the world be really best for the church, then your dejection is not only irrational, but ungrateful. Indeed if you estimate the happiness of the church by its worldly ease, splendor and prosperity, then such times of affliction will appear to be unfavorable; but if you reckon its glory to consist in its humility, faith, and heavenly-mindedness, no condition so much abounds with advantages for these as an afflicted condition. It was not persecutions and prisons, but worldliness and wantonness that poisoned the church: neither was it the earthly glory of its professors, but the blood of its martyrs that was the seed of the church. The power of godliness did never thrive better than in affliction, and was never less thriving than in times of greatest prosperity: when "we are left a poor and an afflicted people, then we learn to trust in the name of the Lord." It is indeed for the saints' advantage to be weaned from love of, and delight in, ensnaring earthly vanities; to be quickened and urged forward with more haste to heaven; to have clearer discoveries of their own hearts; to be taught to pray more fervently, frequently, spiritually; to look and long for the rest to come more ardently. If these be for their advantage, experience teaches us that no condition is ordinarily blessed with such fruits as these, like an afflicted condition. Is it well then to repine and droop, because your Father consults the advantage of your soul rather than the gratification of your humors? because he will bring you to heaven by a nearer way than you are willing to go? Is

this a due requital of his love, who is pleased so much to concern himself in your welfare—who does more for you than he will do for thousands in the world, upon whom he will not lay a rod, dispense an affliction to them for their good? But alas! we judge by sense, and reckon things good or evil, according to our present taste.

4. Take heed that you overlook not the many precious mercies which the people of God enjoy amidst all their trouble. It is a pity that our tears on account of our troubles should so blind our eyes that we should not see our mercies. I will not insist upon the mercy of having your life given you for a prey; nor upon the many outward comforts which you enjoy, even above what were enjoyed by Christ and his precious servants, of whom the world was not worthy. But what say you to pardon of sin; interest in Christ; the covenant of promise; and an eternity of happiness in the presence of God, after a few days are over? O that a people entitled to such mercies as these should droop under any temporal affliction, or be so much concerned for the frowns of men and the loss of trifles. You have not the smiles of great men, but you have the favor of the great God; you are perhaps diminished in temporal, but you are thereby increased in spiritual and eternal goods. You cannot live so plentifully as before; but you may live as heavenly as ever. Will you grieve so much for these circumstances as to forget your substance? Shall light troubles make you forget weighty mercies? Remember the true riches of the church are laid out of the reach of all enemies. What though God do not in his outward dispensations distinguish between his own and others? Yea, what though his judgments single out the best, and spare the worst? What though an Abel be killed in love, and a Cain survive in hatred; a bloody Dionysius die in his bed, and a good Josiah fall in battle? What though the belly of the wicked be filled with hidden treasures, and the teeth of the saints with gravel-stones? Still there is much matter of praise; for electing love has distinguished, though common providence has not: and while prosperity and impunity slay the wicked, even slaying and adversity shall benefit and save the righteous.

5. Believe that how low soever the church be plunged under the waters of adversity, she shall assuredly rise again. Fear not; for as surely as Christ arose the third day, notwithstanding the seal and watch upon him; so surely Zion shall arise out of all her troubles, and lift up her victorious head over all her enemies. There is no reason to fear the ruin of that people who thrive by their losses and multiply by being diminished. Be not too hasty to bury the church before she is dead; stay till Christ has tried his skill, before you give her up for lost. The bush may be all in a flame, but shall never be consumed; and that because of the good will of Him that dwelleth in it.

6. Remember the instances of God's care and tenderness over his people in former difficulties. For above eighteen hundred years the Christian church has been in affliction, and yet it is not consumed; many a wave of persecution has gone over it, yet it is not drowned; many devices have been formed against it, hitherto none of them has prospered. This is not the first time that Hamans and Ahithophels have plotted its ruin; that a Herod has stretched out his hand to vex it; still it has been preserved from, supported under, or delivered out of all its troubles. Is it not as dear to God as ever? Is he not as able to save it now as formerly? Though we know not whence deliverance should arise, "yet the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations."

7. If you can derive no comfort from any of these considerations, try to draw some out of your very trouble. Surely this trouble of yours is a good evidence of your integrity. Union is the ground of sympathy: if you had not some rich, adventure in that ship, you would not tremble as you do when

it is in danger. Beside this framer of spirit may afford you this consolation, that if you are so sensible of Zion's trouble, Jesus Christ is much more sensible of and solicitous about it than you can be, and he will have an eye of favor upon them that mourn for it.

IV. The fourth season, requiring our utmost diligence to keep our hearts, is the time of danger and public distraction. . . .

IV. The fourth season, requiring, our utmost diligence to. keep our hearts, is the time of danger and public distraction. In such times the best hearts are too apt to be surprised by slavish: fear. If Syria be confederate with Ephraim, how do the hearts of the house of David shake, even as the trees of the wood which are shaken with the wind. When there are ominous signs in the heavens, or the distress of nations with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; then the hearts of men fail for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth. Even a Paul may sometimes complain of "fightings within, when there are fears without."

But, my brethren, these things ought not so to be; saints should be of a more elevated spirit; so was David when his heart was kept in a good frame: "The Lord is my light and my salvation whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" Let none but the servants of sin be the slaves of fear; let them that have delighted in evil fear evil. Let not that which God has threatened as a judgment upon the wicked, ever seize upon the hearts of the righteous. "I will send faintness into their hearts in the land of their enemies, and the sound of a shaking leaf shall chase them." What poor spirited men are those, to fly at a shaking leaf! A leaf makes a pleasant, not a terrible noise; it makes indeed a kind of natural music: but to a guilty conscience even the whistling leaves are drums and trumpets! "But God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of love and of a sound mind." A sound mind, as it stands there in opposition to fear, is an unwounded conscience not weakened by guilt: and this should make a man as bold as a lion. I know it cannot be said of a saint, as God said of leviathan, that he is made without fear; there is a natural fear in every man, and it is as impossible to remove it wholly, as to remove the body itself. Fear is perturbation of the mind, arising from the apprehension of approaching danger; and as long as dangers can approach us, we shall find some perturbations within us. It is not my purpose to commend to you a stoical apathy, nor yet to dissuade you from such a degree of cautionary preventive fear as may fit you for trouble and be serviceable to your soul. There is a provident, fear that opens our eyes to foresee danger, and quickens us to a prudent and lawful use of means to prevent it: such was Jacob's fear, and such his prudence when expecting to meet his angry brother Esau. But it is the fear of diffidence, from which I would persuade you to keep your heart; that tyrannical passion which invades the heart in times of danger, distracts, weakens and unfits it for duty, drives men upon unlawful means, and brings a snare with it.

Now let us inquire how a Christian may keep his heart from distracting and tormenting fears in times of great and threatening dangers. There are several excellent rules for keeping the heart from sinful fear when imminent dangers threaten us:

1. Look upon all creatures as in the band of God, who manages them in all their motions, limiting, restraining and determining them at his pleasure. Get this great truth well settled by faith in your heart, and it will guard you against slavish fears. Ezekiel 1:1-28 contains an admirable draught of Providence: there you see the living creatures who move the wheels (that is, the great revolutions of things here below) coming unto Christ, who sits upon the throne, to receive new instructions

from him. In Revelation 6:1-17, you read of white, black, and red horses, which are but the instruments God employs in executing judgments in the world, as wars, pestilence, and death. When these horses are prancing and trampling up and down in the world, here is a consideration that may quiet our hearts; God has the reins in his hand. Wicked men are sometimes like mad horses, they would stamp the people of God under their feet, but that the bridle of Providence is in their mouths. A lion at liberty is terrible to meet, but who is afraid of a lion in the keeper's hand?'

2. Remember that this God in whose hand are all creatures, is your Father, and is much more tender of you than you are, or can be, of yourself. "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye." Let me ask the most timorous woman whether there be not a great difference between the sight of a drawn sword in the hand of a bloody ruffian, and of the same sword in the hand of her own tender husband? As great a difference there is between looking upon creatures by an eye of sense, and looking on them, as in the hand of your God, by an eye of faith. Isaiah 54:5, is here very appropriate: "Thy Maker is thine husband, the Lord of hosts is his name;" he is Lord of all the hosts of creatures. Who would be afraid to pass through an army, though all the soldiers should turn their swords and guns toward him, if the commander of that army were his friend or father? A religious young man being at sea with many other passengers in a great storm, and they being half dead with fear, lie only was observed to be very cheerful, as if he were but little concerned in that danger: one of them demanding the reason of his cheerfulness, "O," said he, "it is because the pilot of the ship is my Father!" Consider Christ first as the King and supreme Lord over the providential kingdom, and then as your head, husband and friend, and you will quickly say, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul." This truth will make you cease trembling, and cause you to sing in the midst of danger, "The Lord is King of all the earth, sing ye praise with understanding." That is, 'Let every one that has understanding of this heart-reviving and establishing doctrine of the dominion of our Father over all creatures, sing praise.'

3. Urge upon your heart the express prohibitions of Christ in this case, and let your heart stand in awe of the violation of them. He hath charged you not to fear: "When we shall hear of wars and commotions, see that ye be not terrified." "In nothing be terrified by your adversaries." In Matthew 10:1-42, and within the compass of six verses, our Savior commands us thrice, "not to fear man." Does the voice of a man make thee to tremble, and shall not the voice of God? If thou art of such a timorous spirit, how is it that thou fearest not to disobey the commands of Jesus Christ? Methinks the command of Christ should have as much power to calm, as the voice of a poor worm to terrify thy heart. "I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man that shall be made as the grass, and forgettest the Lord thy Maker?" We cannot fear creatures sinfully till we have forgotten God: did we remember what he is, and what he has said, we should not be of such feeble spirits. Bring thyself then to this reflection in times of danger: 'If I let into my heart the slavish fear of man, I must let out the reverential awe and fear of God; and dare I cast off the fear of the Almighty for the frowns of a man I shall I lift up proud dust above the great God I shall I run upon a certain sin, to shun a probable danger?'—O keep thy heart by this consideration!

4. Remember how much needless trouble your vain fears have brought upon you formerly: "And hast feared continually because of the oppressor, as if he were ready to devour; and where is the fury of the oppressor?" He seemed ready to devour, yet you are not devoured. I have not brought upon you the thing that you. feared; you have wasted your spirit, disordered your soul, and

weakened your hands to no purpose: you might have all this while enjoyed your peace, and possessed your soul in patience. And here I cannot but observe a very deep policy of Satan in managing a design against the soul by these vain fears. I call them vain, with reference to the frustration of them by Providence; but certainly they are not in vain as the end at which Satan aims in raising them; for herein he acts as soldiers do in the siege of a garrison, who to wear out the besieged by constant watchings, and thereby unfit them to make resistance when they storm it in earnest, every night rouse them with false alarms, which though they come to nothing yet remarkably answer the ultimate design of the enemy.—O when will you beware of Satan's devices?

5. Consider solemnly, that though the things you fear should really happen, yet there is more evil in your own fear than in the things feared: and that, not only as the least evil of sin is worse than the greatest evil of suffering; but as this sinful fear has really more trouble in it than there is in that condition of which you are so much afraid. Fear is both a multiplying and a tormenting passion; it represents troubles as much greater than they are, and so tortures the soul much more than the suffering itself. So it was with Israel at the Red Sea; they cried out and were afraid, till they stepped into the water, and then a passage was opened through those waters which they thought would have drowned them. Thus it is with us; we, looking through the glass of carnal fear upon the waters of trouble, the swellings of Jordan, cry out, 'O they are unfordable; we must perish in them!' But when we come into the midst of those floods indeed, we find the promise made good: "God will make a way to escape." Thus it was with a blessed martyr; when he would make a trial by putting his finger to the candle, and found himself not able to endure that, he cried out, "What! cannot I bear the burning of a finger? How then shall I be able to bear the burning of my whole body to-morrow?" Yet when that morrow came he could go cheerfully into the flames with this scripture in his mouth: "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine; when thou passest through the waters I will be with you; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt."

6. Consult the many precious promises which are written for your support and comfort in all dangers. These are your refuges to which you may fly and be safe when the arrows of danger fly by night, and destruction wasteth at noon-day. There are particular promises suited to particular cases and exigencies; there are also general promises reaching all cases and conditions. Such as these: "All things shall work together for good," &c. "Though a sinner do evil an hundred times and his days be prolonged, yet it shall be well with them that fear the Lord," &c. Could you but believe the promises your heart should be established. Could you but plead them with God as Jacob did, ("Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good," &c.) they would relieve you in every distress.

7. Quiet your trembling heart by recording and consulting your past experiences of the care and faithfulness of God in former distresses. These experiences are food for your faith in a wilderness. By this David kept his heart in time of danger, and Paul his. It was answered by a saint, when one told him that his enemies waylaid him to take his life: "If God take no care of me, how is it that I have escaped hitherto?" You may plead with God old experiences for new ones: for it is in pleading with God for new deliverances, as it is in pleading for new pardons. Mark how Moses pleads of that account with God. "Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people, as thou hast forgiven them from Egypt until now." He does not say as men do, 'Lord, this is the first fault, thou hast not been troubled before to sign their pardon:' but, 'Lord, because thou hast pardoned them

so often, I beseech thee pardon them once again.' So in new difficulties let the saint say, 'Lord, thou hast often heard, helped and saved, in former years; therefore now help again, for with thee there is plenteous redemption and thine arm is not shortened.'

8. Be well satisfied that you are in the way of your duty, and that will beget holy courage in times of danger. "Who, will harm you if you be a follower of that which is good?" Or if any dare attempt to harm you, "you may boldly commit yourself to God in well-doing." It was this consideration that raised Luther's spirit above all fear: "in the cause of God (said he) I ever am, and ever shall be stout: herein I assume this title, "I yield to none." A good cause will bear up a man's spirit. Hear the saying of a hea-then, to the shame of cowardly Christians: when the emperor Vespasian had commanded Fluidus Priseus not to come to the senate, or if he did come, to speak nothing but what 'he would have him; the senator returned this noble answer, "that he was a senator, it was fit he should be at the senate; and if being there, he were required to give his advice, he would freely speak that which his conscience commanded him." The emperor threatening that then he should die; he answered, "Did I ever tell you that I was immortal? Do what you will, and I will do what I ought. It is in your power to put me to death unjustly, and in my power to die with constancy." Righteousness is a breastplate: let them tremble whom danger finds out of the way of duty.

9. Get your conscience sprinkled with the blood of Christ from all guilt, and that will set your heart above all fear. It is guilt upon the conscience that softens and makes cowards of our spirits: "the righteous are bold as a lion." It was guilt in Cain's conscience that made him cry, "Every one that findeth me will slay me." A guilty conscience is more terrified by imagined dangers, than a pure conscience is by real ones. A guilty sinner carries a witness against himself in his own bosom. It was guilty Herod cried out, "John Baptist is risen from the dead." Such a conscience is the devil's anvil, on which he fabricates all those swords and spears with which the guilty sinner pierces himself. Guilt is to danger, what fire is to gun-powder: a man need not fear to walk among many barrels of powder, if he have no fire about him.

10. Exercise holy trust in times of great distress. Make it your business to trust God with your life and comforts, and then your heart will be at rest about them. So did David, "At what time I am afraid I will trust in thee;" that is, 'Lord, if at any time a storm arise, I will shelter from it under the covert of thy wings.' Go to God by acts of faith and trust, and never doubt that he will secure you. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee," says Isaiah. God is pleased when you come to him thus: 'Father, my life, my liberty and my estate are exposed, and I cannot secure them; O let me leave them in, thy hand. The poor leaveth himself with thee; and does his God fail him? No, thou art the helper of the fatherless: that is, thou art the helper of the destitute one, that has none to go to but God. This is a comforting passage, "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord;" he does not say, his ear shall be preserved from the report of evil tidings, he may hear as sad tidings as other men, but his heart shall be kept from the terror of those tidings; his heart is fixed.

11. Consult the honor of religion more, and your personal safety less. Is it for the honor of religion (think you) that Christians should be as timorous as bores to start at every sound? Will not this tempt the world to think, that whatever you talk, yet your principles are no better than other men's? What mischief may the discovery of your fears before them do! It was nobly said by Nehemiah, "Should such a man as I flee? and who, being as I am, would flee?" Were it not better you should

die than that the world should be prejudiced against Christ by your example? For alas! how apt is the world (who judge more by what they see in your practices than by what they understand of your principles) to conclude from your timidity, that how much soever you commend faith and talk of assurance, yet you dare trust to those things no more than they, when it comes to the trial. O let not your fears lay such a stumbling-block before the blind world.

12. He that would secure his heart from fear, must first secure the eternal interest of his soul in the hands of Jesus Christ., When this is done, you may say, 'Now, world, do thy worst!' You will not be very solicitous about a vile body, when you are once assured it shall be well to all eternity with your precious soul. "Fear not them (says Christ) that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." The assured Christian may smile with contempt upon all his enemies, and say, 'Is this the worst that you can do?' What say you, Christian? Are you assured that your soul is safe; that within a few moments of your dissolution it shall be received by Christ into an everlasting habitation? If you be sure of that, never trouble yourself about the instrument and means of your death.'

13. Learn to quench all slavish creature-fears in the reverential fear of God. This is a cure by diversion. It is an exercise of Christian wisdom to turn those passions of the soul which most predominate, into spiritual channels; to turn natural anger into spiritual zeal, natural mirth into holy cheerfulness, and natural fear into a holy dread and awe of God. This method of cure Christ prescribes in Matthew 10:1-42; similar to which is Isaiah 8:12-13, "Fear not their fear." 'But how shall we help it?' "Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." Natural fear may be allayed for the present by natural reason, or the removal of the occasion; but then it is like a candle blown out by a puff of breath, which is easily blown in again: but if the fear of God extinguish it, then it is like a candle quenched in water, which cannot easily be rekindled.'

14. Pour out to God in prayer those fears which the devil and your own unbelief pour in upon you in times of danger. Prayer is the best outlet to fear: where is the Christian that cannot set his seal to this direction? I will give you the greatest example to encourage you to compliance, even the example of Jesus Christ. When the hour of his danger and death drew nigh, he went into the garden, separated from his disciples, and there wrestled mightily with God in prayer, even unto agony; in reference to which the apostle says, "who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong cries and tears, to him that was able to save from death, and was heard in that he feared." He was heard as to strength and support to carry him through it; though not as to deliverance, or exemption from it. O that these things may abide with you, and be reduced to practice in these evil days, and that many trembling souls may be established by them.'

V. The fifth season, requiring diligence in keeping the heart, is the time of outward wants. . . .

V. The fifth season, requiring diligence in keeping the heart, is the time of outward wants. Although at such times we should complain to God, not of God, (the throne of grace being erected for a "time of need,") yet when the waters of relief run low, and want begins to press, how prone are the best hearts to distrust the fountain! When the meal in the barrel and the oil in the cruse are almost spent, our faith and patience too are almost spent. It is now difficult to keep the proud and unbelieving heart in a holy quietude and sweet submission at the foot of God. It is an easy thing to talk of trusting God for daily bread, while we have a full barn or purse; but to say as the prophet,

“Though the fig-tree should not blossom, neither fruit be in the vine, &c. yet will I rejoice in the Lord:” surely this is not easy. Would you know then how a Christian may keep his heart from distrusting God, or repining against him, when outward wants are either felt or feared?—The case deserves to be seriously considered, especially now, since it seems to be the design of Providence to empty the people of God of their creature fullness, and acquaint them with those difficulties to which hitherto they have been altogether strangers. To secure the heart from the dangers attending this condition, these considerations may, through the blessing of the Spirit, prove effectual:

1. If God reduces you to necessities, he therein deals no otherwise with you than he has done with some of the holiest men that ever lived. Your condition is not singular; though you have hitherto been a stranger to want, other saints have been familiarly acquainted with it. Hear what Paul says, not of himself only, but in the name of other saints reduced to like exigencies: “Even to the present hour, we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place.” To see such a man as Paul going up and down the world naked, and hungry, and houseless; one that was so far above thee in grace and holiness; one that did more service for God in a day than perhaps thou hast done in all thy days may well put an end to your repining. Have you forgotten how much even a David has suffered? How great were his difficulties! “Give, I pray thee,” says he to Nabal, “whatsoever cometh to thy hand, to thy servants, and to thy son David.” But why speak I of these? Behold a greater than any of them, even the Son of God, who is the heir of all things, and by whom the worlds were made, sometimes would have been glad of any thing, having nothing to eat. “And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry; and seeing a fig-tree, afar off, having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon.”

Hereby then God has set no mark of hatred upon you, neither can you infer want of love from want of bread. When thy repining heart puts the question, ‘Was there ever sorrow like unto mine?’ ask these worthies, and they will tell thee that though they did not complain as thou dost, yet their condition was as necessitous as thine is.

2. If God leave you not in this condition without a promise, you have no reason to repine or despond under it. That is a sad condition indeed to which no promise belongs. Calvin in his comment on Isaiah, 9:1, explains in what sense the darkness of the captivity was not so great as that of the lesser incursions made by Tiglath Pileser. In the captivity, the city was destroyed and the temple burnt with fire: there was no comparison in the affliction, yet the darkness was not so great, because, says he, “there was a certain promise made in this case, but none in the other.” It is better to be as low as hell with a promise, than to be in paradise without one. Even the darkness of hell itself would be no darkness comparatively at all, were there but a promise to enlighten it. Now, God has left many sweet promises for the faith of his poor people to live upon in this condition; such as these: “O fear the Lord, ye his saints, for there is no want to them that fear him; the lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that fear the Lord shall not want any good thing.” “The eye of the Lord is upon the righteous to keep them alive in famine.” “No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” “When the poor and the needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.” Here you see their extreme wants, water being put for their

necessaries of life; and their certain relief, “I the Lord will hear them;” in which it is supposed that they cry unto him in their distress, and he hears their cry. Having therefore these promises, why should not your distrustful heart conclude like David’s, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want?”

‘But these promises imply conditions: if they were absolute, they would afford more satisfaction.’ What are those tacit conditions of which you speak but these, that he will either supply or sanctify your wants; that you shall have so much as God sees fit for you? And does this trouble you? Would you have the mercy, whether sanctified or not? whether God sees it fit for you or not? The appetites of saints after earthly things should not be so ravenous as to seize greedily upon any enjoyment without regarding circumstances.

‘But when wants press, and I see not whence supplies should come, my faith in the promise shakes, and I, like murmuring Israel, cry, “He gave bread, can he give water also?”’ O unbelieving heart! when did his promises fail? who ever trusted them and was ashamed? May not God upbraid thee with thine unreasonable infidelity, as in Jeremiah 2:31, “Have I been a wilderness unto you?” or as Christ said to his disciples, “Since I was with you, lacked ye any thing?” Yea, may you not upbraid yourself; may you not say with good old Polycarp, “These many years I have served Christ, and found him a good Master?”

Indeed he may deny what your wantonness, but not what your want calls for. He will not regard the cry of your lusts, nor yet despise the cry of your faith: though he will not indulge your wanton appetites, yet he will not violate his. own faithful promises. These promises are your best security for eternal life; and it is strange they should not satisfy you for daily bread. Remember the words of the Lord, and solace your heart with them amidst all your wants. It is said of Epicurus, that in dreadful paroxysms of the cholic he often refreshed himself by calling to mind his inventions in philosophy; and of Possodonius the philosopher, that in an acute disorder he solaced himself with discourses on moral virtue; and when distressed, he would say, “O pain, thou dost nothing; though thou art a little troublesome, I will never confess thee to be evil.” If upon such grounds as these they could support themselves under such racking pains, and even deluded their diseases by them; how much rather should the promises of God, and the sweet experiences which have gone along step by step with them, make you forget all your wants, and comfort you in every difficulty?

3. If it be bad now, it might have been worse. Has God denied thee the comforts of this life? He might have denied thee Christ, peace, and pardon also; and then thy case had been woful indeed.

You know God has done so to millions. How many such wretched objects max your eyes behold every day, that have no comfort in hand, nor yet in hope; that are miserable here, and will be so to eternity; that have a bitter cup, and nothing to sweeten it—no, not so much as any hope that it will be better. But it is not so with you: though you be poor in this world, yet you are “rich in faith, and an heir of the kingdom which God has promised.” Learn to set spiritual riches over against temporal poverty. Balance all your present troubles with your spiritual privileges. Indeed if God has denied your soul the robe of righteousness to clothe it, the hidden manna to feed it, the heavenly mansion to receive it, you might well be pensive; but the consideration that he has not may administer comfort under any outward distress. When Luther began to be pressed by want, he said, “Let us be contented with our hard fare; for do not we feast upon Christ, the bread of life?“ “Blessed be God (said Paul) who hath abounded to us in all spiritual blessings.”

4. Though this affliction be great, God has far greater, with which he chastises the dearly beloved of his soul in this world. Should he remove this and inflict those, you would account your present state a very comfortable one, and bless God to be as you now are. Should God remove your present troubles, supply all your outward wants, give you the desire of your heart in creature-comforts; but hide his face from you, shoot his arrows into your soul, and cause the venom of them to drink up your spirit: should he leave you but a few days to the buffetings of Satan: should he hold your eyes but a few nights waking with horrors of conscience, tossing to and fro till the dawning of the day:—should he lead you through the chambers of death, show you the visions of darkness, and make his terrors set themselves in array against you: then tell me if you would not think it a great mercy to be back again in your former necessitous condition, with peace of conscience; and account bread and water, with God's favor, a happy state? O then take heed of repining. Say not that God deals hardly with you, lest you provoke him to convince you by your own sense that he has worse rods than these for unsubmissive and froward children.

5. If it be had now, it will be better shortly. Keep thy heart by this consideration, 'the meal in the barrel is almost spent; well, be it so, why should that trouble me, if I am almost beyond the need and use of these things?' The traveler has spent almost all his money; 'well,' says he, 'though my money be almost spent, my journey is almost finished too: I am near home, and shall soon be fully supplied.' If there be no candles in the house, it is a comfort to think that it is almost day, and then there will be no need of them. I am afraid, Christian, you misreckon when you think your provision is almost spent, and you have a great way to travel, many years to live and nothing to live upon; it may be not half so many, as you suppose In this be confident, if your provision be spent, either fresh supplies are coining, though you see not whence, or you are nearer your journey's end than you reckon yourself to be. Desponding soul, does it become a man traveling upon the road to that heavenly city, and almost arrived there, within a few days' journey of his Father's house, where all his wants shall be supplied, to be so anxious about a little meat, or drink, or clothes, which he fears he shall want by the way? It was nobly said by the forty martyrs when turned out naked in a frosty night to be starved to death, " The winter indeed is sharp and cold, but heaven is warm and comfortable; here we shiver for cold, but Abraham's bosom will make amends for all."

'But,' says the desponding soul, 'I may die for want.' Who ever did so? When were the righteous forsaken? If indeed it be so, your journey is ended, and you fully supplied.

'But I am not sure of that; were I sure of heaven, it would be another matter.' Are you not sure of that? then you have other matters to trouble yourself about than these; methinks these should be the least of all your cares. I do not find that souls perplexed about the want of Christ, pardon of sin, &c. are usually very solicitous about these things. He that seriously puts such questions as these, 'What shall I do to be saved? how shall I know my sin is pardoned?' does not trouble himself with, "What shall I eat, what shall I drink, or wherewithal shall I be clothed?"

6. Does it become the children of such a Father to distrust his all-sufficiency, or repine at any of his dispensations? Do you well to question his care and love upon every new exigency? Say, have you not formerly been ashamed of this? Has not your Father's seasonable provision for you in former difficulties put you to the blush, and made you resolve never more to question his love and care? And yet will you again renew your unworthy suspicions of him? Disingenuous child! reason thus with yourself: "If I perish for want of what is good and needful for me, it must be either

because my Father knows not my wants, Or has not wherewith to supply them, or regards not what becomes of me. Which of these shall I charge upon him? Not the first: for my Father knows what I have need of Not the second: for the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; his name is God All-sufficient. Not the last: for as a Father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him; the Lord is exceeding pitiful and of tender mercy; he hears the young ravens when they cry:—and will he not hear me? Consider, says Christ, the fowls of the air; not the fowls at the door, that are fed every day by hand, but the fowls of the air that have none to provide for them. Does he feed and clothe his enemies, and will he forget his children? he heard even the cry of Ishmael in distress. O my unbelieving heart, dost thou yet doubt?"

7. Your poverty is not your sin, but your affliction. If you have not by sinful means brought it upon yourself, and if it be but an affliction, it may the more easily be borne. It is hard indeed to bear an affliction coming upon us as the fruit and punishment of sin. When men are under trouble upon that account; they say, 'O if it were but a single affliction, coming from the hand of God by way of trial, I could bear it; but I have brought it upon myself by sin, it comes as the punishment of sin; the marks of God's displeasure are upon it: it is the guilt within that troubles and galls more than the want without.' But it is not so here; therefore you have no reason to be cast down under it.

'But though there be no sting of guilt, yet this condition wants not other stings; as, for instance, The discredit of religion. I cannot comply with my engagements in the world, and thereby religion is likely to suffer.' It is well you have a heart to discharge every duty; yet if God disable you by providence, it is no discredit to your profession that you do not that which you cannot do, so long as it is your desire and endeavor to do what you can and ought to do; and in this case God's will is, that lenity and forbearance be toward you.

'But it grieves me to behold the necessities of others, whom I was wont to relieve and refresh, but now cannot.' If you cannot, it ceases to be your duty, and God accepts the drawing out of your soul to the hungry in compassion and desire to help them, though you cannot draw forth a full purse to relieve and supply them.

'But I find such a condition full of temptations, a great hinderance in the way to heaven.' Every condition in the world has its hinderances and attending temptations; and were you in a prosperous condition, you might there meet with more temptations and fewer advantages than you now have; for though I confess poverty as well as prosperity has its temptations, yet I am confident prosperity has not those advantages that poverty has. Here you have an opportunity to discover the sincerity of your love to God, when you can live upon him, find enough in him, and constantly follow him, even when all external inducements and motives fail.

Thus I have shown you how to keep your heart from the temptations and dangers attending a low condition in the world. When want oppresses and the heart begins to sink, then improve, and bless God for these helps to keep it.

VI. The sixth season requiring this diligence in keeping the heart, is the season of duty. . . .

VI. The sixth season requiring this diligence in keeping the heart, is the season of duty. Our hearts must be closely watched and kept when we draw nigh to God in public, private, or secret duties; for the vanity of the heart seldom discovers itself more than at such times. How often does the poor soul cry out, 'O Lord, how gladly would I serve thee, but vain thoughts will not let me: I come

to open my heart to thee, to delight my soul in communion with thee, but my corruptions oppose me: Lord, call off these vain thoughts, and suffer them not to estrange the soul that is espoused to thee.' The question then is this: How may the heart be kept from distractions by vain thoughts in time of duty? There is a two-fold distraction, or wandering of the heart in duty: First, voluntary and habitual, They set not their hearts aright, and their spirit was not steadfast with God." This is the case of formalists, and it proceeds from the want of a holy inclination of the heart to God; their hearts are under the power of their lusts, and therefore it is no wonder that they go after their lusts, even when they are about holy things. Secondly, involuntary and lamented distractions: "I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me; O wretched man that I am," &c. This proceeds not from the want of a holy inclination or aim, but from the weakness of grace and the want of vigilance in opposing indwelling sin. But it is not my business to show you how these distractions come into the heart but rather how to get them out, and prevent their future admission:

1. Sequester yourself from all earthly employments, and set apart some time for solemn preparation to meet God in duty. You cannot come directly from the world into God's presence without finding a savor of the world in your duties. It is with the heart (a few minutes since plunged in the world, now in the presence of God) as it is with the sea after a storm, which still continues working, muddy and disquiet, though the wind be laid and the storm be over. Your heart must have some time to settle. Few musicians can take an instrument and play upon it without some time and labor to tune it; few Christians can say with David, "My heart is fixed, O God, it is fixed." When you go to God in any duty, take your heart aside and say, 'O my soul, I am now engaged in the greatest work that a creature was ever employed about; I am going into the awful presence of God upon business of everlasting moment. O my soul, leave trifling now; be composed, be watchful, be serious; this is no common work, it is soul-work; it is work for eternity; it is work which will bring forth fruit to life or death in the world to come.' Pause awhile and consider your sins, your wants, your troubles; keep your thoughts awhile on these before you address yourself to duty. David first mused, and then spake with his tongue.

2. Having composed your heart by previous meditation, immediately set a guard upon your senses. How often are Christians in danger of losing the eyes of their mind by those of their body! Against this David prayed, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou me in thy way." This may serve to expound the Arabian proverb: "Shut the windows that the house may be light." It were well if you could say in the commencement, as a holy man once said when he came from the performance of duty: "Be shut, O my eyes, be shut; for it is impossible that you should ever discern such beauty and glory in any creature as I have now seen in God." You must avoid all occasions of distraction from without, and imbibe that intenseness of spirit in the work of God which locks up the eye and ear against vanity.

3. Beg of God a mortified fancy. A working fancy, (saith one,) how much soever it be extolled among men, is a great snare to the soul, except it work in fellowship with right reason and a sanctified heart. The fancy is a power of the soul, placed between the senses and the understanding; it is that which first stirs itself in the soul, and by its motions the other powers of the soul are brought into exercise; it is that in which thoughts are first formed, and as that is, so are they. If imaginations be not first cast down, it is impossible that every thought of the heart should be brought into obedience to Christ. The fancy is naturally the wildest and most untameable power of the soul. Some Christians have much to do with it; and the more spiritual the heart is, the more

does a wild and vain fancy disturb and perplex it. It is a sad thing that one's imagination should call off the soul from attending on God, when it is engaged in communion with him. Pray earnestly and perseveringly that your fancy may be chastened and sanctified, and when this is accomplished your thoughts will be regular and fixed.

4. If you would keep your heart from vain excursions when engaged in duties, realize to yourself, by faith, the holy and awful presence of God. If the presence of a grave man would compose you to seriousness, how much more should the presence of a holy God? Do you think that you would dare to be gay and light if you realized the presence and inspection of the Divine Being? Remember where you are when engaged in religious duty, and act as if you believed in the omniscience of God. "All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." Realize his infinite holiness, his purity, his spirituality.

Strive to obtain such apprehensions of the greatness of God as shall suitably affect your heart; and remember his jealousy over his worship. "This is that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified." "A man that is praying (says Bernard) should behave himself as if he were entering into the court of heaven, where he sees the Lord upon his throne, surrounded with ten thousand of his angels and saints ministering unto him."—When you come from an exercise in which your heart has been wandering and listless, what can you say? Suppose all the vanities and impertinences which have passed through your mind during a devotional exercise were written down and interlined with your petitions, could you have the face to present them to God? Should your tongue utter all the thoughts of your heart when at tending the worship of God, would not men abhor you? Yet your thoughts are perfectly known to God. O think upon this scripture: "God is greatly to be feared in the assemblies of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are round about him." Why did the Lord descend in thunderings and lightnings and dark clouds upon Sinai? why did the mountains smoke under him, the people quake and tremble round about him, Moses himself not excepted? but to teach the people this great truth: "Let us have grace, whereby we may serve Him acceptably, with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire." Such apprehensions of the character and presence of God will quickly reduce a heart inclined to vanity to a more serious frame.

5. Maintain a prayerful frame of heart in the intervals of duty. What reason can be assigned why our hearts are so dull, so careless, so wandering, when we hear or pray, but that there have been long intermissions in our communion with God? If that divine unction, that spiritual fervor, and those holy impressions, which we obtain from God while engaged in the performance of one duty, were preserved to enliven and engage us in the performance of another, they would be of incalculable service to keep our hearts serious and devout. For this purpose, frequent ejaculations between stated and solemn duties are of most excellent use: they not only preserve the mind in a composed and pious frame, but they connect one stated duty, as it were, with another, and keep the attention of the soul alive to all its interests and obligations.

6. If you would have the distraction of your thoughts prevented, endeavor to raise your affections to God, and to engage them warmly in your duty. When the soul is intent upon any work, it gathers in its strength and bends all its thoughts to that work; and when it is deeply affected, it will pursue its object with intenseness, the affections will gain, an ascendancy over the thoughts and guide

them. But deadness causes distraction, and distraction increases deadness. Could you but regard your duties as the medium in which you might walk in communion with God in which your soul might be filled with those ravishing and matchless delights which his presence affords, you might have no inclination to neglect them. But if you would prevent the recurrence of distracting thoughts, if you would find your happiness in the performance of duty, you must not only be careful that you engage in what is your duty, bat labor with patient and persevering exertion to interest your feelings in it. Why is your heart so inconstant, especially in secret duties; why are you ready to be gone, almost as soon as you are come into the presence of God, but because your affections are not engaged?

7. When you are disturbed by vain thoughts, humble yourself before God, and call in assistance from Heaven. When the messenger of Satan buffeted St. Paul by wicked suggestions, (as is supposed) he mourned before God on account of it. Never slight wandering thoughts in duty as small matters; follow every such thought with a deep regret. Turn to God with such words as these: ‘Lord, I came hither to commune with thee, and here a busy adversary and a vain heart, conspiring together, have opposed me. O my God what a heart have I! shall I never wait upon thee without distraction? when shall I enjoy an hour of free communion with thee? Grant me thy assistance at this time; discover thy glory to me, and my heart will quickly be recovered. I came hither to enjoy thee, and shall I go away without thee? Behold my distress, and help me!’ —Could you but sufficiently be wail your distractions, and repair to God for deliverance from them, you would gain relief.

8. Look upon the success and the comfort of your duties, as depending very much upon the keeping of your heart close with God in them. These two things, the success of duty and the inward comfort arising from the performance of it, are unspeakably dear to the Christian; but both of these will be lost if the heart be in a listless state. “Surely God heareth not vanity, nor doth the Almighty regard it.” The promise is made to a heart engaged: “Then shall ye seek for me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your hearts.” When you find your heart under the power of deadness and distraction, say to yourself, ‘O what do I lose by a careless heart now! My praying seasons , are the most valuable portions of my life: could I but raise my heart to God, I might now obtain such mercies as would be matter of praise to all eternity.’

04.02c. Duties Included in Keeping the Heart

9. Regard your carefulness or carelessness in this matter as a great evidence of your sincerity, or hypocrisy. Nothing will alarm an upright heart more than this. ‘What shall I give way to a customary wandering of the heart from God? Shall the spot of the hypocrite appear upon my soul? Hypocrites, indeed, can drudge on in the round of duty, never regarding the frame of their hearts; but shall I do so? Never— never let me be satisfied with empty duties. Never let me take my leave of a duty until my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.’

10. It will be of special use to keep your heart with God in duty, to consider what influence all your duties will have upon your eternity. Your religious seasons are your seed times, and in another world you must reap the fruits of what you sow in your duties here, If you sow to the flesh, you will reap corruption; if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap life everlasting. Answer seriously these questions: Are you willing to reap the fruit of vanity in the world to come? Dare you say, when your thoughts are roving to the ends of the earth in duty, when you scarce mind what you say or hear, ‘Now, Lord, I am sowing to the Spirit; now I am providing and laying up for eternity; now I am seeking for glory, honor and immortality; now I am striving to enter in at the strait gate; now I am taking the kingdom of heaven by holy violence!’ Such reflections are well calculated to dissipate vain thoughts.

VII. The seventh season, which requires more than common diligence to keep the heart, is when we receive injuries and abuses from men. Such is the depravity and corruption of man, that one is become as a wolf or a tiger to another. And as men are naturally cruel and oppressive one to another, so the wicked conspire to abuse and wrong the people of God, “The wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he.” Now when we are thus abused and wronged, it is hard to keep the heart from revengeful motions; to make it meekly and quietly commit the cause to Him that judgeth righteously; to prevent the exercise of any sinful affection. The spirit that is in us lusteth to revenge; but it must not be so. We have choice helps in the Gospel to keep our hearts from sinful motions against our enemies, and to sweeten our embittered spirits. Do you ask how a Christian may keep his heart from revengeful motions under the greatest injuries and abuses from men? I reply: When you find your heart begin to be inflamed by revengeful feelings, immediately reflect on the following things

1. Urge upon your heart the severe prohibitions of revenge contained in the law of God. However gratifying to your corrupt propensities revenge may be, remember that it is forbidden. Hear the word of God: “Say not, I will recompense evil.” Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me. “Recompense to no man evil for evil. Avenge not yourselves, but give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.” On the contrary. “If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink.” It was an argument urged by the Christians to prove their religion to be supernatural and pure, that it forbids revenge, which is so agreeable to nature; and it is to be wished that such an argument might not be laid aside. Awe your heart, then, with the authority of God in the Scriptures; and when carnal reason says, ‘My enemy deserves to be

hated,' let conscience reply, 'But doth God deserve to be disobeyed?' 'Thus and thus hath he done, and so hath he wronged me;' 'But what hath God done that 1 should wrong him? If my enemy dares boldly to break the peace, shall I be so wicked as to break the precept? if he fears not to wrong me, shall not I fear to wrong God?' Thus let the fear of God restrain and calm your feelings.

2. Set before your eyes the most eminent patterns of meekness and forgiveness, that you may feel the force of their example. This is the way to cut off the common pleas of flesh and blood for revenge: as thus, 'No man would bear such an affront;' yes, others have borne as bad, and worse ones. 'But I shall be reckoned a coward, a fool, if I pass by this:' no matter, so long as you follow the examples of the wisest and holiest of men. Never did any one suffer more or greater abuses from men than Jesus did, nor did any one ever endure insult and reproach and every kind of abuse in a more peaceful and forgiving manner; when he Was reviled he reviled not again; when he suffered. he threatened not when his murderers. crucified him he prayed Father, forgive them; and herein he hath set us an example, that we should follow his steps. Thus his apostles imitated him: "Being reviled," say they, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat." I have often heard it reported of the holy Mr. Dod, that when a man, enraged at his close, convincing doctrine, assaulted him, smote him on the face and dashed out two of his teeth; that meek servant of Christ spit out the teeth and blood into his hand, and said, "See here, you have knocked out two of my teeth, and that without any just provocation; but on condition that I might do your soul good, I would give you leave to knock out all the rest." Here was exemplified the excellency of the Christian spirit. Strive then for this spirit, which constitutes the true excellence of Christians. Do what others cannot do, keep this spirit in exercise, and you will preserve peace in your own soul and gain the victory over your enemies.

2. Consider the character of the person who has wronged you. He is either a good or a wicked man. If he is a good man, there is light and tenderness in his conscience, which sooner or later will bring him to a sense of the evil of what he has done. If he is a good man, Christ has forgiven him greater injuries than he has done to you; and why should not you forgive him? Will Christ not upbraid him for any of his wrongs, but frankly forgive them all; and will you take him by the throat for some petty abuse which he has offered you?

3. But if a wicked man has injured or insulted you, truly you have more reason to exercise pity than revenge toward him. He is in a deluded and miserable state; a slave to sin and an enemy to righteousness. If he should ever repent, he will be ready to make you reparation; if he continues impenitent, there is a day coming when .he will be punished to the extent of his deserts. You need not study revenge, God will execute vengeance upon him.

4. Remember that by revenge you can only gratify a sinful passion, which by forgiveness you might conquer. Suppose that by revenge you might destroy one enemy; yet, by exercising the Christian's temper you might conquer three—your own lust, Satan's temptation, and your enemy's heart. If by revenge you should overcome your enemy, the victory would be unhappy and inglorious, for in gaining it you would be overcome by your own corruption; but by exercising a meek and forgiving temper, you will always come off with honor and success. It must be a very disingenuous nature indeed upon which meekness and forgiveness will not operate; that must be a flinty heart which this fire will not melt. Thus David gained such a victory over Saul his

persecutor, that “Saul lifted up his voice and wept, and he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I.”

5. Seriously propose this question to your own heart: ‘Have I got any good by means of the wrongs and injuries which I have received?’ If they have done you no good, turn your revenge upon yourself. You have reason to be filled with shame and sorrow that you should have a heart which can deduce no good from such troubles; that your temper should be so unlike that of Christ. The patience and meekness of other Christians have turned all the injuries offered to them to a good account; their souls have been animated to praise God when they have been loaded with reproaches from the world. “I thank my God,” said Jerome, “that I am worthy to be hated of the world.” But if you have derived any benefit from the reproaches and wrongs which you have received, if they have put you upon examining your own heart, if they have made you more careful how you conduct, if they have convinced you of the value of a sanctified temper; will you not forgive them? will you not forgive one who has been instrumental of so much good to you? What though he meant it for evil? if through the Divine blessing your happiness has been promoted by what he has done, why should you even have a hard thought of him?

6. Consider by whom all your troubles are ordered. This will be of great use to keep your heart from revenge; this will quickly calm and sweeten your temper. When Shimei railed at David and cursed him, the spirit of that good man was not at all poisoned by revenge; for when Abishai offered him. if he pleased, the head of Shimei, the king said, “Let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David: who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?” It may be that God uses him as his rod to chastise me, because by my sin I gave the enemies of God occasion to blaspheme; and shall I be angry with the instrument? how irrational were that! Thus Job was quieted; he did not rail and meditate revenge upon the Chaldeans and Sabeans, but regarded God as the orderer of his troubles, and said, “The Lord hath taken away, blessed be his name.”

7. Consider how you are daily and hourly wronging God, and you will not be so easily inflawed with revenge against those who have wronged you. You are constantly affronting God, yet he does not take vengeance on you, but bears with you and forgives; and will you rise up and avenge yourself upon others? Reflect on this cutting rebuke: “O thou wicked and slothful servant! I forgave thee all that debt because thou desiredst me; shouldst thou not also have compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?” None should be so filled with forbearance and mercy to such as wrong them, as those who have experienced the riches of mercy themselves. The mercy of God to us should melt our hearts into mercy toward others. It is impossible that we should be cruel to others, except we forget how kind and compassionate God hath been to us. And if kindness cannot prevail in us, methinks fear should:—“If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

8. Let the consideration that the day of the Lord draweth nigh, restrain you from anticipating it by acts of revenge. Why are you so hasty? is not the Lord at hand to avenge all his abused servants? “Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth, &c. Be ye also patient, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned. Behold, the Judge standeth at the door. Vengeance belongeth unto God, and will you wrong yourself so much as to assume his work?

VIII. The next season in which special exertion is necessary to keep the heart, is when we meet with great trials. . . .

VIII. The next season in which special exertion is necessary to keep the heart, is when we meet with great trials. In such cases the heart is apt to be suddenly transported with pride, impatience, or other sinful passions. Many good people are guilty of hasty and very sinful conduct in such instances; and all have need to use diligently the following means to keep their hearts submissive and patient under great trials:

1. Get humble and abasing thoughts of yourself. The humble is ever the patient man. Pride is the source of irregular and sinful passions. A lofty, will be an unyielding and peevish spirit. When we over-rate ourselves, we think that we are treated unworthily, that our trials are too severe: thus we cavil and repine. Christian, you should have such thoughts of yourself as would put a stop to these murmurings. You should have lower and more humiliating views of yourself than any other one can have of you. Get humility, and you will have peace whatever be your trial.

2. Cultivate a habit of communion with God. This will prepare you for whatever may take place. This will so sweeten your temper and calm your mind as to secure you against surprisals. This will produce that inward peace which will make you superior to your trials. Habitual communion with God will afford you enjoyment, which you can never be willing to interrupt by sinful feeling. When a Christian is calm and submissive under his afflictions, probably he derives support and comfort in this way; but he who is discomposed, impatient, or fretful, shows that `all is not right within—he cannot be supposed to practise communion with God.

3. Let your mind be deeply impressed with an apprehension of the evil nature and effects of an unsubmissive and restless temper. It grieves the Spirit of God, and induces his departure. His gracious presence and influence are enjoyed only where peace and quiet submission prevail. The indulgence of such a temper gives the adversary an advantage. Satan is an angry and discontented spirit. He finds no rest but in restless hearts. He bestirs himself when the spirits are in commotion; sometimes he fills the heart with ungrateful and rebellious thoughts; sometimes he inflames the tongue with indecent language. Again, such a temper brings great guilt upon the conscience, unfits the soul for any duty, and dishonors the Christian name. O keep your heart, and let the power and excellence of your religion be chiefly manifested when you are brought into the greatest straits.

4. Consider how desirable it is for a Christian to overcome his evil propensities. How much more present happiness it affords; how much better it is in every respect to mortify and subdue unholy feelings, than to give way to them. When upon your death-bed you come calmly to review your life, how comfortable will it be to reflect on the conquest which you have made over the depraved feelings of your heart. It was a memorable saying of Valentinian the emperor, when he was about to die: “Amongst all my conquests, there is but one that now comforts me” Being asked what that was, he answered, “I have overcome my worst enemy, my own sinful heart!”

5. Shame yourself, by contemplating the character of those who have been most eminent for meekness and submission. Above all, compare your temper with the Spirit of Christ. “Learn of me,” saith he, “for I am meek and lowly.” It is said of Calvin and Ursin, though both of choleric natures, that they had so imbibed and cultivated the meekness of Christ as not to utter an unbecoming

word under the greatest provocations. And even many of the heathens have manifested great moderation and forbearance under their severest afflictions. Is it not a shame and a reproach that you should be outdone by them?

6. Avoid every thing which is calculated to irritate your feelings. It is true spiritual valor to keep as far as we can out of sins way. If you can but avoid the excitements to impetuous and rebellious feelings, or check them in their first beginnings, you will have but little to fear. The first workings of common sins are comparatively weak, they gain their strength by degrees; but in times of trial the motions of sin are strongest at first, the unsubdued temper breaks out suddenly and violently. But if you resolutely with. stand it at first, it will yield and give you the victory.

IX. The ninth season wherein the greatest diligence and skill are necessary to keep the heart, is the hour of temptation, when Satan besets the Christians heart, and takes the unwary by surprise. . . .

IX. The ninth season wherein the greatest diligence arid skill are necessary to keep the heart, is the hour of temptation, when Satan besets the Christians heart, and takes the unwary by surprise. To keep the heart at such times, is not less a mercy than a duty. Few Christians are so skillful in detecting the fallacies, and repelling the arguments by which the adversary incites them to sin, as to come off safe and whole in these encounters. Many eminent saints have smarted severely for their want of watchfulness and diligence at such times. How then may a Christian keep his heart from yielding to temptation? There are several principal ways in which the adversary insinuates temptation, and urges compliance:

1. Satan suggests that here is pleasure to be enjoyed; the temptation is presented with a smiling aspect and an enticing voice: `What, are you so dull and phlegmatic as not to feel the powerful charms of pleasure? Who can withhold himself from such delights? Reader, you may be rescued from the danger of such temptations by repelling the proposal of pleasure. It is urged that the commission of sin will afford you pleasure. Suppose this were true, will the accusing and condemning rebukes of conscience and the flames of hell be pleasant too? Is there pleasure in the scourges of conscience? If so why did Peter weep so bitterly? why did David cry out of broken bones? You hear what is said of the pleasure of sin, and have you not read what David said of the effects of it? “Thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore; there is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger, neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin,” &c. If you yield to temptation, you must feel such inward distress on account of it, or the miseries of hell. But why should the pretended pleasure of sin allure you, when you know that unspeakably more real pleasure will arise from the mortification than can arise from the commission of sin. Will you prefer the gratification of some unhallowed passion, with the deadly poison which it will leave behind, to that sacred pleasure which arises from fearing and obeying God, complying with the dictates of conscience, and maintaining inward peace? Can sin afford any such delight as he feels who, by resisting temptation, has manifested the sincerity of his heart, and obtained evidence that he fears God, loves holiness, and hates sin?

2. The secrecy with which you may commit sin is made use of to induce compliance with temptation. The tempter insinuates that this indulgence will never disgrace you among men, for no one will know it. But recollect yourself. Does not God behold you? Is not the divine presence every where? What if you might hide your sin from the eyes of the world, you cannot hide it from God. No

darkness nor shadow of death can screen you from his inspection. Besides have you no reverence for yourself? Can you do that by yourself which you dare not have others observe? Is not your conscience as a thousand witnesses? Even a heathen could say, “When thou art tempted to commit sin, fear thyself without any other witness.”

3. The prospect of worldly advantage often enforces temptation. It is suggested, `Why should you be so nice and scrupulous? Give yourself a little liberty, and you may better your condition: now is your time. This is a dangerous temptation, and must be promptly resisted. Yielding to such a temptation will do your soul more injury than any temporal acquisition can possibly do you good. And what would it profit you, if you should gain the whole world and lose your own soul? What can be compared with the value of your spiritual interests? or what can at all compensate for the smallest injury of them?

4. Perhaps the smallness of the sin is urged as a reason why you may commit it; thus: `It is but a little one, a small matter, a trifle; who Would stand upon such niceties? But is the Majesty of heaven little too? If you commit this sin you will offend a great God. Is there any little hell to torment little sinners in? No; the least sinners in hell are full of misery. There is great wrath treasured up for those whom the world regard as little sinners. But the less the sin, the less the inducement to commit it. Will you provoke God for a trifle? will you destroy your peace, wound your conscience, and grieve the Spirit, all for nothing? What madness is this!

5. An argument to enforce temptation is sometimes drawn from the mercy of God and the hope of pardon —God is merciful, he will pass by this as an infirmity, he will not be severe to mark it. But stay: where do you find a promise of mercy to presumptuous sinners? Involuntary reprisals and lamented infirmities may be pardoned, “but the soul that doth aught presumptuously, the same reproacheth the Lord, and that soul shall be cut off from among his people.” If God is a being of so much mercy, how can you affront him? How can you make so glorious an attribute as the divine mercy an occasion of sin? Will you wrong him because he is good? Rather let his goodness lead you to repentance, and keep you from transgression.

6. Sometimes Satan encourages to the commission of sin, from the examples of holy men. Thus and thus they sinned, and were restored; therefore you may commit this sin, and yet. be a saint and be saved. Such suggestions must be instantly repelled. If good men have committed sins similar to that with which you are beset, did any good man ever sin upon such ground and from such encouragement as is here presented? Did God cause their examples to be recorded for your imitation, or for your warning? Are they not set up as beacons that you may avoid the rocks upon which they split? Are you willing to feel what they felt for sin? Dare you follow them in sin, and plunge yourself into such distress and danger as they incurred?—Reader, in these ways learn to keep your heart in the hour of temptation.

X. The time of doubting and of spiritual darkness constitutes another season when it is very difficult to keep the heart. . . .

X. The time of doubting and of spiritual darkness constitutes another season when it is very difficult to keep the heart. When the light and comfort of the divine presence is withdrawn; when the believer, from the prevalence of indwelling sin in one form or other, is ready to renounce his hopes, to infer desperate conclusions with respect to himself, to regard his former comforts as vain

delusions, and his professions as hypocrisy; at such a time much diligence is necessary to keep the heart from despondency. The Christian's distress arises from his apprehension of his spiritual state, and in general he argues against his possessing true religion, either from his having relapsed into the same sins from which he had formerly been recovered with shame and sorrow; or from the sensible declining of his affections from God; or from the strength of his affections toward creature enjoyments; or from his enlargement in public, while he is often confined and barren in private duties; or from some horrible suggestions of Satan, with which his soul is greatly perplexed; or, lastly, from God's silence and seeming denial of his long depending prayers. Now in order to the establishment and support of the heart under these circumstances, it is necessary that you be acquainted with some general truths which have a tendency to calm the trembling and doubting soul; and that you be rightly instructed with regard to the above-mentioned causes of disquiet. Let me direct your attention to the following general truths:

1. Every appearance of hypocrisy does not prove the person who manifests it to be a hypocrite. You should carefully distinguish between the appearance and the predominance of hypocrisy. There are remains of deceitfulness in the best hearts; this was exemplified in David and Peter; but the prevailing frame of their hearts being upright, they were not denominated hypocrites for their conduct.

2. We ought to regard what can be said in our favor, as well as what may be said against us. It is the sin of upright persons sometimes, to exercise an unreasonable severity against themselves. They do not impartially consider the state of their souls. To make their state appear butter than it really is, indeed is the damning sin of self-flattering hypocrites; and to make their state appear worse than it really is, is the sin and folly of some good persons. But why should you be such an enemy to your own peace? Why read over the evidences of God's love to your soul, as a man does a book which he intends to confute? Why do you study evasions, and turn off those comforts which are due to you?

3. Every thing which may be an occasion of grief to the people of God, is not a sufficient ground for their questioning the reality of their religion. Many things may trouble, which ought not to stumble you. If upon every occasion you should call in question all that had ever been wrought upon you, your life would be made up of doubtings and fears, and you could never attain that settled inward peace, and live that life of praise and thankfulness which the Gospel requires.

4. The soul is not at all times in a suitable state to pass a right judgment upon itself. It is peculiarly unqualified for this in the hour of desertion or temptation. Such seasons must be improved rather for watching and resisting, than for judging and determining.

5. Whatever be the ground of one's distress, it should drive him to, not from God. Suppose you have sinned thus and so, or that you have been thus long and sadly deserted, yet you have no right to infer that you ought to be discouraged, as if there was no help for you in God. When you have well digested these truths, if your doubts and distress remain, consider what is now to be offered:

1. Are you ready to conclude that you have no part in the favor of God, because you are visited with some extraordinary affliction? If so, do you then rightly conclude that great trials are tokens of God's hatred? Does the Scripture teach this? And dare you infer the same with respect to all who

have been as much or more afflicted than yourself? If the argument is good in your case, it is good in application to theirs, and more conclusive with respect to them, in proportion as their trials were greater than yours. Wo then to David, Job, Paul, and all who have been afflicted as they were! But had you passed along in quietness and prosperity; had God withheld those chastisements with which he ordinarily visits his people, would you not have had far more reason for doubts and distress than you now have?

2. Do you rashly infer that the Lord has no love to you, because he has withdrawn the light of his countenance? Do you imagine your state to be hopeless, because it is dark and uncomfortable? Be not hasty in forming this conclusion. If any of the dispensations of God to his people will bear a favorable as well as a harsh construction, why should they not be construed in the best sense? And may not God have a design of love rather than of hatred in the dispensation under which you mourn? May he not depart for a season, without departing for ever? You are not the first that have mistaken the design of God in withdrawing himself. “Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, my Lord hath forgotten me.” But was it so? What saith the answer of God? “Can a woman forget her sucking child?” &c. But do you sink down under the apprehension that the evidences of a total and final desertion are discoverable in your experience? Have you then lost your conscientious tenderness with regard to sin? and are you inclined to forsake God? If so, you have reason indeed to be alarmed. But if your conscience is tenderly alive; if you are resolved to cleave to the Lord; if the language of your heart is, I cannot forsake God, I cannot live without his presence; though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: then you have reason to hope that he will visit you again. It is by these exercises that he still maintains his interest in you.

Once more. Are sense and feelings suitable to judge of the dispensations of God by? Can their testimony be safely relied on? Is it safe to argue thus: ‘If God bad any love for my soul, I should feel it now as well as in former times; but I cannot feel it, therefore it is gone?’ May you not as well conclude, when the sun is invisible to you, that he has ceased to exist? Read Isaiah 1:10.

Now if there is nothing in the divine dealings with you which is a reasonable ground of your despondency and distress, let us inquire what there is in your own conduct for which you should be so cast down:

1. Have you committed sins from which you were formerly recovered with shame and sorrow? And do you thence conclude that you sin allowedly and habitually, and that your oppositions to sin were hypocritical? But do not too hastily give up all for lost. Is not your repentance and care renewed as often as you commit sin? Is it not the sin itself which troubles you, and is it not true, that the oftener you sin the more you are distressed? It is not so in customary sinning; of which Bernard excellently discourses thus: “When a man accustomed to restrain, sins grievously, it seems insupportable to him, yea he seems to descend alive into hell. In process of time it seems not insupportable, but heavy, and between insupportable and heavy there is no small descent. Next, such sinning becomes light, his conscience smites but faintly, and he regards not her rebukes. Then he is not only insensible to his guilt, but that which was bitter and displeasing has become in some degree sweet and pleasant. Now it is made a custom, and not only pleases, but pleases habitually. At length custom becomes nature; he cannot be dissuaded from it, but defends and pleads for it.” This is allowed and customary sinning, this is the way of the wicked. But is not your way the contrary of this?

2. Do you apprehend a decline of your affections from God and from spiritual subjects? This may be your case, and yet there may be hope. But possibly you are mistaken with regard to this. There are many things to be learnt in Christian experience; it has relation to a great variety of subjects. You may now be learning what it is very necessary for you to know as a Christian. Now, what if you are not sensible of so lively affections, of such ravishing views as you had at first; may not your piety be growing more solid and consistent, and better adapted to practical purposes? Does it follow from your not always being in the same frame of mind, or from the fact that the same objects do not at all times excite the same feelings, that you have no true religion? Perhaps you deceive yourself by looking forward to what you would be, rather than contemplating what you are, compared with what you once were.

3. If the strength of your love to creature-enjoyments is the ground of desperate conclusions respecting yourself, perhaps you argue thus: “I fear that I love the creature more than God, if so, I have not true love to God. I sometimes feel stronger affections toward earthly comforts than I do toward heavenly objects, therefore my soul is not upright within me.” If, indeed, you love the creature for itself, if you make it your end, and religion but a means, then you conclude rightly; for this is incompatible with supreme love to God. But may not a man love God more ardently and unchangeably than he does any thing, or all things else, and yet, when God is not the direct object of his thoughts, may he not be sensible of more violent affection for the creature than he has at that time for God? As rooted malice indicates a stronger hatred than sudden though inure violent passion; so we must judge of our love, not by a violent motion of it now and then, but by the depth of its root and the constancy of its exercise. Perhaps your difficulty results from bringing your love to some foreign and improper test. Many persons have feared that when brought to some eminent trial they should renounce Christ and cleave to the creature; but when the trial came, Christ was every thing, and the world as nothing in their esteem. Such were the fears of some martyrs whose victory was complete. But you may expect divine assistance only at the time of, and in proportion to your necessity. If you would try your love, see whether you are willing to forsake Christ now.

4. Is the want of that enlargement in private which you find in public exercises an occasion of doubts and fears? Consider then whether there are not some circumstances attending public duties which are peculiarly calculated to excite your feelings and elevate your mind, and which cannot affect you in private. If so, your exercises in secret, if performed faithfully and in a suitable manner, may he profitable, though they have not all the characteristics of those in public. If you imagine that you have spiritual enlargement and enjoyment in public exercises while you neglect private duties, doubtless you deceive yourself. Indeed if you live in the neglect of secret duties, or are careless about them, you have great reason to fear. But if you regularly and faithfully perform them, it does not follow that they are vain and worthless, or that they are not of great value, because they are not attended with so much enlargement as you sometimes find in public. And what if the Spirit is pleased more highly to favor you with his gracious influence in one place and at one time than another, should this be a reason for murmuring and unbelief, or for thankfulness?

5. The vile or blasphemous suggestions of Satan sometimes occasion great perplexity and distress.— They seem to lay open an abyss of corruption in the heart, and to say there can be no grace here. But there may be grace in the heart where such thoughts are injected, though not, in the heart which consents to and cherishes them. Do you then abhor and oppose them? do you utterly refuse to give up yourself to their influence, and strive to keep holy and reverend thoughts

of God, and of all religious objects? If so, such suggestions are involuntary, and no evidence against your piety.

6. Is the seeming denial of your prayers an occasion of despondency? Are you disposed to say, “If God had any regard for my soul he would have heard my petitions before now; but I have no answer from him, and therefore no interest in him?” But stay: though God’s abhorring and finally rejecting prayer is an evidence that he rejects the person who prays, yet, dare you conclude that he has rejected you, because an answer to your prayers is delayed, or because you do not discover it if granted? “May not God bear long with his own elect, that cry unto him day and night?”

Others have stumbled upon the same ground with you: “I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardst the voice of my supplication.” Now are there not some things in your experience which indicate that your prayers are not rejected, though answer to them is deferred? Are you not disposed to continue praying though you do not discover an answer? Are you not disposed still to ascribe righteousness to God, while you consider the cause of his silence as being in yourself? Thus did David: “O my God, I cry in the day time, and thou hearest not; and in the night, and am not silent: but thou art holy,” &c. Does not the delay of an answer to your prayers excite you to examine your own heart and try your ways, that you may find and remove the difficulty? If so, you may have reason for humiliation, but not for despair.

Thus I have shown you how to keep your heart in dark and doubting seasons. God forbid that any false heart should encourage itself from these things. It is lamentable, that when we give saints and sinners their proper portions, each is so prone to take up the other’s part.

XI. Another season, wherein the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when sufferings for religion are laid upon us. . . .

XI. Another season, wherein the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when sufferings for religion are laid upon us. Blessed is the man who in such a season is not offended in Christ. Now, whatever may be the kind or degree of your sufferings, if they are sufferings for Christ’s sake and the Gospel’s, spare no diligence to keep your heart. If you are tempted to shrink or waver under them, let what follows help you to repel and to surmount the instigation:

1. What reproach would you cast upon the Redeemer and his religion by deserting him at such a time as this! You would proclaim to the world, that how much soever you have boasted of the promises when you are put to the proof you dare hazard no thing upon your faith in them; and this will give the enemies of Christ an occasion to blaspheme. And will you thus furnish the triumphs of the uncircumcised? Ah, if you did but value the name of Christ as much as many wicked men value their names, you could never endure that his should be exposed to contempt. Will proud dust and ashes hazard death or hell rather than have their names disgraced, and will you endure nothing to maintain the honor of Christ?

2. Dare you violate your conscience out of complaisance to flesh and blood? Who will comfort you when your conscience accuses and condemns you? What happiness can there be in life, liberty or friends, when inward peace is taken away? Consider well what you do.

3. Is not the public interest of Christ and his cause infinitely more important than any interest of your own, and should you not prefer his glory and the welfare of his kingdom before every thing

else? Should any temporary suffering, or any sacrifice which you can be called to make, be suffered to come into competition with the honor of his name?

4. Did the Redeemer neglect your interest and think lightly of you, when for your sake he endured sufferings between which and yours there can be no comparison? Did he hesitate and shrink back? No: “He endured the cross, despising the shame.” And did he with unbroken patience and constancy endure so much for you; and will you flinch from momentary suffering in his cause?

5. Can you so easily cast off the society and the privileges of the saints and go over to the enemy’s side? Are you willing to withhold your support from those who are determined to persevere, and throw your influence in the scale against them? Rather let your body and soul be rent asunder. “If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”

6. How can you stand before Christ in the day of judgment, if you desert him now? “He that is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” Yet a little while, and the Son of man will come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, to judge the world. He will sit upon the throne of judgment, while all the nations are brought before him. Imagine yourself now to be witnessing the transactions of that day. Behold the wicked; behold the apostates; and hear the consuming sentence which is pronounced upon them, and see them sinking in the gulf of infinite and everlasting wo! And will you desert Christ now, will you forsake his cause to save a little suffering, or to protract an unprofitable life on earth, and thus expose yourself to the doom of the apostate? Remember, that if you can silence the remonstrances of conscience now, you cannot hinder the sentence of the Judge then. By these means keep your heart, that it depart not from the living God.

XII. The last season which I shall mention, in which the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when we are warned by sickness that our dissolution is at hand. . . .

XII. The last season which I shall mention, in which the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when we are warned by sickness that our dissolution is at hand. When the child of God draws nigh to eternity, the adversary makes his last effort; and as he cannot win the soul from God, as he cannot dissolve the bond which unites the soul to Christ, his great design is to awaken fears of death, to fill the mind with aversion and horror at the thoughts of dissolution from the body. Hence, what shrinking from a separation, what fear to grasp death’s cold hand, and unwillingness to depart, may sometimes be observed in the people of God. But we ought to die, as well as live, like saints.

I shall offer several considerations calculated to help the people of God in time of sickness, to keep their hearts loose from all earthly objects, and cheerfully willing to die:

1. Death is harmless to the people of God; its shafts leave no sting in them. Why then are you afraid that your sickness may be unto death? If you were to die in your sins; if death were to reign over you as a tyrant, to feed upon you as a lion doth upon his prey; if death to you were to be the precursor of hell, then you might reasonably startle and shrink back from it with horror and dismay. But if your sins are blotted out; if Christ has vanquished death in your behalf, so that you have nothing to encounter but bodily pain, and possibly not even that; if death will be to you the harbinger of heaven, why should you be afraid? why not bid it welcome? It cannot hurt you; it is

easy and harmless; it is like putting off your clothes, on taking rest.

2. It may keep your heart from shrinking back, to consider that death is necessary to fit you for the full enjoyment of God. Whether you are willing to die or not, there certainly is no other way to complete the happiness of your soul. Death must do you the kind office to remove this veil of flesh, this animal life which separates you from God, before you can see and enjoy him fully. “Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.” And who would not be willing to die for the perfect enjoyment of God? Methinks one should look and sigh, like a prisoner, through the grates of this mortality: “O that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest.” Indeed most men need patience to die; but a saint, who understands what death will introduce him to, rather needs patience to live. On his death-bed he should often look out and listen to his Lord’s coming; and when he perceives his dissolution to be near, he should say, “The voice of my beloved; behold he cometh, leaping over the mountains, skipping over the hills.”

3. Consider that the happiness of heaven commences immediately after death. That happiness will not be deferred till the resurrection; but as soon as death has passed upon you, your soul will be swallowed up in life. When you have once loosed from this shore, you shall be quickly wafted to the shore of a glorious eternity. And can you not say, I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ? Did the soul and body die together, or did they sleep till the resurrection, as some have fancied, it would have been folly for Paul to desire a dissolution for the enjoyment of Christ; because he would have enjoyed more in the body than he could have enjoyed out of it. The Scripture speaks of but two ways in which the soul can properly live: viz, by faith and vision. These two comprehend its present and future existence.

Now, if when faith fails, sight should not immediately succeed, what would become of the soul? But the truth on this subject is clearly revealed in Scripture. See Luke 23:3; John 14:3, &c. What a blessed change then will death make in your condition! Rouse up, dying saint, and rejoice; let death do his work, that the angels may conduct your soul to the world of light.

4. It may increase your willingness to die, to reflect that by death God often removes his people out of the way of great troubles and temptations. When some extraordinary calamity is coming upon the world, God sometimes removes his saints out of the way of the evil. Thus Methuselah died the year before the flood; Augustine a little before the sacking of Hippo; Pareus just before the taking of Heidelburg. Luther observes that all the apostles died before the destruction of Jerusalem; and Luther himself died before the wars broke out in Germany. Now it may be that by death you will escape some grievous trial, which you could not and need not endure. But if no extraordinary trouble would come upon you in case your life were prolonged, yet God designs by death to relieve you from innumerable evils and burdens which are inseparable from the present state. Thus you will be delivered from indwelling sin, which is the greatest trouble; from all temptations from whatever source; from bodily tempers and embarrassments; and from all the afflictions and sorrows of this life. The days of your mourning will be ended, and God will wipe away all tears from your eyes. Why then should you not hasten to depart?

5. If you still linger, like Lot in Sodom, what are your pleas and pretences for a longer life? Why are you unwilling to die? Are you concerned for the welfare of your relations? If so, are you anxious for their temporal support? Then let the word of God satisfy you: “Leave thy fatherless children to me, I will keep them alive, and let thy widows trust in me.” Luther says, in his last will, “Lord, thou hast

given inc a wife and children, I have nothing to leave them, but I commit them unto thee. O Father of the fatherless and Judge of widows, nourish, keep and teach them." But are you concerned for the spiritual welfare of your relations? Remember that you cannot convert them, if you should live; and God can make your prayers and counsels effectual when you are dead.

Perhaps you desire to serve God longer in this world. But if he has nothing further for you to do here, why not say with David, "Here am I, let him do what seemeth him good." He is calling you to higher service in heaven, and can accomplish by other hands what you desire to do further here.—Do you feel too imperfect to go to heaven? Consider that you must be imperfect until you die; your sanctification cannot be complete until you get to heaven.

'But,' you say, 'I want assurance; if I had that I could die easily.' Consider, then, that a hearty willingness to leave all the world to be freed from sin, and to be with God, is the direct way to that desired assurance; no carnal person was ever willing to die upon this ground.

Thus I have shown how the people of God, in the most difficult seasons, may keep their hearts with alt diligence.

I now proceed to improve and apply the subject: . . .

You have seen that the keeping of the heart is the great work of a Christian, in which the very soul and life of religion consists, and without which all other duties are of no value in the sight of God. Hence, to the consternation of hypocrites and formal professors, I infer:

1. That the pains and labors which many persons have undergone in religion are of no value, and will turn to no good account. Many splendid services have been performed by men, which God will utterly reject: they will not stand on record in order to an eternal acceptance, because the performers took no heed to keep their hearts with God. This is that fatal rock on which thousands of vain professors dash and ruin themselves eternally; they are exact about the externals of religion, but regardless of their hearts. O how many hours have some professors spent in hearing, praying, reading and conferring! and yet, as to the main end of religion, they might as well have sat still and done nothing, the great work, I mean heart-work, being all the while neglected. Tell me, vain professor, when did you shed a tear for the deadness, hardness, unbelief or earthliness of your heart? And do you think your easy religion can save you? If so, you must invert Christ's words, and say, Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to life, and many there be that go in thereat! Hear me, ye self-deluding hypocrite; you who have put off God with heartless duties; you who have acted in religion as if you had been blessing an idol; you who could not search your heart, and regulate it, and exercise it in your performances; how will you abide the coming of the Lord? how will you hold up your head before him, when he shall say. 'O you dissembling, false-hearted man! how could you profess religion? with what face could you so often tell me that you loved me, when you knew in your conscience that your heart was not with me?' O tremble to think what a fearful judgment it is to be given over to a heedless and careless heart, and then to have religious duties instead of a rattle to quiet and still the conscience!

2. I infer for their humiliation, that unless the people of God spend more time and pains about their hearts than they ordinarily do, they are never like to do God much service, or to possess much comfort in this world. I may say of that Christian who is remiss and careless in keeping his heart, as Jacob said of Reuben, Thou shalt not excel. It grieves me to see how many Christians there are

who live at a poor, low rate, both of service and comfort, and who go up and down dejected and complaining. But how can they expect it should be otherwise, while they live so carelessly?

O how little of their time is spent in the closet, in searching, humbling, and quickening their hearts!

Christian, you say your heart is dead, and do you wonder that it is, so long as you keep it not with the fountain of life? If your body had been dieted as your soul has, that would have been dead too. And you may never expect that your heart will be in a better state until you take more pains with it.

O Christians! I fear your zeal and strength have run in the wrong channel; I fear that most of us may take up the Church's complaint: "They have made me the keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vine-yard have I not kept." Two things have eaten up the time and strength of the professors of this generation, and sadly diverted them from heart-work.

First:—Fruitless controversies, started by Satan, I doubt not for the very purpose of taking us off from practical godliness, to make us puzzle our heads when we should be inspecting our hearts. How little have we regarded the observation: "It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, and not with meats," (that is, with disputes and controversies about meats,) "which have not profited them that have been occupied therein." How much better it is to see men live exactly, than to hear them dispute with subtlety! These unfruitful questions, how have they rent the churches, wasted time and spirits, and taken Christians off from their main business! 'What think you, would it not have been better if the questions agitated among the people of God of late had been such as these:—"How shall a man distinguish the special from the common operations of the Spirit? How may a soul discern its first backslidings from God? How may a backsliding Christian recover his first love? How may the heart be preserved from unseasonable thoughts in duty? How may a bosom-sin be discovered and mortified?" &c. Would not this course have tended more to the honor of religion and the comfort of souls? I am ashamed that the professors of this generation are yet insensible of their folly. O that God would turn their disputes and contentions into practical godliness!

Second:—Worldly cares and incumbrances have greatly increased the neglect of our hearts. The heads and hearts of multitudes have been filled with such a crowd and noise of worldly business that they have lamentably declined in their zeal, their love, their delight in God, and their heavenly, serious, and profitable way of conversing with men. How miserably have we entangled ourselves in this wilderness of trifles! Our discourses, our conferences, nay, our very prayers are tinged with it. We have had so much to do without, that we have been able to do but little within. And how many precious opportunities have we thus lost? How many admonitions of the Spirit have passed over unfruitfully? How often has the Lord called to us, when our worldly thoughts have prevented us from hearing? But there certainly is a way to enjoy God even in our worldly employments. If we lose our views of him when engaged in our temporal affairs, the fault is our own. Alas! that Christians should stand at the door of eternity, having more work upon their hands than their time is sufficient for, and yet be filling their heads and hearts with trifles!

3. I infer, lastly, for the awakening of all, that if the keeping of the heart be the great work of a Christian, then there are but few real Christians in the world. If every one who has learned the dialect of Christianity, and who can talk like a saint; if every one who has gifts and parts, and who can make shift to preach, pray, or discourse like a Christian: in a word, if all such as associate with

the people of God and partake of ordinances may pass for Christians, then indeed the number is great. But alas! how few can he found, if you judge them by this rule,—how few are there who conscientiously keep their hearts, watch their thoughts and look scrupulously to their motives! Indeed there are few closet-men among professors. It is easier for men to be reconciled to any other duties in religion than to these. The profane part of the world will not so much as meddle with the outside of any religious duties, and least of all with these; and as to the hypocrite, though he may be very particular in externals, you can never persuade him to undertake this inward, this difficult work; this work, to which there is no inducement from human applause; this work, which would quickly discover what the hypocrite cares not to know: so that by general consent this heart-work is left to the hands of a few retired ones, and I tremble to think in how few hands it is.

II. If the keeping of the heart be so important a business; if such great advantages result from it; if so many valuable interests be wrapt up in it, then let me call upon the people of God every where to engage heartily in this work. O study your hearts, watch your hearts, keep your hearts! Away with fruitless controversies and all idle questions; away with empty names and vain shows; away with unprofitable discourse and bold censures of others, and turn in upon yourselves. O that this day, this hour, you would resolve upon doing so!

Reader, methinks I shall prevail with you. All that I beg for is this, that you would step aside oftener to talk with God and your own heart; that you would not suffer every trifle to divert you; that you would keep a more true and faithful account of your thoughts and affections; that you would seriously demand of your own heart at least every evening, ‘O my heart, where hast thou been today, and what has engaged thy thoughts?’

If all that has been said by way of inducement be not enough, I have yet some motives to offer you:

If all that has been said by way of inducement be not enough, I have yet some motives to offer you:

1. The studying, observing, and diligently keeping your own heart, will surprisingly help you to understand the deep mysteries of religion. An honest, well-experienced heart is an excellent help to the head. Such a heart will serve for a commentary on a great part of the Scriptures. By means of such a heart you will have a better understanding of divine things than the most learned (graceless) man ever had, or call have; you will not only have a clearer, but a more interesting and profitable apprehension of them. A man may discourse orthodoxy and profoundly of the nature and effects of faith, the troubles and comforts of conscience, and the sweetness of communion with God, who never felt the efficacy and sweet impression of these things upon his own soul. But how dark and dry are his notions compared with those of an experienced Christian!

2. The study and observation of your own heart will powerfully secure you against the dangerous and infecting errors of the times in which you live. For what think you is the reason why so many professors have departed from the faith, giving heed to fables? why have so many been led away by the error of the wicked? why have those who have sown corrupt doctrines had such plentiful harvests among us, but because they have met with a race of professors who never knew what belongs to practical godliness and the study and keeping of their hearts?

3. Your care and diligence in keeping your heart will prove one of the best evidences of your sincerity. I know no external act of religion which truly distinguishes the sound from the unsound professor. It is marvellous how far hypocrites go in all external duties; how plausibly they can order the outward man, hiding all their indecencies from the observation of the world. But they take no heed to their hearts; they are not in secret what they appear to be in public; and before this test no hypocrite can stand. They may, indeed, in a fit of terror, or on a death-bed, cry out of the wickedness of their hearts; but such extort ed complaints are worthy of no regard. No credit, in law, is to be given to the testimony of one upon the rack, because it may be supposed that the extremity of his torture will make him say any thing to get relief. But if self-jealousy, care and watchfulness be the daily workings and frames of your heart, you have some evidence of your sincerity.

4. How comfortable and how profitable would all ordinances and duties be to you, if your heart was faithfully kept. What lively communion might you have with God every time you approach him, if your heart was in a right frame! You might then say with David, “My meditation of Him shall be sweet.” It is the indisposition of the heart which renders ordinances, and secret duties so comfortless to some. They strive to raise their hearts to God, now pressing this argument upon them, then that, to quicken and affect them; yet they often get nearly through the exercise before their hearts begin to be interested in it; and some times they go away no better than they came. But the Christian whose heart is prepared by being constantly kept, enters immediately and heartily into his duties; he outstrips his sluggish neighbor, gets the first sight of Christ in a sermon, the first seal from Christ in a sacrament, the first communication of grace and love in secret prayer. Now if there be any thing valuable and comfortable in ordinances and private duties, look to your heart and keep it, I beseech you.

5. An acquaintance with your own heart will furnish you a fountain of matter in prayer. The man who is diligent in heart-work, will be richly supplied with matter in his addresses to God. He will not be confused for want of thoughts; his tongue will not falter for want of expressions.

6. The most desirable thing in the world, viz, the revival of religion among a people, may be effected by means of what I am urging upon you.

O that I might see the time when professors shall not walk in a vain show; when they shall please themselves no more with a name to live, while they are spiritually dead; when they shall be no more a company of frothy, vain persons; but when holiness shall shine in their conversation, and awe the world, and command reverence from all that are around them; when they shall warm the heart of those who come near them, and cause it to be said, God is in these men of a truth. And may such a time be expected? Until heart-work becomes the business of professors, I have no hope of seeing a time so blessed! Does it not grieve you to see how religion is contemned and trampled under foot, and the professors of it ridiculed and scorned in the world? Professors, would you recover your credit? would you obtain an honorable testimony in the consciences of your very enemies? Then keep your hearts.

7. By diligence in keeping our hearts we should prevent the occasions of fatal scandals and stumbling-blocks to the world. Wo to the world because of offences!

Keep your heart faithfully, and you will be prepared for any situation or service to which you may be called. This, and this only can properly fit you for usefulness in any station; but with this you can endure prosperity or adversity; you can deny yourself, and turn your hand to any work. Thus Paul turned every circumstance to good account, and made himself so eminently useful. When he preached to others, he provided against being cast away himself: he kept his heart; and every thing in which lie excelled seems to have had a close connection with his diligence in keeping his heart.

9. If the people of God would diligently keep their hearts, their communion with each other would be unspeakably more inviting and profitable. Then “how goodly would be thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!” It is the fellowship which the people of God have with the Father and with the Son that kindles the desires of others to have communion with them. I tell you, that if saints would be persuaded to spend more time and take more pains about their hearts, there would soon be such a divine excellence in their conversation that others would account it no small privilege to be with or near them. It is the pride, passion and earthliness of our hearts, that has spoiled Christian fellowship. Why is it that when Christians meet they are often jarring and contending, but because their passions arc unmortified? Whence come their uncharitable censures of their brethren, but from their ignorance of themselves? Why are they so rigid and unfeeling toward those who have fallen, but because they do not feel their own weakness and liability to temptation? Why is their discourse so light and unprofitable when they meet, but because their hearts are earthly and vain? But now, if Christians would study their hearts more and keep them better, the beauty and glory of communion would be restored. They would divide no more, contend no more, censure rashly no more. They will feel right one toward another, when each is daily humbled under a sense of the evil of his own heart.

10. Lastly:—Keep your heart, and then the comforts of the Spirit and the influence of all ordinances will be more fixed and lasting than they now are. And do the consolations of God seem small to you?” Ah, you have reason to be ashamed that the ordinances of God, as to their quickening and comforting effects, should make so light and transient an impression on your heart.

Now, reader, consider well these special benefits of keeping the heart which I have mentioned. Examine their importance. Are they small matters? Is it a small matter to have your understanding assisted? your endangered soul rendered safe? your sincerity proved? your communion with God sweetened? your heart filled with matter for prayer? Is it a small thing to have the power of godliness? all fatal scandals removed? an instrumental fitness to serve Christ obtained? the communion of saints restored to its primitive glory? and the influence of ordinances abiding in the souls of saints? If these are no common blessings, no ordinary benefits, then surely it is a great and in dispensable duty to keep the heart with all diligence. And now are you inclined to undertake the business of keeping your heart? are you resolved upon it? I charge you, then, to engage in it earnestly. Away with every cowardly feeling, and make up your mind to encounter difficulties. Draw your armor from the word of God. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in its commands, its promises, its threatenings; let it be fixed in your understanding, your memory, your conscience, your affections. You must learn to wield the sword of the Spirit (which is the word of God) familiarly, if you would defend your heart and conquer your enemies. You must call yourself frequently to an account; examine yourself as in the presence of the all seeing God; bring your conscience, as it were, to the bar of judgment. Beware how you plunge yourself into a multiplicity

of worldly business; how you practise upon the maxims of the world; and how you venture at all to indulge your depraved propensities. You must exercise the utmost vigilance to discover and check the first symptoms of departure from God, the least decline of spirituality, or the least indisposition to meditation by yourself and holy conversation and fellowship with others. These things you must undertake, in the strength of Christ, with invincible resolution in the outset. And if you thus engage in this great work, he assured you shall not spend your strength for naught; comforts which you never felt or thought of will flow in upon you from every side. The diligent prosecution of this work will constantly afford you the most powerful excitements to vigilance and ardor in the life of faith, while it increases your strength and wears out your enemies. And when you have kept your heart with all diligence a little while; when you have fought the battles of this spiritual warfare, gained the ascendancy over the corruptions within, and vanquished the enemies without, then God will open the gate of heaven to you, and give you the portion which is promised to them that overcome. Awake then, this moment; get the world under your feet pant not for the things which a man may have, and eternally lose his soul; but bless God that you may have his service here, and the glory hereafter which he appoints to his chosen.

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

04.03a. Reasons Why is Greatest Business of Life

Reasons Why this Should be the Great Business of Life In such particulars as these do gracious souls express the care they have of their hearts. They are careful to prevent the breaking loose of the corruptions in time of temptation; careful to preserve the sweetness and comfort they have got from God in any duty. This is the work, and of all works in religion it is the most difficult, constant, and important work. In such particulars as these do gracious souls express the care they have of their hearts. They are careful to prevent the breaking loose of the corruptions in time of temptation; careful to preserve the sweetness and comfort they have got from God in any duty. This is the work, and of all works in religion it is the most difficult, constant, and important work.

1. It is the hardest work. Heart-work is hard work indeed. To shuffle over religious duties with a loose and heedless spirit, will cost no great pains; but to set thyself before the Lord, and tie up thy loose and vain thoughts to a constant and serious attendance upon him; this will cost thee something. To attain a facility and dexterity of language in prayer, and put thy meaning into apt and decent expressions, is easy; but to get thy heart broken for sin, while thou art confessing it; melted with free grace while thou art blessing God for it; to be really ashamed and humbled through the apprehensions of God's infinite holiness, and to keep thy heart in this frame; not only in, but after duty, will surely cost thee some groans and pains of soul. To repress the outward acts of sin, and compose the external part of thy life in a laudable manner, is no great matter; even carnal persons, by the force of common principles, can do this: but to kill the root of corruption within, to set and keep up an holy government over thy thoughts, to have all things lie straight and orderly in the heart, this is not easy.

2. It is a constant work. The keeping of the heart is a work that is never done till life is ended. There is no time or condition in the life of a Christian which will suffer an intermission of this work. It is in keeping watch over our hearts, as it was in keeping up Moses' bands while Israel and Amalek were fighting. No sooner do the hands of Moses grow heavy and sink down, than Amalek prevails. Intermitting the watch over their own hearts for but a few minutes, cost David and Peter many a sad day and night.

3. It is the most important business of a Christian's life. Without this we are but formalists in religion: all our professions, gifts and duties signify nothing. "My son, give me thine heart," is God's request. God is pleased to call that a gift which is indeed a debt; he will put this honor upon the creature, to receive it from him in the way of a gift; but if this be not given him, ho regards not whatever else you bring to him. There is only so much of worth in what we do, as there is of heart in it. Concerning the heart, God seems to say, as Joseph of Benjamin, "If you bring not Benjamin with you, you shall not see my face." Among the Heathen, when the beast was cut up for sacrifice, the first thing the priest looked upon was the heart; and if that was unsound and worthless the sacrifice was rejected. God rejects all duties (how glorious soever in other respects) which are offered him without the heart. He that performs duty without the heart, that is, heedlessly, is no more accepted with God than he that performs it with a double heart, that is, hypocritically.

Thus I have briefly considered what the keeping of the heart supposes and imports. I proceed, Secondly, To assign some reasons why Christians must make this the great business of their lives. The importance and necessity of making this our great business will manifestly appear from several considerations:

1. The glory of God is much concerned. Heart-evils are very provoking evils to the Lord. The Schools correctly observe, that outward sins are “sins of great infamy;“ but that the heart sins are “sins of deeper guilt.” How severely has the great God declared his wrath from heaven against heart-wickedness! The crime for which the old world stands indicted is heart-wickedness! “God saw that every imagination of their hearts was only evil, and that continually;” for which he sent the most dreadful judgments that were ever inflicted since time began. We find not their murders, adulteries, blasphemies, (though they were defiled with these) particularly alleged against them; but the evils of their hearts. That by which God was so provoked as to give up his peculiar inheritance into the enemy’s hand, was the evil of their hearts. “O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved; how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?” Of the wickedness and vanity of their thoughts God took particular notice; and because of this the Chaldeans. must come upon them, “as a lion from his thicket and tear them to pieces.” For the sin of thoughts it was that God threw down the fallen, angels from heaven and still keeps them in “everlasting chains.” to the judgment of the great day; by which expression is not obscurely intimated some extraordinary judgment to which they are reserved; as prisoners that have most irons laid upon them may be supposed to be the greatest malefactors. And what was their sin? Spiritual wickedness. Merely heart-evils are so provoking to God, that for them he rejects with indignation all the duties that some men perform. “He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrifices a lamb, as if he cut off a dog’s neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine’s blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol.” In what words could the abhorrence of a creature’s actions be more fully expressed by the holy God? Murder and idolatry are not more vile in his account, than, their sacrifices, though materially such as himself appointed. And what made their sacrifices so vile? The following words inform us: “Their soul delighteth in their abominations.”

Such is the vileness of mere heart-sins, that the Scriptures sometimes intimate the difficulty of pardon for them. The heart of Simon Magus was not right, he had base thoughts of God, and of the things of God: the apostle bade him “repent and pray, if perhaps the thoughts of his heart might be forgiven him.” O then never slight heart evils! for by these God is highly wronged and provoked. For this reason let every Christian keep his heart with all diligence.

2. The sincerity of our profession much depends upon the care we exercise in keeping our hearts. Most certainly, that man who is careless of the frame of his heart, is but a hypocrite in his profession, however eminent he be in the externals of religion. We have a striking instance of this in the history of Jehu. “But Jehu took no heed to walk in the ways of the Lord God of Israel with his heart.” The context gives an account of the great service performed by Jehu against the house of Ahab and Baal, and also of the great temporal reward given him by God for that service, even that his children, to the fourth generation, should sit upon the throne of Israel. Yet in these words Jehu is censured as a hypocrite: though God approved and re warded the work, yet he abhorred and rejected the person that did it, as hypocritical. Wherein lay the hypocrisy of Jehu? In this; he took no heed to walk in the ways of the Lord with his heart; that is, he did all insincerely and for selfish

ends: and though. the work he did was materially good, yet he, not purging his heart from those unworthy selfish designs in doing it, was a hypocrite. And though Simon Magus appeared such a person that the apostle could not regularly reject him, yet his hypocrisy was quickly discovered. Though he professed piety and associated himself with the saints, he was a stranger to the mortification of heart-sins. “Thy heart is not right with God.” It is true, there is great difference between Christians themselves in their diligence and dexterity about heart work; some are more conversant with, and more successful in it than others but he that takes no heed to his heart, that is not careful to order it aright before God, is but a hypocrite. “And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.” Here was a company of formal hypocrites, as is evident from that expression, as my people; like them, but not of them. And what made them so? Their outside was fair; here were reverent postures, high professions, much seeming delight in ordinances; “thou art to them as a lovely song:” yea, but for all that they kept not their hearts with God in those duties; their hearts were commanded by their lusts, they went after their covetousness. Had they kept their hearts with God, all had been well: but not regarding which way their hearts went in duty, there lay the essence of their hypocrisy.

If any upright soul should hence infer, I am a hypocrite too, for many times my heart departs from God in duty; do what I can, yet I cannot hold it close with God; I answer, the very objection carries in it its own solution. Thou sayest, Do what I can, yet! cannot keep my heart with God. Soul, if thou doest what thou canst, thou hast the blessing of an upright, though God sees good to exercise thee under the affliction of a discomposed heart.

There still remains some wildness in the thoughts and fancies of the best to bumble them; but if you find a care before to prevent them, and opposition against them when they come, and grief and sorrow afterward, you find enough to clear you from the charge of reigning hypocrisy. This precaution is seen partly in laying up the word in thy heart to prevent them. “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.” Partly in your endeavors to engage your heart to God; and partly in begging preventing grace from God in. your commencement of duty. It is a good sign to exercise such precaution. And it is an evidence of uprightness, to oppose these sins in their first rise. “I hate vain thoughts.” “The spirit lusteth against the flesh.” Thy grief also discovers the uprightness of thy heart. If with Hezekiah thou art humbled for the evils of thy heart, thou hast no reason, from those disorders, to question the integrity of it; but to suffer sin to lodge quietly in the heart, to let thy heart habitually and without control wander from God, is a sad, a dangerous symptom indeed.

3. The beauty of our conversation arises from the heavenly frame of our spirits. There is a spiritual lustre and beauty in the conversation of saints. “The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor;” saints shine as the lights of the world; but whatever lustre and beauty is in their lives, comes from the excellency of their spirits; as the candle within puts lustre upon the lantern in which it shines. It is impossible that a disordered and neglected heart should ever produce well ordered conversation; and since (as the text observes) the issues or streams of life flow out of the heart as their fountain, it must follow, that such as the heart is, the life will be. Hence 1 Peter 2:12, “Abstain from fleshly lusts—having your conversation honest,” or beautiful, as the Greek word imports. So Isaiah 55:7. “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts.”

His way, denotes the course of his life; his thoughts, the frame of his heart: and therefore since the course of his life flows from his thoughts, or the frame of his heart, both, or neither will be forsaken. The heart is the source of all actions; these actions are virtually and radically contained in our thoughts; these thoughts being once made up into affections, are quickly made out into suitable actions. If the heart be wicked, then, as Christ says, “Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders,” &c. Mark the order: first, wanton or revengeful thoughts then unclean, or murderous practices. And if the heart be holy, then it is as with David: “My heart is inditing a good matter—I speak of the things which I have made. my tongue is as the pen of a ready writer.” Here is a life richly beautified with good works, some ready made— I will speak of the things which I have made; others making—my heart is inditing; both proceed from the heavenly frame of his heart. Put the heart in frame and the life will quickly discover that it is so. It is not very difficult to discern, by the performances and converse of Christians, what frames their spirits are in. Take a Christian in a good frame, and how serious, heavenly and profitable will his conversation and religious exercises be! what a lovely companion is he during the continuance of it! it would do any one’s heart good to be with him at such a time. “The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment; the law of his God is in his heart.” When the heart is up with God, and full of God how dexterously will he insinuate spiritual discourse, improving every occasion and advantage to some heavenly purpose! Few words then run to waste. And what can be the reason that the discourses and duties of many Christians are become so frothy and unprofitable, their communion both with God and with one another becomes as a dry stalk, but this, their hearts are neglected? Surely this must be the reason of it, and it is an evil greatly to be bewailed. Thus the attracting beauty that was wont to shine, from the conversation of the saints, upon the faces and consciences of the world, (which, if it did not allure and bring them in love with the ways of God, at least left a testimony in their consciences of the excellency of those men and of their ways,) is in a great measure lost, to the unspeakable detriment of religion. Time was, when Christians conducted in such a manner that the world stood gazing at them. Their life and language were of a different strain from those of others, their tongues discovered them to be Galileans wherever they came. But now, since vain speculations and fruitless controversies have so much obtained, and heart-work, practical godliness is so much neglected among professors, the case is sadly altered: their discourse is become like other men’s; if they come among you now, they may “hear every man speak in his own language.” And I have little hope to see this evil redressed, and the credit of religion repaired, till Christians do their first works, till they apply again to heart-work: when the salt of heavenly-mindedness is cast into the spring, the streams will run more clear and more sweet.

4. The comfort of our souls much depends upon the keeping of our hearts; for he that is negligent in attending to his own heart, is, ordinarily, a great stranger to assurance, and the comforts following from it. Indeed if The Antinomian doctrine were true, which teaches you to reject all marks and signs for the trial of your condition, telling you that it is the Spirit that immediately assures you, by witnessing your adoption directly, without them; then you might be careless of your hearts, yea, strangers to them, and yet no strangers to comfort: but since both Scripture and experience confute this, I hope you will never look for comfort in this unscriptural way. I deny not that it is the work and office of the Spirit to assure you; yet I confidently affirm, that if ever you attain assurance in the ordinary way wherein God dispenses it, you must take pains .with your own hearts. You may expect your comforts upon easier terms, but I am mistaken if ever you enjoy them upon any other: give all diligence; prove yourselves; this is the scriptural method. A distinguished

writer, in his treatise on the covenant, tells us that he knew a Christian who, in the infancy of his Christianity, so vehemently panted after the infallible assurance of God's love, that for a long time together he earnestly desired some voice from heaven; yea, sometimes walking in the solitary fields, earnestly desired some miraculous voice from the trees and stones there: this, after many desires and longings, was denied; but in time a better was afforded in the ordinary way of searching the word and his own heart. An instance of the like nature another learned person gives us of one that was driven by temptation upon the very borders of despair; at last, being sweetly settled and assured, one asked him how he attained it; he answered, "Not by any extraordinary revelation, but by subjecting my understanding to the Scriptures, and comparing my heart with them." The Spirit, indeed, assures by witnessing our adoption; and he witnesses in two ways. One way is, objectively, that is, by producing those graces in our souls which are the conditions of the promise.; and so the Spirit, and his graces in us, are all one: the Spirit of God dwelling in us, is a mark of our adoption. Now the Spirit can be discerned, not in his essence, but in his operations; and to discern these, is to discern the Spirit; and how these can be discerned without serious searching and diligent watching of the heart I cannot imagine. The other way of the Spirit's witnessing is effectively, that is, by irradiating the soul with a grace discovering light, shining upon his own work; and this, in order of nature, follows the former work: he first infuses the grace, and then opens the eye of the soul to see it. Now, since the heart is the subject of that infused grace, even this way of the Spirit's witnessing includes the necessity of carefully keeping our own hearts. For,

1. A neglected heart is so confused and dark, that the little grace which is in it is not ordinarily discernible: the most accurate and laborious Christians sometimes find it difficult to discover the pure and genuine workings of the Spirit in their hearts. How then shall the Christian who is comparatively negligent about heart-work, be ever able to discover grace? Sincerity! which is the thing sought, lies in the heart like a small piece of gold on the bottom of a river; he that would find it must stay till the water is clear, and then he will see it sparkling at the bottom. That the heart may be clear and settled, how much pains and watching, care and diligence, are requisite!

4. God does not usually indulge negligent souls with the comforts of assurance; he will not so much as seem to patronize sloth and carelessness. He will give assurance, but it shall be in his own way; his command hath united our care and comfort together. Those are mistaken who think that assurance may be obtained without labor. Ah! how many solitary hours have the people of God spent in heart-examination! how many times have they looked into the word, and then into their hearts! Sometimes they thought they discovered sincerity, and were even ready to draw forth the triumphant conclusion of assurance; then comes a doubt they cannot resolve, and destroys it all: many hopes and fears, doubtings and reasonings, they have had in their own breasts before they arrived at a comfortable settlement. But suppose it possible for a careless Christian to attain assurance, yet it is impossible for him long to retain it; for it is a thousand to one if those whose hearts are filled with the joys of assurance, long retain those joys, unless extraordinary care be used. A little pride, vanity, or carelessness will dash to pieces all that for which they have been a long time laboring in many a weary duty. Since then the joy of our life, the comfort of our souls, rises and falls with our diligence in this work, keep your heart with all diligence.

5. The improvement of our graces depends on the keeping of our hearts. I never knew grace to thrive in a careless soul. The habits and roots of grace are planted in the heart; and the deeper

they are rooted there, the more flourishing grace is. In Ephesians 3:17, we read of being “ rooted” in grace; grace in the heart is the root of every gracious word in the mouth, and of every holy work in the hand. It is true, Christ is the root of a Christian, but Christ is the originating root, and grace a root originated, planted, and influenced by Christ; accordingly, as this thrives under divine influences, the acts of grace are more or less fruitful or vigorous. Now, in a heart not kept with care and diligence, these fructifying influences are stopt and cut off—multitudes of vanities break in upon it, and devour its strength; the heart is, as it were, the inclosure, in which multitudes of thoughts are fed every day; a gracious heart, diligently kept, feeds many precious thoughts of God in a day. “How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee.” And as the gracious heart nourishes them, so they refresh and feast the heart. “My soul is filled as with marrow and fatness while I think upon thee,” &c. But in the disregarded heart, multitudes of vain and foolish thoughts are perpetually working, and drive out those spiritual thoughts of God by which the soul should be refreshed. Besides, the careless heart profits nothing by any duty or ordinance it performs or attends upon, and yet these are the conduits of heaven, whence grace is watered and made fruitful. A man may go with a heedless spirit from ordinance to ordinance, abide all his days under the choicest teaching, and yet never he improved by them; for heart-neglect is a leak in the bottom—no heavenly influences, however rich, abide in that soul. When the seed falls upon the heart that lies open and common, like the highway, free for all passengers, the fowls come and devour it. Alas! it is not enough to hear, unless we take heed how we hear; a man may pray, and never be the better, unless he watch unto prayer. In a word, all means are blessed to the improvement of grace, according to the care and strictness we use in keeping our hearts in them.

6. The stability of our souls in the hour of temptation depends upon the care we exercise in keeping our hearts. The careless heart is an easy prey to Satan in the hour of temptation; his principal batteries are raised against the heart; if he wins that he wins all, for it commands the whole man: and alas! how easy a conquest is a neglected heart! It is not more difficult to surprise such a heart, than for an enemy to enter that city whose gates are open and unguarded. It is the watchful heart that discovers and suppresses the temptation before it comes to its strength. Divines observe this to be the method in which temptations are ripened and brought to their full strength. There is the irritation of the object, or that power it has to provoke our corrupt nature; which is either done by the real presence of the object, or by speculation when the object (though absent) is held out by the imagination before the soul. Then follows the motion of the appetite, which is provoked by the fancy representing it as a sensual good. Then there is a consultation in the mind about the best means of accomplishing it. Next follows the election, or choice of the will. And lastly, the desire, or full engagement of the will to it. All this may be done in a few minutes, for the debates of the soul are quick and soon ended: when it comes thus far, the heart is won, Satan hath entered victoriously and displayed his colors upon the walls of that royal fort; but, had the heart been well guarded at first, it had never come to this—the temptation had been stopped in the first or second act. And indeed there it is stopped easily; for it is in the motion of a soul tempted to sin, as in the motion of a stone falling from the brow of a hill—it is easily stopped at first, but when once it is set in motion “it acquires strength by descending.” Therefore it is the greatest wisdom to observe the first motions of the heart, to check and stop sin there. The motions of sin are weakest at first; a little care and watchfulness may prevent much mischief now; the careless heart not heeding this, is brought within the power of temptation, as the Syrians were brought blind-fold into

the midst of Samaria, before they knew where they were.

I hope that these considerations satisfy my readers that it is important to keep the heart with all diligence. I proceed,

I proceed,

Thirdly, To point out those special seasons in the life of a Christian which require our utmost diligence in keeping the heart. Though (as was observed before) the duty is always binding, and there is no time or condition of life in which we may be excused from this work; yet there are some signal seasons, critical hours, requiring more than common vigilance over the heart.

1. The first season is the time of prosperity, when Providence smiles upon us. Now, Christian, keep thy heart with all diligence; for it will be very apt to grow secure, proud and earthly. “To see a man humble in prosperity,”(says Bernard,) “is one of the greatest rarties in the world.” Even a good Hezekiah could not hide a vain-glorious temper in his temptation; hence that caution to Israel: “And it shall be, when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he aware to thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities which thou bulkiest not, and houses full of all good things which thou filledst not,” &c. “then beware lest thou forget the Lord.” So indeed it happened: for “Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked?’ How then may a Christian keep his heart from pride and carnal security under the smiles of Providence and the confluence of creature-comforts?

There are several helps to secure the heart from the dangerous snares of prosperity.

1. Consider the dangerous ensnaring temptations attending a pleasant and prosperous condition. Few, very few of those that live in the pleasures of this world, escape everlasting perdition. “It is easier” (says Christ) “for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.” “Not many mighty, not many noble are called.”

We have great reason to tremble, when the Scripture tells us in general that few shall be saved; much more when it tells us, that of that rank of which we are, but few shall be saved. When Joshua. called all the tribes of Israel to cast lots for the discovery of Achan, doubtless Achan feared; when the tribe of Judah was taken, his fear increased; but when the family of the Zarhites was taken, it was time to tremble. So when the Scriptures come so near as to tell us that of such a class of men very few shall escape, it is time to be alarmed.. “I should woner” (says Chrysostom) “if any of the rulers be saved.” O how many have been wheeled to hell in the chariots of earthly pleasures, while others have been whipped to heaven by the rod of affliction! How few, like the daughter of Tyre, come to Christ with a gift! How few among the rich entreat his favor!

2. It may keep one more humble and watchful in prosperity, to consider that among Christians many have been much the worse for it. How good had it been for some of them, if they had never known prosperity! When they were in a low condition, how humble, spiritual and heavenly they were but when advanced, what an apparent alteration has been upon their spirits! It was so with Israel; when they were in a low condition in the wilderness, then Israel was “holiness to the Lord;” but when they came into Canaan and were richly fed, their language was, “We are lords, we will come no more unto thee." Outward gains are ordinarily attended with inward losses; as in a low condition their civil employments were wont to have a savor of their religious duties, so in an

exalted condition their duties commonly have a savor of the world. He, indeed, is rich in grace whose graces are not hindered by his riches. There are but few Jehosaphats in the world, of whom it is said, “He had silver and gold in abundance, and his heart was lifted up in the way of God’s commands.” Will not this keep thy heart humble in prosperity, to think how dearly many godly men have paid for their riches; that through them they have lost that which all the world cannot purchase?

3. Keep down thy vain heart by this consideration; God values no man the more for these things. God values no man by outward excellencies, but by inward graces; they are the internal ornaments of the Spirit, which are of great price in God’s sight. God despises all worldly glory, and accepts no man’s person; “but in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him.” Indeed, if the judgment of God went by the same rule that man’s does, we might value ourselves by these things, and stand upon them: but so much every man is, as he is in the judgment of God. Does thy heart yet swell, and will neither of the former considerations keep it humble?

4. Consider how bitterly many dying persons have bewailed their folly in setting their hearts upon these things, and have wished that they had never known them. How dreadful was the situation of Pius Quintus, who died crying out despairingly, “When I was in a low condition I had some hopes of salvation, when I was advanced to be a cardinal, I greatly doubted; but since I came to the popedom I have no hope at all.” An author also tells us a real, but sad story of a rich oppressor, who had scraped up a great estate for his only son: when he came to die he called his son to him, and said, “Son, do you indeed love me?” The son answered that “Nature, besides his paternal, indulgence, obliged him to that.” “Then (said the father) express it by this: hold thy finger in the candle as long as I am saying a prayer.” The son attempted, but could not endure it. Upon that the father broke out into these expressions: “Thou canst not suffer the burning of thy finger for me; but to get this wealth I have hazarded my soul for thee and must burn, body and soul, in hell, for thy sake; thy pains would have been but for a moment, but mine will be unquenchable fire.”

5. The heart may be kept humble by considering of what a clogging nature earthly things are to a soul heartily engaged in the way to heaven. They shut out much of heaven from us at present, though they may not shut us out of heaven at last. If thou consider thyself as a stranger in this world, traveling for heaven, thou hast then as much reason to be delighted with these things as a weary horse has to be pleased with a heavy burden. There was a serious truth in the atheistical scoff of Julian: when taking away the Christians’ estates, he told them “it was to make them more fit for the kingdom of heaven.”

6. Is thy spirit still vain and lofty? Then urge upon it the consideration of that awful day of reckoning, wherein, according to our receipts of mercies shall be our account for them. Methinks this should awe and humble the vainest heart that ever was n the breast of a saint. Know for a certainty that the Lord records all the mercies that ever he gave thee, from the beginning to the end of thy life. “Remember, O my people, from Shittim unto Gilgal,” &c. Yes, they are exactly numbered and recorded in order to an account; and thy account will be suitable: “To whomsoever much is given, of him shall, much be required.” You are but a steward, and your Lord will come and take an account of you; and what a great account have you to make, who have much of this world in your hands.! What swift witnesses will your mercies be against you, if this be the best fruit

of them!

7. It is a very humbling reflection, that the mercies of God should work otherwise upon my spirit than they used to do upon the spirits of others to whom they come as sanctified mercies from the love of God. Ah, Lord! what a sad consideration is this! enough to lay me in the dust, when I consider:

(1.) That their mercies have greatly humbled them, the higher God has raised them, the lower they have laid themselves before him. Thus did Jacob when God had given him much substance. “And Jacob said, I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, and all the truth which thou hast showed thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and am now become two bands.” Thus also it was with holy David; when God had confirmed the promise to him, to build him a house, and not reject him as he did Saul, he goes in before the Lord and says, “Who am I, and what is my father’s house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?” So indeed God required. When Israel brought to him the first fruits of Canaan, they were to say, “A Syrian ready to perish was my father,” &c. Do others raise God the higher for his raising them? and the more God raises me, the more shall I abuse him and exalt myself? O how wicked is such conduct as this!

(2.) Others have freely ascribed the glory of all their enjoyments to God, and magnified not themselves, but him, for their mercies. Thus says David, “Let thy name be magnified and the house of thy servant be established.” He does not fly upon the mercy and suck out its sweetness, looking no further than his own comfort: no, he cares for no mercy except God be magnified in it. So when God had delivered him from all his enemies, he says, “The Lord is my strength and my rock, he is become my salvation.” Saints of old did not put the crown upon their own heads as I do by my vanity.

(3.) The mercies of God have been melting mercies unto others, melting their souls in love to the God of their mercies. When Hannah received the mercy of a son, she said, “My soul rejoiceth in the Lord;” not in the mercy, but in the God of the mercy. So also Mary: “My soul doth magnify the Lord; my spirit rejoiceth in God my Savior.” The word signifies to make more room for God; their hearts were not contracted, but the more enlarged to God.

(4.) The mercies of God have been great restraints to keep others from sin. “Seeing thou, our God, hast given us such a deliverance as this, should we again break thy commandments?” Ingenuous souls have felt the force of the obligations of love and mercy upon them.

(5.) The mercies of God to others have been as oil to the wheels of their obedience, and made them more fit for service. Now if mercies work contrarily upon my heart, what cause have I to be afraid that they come not to me in love! It is enough to damp the spirits of any saint, to see what sweet effects mercies have had upon others, and what bitter effects upon him.

II. The second season in the life of a Christian, requiring more than common diligence to keep his heart, is the time of adversity. . .

II. The second season in the life of a Christian, requiring more than common diligence to keep his heart, is the time of adversity. When Providence frowns upon you, and blasts your outward comforts, then look to your heart; keep it with all diligence from repining against God, or fainting under his hand; for troubles, though sanctified, are troubles still. Jonah was a good man, and yet

how fretful was his heart under affliction! Job was the mirror of patience, yet how was his heart discomposed by trouble! You will find it hard to get a composed spirit under great afflictions. O the hurries and tumults which they occasion even in the best hearts I—Let me show you, then, how a Christian under great afflictions may keep his heart from repining or desponding, under the hand of God.

I will here offer several helps to keep the heart in this condition.

1. By these cross providences God is faithfully pursuing the great design of electing love upon the souls of his people, and orders all these afflictions as means sanctified to that end. Afflictions come not by casualty, but by counsel. By this counsel of God they are ordained as means of much spiritual good to saints. “By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged,” &c. “But he for our profit,” &c. “All things work together for good,” &c. They are God’s workmen upon our hearts, to pull down the pride and carnal security of them; and being so, their nature is changed; they are turned into blessings and benefits. “It is good for me that I have been afflicted,” says David. Surely then thou hast no reason to quarrel with God, but rather to wonder that he should concern himself so much in thy good as to use any means for accomplishing it. Paul could bless God if by any means he might attain the resurrection of the dead. “My brethren,” says James, “count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations.” ‘My Father is about a design of love upon my soul, and do I well to be angry with him? All that he does is in pursuance of, and in reference to some eternal, glorious ends upon my soul. It is my ignorance of God’s design that makes me quarrel with him.’ He says to thee in this case, as he did to Peter, “What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.”

2. Though God has reserved to himself a liberty of afflicting his people, yet he has tied up his own hands by promise never to take away his loving kindness from them. Can I contemplate this scripture with a repining, discontented spirit: “I will be his Father, and be shall be my son: if he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of man, and with the stripes of the children of men nevertheless my mercy shall not depart away from him.” O my heart, my haughty heart! dost thou well to be discontent, when God has given thee the whole tree, with all the clusters of comfort growing on it, because he suffers the wind to blow down a few leaves? Christians have two kinds of goods, the goods of the throne and the goods of the footstool; immoveables and moveables. If God has secured those, never let my heart be troubled at the loss of these: indeed, if he had cut off his love or discovenanted my soul; I had reason to be cast down; but this he hath not done, nor can he do it.

3. It is of great efficacy to keep the heart from sinking under afflictions, to call to mind that thine own Father has the ordering of them. Not a creature moves hand or tongue against thee but by his permission. Suppose the cup be bitter, yet it is the cup which thy Father hath given thee; and canst thou suspect poison to be in it? Foolish man, put home the case to thine own heart; canst thou give thy child that which would ruin him? No! thou wouldst as soon hurt thyself as him. “If thou then, being evil, knowest how to give good gifts to thy children,” how much more does God! The very consideration of his nature as a God of love, pity, and tender mercies; or of his relation to thee as a father, husband, friend, may be security enough, if he had not spoken a word to quiet thee in this case; and yet you have his word too, by the prophet Jeremiah: “I will do you no hurt.” You lie too near his heart for him to hurt you; nothing grieves him more than your groundless and

unworthy suspicions of his designs. Would it not grieve a faithful, tender-hearted physician, when he had studied the case of his patient, and prepared the most excellent medicines to save his life, to hear him cry out, 'O he has undone me! he has poisoned me!' because it pains him in the operation?. O when will you be ingenuous?

4. God respects you as much in a low as in a high condition; and therefore it need not so much trouble you to be made low; nay, he manifests more of his love, grace and tenderness in the time of affliction than in the time of prosperity. As God did not at first choose you because you were high, he will not now forsake you because you are low. Men may look shy upon you, and alter their respects as your condition is altered; when Providence has blasted your estate, your summer-friends may grow strange, fearing you may be troublesome to them; but will God do so? No, no: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." says he. If adversity and poverty could bar you from access to God, it were indeed a deplorable condition: but, so far from this, you may go to him as freely as ever. "My God will hear me," says the church. Poor David, when stripped of all earthly comforts, could encourage himself in the Lord his God; and why cannot you? Suppose your husband or son had lost all at sea, and should come to you in rags; could you deny the relation, or refuse to entertain him? If you would not, much less will God. Why then are you so troubled? Though your condition be changed, your Father's love is not changed.

5. What if by the loss of outward comforts God preserves your soul from the ruining power of temptation? Surely then you have little cause to sink your heart by such sad thoughts. Do not earthly enjoyments make men shrink and warp in times of trial? For the love of these many have forsaken Christ in such an hour. The young ruler "went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions." If this is God's design, how ungrateful to murmur against him for it! We see mariners in a storm can throw overboard the most valuable goods to preserve their lives. We know it is usual for soldiers in a besieged city to destroy the finest buildings without the walls in which the enemy may take shelter; and no one doubts that it is wisely done. Those who have mortified limbs willingly stretch them out to be cut off, and not only thank, but pay the surgeon. Must God be murmured against for casting over that which would sink you in a storm; for pulling down that which would assist your enemy in the siege of temptation; for cutting off what would endanger your everlasting life? O, inconsiderate, ungrateful man! are not these things for which thou grievest, the very things that have ruined thousands of souls?

6. It would much support thy heart under adversity, to consider that God by such humbling providences maybe accomplishing that for which you have long prayed and waited. And should you be troubled at that? Say, Christian, hast thou not many prayers depending before God upon such accounts as these; that he would keep thee from sin; discover to thee the emptiness of the creature; that he would mortify and. kill thy lusts; that thy. heart may never find rest in any enjoyment but Christ? By such humbling and impoverishing strokes God may be fulfilling thy desire. Wouldst thou be kept from sin? Lo, he hath hedged up thy way with thorns. Wouldst thou see the creature's vanity? Thy affliction is a fair glass to discover it; for the vanity of the creature is never so effectually and sensibly discovered, as in our own experience. Wouldst thou have thy corruptions mortified? This is the way: to have the food and fuel removed that maintained them; for as prosperity begat and fed them, so adversity, when sanctified, is a means to kill them. Wouldst thou have thy heart rest no where but in the bosom of God? What better method could Providence take to accomplish thy desire than pulling from under thy head that soft pillow of creature-delights

on which you rested before? And yet you fret at this: peevish child, how dost thou try thy Father's patience! If he delay to answer thy prayers, thou art ready to say he regards thee not; if he does that which really answers the end of them, though not in the way which you expect, you murmur against him for that; as if, instead of answering, he were crossing all thy hopes and aims. Is this ingenuous? Is it not enough that God is so gracious as to do what thou desirest: must thou be so impudent as to expect him to do it in the way which thou prescribest?

7. It may support thy heart, to consider that in these troubles God is performing that work in which thy soul would rejoice, if thou didst see the design of it. We are clouded with much ignorance, and are not able to discern how particular providences tend to the fulfillment of God's designs; and therefore, like Israel in the wilderness, are often murmuring, because Providence leads us about in a howling desert, where we are exposed to difficulties; though then he led them, and is now4eading us, by the right way to a city of habitations. If you could but see how God in his secret counsel has exactly laid the whole plan of your salvation, even to the smallest means and circumstances; could you but discern the admirable harmony of divine dispensations, their mutual relations, together with the general respect they all have to the last end; had you liberty to make your own choice, you would, of all conditions in the world, choose that in which you now are. Providence is like a curious piece of tapestry made of a thousand shreds, which, single, appear useless, but put together, they represent a beautiful history to the eye. As God does all things according to the counsel of his own will, of course this is ordained as the best method to effect your salvation. Such an one has a proud heart, so many humbling providences appoint for him; such an one has an earthly heart, see many impoverishing providences for him. Did you but see this, I need say no more to support the most dejected heart.

8. It would much conduce to the settlement of your heart, to consider that by fretting and discontent you do yourself more injury than all your afflictions could do. Your own discontent is that which arms your troubles with a sting; you make your burden heavy by struggling under it. Did you but lie quietly under the hand of God, your condition would be much more easy than it is. "Impatience in the sick occasions severity in the physician." This makes God afflict the more, as a father a stubborn child that receives not correction. Beside, it unfits the soul to pray over its troubles, or receive the sense of that good which God intends by them. Affliction is a pill, which, being wrapt up in patience and quiet submission, may be easily swallowed; but discontent chews the pill, and so embitters the soul. God throws away some comfort which he saw would hurt you, and you will throw away your peace after it; he shoots an arrow which sticks in your clothes, and was never intended to hurt, but only to drive you from sin, and you will thrust it deeper, to the piercing of your very heart, by despondency and discontent.

9. If thy heart (like that of Rachel) still refuses to be comforted, then do one thing more: compare the condition thou art now in, and with which thou art so much dissatisfied, with the condition in which others are, and in which thou deservest to be. 'Others are roaring in flames, howling under the scourge of vengeance; and among them I deserve to be. O my soul is this hell? is my condition as bad as that of the damned? what would thousands now in hell give to exchange conditions with me!' I have read (says an author) that when the Duke of Conde had voluntarily subjected himself to the inconveniences of poverty, he was one day observed and pitied by a lord of Italy, who from tenderness wished him to be more careful of his person. The good duke answered, "Sir, be not troubled, and think not that I suffer from want; for I send a harbinger before me, who makes ready

my lodgings and takes care that I be royally entertained." The lord asked him who was his harbinger? He answered, "The knowledge of myself, and the consideration of what I deserve for my sins, which is eternal torment; when with this knowledge I arrive at my lodging, however unprovided I find it, methinks it is much better than I deserve. Why doth the living man complain?" Thus the heart may be kept from desponding or repining under adversity.

III. The third season calling for more than ordinary diligence to keep the heart is the time of Zion's troubles. . . .

III. The third season calling for more than ordinary diligence to keep the heart is the time of Zion's troubles. When the Church, like the ship in which Christ and his disciples were, is oppressed and ready to perish in the waves of persecution, then good souls are ready to be shipwrecked too, upon the billows of their own fears. It is true, most men need the spur rather than the reins in this case; yet some men sit down discouraged under a sense of the Church's troubles. The loss of the ark cost Eli his life; the sad posture in which Jerusalem lay made good Nehemiah's countenance change in the midst of all the pleasures and accommodations of the court. But though God allows, yea, commands the most awakened apprehensions of these calamities, and in "such a day calls to mourning, weeping, and girding with sackcloth," and severely threatens the insensible; yet it will not please him to see you sit like pensive Elijah under the juniper tree. "Ah, Lord God! it is enough, take away my life also." No: a mourner in Zion you may and ought to be, but a self-tormentor you must not be; complain to God you may, but complain of God (though but by the language of your actions) you must not.

Now let us inquire how tender hearts may be relieved and supported, when they are even overwhelm-ed with the burdensome sense of Zion's troubles? I grant it is hard for him who preferreth Zion to his chief joy, to keep his heart that it sink not below the due sense of its troubles; yet this ought to, and may be done, by the use of such heart-establishing directions as these:

1. Settle this great truth in your heart, that no trouble befalls Zion but by the permission of Zion's God; and he permits nothing out of which he will not ultimately bring much good to his people. Comfort may be derived from reflections on the permitting as well as on the commanding will of God. "Let him alone, it may be God hath bidden him." "Thou couldst have no power against me, except it were given thee from above." It should much calm our spirits, that it is the will of God to suffer it; and that, had he not suffered it, it could, never have been as it is. This very consideration quieted Job, Eli, David, and Hezekiah. That the Lord did it was enough to them: and why should it not be so to us? If the Lord will have Zion ploughed as a field, and her goodly stones lie in the dust; if it be his pleasure that Anti-Christ shall rage yet longer and wear out the saints of the Most High; if it be his will that a day of trouble, and of treading down, and of perplexity by the Lord God of Hosts,, shall be upon the valley of vision, that the wicked shall devour the man that is more righteous than he; what are we that we should contend with God? It is fit that we should be resigned to that Will whence we proceeded, and that He that made us should dispose of us as he pleases: he may do what seemeth him good without our consent. Doth poor man stand upon equal ground, that he may capitulate with his Creator; or that God should render him an account of any of his matters? That we be content, however God may dispose of us, is as reasonable as that we be obedient, whatever he may require of us. But if we pursue this argument farther, and. consider that God's permissions all meet at last in the real good of his people, this will much more quiet our

spirits. Do the enemies carry away the best among the people into captivity? This looks like a distressing providence; but God sends them thither for their good. Does God take the Assyrian as a staff in his hand to beat his people with? The end of his so doing is, "that he may accomplish his whole work upon Mount Zion." If God can bring much good out of the greatest evil of sin, much more out of temporal afflictions; and that he will, is as evident as that he can do so. For it is inconsistent with the wisdom of a common agent to permit any thing (which he might prevent if he pleased) to cross his great design; and can it be imagined that the most wise God should do so? As, then, Luther said to Melancthon, so say I to you: "Let infinite wisdom, power and love alone" for by these all creatures are swayed, and all actions guided, in reference to the church. It is not our work to rule the world, but to submit to Him that does. The motions of Providence are all judicious, the wheels are full of eyes: it is enough that the affairs of Zion are in a good hand.

2. Ponder this heart-supporting truth: how many troubles soever are upon Zion, yet her King is in her. What! hath the Lord forsaken his churches? has he sold them into the enemy's hands? Does he not regard what evil befalls them that our hearts sink thus? Is it not shamefully undervaluing the great God, and too much magnifying poor impotent man, to fear and tremble at creatures while God is in the midst of us? The church's enemies are many and mighty: let that be granted, yet that argument with which Caleb and Joshua strove to raise their own hearts, is of as much force now as it was then: "The Lord is with, us, fear them not." A historian tells us, that when Antigonus overheard his soldiers reckoning how many their enemies were, and so discouraging one another, he suddenly stepped in among them with this question, "And how many do you reckon me for?" Discouraged souls, how many do you reckon the Lord for? Is he not an overmatch for all his enemies? Is not one Almighty more than many mighties? "If God be for us, who can be against us?" What think you was the reason of that great examination Gideon made? He questions, he desires a sign, and after that, another: and what was the end of all this, but that he might be sure the Lord was with him, and that he might but write this motto upon his ensign: The sword of the Lord and of Gideon. So if you can be well assured the Lord is with his people, you will thereby rise above all your discouragements: and that he is so, you need not require a sign from heaven; lo, you have a sign before you, even their marvellous preservation amidst all their enemies. If God be not with his people, how is it that they are not swallowed up quickly? Do their enemies want malice, power, or opportunity? No, but there is an invisible hand upon them. Let then his presence give us rest; and though the mountains be hurled into the sea, though heaven and earth mingle together, fear not; God is in the midst of Zion, she shall not be moved.

3. Consider the great advantages attending the people of God in an afflicted condition. If a low and an afflicted state in the world be really best for the church, then your dejection is not only irrational, but ungrateful. Indeed if you estimate the happiness of the church by its worldly ease, splendor and prosperity, then such times of affliction will appear to be unfavorable; but if you reckon its glory to consist in its humility, faith, and heavenly-mindedness, no condition so much abounds with advantages for these as an afflicted condition. It was not persecutions and prisons, but worldliness and wantonness that poisoned the church: neither was it the earthly glory of its professors, but the blood of its martyrs that was the seed of the church. The power of godliness did never thrive better than in affliction, and was never less thriving than in times of greatest prosperity: when "we are left a poor and an afflicted people, then we learn to trust in the name of the Lord." It is indeed for the saints' advantage to be weaned from love of, and delight in, ensnaring earthly vanities; to be

quickened and urged forward with more haste to heaven; to have clearer discoveries of their own hearts; to be taught to pray more fervently, frequently, spiritually; to look and long for the rest to come more ardently. If these be for their advantage, experience teaches us that no condition is ordinarily blessed with such fruits as these, like an afflicted condition. Is it well then to repine and droop, because your Father consults the advantage of your soul rather than the gratification of your humors? because he will bring you to heaven by a nearer way than you are willing to go? Is this a due requital of his love, who is pleased so much to concern himself in your welfare—who does more for you than he will do for thousands in the world, upon whom he will not lay a rod, dispense an affliction to them for their good? But alas! we judge by sense, and reckon things good or evil, according to our present taste.

4. Take heed that you overlook not the many precious mercies which the people of God enjoy amidst all their trouble. It is a pity that our tears on account of our troubles should so blind our eyes that we should not see our mercies. I will not insist upon the mercy of having your life given you for a prey; nor upon the many outward comforts which you enjoy, even above what were enjoyed by Christ and his precious servants, of whom the world was not worthy. But what say you to pardon of sin; interest in Christ; the covenant of promise; and an eternity of happiness in the presence of God, after a few days are over? O that a people entitled to such mercies as these should droop under any temporal affliction, or be so much concerned for the frowns of men and the loss of trifles. You have not the smiles of great men, but you have the favor of the great God; you are perhaps diminished in temporal, but you are thereby increased in spiritual and eternal goods. You cannot live so plentifully as before; but you may live as heavenly as ever. Will you grieve so much for these circumstances as to forget your substance? Shall light troubles make you forget weighty mercies? Remember the true riches of the church are laid out of the reach of all enemies. What though God do not in his outward dispensations distinguish between his own and others? Yea, what though his judgments single out the best, and spare the worst? What though an Abel be killed in love, and a Cain survive in hatred; a bloody Dionysius die in his bed, and a good Josiah fall in battle? What though the belly of the wicked be filled with hidden treasures, and the teeth of the saints with gravel-stones? Still there is much matter of praise; for electing love has distinguished, though common providence has not: and while prosperity and impunity slay the wicked, even slaying and adversity shall benefit and save the righteous.

5. Believe that how low soever the church be plunged under the waters of adversity, she shall assuredly rise again. Fear not; for as surely as Christ arose the third day, notwithstanding the seal and watch upon him; so surely Zion shall arise out of all her troubles, and lift up her victorious head over all her enemies. There is no reason to fear the ruin of that people who thrive by their losses and multiply by being diminished. Be not too hasty to bury the church before she is dead; stay till Christ has tried his skill, before you give her up for lost. The bush may be all in a flame, but shall never be consumed; and that because of the good will of Him that dwelleth in it.

6. Remember the instances of God’s care and tenderness over his people in former difficulties. For above eighteen hundred years the Christian church has been in affliction, and yet it is not consumed; many a wave of persecution has gone over it, yet it is not drowned; many devices have been formed against it, hitherto none of them has prospered. This is not the first time that Hamans and Ahithophels have plotted its ruin; that a Herod has stretched out his hand to vex it; still it has been preserved from, supported under, or delivered out of all its troubles. Is it not as dear to God

as ever? Is he not as able to save it now as formerly? Though we know not whence deliverance should arise, “yet the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations.”

7. If you can derive no comfort from any of these considerations, try to draw some out of your very trouble. Surely this trouble of yours is a good evidence of your integrity. Union is the ground of sympathy: if you had not some rich, adventure in that ship, you would not tremble as you do when it is in danger. Beside this framer of spirit may afford you this consolation, that if you are so sensible of Zion’s trouble, Jesus Christ is much more sensible of and solicitous about it than you can be, and he will have an eye of favor upon them that mourn for it.

IV. The fourth season, requiring our utmost diligence to keep our hearts, is the time of danger and public distraction. . . .

IV. The fourth season, requiring, our utmost diligence to. keep our hearts, is the time of danger and public distraction. In such times the best hearts are too apt to be surprised by slavish: fear. If Syria be confederate with Ephraim, how do the hearts of the house of David shake, even as the trees of the wood which are shaken with the wind. When there are ominous signs in the heavens, or the distress of nations with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; then the hearts of men fail for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth. Even a Paul may sometimes complain of “fightings within, when there are fears without.”

But, my brethren, these things ought not so to be; saints should be of a more elevated spirit; so was David when his heart was kept in a good frame: “The Lord is my light and my salvation whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?” Let none but the servants of sin be the slaves of fear; let them that have delighted in evil fear evil. Let not that which God has threatened as a judgment upon the wicked, ever seize upon the hearts of the righteous. “I will send faintness into their hearts in the land of their enemies, and the sound of a shaking leaf shall chase them.” What poor spirited men are those, to fly at a shaking leaf! A leaf makes a pleasant, not a terrible noise; it makes indeed a kind of natural music: but to a guilty conscience even the whistling leaves are drums and trumpets! “But God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of love and of a sound mind.” A sound mind, as it stands there in opposition to fear, is an unwounded conscience not weakened by guilt: and this should make a man as bold as a lion. I know it cannot be said of a saint, as God said of leviathan, that he is made without fear; there is a natural fear in every man, and it is as impossible to remove it wholly, as to remove the body itself. Fear is perturbation of the mind, arising from the apprehension of approaching danger; and as long as dangers can approach us, we shall find some perturbations within us. It is not my purpose to commend to you a stoical apathy, nor yet to dissuade you from such a degree of cautionary preventive fear as may fit you for trouble and be serviceable to your soul. There is a provident, fear that opens our eyes to foresee danger, and quickens us to a prudent and lawful use of means to prevent it: such was Jacob’s fear, and such his prudence when expecting to meet his angry brother Esau. But it is the fear of diffidence, from which I would persuade you to keep your heart; that tyrannical passion which invades the heart in times of danger, distracts, weakens and unfits it for duty, drives men upon unlawful means, and brings a snare with it.

Now let us inquire how a Christian may keep his heart from distracting and tormenting fears in times of great and threatening dangers. There are several excellent rules for keeping the heart from sinful fear when imminent dangers threaten us:

04.03b. Reasons Why is Greatest Business of Life

1. Look upon all creatures as in the band of God, who manages them in all their motions, limiting, restraining and determining them at his pleasure. Get this great truth well settled by faith in your heart, and it will guard you against slavish fears. Ezekiel 1:1-28 contains an admirable draught of Providence: there you see the living creatures who move the wheels (that is, the great revolutions of things here below) coming unto Christ, who sits upon the throne, to receive new instructions from him. In Revelation 6:1-17, you read of white, black, and red horses, which are but the instruments God employs in executing judgments in the world, as wars, pestilence, and death. When these horses are prancing and trampling up and down in the world, here is a consideration that may quiet our hearts; God has the reins in his hand. Wicked men are sometimes like mad horses, they would stamp the people of God under their feet, but that the bridle of Providence is in their mouths. A lion at liberty is terrible to meet, but who is afraid of a lion in the keeper's hand?'

2. Remember that this God in whose hand are all creatures, is your Father, and is much more tender of you than you are, or can be, of yourself. "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye." Let me ask the most timorous woman whether there be not a great difference between the sight of a drawn sword in the hand of a bloody ruffian, and of the same sword in the hand of her own tender husband? As great a difference there is between looking upon creatures by an eye of sense, and looking on them, as in the hand of your God, by an eye of faith. Isaiah 54:5, is here very appropriate: "Thy Maker is thine husband, the Lord of hosts is his name;" he is Lord of all the hosts of creatures. Who would be afraid to pass through an army, though all the soldiers should turn their swords and guns toward him, if the commander of that army were his friend or father? A religious young man being at sea with many other passengers in a great storm, and they being half dead with fear, lie only was observed to be very cheerful, as if he were but little concerned in that danger: one of them demanding the reason of his cheerfulness, "O," said he, "it is because the pilot of the ship is my Father!" Consider Christ first as the King and supreme Lord over the providential kingdom, and then as your head, husband and friend, and you will quickly say, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul." This truth will make you cease trembling, and cause you to sing in the midst of danger, "The Lord is King of all the earth, sing ye praise with understanding." That is, 'Let every one that has understanding of this heart-reviving and establishing doctrine of the dominion of our Father over all creatures, sing praise.'

3. Urge upon your heart the express prohibitions of Christ in this case, and let your heart stand in awe of the violation of them. He hath charged you not to fear: "When we shall hear of wars and commotions, see that ye be not terrified." "In nothing be terrified by your adversaries." In Matthew, 10th, and within the compass of six verses, our Savior commands us thrice, "not to fear man." Does the voice of a man make thee to tremble, and shall not the voice of God? If thou art of such a timorous spirit, how is it that thou fearest not to disobey the commands of Jesus Christ? Methinks the command of Christ should have as much power to calm, as the voice of a poor worm to terrify thy heart. "I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man that shall be made as the grass, and forgettest the Lord thy

Maker?" We cannot fear creatures sinfully till we have forgotten God: did we remember what he is, and what he has said, we should not be of such feeble spirits. Bring thyself then to this reflection in times of danger: 'If I let into my heart the slavish fear of man, I must let out the reverential awe and fear of God; and dare I cast off the fear of the Almighty for the frowns of a man I shall I lift up proud dust above the great God I shall I run upon a certain sin, to shun a probable danger?'—O keep thy heart by this consideration!

4. Remember how much needless trouble your vain fears have brought upon you formerly: "And hast feared continually because of the oppressor, as if he were ready to devour; and where is the fury of the oppressor?" He seemed ready to devour, yet you are not devoured. I have not brought upon you the thing that you. feared; you have wasted your spirit, disordered your soul, and weakened your hands to no purpose: you might have all this while enjoyed your peace, and possessed your soul in patience. And here I cannot but observe a very deep policy of Satan in managing a design against the soul by these vain fears. I call them vain, with reference to the frustration of them by Providence; but certainly they are not in vain as the end at which Satan aims in raising them; for herein he acts as soldiers do in the siege of a garrison, who to wear out the besieged by constant watchings, and thereby unfit them to make resistance when they storm it in earnest, every night rouse them with false alarms, which though they come to nothing yet remarkably answer the ultimate design of the enemy.—O when will you beware of Satan's devices?

5. Consider solemnly, that though the things you fear should really happen, yet there is more evil in your own fear than in the things feared: and that, not only as the least evil of sin is worse than the greatest evil of suffering; but as this sinful fear has really more trouble in it than there is in that condition of which you are so much afraid. Fear is both a multiplying and a tormenting passion; it represents troubles as much greater than they are, and so tortures the soul much more than the suffering itself. So it was with Israel at the Red Sea; they cried out and were afraid, till they stepped into the water, and then a passage was opened through those waters which they thought would have drowned them. Thus it is with us; we, looking through the glass of carnal fear upon the waters of trouble, the swellings of Jordan, cry out, 'O they are unfordable; we must perish in them!' But when we come into the midst of those floods indeed, we find the promise made good: "God will make a way to escape." Thus it was with a blessed martyr; when he would make a trial by putting his finger to the candle, and found himself not able to endure that, he cried out, "What! cannot I bear the burning of a finger? How then shall I be able to bear the burning of my whole body to-morrow?" Yet when that morrow came he could go cheerfully into the flames with this scripture in his mouth: "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine; when thou passest through the waters I will be with you; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt."

6. Consult the many precious promises which are written for your support and comfort in all dangers. These are your refuges to which you may fly and be safe when the arrows of danger fly by night, and destruction wasteth at noon-day. There are particular promises suited to particular cases and exigencies; there are also general promises reaching all cases and conditions. Such as these: "All things shall work together for good," &c. "Though a sinner do evil an hundred times and his days be prolonged, yet it shall be well with them that fear the Lord," &c. Could you but believe the promises your heart should be established. Could you but plead them with God as Jacob did,

(“Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good,” &c.) they would relieve you in every distress.

7. Quiet your trembling heart by recording and consulting your past experiences of the care and faithfulness of God in former distresses. These experiences are food for your faith in a wilderness. By this David kept his heart in time of danger, and Paul his. It was answered by a saint, when one told him that his enemies waylaid him to take his life: “If God take no care of me, how is it that I have escaped hitherto?” You may plead with God old experiences for new ones: for it is in pleading with God for new deliverances, as it is in pleading for new pardons. Mark how Moses pleads of that account with God. “Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people, as thou hast forgiven them from Egypt until now.” He does not say as men do, ‘Lord, this is the first fault, thou hast not been troubled before to sign their pardon:’ but, ‘Lord, because thou hast pardoned them so often, I beseech thee pardon them once again.’ So in new difficulties let the saint say, ‘Lord, thou hast often heard, helped and saved, in former years; therefore now help again, for with thee there is plenteous redemption and thine arm is not shortened.’

8. Be well satisfied that you are in the way of your duty, and that will beget holy courage in times of danger. “Who, will harm you if you be a follower of that which is good?” Or if any dare attempt to harm you, “you may boldly commit yourself to God in well-doing.” It was this consideration that raised Luther’s spirit above all fear: “in the cause of God (said he) I ever am, and ever shall be stout: herein I assume this title, “I yield to none.” A good cause will bear up a man’s spirit. Hear the saying of a hea-then, to the shame of cowardly Christians: when the emperor Vespasian had commanded Fluidus Priseus not to come to the senate, or if he did come, to speak nothing but what ‘he would have him; the senator returned this noble answer, “that he was a senator, it was fit he should be at the senate; and if being there, he were required to give his advice, he would freely speak that which his conscience commanded him.” The emperor threatening that then he should die; he answered, “Did I ever tell you that I was immortal? Do what you will, and I will do what I ought. It is in your power to put me to death unjustly, and in my power to die with constancy.” Righteousness is a breastplate: let them tremble whom danger finds out of the way of duty.

9. Get your conscience sprinkled with the blood of Christ from all guilt, and that will set your heart above all fear. It is guilt upon the conscience that softens and makes cowards of our spirits: “the righteous are bold as a lion.” It was guilt in Cain’s conscience that made him cry, “Every one that findeth me will slay me.” A guilty conscience is more terrified by imagined dangers, than a pure conscience is by real ones. A guilty sinner carries a witness against himself in his own bosom. It was guilty Herod cried out, “John Baptist is risen from the dead.” Such a conscience is the devil’s anvil, on which he fabricates all those swords and spears with which the guilty sinner pierces himself. Guilt is to danger, what fire is to gun-powder: a man need not fear to walk among many barrels of powder, if he have no fire about him.

10. Exercise holy trust in times of great distress. Make it your business to trust God with your life and comforts, and then your heart will be at rest about them. So did David, “At what time I am afraid I will trust in thee;” that is, ‘Lord, if at any time a storm arise, I will shelter from it under the covert of thy wings.’ Go to God by acts of faith and trust, and never doubt that he will secure you. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee,” says Isaiah. God is pleased when you come to him thus: ‘Father, my life, my liberty and my estate are exposed, and I cannot secure them; O let me leave them in, thy hand. The poor leaveth

himself with thee; and does his God fail him? No, thou art the helper of the fatherless: that is, thou art the helper of the destitute one, that has none to go to but God. This is a comforting passage, “He shall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord;” he does not say, his ear shall be preserved from the report of evil tidings, he may hear as sad tidings as other men, but his heart shall be kept from the terror of those tidings; his heart is fixed.

11. Consult the honor of religion more, and your personal safety less. Is it for the honor of religion (think you) that Christians should be as timorous as bores to start at every sound? Will not this tempt the world to think, that whatever you talk, yet your principles are no better than other men’s? What mischief may the discovery of your fears before them do! It was nobly said by Nehemiah, “Should such a man as I flee? and who, being as I am, would flee?” Were it not better you should die than that the world should be prejudiced against Christ by your example? For alas! how apt is the world (who judge more by what they see in your practices than by what they understand of your principles) to conclude from your timidity, that how much soever you commend faith and talk of assurance, yet you dare trust to those things no more than they, when it comes to the trial. O let not your fears lay such a stumbling-block before the blind world.

12. He that would secure his heart from fear, must first secure the eternal interest of his soul in the hands of Jesus Christ., When this is done, you may say, ‘Now, world, do thy worst!’ You will not be very solicitous about a vile body, when you are once assured it shall be well to all eternity with your precious soul. “Fear not them (says Christ) that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.” The assured Christian may smile with contempt upon all his enemies, and say, ‘Is this the worst that you can do?’ What say you, Christian? Are you assured that your soul is safe; that within a few moments of your dissolution it shall be received by Christ into an everlasting habitation? If you be sure of that, never trouble yourself about the instrument and means of your death.’

13. Learn to quench all slavish creature-fears in the reverential fear of God. This is a cure by diversion. It is an exercise of Christian wisdom to turn those passions of the soul which most predominate, into spiritual channels; to turn natural anger into spiritual zeal, natural mirth into holy cheerfulness, and natural fear into a holy dread and awe of God. This method of cure Christ prescribes in Matthew 10:1-42; similar to which is Isaiah 8:12-13, “Fear not their fear.” ‘But how shall we help it?’ “Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.” Natural fear may be allayed for the present by natural reason, or the removal of the occasion; but then it is like a candle blown out by a puff of breath, which is easily blown in again: but if the fear of God extinguish it, then it is like a candle quenched in water, which cannot easily be rekindled.’

14. Pour out to God in prayer those fears which the devil and your own unbelief pour in upon you in times of danger. Prayer is the best outlet to fear: where is the Christian that cannot set his seal to this direction? I will give you the greatest example to encourage you to compliance, even the example of Jesus Christ. When the hour of his danger and death drew nigh, he went into the garden, separated from his disciples, and there wrestled mightily with God in prayer, even unto agony; in reference to which the apostle says, “who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong cries and tears, to him that was able to save from death, and was heard in that he feared.” He was heard as to strength and support to carry him through it;

though not as to deliverance, or exemption from it. O that these things may abide with you, and be reduced to practice in these evil days, and that many trembling souls may be established by them.'

V. The fifth season, requiring diligence in keeping the heart, is the time of outward wants. . . .

V. The fifth season, requiring diligence in keeping the heart, is the time of outward wants. Although at such times we should complain to God, not of God, (the throne of grace being erected for a "time of need,") yet when the waters of relief run low, and want begins to press, how prone are the best hearts to distrust the fountain! When the meal in the barrel and the oil in the cruse are almost spent, our faith and patience too are almost spent. It is now difficult to keep the proud and unbelieving heart in a holy quietude and sweet submission at the foot of God. It is an easy thing to talk of trusting God for daily bread, while we have a full barn or purse; but to say as the prophet, "Though the fig-tree should not blossom, neither fruit be in the vine, &c. yet will I rejoice in the Lord:" surely this is not easy. Would you know then how a Christian may keep his heart from distrusting God, or repining against him, when outward wants are either felt or feared?—The case deserves to be seriously considered, especially now, since it seems to be the design of Providence to empty the people of God of their creature fullness, and acquaint them with those difficulties to which hitherto they have been altogether strangers. To secure the heart from the dangers attending this condition, these considerations may, through the blessing of the Spirit, prove effectual:

1. If God reduces you to necessities, he therein deals no otherwise with you than he has done with some of the holiest men that ever lived. Your condition is not singular; though you have hitherto been a stranger to want, other saints have been familiarly acquainted with it. Hear what Paul says, not of himself only, but in the name of other saints reduced to like exigencies: "Even to the present hour, we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place." To see such a man as Paul going up and down the world naked, and hungry, and houseless; one that was so far above thee in grace and holiness; one that did more service for God in a day than perhaps thou hast done in all thy days may well put an end to your repining. Have you forgotten how much even a David has suffered? How great were his difficulties! "Give, I pray thee," says he to Nabal, "whatsoever cometh to thy hand, to thy servants, and to thy son David." But why speak I of these? Behold a greater than any of them, even the Son of God, who is the heir of all things, and by whom the worlds were made, sometimes would have been glad of any thing, having nothing to eat. "And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry; and seeing a fig-tree, afar off, having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon."

Hereby then God has set no mark of hatred upon you, neither can you infer want of love from want of bread. When thy repining heart puts the question, 'Was there ever sorrow like unto mine?' ask these worthies, and they will tell thee that though they did not complain as thou dost, yet their condition was as necessitous as thine is.

2. If God leave you not in this condition without a promise, you have no reason to repine or despond under it. That is a sad condition indeed to which no promise belongs. Calvin in his comment on Isaiah, 9:1, explains in what sense the darkness of the captivity was not so great as that of the lesser incursions made by Tiglath Pileser. In the captivity, the city was destroyed and the temple burnt with fire: there was no comparison in the affliction, yet the darkness was not so

great, because, says he, “there was a certain promise made in this case, but none in the other.” It is better to be as low as hell with a promise, than to be in paradise without one. Even the darkness of hell itself would be no darkness comparatively at all, were there but a promise to enlighten it. Now, God has left many sweet promises for the faith of his poor people to live upon in this condition; such as these: “O fear the Lord, ye his saints, for there is no want to them that fear him; the lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that fear the Lord shall not want any good thing.” “The eye of the Lord is upon the righteous to keep them alive in famine.” “No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” “When the poor and the needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.” Here you see their extreme wants, water being put for their necessaries of life; and their certain relief, “I the Lord will hear them;” in which it is supposed that they cry unto him in their distress, and he hears their cry. Having therefore these promises, why should not your distrustful heart conclude like David’s, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want?”

‘But these promises imply conditions: if they were absolute, they would afford more satisfaction.’ What are those tacit conditions of which you speak but these, that he will either supply or sanctify your wants; that you shall have so much as God sees fit for you? And does this trouble you? Would you have the mercy, whether sanctified or not? whether God sees it fit for you or not? The appetites of saints after earthly things should not be so ravenous as to seize greedily upon any enjoyment without regarding circumstances.

‘But when wants press, and I see not whence supplies should come, my faith in the promise shakes, and I, like murmuring Israel, cry, “He gave bread, can he give water also?”’ O unbelieving heart! when did his promises fail? who ever trusted them and was ashamed? May not God upbraid thee with thine unreasonable infidelity, as in Jeremiah 2:31, “Have I been a wilderness unto you?” or as Christ said to his disciples, “Since I was with you, lacked ye any thing?” Yea, may you not upbraid yourself; may you not say with good old Polycarp, “These many years I have served Christ, and found him a good Master?”

Indeed he may deny what your wantonness, but not what your want calls for. He will not regard the cry of your lusts, nor yet despise the cry of your faith: though he will not indulge your wanton appetites, yet he will not violate his. own faithful promises. These promises are your best security for eternal life; and it is strange they should not satisfy you for daily bread. Remember the words of the Lord, and solace your heart with them amidst all your wants. It is said of Epicurus, that in dreadful paroxysms of the cholic he often refreshed himself by calling to mind his inventions in philosophy; and of Possodonius the philosopher, that in an acute disorder he solaced himself with discourses on moral virtue; and when distressed, he would say, “O pain, thou dost nothing; though thou art a little troublesome, I will never confess thee to be evil.” If upon such grounds as these they could support themselves under such racking pains, and even deluded their diseases by them; how much rather should the promises of God, and the sweet experiences which have gone along step by step with them, make you forget all your wants, and comfort you in every difficulty?

3. If it be bad now, it might have been worse. Has God denied thee the comforts of this life? He might have denied thee Christ, peace, and pardon also; and then thy case had been woful indeed.

You know God has done so to millions. How many such wretched objects max your eyes behold every day, that have no comfort in hand, nor yet in hope; that are miserable here, and will be so to eternity; that have a bitter cup, and nothing to sweeten it—no, not so much as any hope that it will be better. But it is not so with you: though you be poor in this world, yet you are “rich in faith, and an heir of the kingdom which God has promised.” Learn to set spiritual riches over against temporal poverty. Balance all your present troubles with your spiritual privileges. Indeed if God has denied your soul the robe of righteousness to clothe it, the hidden manna to feed it, the heavenly mansion to receive it, you might well be pensive; but the consideration that he has not may administer comfort under any outward distress. When Luther began to be pressed by want, he said, “Let us be contented with our hard fare; for do not we feast upon Christ, the bread of life?“ “Blessed be God (said Paul) who hath abounded to us in all spiritual blessings.”

4. Though this affliction be great, God has far greater, with which he chastises the dearly beloved of his soul in this world. Should he remove this and inflict those, you would account your present state a very comfortable one, and bless God to be as you now are. Should God remove your present troubles, supply all your outward wants, give you the desire of your heart in creature-comforts; but hide his face from you, shoot his arrows into your soul, and cause the venom of them to drink up your spirit: should he leave you but a few days to the buffetings of Satan: should he hold your eyes but a few nights waking with horrors of conscience, tossing to and fro till the dawning of the day:—should he lead you through the chambers of death, show you the visions of darkness, and make his terrors set themselves in array against you: then tell me if you would not think it a great mercy to be back again in your former necessitous condition, with peace of conscience; and account bread and water, with God’s favor, a happy state? O then take heed of repining. Say not that God deals hardly with you, lest you provoke him to convince you by your own sense that he has worse rods than these for unsubmissive and froward children.

5. If it be had now, it will be better shortly. Keep thy heart by this consideration, ‘the meal in the barrel is almost spent; well, be it so, why should that trouble me, if I am almost beyond the need and use of these things?’ The traveler has spent almost all his money; ‘well,’ says he, ‘though my money be almost spent, my journey is almost finished too: I am near home, and shall soon be fully supplied.’ If there be no candles in the house, it is a comfort to think that it is almost day, and then there will be no need of them. I am afraid, Christian, you misreckon when you think your provision is almost spent, and you have a great way to travel, many years to live and nothing to live upon; it may be not half so many, as you suppose In this be confident, if your provision be spent, either fresh supplies are coining, though you see not whence, or you are nearer your journey’s end than you reckon yourself to be. Desponding soul, does it become a man traveling upon the road to that heavenly city, and almost arrived there, within a few days’ journey of his Father’s house, where all his wants shall be supplied, to be so anxious about a little meat, or drink, or clothes, which he fears he shall want by the way? It was nobly said by the forty martyrs when turned out naked in a frosty night to be starved to death, “ The winter indeed is sharp and cold, but heaven is warm and comfortable; here we shiver for cold, but Abraham’s bosom will make amends for all.”

‘But,’ says the desponding soul, ‘I may die for want.’ Who ever did so? When were the righteous forsaken? If indeed it be so, your journey is ended, and you fully supplied.

‘But I am not sure of that; were I sure of heaven, it would be another matter.’ Are you not sure of that? then you have other matters to trouble yourself about than these; methinks these should be the least of all your cares. I do not find that souls perplexed about the want of Christ, pardon of sin, &c. are usually very solicitous about these things. He that seriously puts such questions as these, ‘What shall I do to be saved? how shall I know my sin is pardoned?’ does not trouble himself with, “What shall I eat, what shall I drink, or wherewithal shall I be clothed?”

6. Does it become the children of such a Father to distrust his all-sufficiency, or repine at any of his dispensations? Do you well to question his care and love upon every new exigency? Say, have you not formerly been ashamed of this? Has not your Father’s seasonable provision for you in former difficulties put you to the blush, and made you resolve never more to question his love and care? And yet will you again renew your unworthy suspicions of him? Disingenuous child! reason thus with yourself: “If I perish for want of what is good and needful for me, it must be either because my Father knows not my wants, Or has not wherewith to supply them, or regards not what becomes of me. Which of these shall I charge upon him? Not the first: for my Father knows what I have need of Not the second: for the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof; his name is God All-sufficient. Not the last: for as a Father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him; the Lord is exceeding pitiful and of tender mercy; he hears the young ravens when they cry:—and will he not hear me? Consider, says Christ, the fowls of the air; not the fowls at the door, that are fed every day by hand, but the fowls of the air that have none to provide for them. Does he feed and clothe his enemies, and will he forget his children? he heard even the cry of Ishmael in distress. O my unbelieving heart, dost thou yet doubt?”

7. Your poverty is not your sin, but your affliction. If you have not by sinful means brought it upon yourself, and if it be but an affliction, it may the more easily be borne. It is hard indeed to bear an affliction coming upon us as the fruit and punishment of sin. When men are under trouble upon that account; they say, ‘O if it were but a single affliction, coming from the hand of God by way of trial, I could bear it; but I have brought it upon myself by sin, it comes as the punishment of sin; the marks of God’s displeasure are upon it: it is the guilt within that troubles and galls more than the want without.’ But it is not so here; therefore you have no reason to be cast down under it.

‘But though there be no sting of guilt, yet this condition wants not other stings; as, for instance, The discredit of religion. I cannot comply with my engagements in the world, and thereby religion is likely to suffer.’ It is well you have a heart to discharge every duty; yet if God disable you by providence, it is no discredit to your profession that you do not that which you cannot do, so long as it is your desire and endeavor to do what you can and ought to do; and in this case God’s will is, that lenity and forbearance be toward you.

‘But it grieves me to behold the necessities of others, whom I was wont to relieve and refresh, but now cannot.’ If you cannot, it ceases to be your duty, and God accepts the drawing out of your soul to the hungry in compassion and desire to help them, though you cannot draw forth a full purse to relieve and supply them.

‘But I find such a condition full of temptations, a great hinderance in the way to heaven.’ Every condition in the world has its hinderances and attending temptations; and were you in a prosperous condition, you might there meet with more temptations and fewer advantages than you now have; for though I confess poverty as well as prosperity has its temptations, yet I am confident

prosperity has not those advantages that poverty has. Here you have an opportunity to discover the sincerity of your love to God, when you can live upon him, find enough in him, and constantly follow him, even when all external inducements and motives fail.

Thus I have shown you how to keep your heart from the temptations and dangers attending a low condition in the world. When want oppresses and the heart begins to sink, then improve, and bless God for these helps to keep it.

VI. The sixth season requiring this diligence in keeping the heart, is the season of duty. . . .

VI. The sixth season requiring this diligence in keeping the heart, is the season of duty. Our hearts must be closely watched and kept when we draw nigh to God in public, private, or secret duties; for the vanity of the heart seldom discovers itself more than at such times. How often does the poor soul cry out, ‘O Lord, how gladly would I serve thee, but vain thoughts will not let me: I come to open my heart to thee, to delight my soul in communion with thee, but my corruptions oppose me: Lord, call off these vain thoughts, and suffer them not to estrange the soul that is espoused to thee.’ The question then is this: How may the heart be kept from distractions by vain thoughts in time of duty? There is a two-fold distraction, or wandering of the heart in duty: First, voluntary and habitual, They set not their hearts aright, and their spirit was not steadfast with God.” This is the case of formalists, and it proceeds from the want of a holy inclination of the heart to God; their hearts are under the power of their lusts, and therefore it is no wonder that they go after their lusts, even when they are about holy things. Secondly, involuntary and lamented distractions: “I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me; O wretched man that I am,” &c. This proceeds not from the want of a holy inclination or aim, but from the weakness of grace and the want of vigilance in opposing indwelling sin. But it is not my business to show you how these distractions come into the heart but rather how to get them out, and prevent their future admission:

1. Sequester yourself from all earthly employments, and set apart some time for solemn preparation to meet God in duty. You cannot come directly from the world into God’s presence without finding a savor of the world in your duties. It is with the heart (a few minutes since plunged in the world, now in the presence of God) as it is with the sea after a storm, which still continues working, muddy and disquiet, though the wind be laid and the storm be over. Your heart must have some time to settle. Few musicians can take an instrument and play upon it without some time and labor to tune it; few Christians can say with David, “My heart is fixed, O God, it is fixed.” When you go to God in any duty, take your heart aside and say, ‘O my soul, I am now engaged in the greatest work that a creature was ever employed about; I am going into the awful presence of God upon business of everlasting moment. O my soul, leave trifling now; be composed, be watchful, be serious; this is no common work, it is soul-work; it is work for eternity; it is work which will bring forth fruit to life or death in the world to come.’ Pause awhile and consider your sins, your wants, your troubles; keep your thoughts awhile on these before you address yourself to duty. David first mused, and then spake with his tongue.

2. Having composed your heart by previous meditation, immediately set a guard upon your senses. How often are Christians in danger of losing the eyes of their mind by those of their body! Against this David prayed, “Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou me in thy way.” This may serve to expound the Arabian proverb: “Shut the windows that the house may be light.” It were well if you could say in the commencement, as a holy man once said when he

came from the performance of duty: “Be shut, O my eyes, be shut; for it is impossible that you should ever discern such beauty and glory in any creature as I have now seen in God.” You must avoid all occasions of distraction from without, and imbibe that intenseness of spirit in the work of God which locks up the eye and ear against vanity.

3. Beg of God a mortified fancy. A working fancy, (saith one,) how much soever it be extolled among men, is a great snare to the soul, except it work in fellowship with right reason and a sanctified heart. The fancy is a power of the soul, placed between the senses and the understanding; it is that which first stirs itself in the soul, and by its motions the other powers of the soul are brought into exercise; it is that in which thoughts are first formed, and as that is, so are they. If imaginations be not first cast down, it is impossible that every thought of the heart should be brought into obedience to Christ. The fancy is naturally the wildest and most untameable power of the soul. Some Christians have much to do with it; and the more spiritual the heart is, the more does a wild and vain fancy disturb and perplex it. It is a sad thing that one’s imagination should call off the soul from attending on God, when it is engaged in communion with him. Pray earnestly and perseveringly that your fancy may be chastened and sanctified, and when this is accomplished your thoughts will be regular and fixed.

4. If you would keep your heart from vain excursions when engaged in duties, realize to yourself, by faith, the holy and awful presence of God. If the presence of a grave man would compose you to seriousness, how much more should the presence of a holy God? Do you think that you would dare to be gay and light if you realized the presence and inspection of the Divine Being? Remember where you are when engaged in religious duty, and act as if you believed in the omniscience of God. “All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” Realize his infinite holiness, his purity, his spirituality.

Strive to obtain such apprehensions of the greatness of God as shall suitably affect your heart; and remember his jealousy over his worship. “This is that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified.” “A man that is praying (says Bernard) should behave himself as if he were entering into the court of heaven, where he sees the Lord upon his throne, surrounded with ten thousand of his angels and saints ministering unto him.”—When you come from an exercise in which your heart has been wandering and listless, what can you say? Suppose all the vanities and impertinences which have passed through your mind during a devotional exercise were written down and interlined with your petitions, could you have the face to present them to God? Should your tongue utter all the thoughts of your heart when at tending the worship of God, would not men abhor you? Yet your thoughts are perfectly known to God. O think upon this scripture: “God is greatly to be feared in the assemblies of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are round about him.” Why did the Lord descend in thunderings and lightnings and dark clouds upon Sinai? why did the mountains smoke under him, the people quake and tremble round about him, Moses himself not excepted? but to teach the people this great truth: “Let us have grace, whereby we may serve Him acceptably, with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire.” Such apprehensions of the character and presence of God will quickly reduce a heart inclined to vanity to a more serious frame.

5. Maintain a prayerful frame of heart in the intervals of duty. What reason can be assigned why our hearts are so dull, so careless, so wandering, when we hear or pray, but that there have been long intermissions in our communion with God? If that divine unction, that spiritual fervor, and those holy impressions, which we obtain from God while engaged in the performance of one duty, were preserved to enliven and engage us in the performance of another, they would be of incalculable service to keep our hearts serious and devout. For this purpose, frequent ejaculations between stated and solemn duties are of most excellent use: they not only preserve the mind in a composed and pious frame, but they connect one stated duty, as it were, with another, and keep the attention of the soul alive to all its interests and obligations.

6. If you would have the distraction of your thoughts prevented, endeavor to raise your affections to God, and to engage them warmly in your duty. When the soul is intent upon any work, it gathers in its strength and bends all its thoughts to that work; and when it is deeply affected, it will pursue its object with intenseness, the affections will gain, an ascendancy over the thoughts and guide them. But deadness causes distraction, and distraction increases deadness. Could you but regard your duties as the medium in which you might walk in communion with God in which your soul might be filled with those ravishing and matchless delights which his presence affords, you might have no inclination to neglect them. But if you would prevent the recurrence of distracting thoughts, if you would find your happiness in the performance of duty, you must not only be careful that you engage in what is your duty, bat labor with patient and persevering exertion to interest your feelings in it. Why is your heart so inconstant, especially in secret duties; why are you ready to be gone, almost as soon as you are come into the presence of God, but because your affections are not engaged?

7. When you are disturbed by vain thoughts, humble yourself before God, and call in assistance from Heaven. When the messenger of Satan buffeted St. Paul by wicked suggestions, (as is supposed) he mourned before God on account of it. Never slight wandering thoughts in duty as small matters; follow every such thought with a deep regret. Turn to God with such words as these: ‘Lord, I came hither to commune with thee, and here a busy adversary and a vain heart, conspiring together, have opposed me. O my God what a heart have I! shall I never wait upon thee without distraction? when shall I enjoy an hour of free communion with thee? Grant me thy assistance at this time; discover thy glory to me, and my heart will quickly be recovered. I came hither to enjoy thee, and shall I go away without thee? Behold my distress, and help me!’ —Could you but sufficiently be wail your distractions, and repair to God for deliverance from them, you would gain relief.

8. Look upon the success and the comfort of your duties, as depending very much upon the keeping of your heart close with God in them. These two things, the success of duty and the inward comfort arising from the performance of it, are unspeakably dear to the Christian; but both of these will be lost if the heart be in a listless state. “Surely God heareth not vanity, nor doth the Almighty regard it.” The promise is made to a heart engaged: “Then shall ye seek for me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your hearts.” When you find your heart under the power of deadness and distraction, say to yourself, ‘O what do I lose by a careless heart now! My praying seasons , are the most valuable portions of my life: could I but raise my heart to God, I might now obtain such mercies as would be matter of praise to all eternity.’

9. Regard your carefulness or carelessness in this matter as a great evidence of your sincerity, or hypocrisy. Nothing will alarm an upright heart more than this. ‘What shall I give way to a customary wandering of the heart from God? Shall the spot of the hypocrite appear upon my soul? Hypocrites, indeed, can drudge on in the round of duty, never regarding the frame of their hearts; but shall I do so? Never— never let me be satisfied with empty duties. Never let me take my leave of a duty until my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.’

10. It will be of special use to keep your heart with God in duty, to consider what influence all your duties will have upon your eternity. Your religious seasons are your seed times, and in another world you must reap the fruits of what you sow in your duties here, If you sow to the flesh, you will reap corruption; if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap life everlasting. Answer seriously these questions: Are you willing to reap the fruit of vanity in the world to come? Dare you say, when your thoughts are roving to the ends of the earth in duty, when you scarce mind what you say or hear, ‘Now, Lord, I am sowing to the Spirit; now I am providing and laying up for eternity; now I am seeking for glory, honor and immortality; now I am striving to enter in at the strait gate; now I am taking the kingdom of heaven by holy violence!’ Such reflections are well calculated to dissipate vain thoughts.

VII. The seventh season, which requires more than common diligence to keep the heart, is when we receive injuries and abuses from men. Such is the depravity and corruption of man, that one is become as a wolf or a tiger to another. And as men are naturally cruel and oppressive one to another, so the wicked conspire to abuse and wrong the people of God, “The wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he.” Now when we are thus abused and wronged, it is hard to keep the heart from revengeful motions; to make it meekly and quietly commit the cause to Him that judgeth righteously; to prevent the exercise of any sinful affection. The spirit that is in us lusteth to revenge; but it must not be so. We have choice helps in the Gospel to keep our hearts from sinful motions against our enemies, and to sweeten our embittered spirits. Do you ask how a Christian may keep his heart from revengeful motions under the greatest injuries and abuses from men? I reply: When you find your heart begin to be inflamed by revengeful feelings, immediately reflect on the following things

1. Urge upon your heart the severe prohibitions of revenge contained in the law of God. However gratifying to your corrupt propensities revenge may be, remember that it is forbidden. Hear the word of God: “Say not, I will recompense evil.” Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me. “Recompense to no man evil for evil. Avenge not yourselves, but give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.” On the contrary. “If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink.” It was an argument urged by the Christians to prove their religion to be supernatural and pure, that it forbids revenge, which is so agreeable to nature; and it is to be wished that such an argument might not be laid aside. Awe your heart, then, with the authority of God in the Scriptures; and when carnal reason says, ‘My enemy deserves to be hated,’ let conscience reply, ‘But doth God deserve to be disobeyed?’ ‘Thus and thus hath he done, and so hath he wronged me;’ ‘But what hath God done that 1 should wrong him? If my enemy dares boldly to break the peace, shall I be so wicked as to break the precept? if he fears not to wrong me, shall not I fear to wrong God?’ Thus let the fear of God restrain and calm your feelings.

2. Set before your eyes the most eminent patterns of meekness and forgiveness, that you may feel the force of their example. This is the way to cut off the common pleas of flesh and blood for revenge: as thus, ‘No man would bear such an affront;’ yes, others have borne as bad, and worse ones. ‘But I shall be reckoned a coward, a fool, if I pass by this:’ no matter, so long as you follow the examples of the wisest and holiest of men. Never did any one suffer more or greater abuses from men than Jesus did, nor did any one ever endure insult and reproach and every kind of abuse in a more peaceful and forgiving manner; when he Was reviled he reviled not again; when he suffered. he threatened not when his murderers. crucified him he prayed Father, forgive them; and herein he hath set us an example, that we should follow his steps. Thus his apostles imitated him: “Being reviled,” say they, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat.” I have often heard it reported of the holy Mr. Dod, that when a man, enraged at his close, convincing doctrine, assaulted him, smote him on the face and dashed out two of his teeth; that meek servant of Christ spit out the teeth and blood into his hand, and said, “See here, you have knocked out two of my teeth, and that without any just provocation; but on condition that I might do your soul good, I would give you leave to knock out all the rest.” Here was exemplified the excellency of the Christian spirit. Strive then for this spirit, which constitutes the true excellence of Christians. Do what others cannot do, keep this spirit in exercise, and you will preserve peace in your own soul and gain the victory over your enemies.

2. Consider the character of the person who has wronged you. He is either a good or a wicked man. If he is a good man, there is light and tenderness in his conscience, which sooner or later will bring him to a sense of the evil of what he has done. If he is a good man, Christ has forgiven him greater injuries than he has done to you; and why should not you forgive him? Will Christ not upbraid him for any of his wrongs, but frankly forgive them all; and will you take him by the throat for some petty abuse which he has offered you?

04.03c. Reasons Why is Greatest Business of Life

3. But if a wicked man has injured or insulted you, truly you have more reason to exercise pity than revenge toward him. He is in a deluded and miserable state; a slave to sin and an enemy to righteousness. If he should ever repent, he will be ready to make you reparation; if he continues impenitent, there is a day coming when .he will be punished to the extent of his deserts. You need not study revenge, God will execute vengeance upon him.

4. Remember that by revenge you can only gratify a sinful passion, which by forgiveness you might conquer. Suppose that by revenge you might destroy one enemy; yet, by exercising the Christian's temper you might conquer three—your own lust, Satan's temptation, and your enemy's heart. If by revenge you should overcome your enemy, the victory would be unhappy and inglorious, for in gaining it you would be overcome by your own corruption; but by exercising a meek and forgiving temper, you will always come off with honor and success. It must be a very disingenuous nature indeed upon which meekness and forgiveness will not operate; that must be a flinty heart which this fire will not melt. Thus David gained such a victory over Saul his persecutor, that "Saul lifted up his voice and wept, and he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I."

5. Seriously propose this question to your own heart: 'Have I got any good by means of the wrongs and injuries which I have received?' If they have done you no good, turn your revenge upon yourself. You have reason to be filled with shame and sorrow that you should have a heart which can deduce no good from such troubles; that your temper should be so unlike that of Christ. The patience and meekness of other Christians have turned all the injuries offered to them to a good account; their souls have been animated to praise God when they have been loaded with reproaches from the world. "I thank my God," said Jerome, "that I am worthy to be hated of the world." But if you have derived any benefit from the reproaches and wrongs which you have received, if they have put you upon examining your own heart, if they have made you more careful how you conduct, if they have convinced you of the value of a sanctified temper; will you not forgive them? will you not forgive one who has been instrumental of so much good to you? What though he meant it for evil? if through the Divine blessing your happiness has been promoted by what he has done, why should you even have a hard thought of him?

6. Consider by whom all your troubles are ordered. This will be of great use to keep your heart from revenge; this will quickly calm and sweeten your temper. When Shimei railed at David and cursed him, the spirit of that good man was not at all poisoned by revenge; for when Abishai offered him. if he pleased, the head of Shimei, the king said, "Let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David: who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?" It may be that God uses him as his rod to chastise me, because by my sin I gave the enemies of God occasion to blaspheme; and shall I be angry with the instrument? how irrational were that! Thus Job was quieted; he did not rail and meditate revenge upon the Chaldeans and Sabeans, but regarded God as the orderer of his troubles, and said, "The Lord hath taken away, blessed be his

name.”

7. Consider how you are daily and hourly wronging God, and you will not be so easily inflawed with revenge against those who have wronged you. You are constantly affronting God, yet he does not take vengeance on you, but bears with you and forgives; and will you rise up and avenge yourself upon others? Reflect on this cutting rebuke: “O thou wicked and slothful servant! I forgave thee all that debt because thou desiredst me; shouldst thou not also have compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?” None should be so filled with forbearance and mercy to such as wrong them, as those who have experienced the riches of mercy themselves. The mercy of God to us should melt our hearts into mercy toward others. It is impossible that we should be cruel to others, except we forget how kind and compassionate God hath been to us. And if kindness cannot prevail in us, methinks fear should:—“If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

8. Let the consideration that the day of the Lord draweth nigh, restrain you from anticipating it by acts of revenge. Why are you so hasty? is not the Lord at hand to avenge all his abused servants? “Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth, &c. Be ye also patient, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned. Behold, the Judge standeth at the door. Vengeance belongeth unto God, and will you wrong yourself so much as to assume his work?

VIII. The next season in which special exertion is necessary to keep the heart, is when we meet with great trials. . . .

VIII. The next season in which special exertion is necessary to keep the heart, is when we meet with great trials. In such cases the heart is apt to be suddenly transported with pride, impatience, or other sinful passions. Many good people are guilty of hasty and very sinful conduct in such instances; and all have need to use diligently the following means to keep their hearts submissive and patient under great trials:

1. Get humble and abasing thoughts of yourself. The humble is ever the patient man. Pride is the source of irregular and sinful passions. A lofty, will be an unyielding and peevish spirit. When we over-rate ourselves, we think that we are treated unworthily, that our trials are too severe: thus we cavil and repine. Christian, you should have such thoughts of yourself as would put a stop to these murmurings. You should have lower and more humiliating views of yourself than any other one can have of you. Get humility, and you will have peace whatever be your trial.

2. Cultivate a habit of communion with God. This will prepare you for whatever may take place. This will so sweeten your temper and calm your mind as to secure you against surprisals. This will produce that inward peace which will make you superior to your trials. Habitual communion with God will afford you enjoyment, which you can never be willing to interrupt by sinful feeling. When a Christian is calm and submissive under his afflictions, probably he derives support and comfort in this way; but he who is discomposed, impatient, or fretful, shows that `all is not right within—he cannot be supposed to practise communion with God.

3. Let your mind be deeply impressed with an apprehension of the evil nature and effects of an unsubmissive and restless temper. It grieves the Spirit of God, and induces his departure. His gracious presence and influence are enjoyed only where peace and quiet submission prevail. The

indulgence of such a temper gives the adversary an advantage. Satan is an angry and discontented spirit. He finds no rest but in restless hearts. He bestirs himself when the spirits are in commotion; sometimes he fills the heart with ungrateful and rebellious thoughts; sometimes he inflames the tongue with indecent language. Again, such a temper brings great guilt upon the conscience, unfits the soul for any duty, and dishonors the Christian name. O keep your heart, and let the power and excellence of your religion be chiefly manifested when you are brought into the greatest straits.

4. Consider how desirable it is for a Christian to overcome his evil propensities. How much more present happiness it affords; how much better it is in every respect to mortify and subdue unholy feelings, than to give way to them. When upon your death-bed you come calmly to review your life, how comfortable will it be to reflect on the conquest which you have made over the depraved feelings of your heart. It was a memorable saying of Valentinian the emperor, when he was about to die: “Amongst all my conquests, there is but one that now comforts me” Being asked what that was, he answered, “I have overcome my worst enemy, my own sinful heart!”

5. Shame yourself, by contemplating the character of those who have been most eminent for meekness and submission. Above all, compare your temper with the Spirit of Christ. “Learn of me,” saith he, “for I am meek and lowly.” It is said of Calvin and Ursin, though both of choleric natures, that they had so imbibed and cultivated the meekness of Christ as not to utter an unbecoming word under the greatest provocations. And even many of the heathens have manifested great moderation and forbearance under their severest afflictions. Is it not a shame and a reproach that you should be outdone by them?

6. Avoid every thing which is calculated to irritate your feelings. It is true spiritual valor to keep as far as we can out of sins way. If you can but avoid the excitements to impetuous and rebellious feelings, or check them in their first beginnings, you will have but little to fear. The first workings of common sins are comparatively weak, they gain their strength by degrees; but in times of trial the motions of sin are strongest at first, the unsubdued temper breaks out suddenly and violently. But if you resolutely with. stand it at first, it will yield and give you the victory.

IX. The ninth season wherein the greatest diligence and skill are necessary to keep the heart, is the hour of temptation, when Satan besets the Christians heart, and takes the unwary by surprise. . . .

IX. The ninth season wherein the greatest diligence arid skill are necessary to keep the heart, is the hour of temptation, when Satan besets the Christians heart, and takes the unwary by surprise. To keep the heart at such times, is not less a mercy than a duty. Few Christians are so skillful in detecting the fallacies, and repelling the arguments by which the adversary incites them to sin, as to come off safe and whole in these encounters. Many eminent saints have smarted severely for their want of watchfulness and diligence at such times. How then may a Christian keep his heart from yielding to temptation? There are several principal ways in which the adversary insinuates temptation, and urges compliance:

1. Satan suggests that here is pleasure to be enjoyed; the temptation is presented with a smiling aspect and an enticing voice: `What, are you so dull and phlegmatic as not to feel the powerful charms of pleasure? Who can withhold himself from such delights? Reader, you may be rescued

from the danger of such temptations by repelling the proposal of pleasure. It is urged that the commission of sin will afford you pleasure. Suppose this were true, will the accusing and condemning rebukes of conscience and the flames of hell be pleasant too? Is there pleasure in the scourges of conscience? If so why did Peter weep so bitterly? why did David cry out of broken bones? You hear what is said of the pleasure of sin, and have you not read what David said of the effects of it? “Thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore; there is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger, neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin,” &c. If you yield to temptation, you must feel such inward distress on account of it, or the miseries of hell. But why should the pretended pleasure of sin allure you, when you know that unspeakably more real pleasure will arise from the mortification than can arise from the commission of sin. Will you prefer the gratification of some unhallowed passion, with the deadly poison which it will leave behind, to that sacred pleasure which arises from fearing and obeying God, complying with the dictates of conscience, and maintaining inward peace? Can sin afford any such delight as he feels who, by resisting temptation, has manifested the sincerity of his heart, and obtained evidence that he fears God, loves holiness, and hates sin?

2. The secrecy with which you may commit sin is made use of to induce compliance with temptation. The tempter insinuates that this indulgence will never disgrace you among men, for no one will know it. But recollect yourself. Does not God behold you? Is not the divine presence every where? What if you might hide your sin from the eyes of the world, you cannot hide it from God. No darkness nor shadow of death can screen you from his inspection. Besides have you no reverence for yourself? Can you do that by yourself which you dare not have others observe? Is not your conscience as a thousand witnesses? Even a heathen could say, “When thou art tempted to commit sin, fear thyself without any other witness.”

3. The prospect of worldly advantage often enforces temptation. It is suggested, `Why should you be so nice and scrupulous? Give yourself a little liberty, and you may better your condition: now is your time. This is a dangerous temptation, and must be promptly resisted. Yielding to such a temptation will do your soul more injury than any temporal acquisition can possibly do you good. And what would it profit you, if you should gain the whole world and lose your own soul? What can be compared with the value of your spiritual interests? or what can at all compensate for the smallest injury of them?

4. Perhaps the smallness of the sin is urged as a reason why you may commit it; thus: `It is but a little one, a small matter, a trifle; who Would stand upon such niceties? But is the Majesty of heaven little too? If you commit this sin you will offend a great God. Is there any little hell to torment little sinners in? No; the least sinners in hell are full of misery. There is great wrath treasured up for those whom the world regard as little sinners. But the less the sin, the less the inducement to commit it. Will you provoke God for a trifle? will you destroy your peace, wound your conscience, and grieve the Spirit, all for nothing? What madness is this!

5. An argument to enforce temptation is sometimes drawn from the mercy of God and the hope of pardon —God is merciful, he will pass by this as an infirmity, he will not be severe to mark it. But stay: where do you find a promise of mercy to presumptuous sinners? Involuntary reprisals and lamented infirmities may be pardoned, “but the soul that doth aught presumptuously, the same reproacheth the Lord, and that soul shall be cut off from among his people.” If God is a being of so

much mercy, how can you affront him? How can you make so glorious an attribute as the divine mercy an occasion of sin? Will you wrong him because he is good? Rather let his goodness lead you to repentance, and keep you from transgression.

6. Sometimes Satan encourages to the commission of sin, from the examples of holy men. Thus and thus they sinned, and were restored; therefore you may commit this sin, and yet. be a saint and be saved. Such suggestions must be instantly repelled. If good men have committed sins similar to that with which you are beset, did any good man ever sin upon such ground and from such encouragement as is here presented? Did God cause their examples to be recorded for your imitation, or for your warning? Are they not set up as beacons that you may avoid the rocks upon which they split? Are you willing to feel what they felt for sin? Dare you follow them in sin, and plunge yourself into such distress and danger as they incurred?—Reader, in these ways learn to keep your heart in the hour of temptation.

X. The time of doubting and of spiritual darkness constitutes another season when it is very difficult to keep the heart. . . .

X. The time of doubting and of spiritual darkness constitutes another season when it is very difficult to keep the heart. When the light and comfort of the divine presence is withdrawn; when the believer, from the prevalence of indwelling sin in one form or other, is ready to renounce his hopes, to infer desperate conclusions with respect to himself, to regard his former comforts as vain delusions, and his professions as hypocrisy; at such a time much diligence is necessary to keep the heart from despondency. The Christian's distress arises from his apprehension of his spiritual state, and in general he argues against his possessing true religion, either from his having relapsed into the same sins from which he had formerly been recovered with shame and sorrow; or from the sensible declining of his affections from God; or from the strength of his affections toward creature enjoyments; or from his enlargement in public, while he is often confined and barren in private duties; or from some horrible suggestions of Satan, with which his soul is greatly perplexed; or, lastly, from God's silence and seeming denial of his long depending prayers. Now in order to the establishment and support of the heart under these circumstances, it is necessary that you be acquainted with some general truths which have a tendency to calm the trembling and doubting soul; and that you be rightly instructed with regard to the above-mentioned causes of disquiet. Let me direct your attention to the following general truths:

1. Every appearance of hypocrisy does not prove the person who manifests it to be a hypocrite. You should carefully distinguish between the appearance and the predominance of hypocrisy. There are remains of deceitfulness in the best hearts; this was exemplified in David and Peter; but the prevailing frame of their hearts being upright, they were not denominated hypocrites for their conduct.

2. We ought to regard what can be said in our favor, as well as what may be said against us. It is the sin of upright persons sometimes, to exercise an unreasonable severity against themselves. They do not impartially consider the state of their souls. To make their state appear butter than it really is, indeed is the damning sin of self-flattering hypocrites; and to make their state appear worse than it really is, is the sin and folly of some good persons. But why should you be such an enemy to your own peace? Why read over the evidences of God's love to your soul, as a man does a book which he intends to confute? Why do you study evasions, and turn off those comforts

which are due to you?

3. Every thing which may be an occasion of grief to the people of God, is not a sufficient ground for their questioning the reality of their religion. Many things may trouble, which ought not to stumble you. If upon every occasion you should call in question all that had ever been wrought upon you, your life would be made up of doubtings and fears, and you could never attain that settled inward peace, and live that life of praise and thankfulness which the Gospel requires.

4. The soul is not at all times in a suitable state to pass a right judgment upon itself. It is peculiarly unqualified for this in the hour of desertion or temptation. Such seasons must be improved rather for watching and resisting, than for judging and determining.

5. Whatever be the ground of one's distress, it should drive him to, not from God. Suppose you have sinned thus and so, or that you have been thus long and sadly deserted, yet you have no right to infer that you ought to be discouraged, as if there was no help for you in God. When you have well digested these truths, if your doubts and distress remain, consider what is now to be offered:

1. Are you ready to conclude that you have no part in the favor of God, because you are visited with some extraordinary affliction? If so, do you then rightly conclude that great trials are tokens of God's hatred? Does the Scripture teach this? And dare you infer the same with respect to all who have been as much or more afflicted than yourself? If the argument is good in your case, it is good in application to theirs, and more conclusive with respect to them, in proportion as their trials were greater than yours. Wo then to David, Job, Paul, and all who have been afflicted as they were! But had you passed along in quietness and prosperity; had God withheld those chastisements with which he ordinarily visits his people, would you not have had far more reason for doubts and distress than you now have?

2. Do you rashly infer that the Lord has no love to you, because he has withdrawn the light of his countenance? Do you imagine your state to be hopeless, because it is dark and uncomfortable? Be not hasty in forming this conclusion. If any of the dispensations of God to his people will bear a favorable as well as a harsh construction, why should they not be construed in the best sense? And may not God have a design of love rather than of hatred in the dispensation under which you mourn? May he not depart for a season, without departing for ever? You are not the first that have mistaken the design of God in withdrawing himself. "Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, my Lord hath forgotten me." But was it so? What saith the answer of God? "Can a woman forget her sucking child?" &c. But do you sink down under the apprehension that the evidences of a total and final desertion are discoverable in your experience? Have you then lost your conscientious tenderness with regard to sin? and are you inclined to forsake God? If so, you have reason indeed to be alarmed. But if your conscience is tenderly alive; if you are resolved to cleave to the Lord; if the language of your heart is, I cannot forsake God, I cannot live without his presence; though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: then you have reason to hope that he will visit you again. It is by these exercises that he still maintains his interest in you.

Once more. Are sense and feelings suitable to judge of the dispensations of God by? Can their testimony be safely relied on? Is it safe to argue thus: 'If God bad any love for my soul, I should feel it now as well as in former times; but I cannot feel it, therefore it is gone?' May you not as well

conclude, when the sun is invisible to you, that he has ceased to exist? Read Isaiah 1:10.

Now if there is nothing in the divine dealings with you which is a reasonable ground of your despondency and distress, let us inquire what there is in your own conduct for which you should be so cast down:

1. Have you committed sins from which you were formerly recovered with shame and sorrow? And do you thence conclude that you sin allowedly and habitually, and that your oppositions to sin were hypocritical? But do not too hastily give up all for lost. Is not your repentance and care renewed as often as you commit sin? Is it not the sin itself which troubles you, and is it not true, that the oftener you sin the more you are distressed? It is not so in customary sinning; of which Bernard excellently discourses thus: “When a man accustomed to restrain, sins grievously, it seems insupportable to him, yea he seems to descend alive into hell. In process of time it seems not insupportable, but heavy, and between insupportable and heavy there is no small descent. Next, such sinning becomes light, his conscience smites but faintly, and he regards not her rebukes. Then he is not only insensible to his guilt, but that which was bitter and displeasing has become in some degree sweet and pleasant. Now it is made a custom, and not only pleases, but pleases habitually. At length custom becomes nature; he cannot be dissuaded from it, but defends and pleads for it.” This is allowed and customary sinning, this is the way of the wicked. But is not your way the contrary of this?

2. Do you apprehend a decline of your affections from God and from spiritual subjects? This may be your case, and yet there may be hope. But possibly you are mistaken with regard to this. There are many things to be learnt in Christian experience; it has relation to a great variety of subjects. You may now be learning what it is very necessary for you to know as a Christian. Now, what if you are not sensible of so lively affections, of such ravishing views as you had at first; may not your piety be growing more solid and consistent, and better adapted to practical purposes? Does it follow from your not always being in the same frame of mind, or from the fact that the same objects do not at all times excite the same feelings, that you have no true religion? Perhaps you deceive yourself by looking forward to what you would be, rather than contemplating what you are, compared with what you once were.

3. If the strength of your love to creature-enjoyments is the ground of desperate conclusions respecting yourself, perhaps you argue thus: “I fear that I love the creature more than God, if so, I have not true love to God. I sometimes feel stronger affections toward earthly comforts than I do toward heavenly objects, therefore my soul is not upright within me.” If, indeed, you love the creature for itself, if you make it your end, and religion but a means, then you conclude rightly; for this is incompatible with supreme love to God. But may not a man love God more ardently and unchangeably than he does any thing, or all things else, and yet, when God is not the direct object of his thoughts, may he not be sensible of more violent affection for the creature than he has at that time for God? As rooted malice indicates a stronger hatred than sudden though inure violent passion; so we must judge of our love, not by a violent motion of it now and then, but by the depth of its root and the constancy of its exercise. Perhaps your difficulty results from bringing your love to some foreign and improper test. Many persons have feared that when brought to some eminent trial they should renounce Christ and cleave to the creature; but when the trial came, Christ was every thing, and the world as nothing in their esteem. Such were the fears of some martyrs whose

victory was complete. But you may expect divine assistance only at the time of, and in proportion to your necessity. If you would try your love, see whether you are willing to forsake Christ now.

4. Is the want of that enlargement in private which you find in public exercises an occasion of doubts and fears? Consider then whether there are not some circumstances attending public duties which are peculiarly calculated to excite your feelings and elevate your mind, and which cannot affect you in private. If so, your exercises in secret, if performed faithfully and in a suitable manner, may he profitable, though they have not all the characteristics of those in public. If you imagine that you have spiritual enlargement and enjoyment in public exercises while you neglect private duties, doubtless you deceive yourself. Indeed if you live in the neglect of secret duties, or are careless about them, you have great reason to fear. But if you regularly and faithfully perform them, it does not follow that they are vain and worthless, or that they are not of great value, because they are not attended with so much enlargement as you sometimes find in public. And what if the Spirit is pleased more highly to favor you with his gracious influence in one place and at one time than another, should this be a reason for murmuring and unbelief, or for thankfulness?

5. The vile or blasphemous suggestions of Satan sometimes occasion great perplexity and distress.— They seem to lay open an abyss of corruption in the heart, and to say there can be no grace here. But there may be grace in the heart where such thoughts are injected, though not, in the heart which consents to and cherishes them. Do you then abhor and oppose them? do you utterly refuse to give up yourself to their influence, and strive to keep holy and reverend thoughts of God, and of all religious objects? If so, such suggestions are involuntary, and no evidence against your piety.

6. Is the seeming denial of your prayers an occasion of despondency? Are you disposed to say, “If God had any regard for my soul he would have heard my petitions before now; but I have no answer from him, and therefore no interest in him?” But stay: though God’s abhorring and finally rejecting prayer is an evidence that he rejects the person who prays, yet, dare you conclude that he has rejected you, because an answer to your prayers is delayed, or because you do not discover it if granted? “May not God bear long with his own elect, that cry unto him day and night?”

Others have stumbled upon the same ground with you: “I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardst the voice of my supplication.” Now are there not some things in your experience which indicate that your prayers are not rejected, though answer to them is deferred? Are you not disposed to continue praying though you do not discover an answer? Are you not disposed still to ascribe righteousness to God, while you consider the cause of his silence as being in yourself? Thus did David: “O my God, I cry in the day time, and thou hearest not; and in the night, and am not silent: but thou art holy,” &c. Does not the delay of an answer to your prayers excite you to examine your own heart and try your ways, that you may find and remove the difficulty? If so, you may have reason for humiliation, but not for despair.

Thus I have shown you how to keep your heart in dark and doubting seasons. God forbid that any false heart should encourage itself from these things. It is lamentable, that when we give saints and sinners their proper portions, each is so prone to take up the other’s part.

XI. Another season, wherein the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when sufferings for religion are laid upon us. . . .

XI. Another season, wherein the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when sufferings for religion are laid upon us. Blessed is the man who in such a season is not offended in Christ. Now, whatever may be the kind or degree of your sufferings, if they are sufferings for Christ's sake and the Gospel's, spare no diligence to keep your heart. If you are tempted to shrink or waver under them, let what follows help you to repel and to surmount the instigation:

1. What reproach would you cast upon the Redeemer and his religion by deserting him at such a time as this! You would proclaim to the world, that how much soever you have boasted of the promises when you are put to the proof you dare hazard no thing upon your faith in them; and this will give the enemies of Christ an occasion to blaspheme. And will you thus furnish the triumphs of the uncircumcised? Ah, if you did but value the name of Christ as much as many wicked men value their names, you could never endure that his should be exposed to contempt. Will proud dust and ashes hazard death or hell rather than have their names disgraced, and will you endure nothing to maintain the honor of Christ?

2. Dare you violate your conscience out of complaisance to flesh and blood? Who will comfort you when your conscience accuses and condemns you? What happiness can there be in life, liberty or friends, when inward peace is taken away? Consider well what you do.

3. Is not the public interest of Christ and his cause infinitely more important than any interest of your own, and should you not prefer his glory and the welfare of his kingdom before every thing else? Should any temporary suffering, or any sacrifice which you can be called to make, be suffered to come into competition with the honor of his name?

4. Did the Redeemer neglect your interest and think lightly of you, when for your sake he endured sufferings between which and yours there can be no comparison? Did he hesitate and shrink back? No: "He endured the cross, despising the shame." And did he with unbroken patience and constancy endure so much for you; and will you flinch from momentary suffering in his cause?

5. Can you so easily cast off the society and the privileges of the saints and go over to the enemy's side? Are you willing to withhold your support from those who are determined to persevere, and throw your influence in the scale against them? Rather let your body and soul be rent asunder. "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."

6. How can you stand before Christ in the day of judgment, if you desert him now? "He that is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." Yet a little while, and the Son of man will come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, to judge the world. He will sit upon the throne of judgment, while all the nations are brought before him. Imagine yourself now to be witnessing the transactions of that day. Behold the wicked; behold the apostates; and hear the consuming sentence which is pronounced upon them, and see them sinking in the gulf of infinite and everlasting wo! And will you desert Christ now, will you forsake his cause to save a little suffering, or to protract an unprofitable life on earth, and thus expose yourself to the doom of the apostate? Remember, that if you can silence the remonstrances of conscience now, you cannot hinder the sentence of the Judge then. By these means keep your heart, that it depart not from the living God.

XII. The last season which I shall mention, in which the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when we are warned by sickness that our dissolution is at hand. . . .

XII. The last season which I shall mention, in which the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when we are warned by sickness that our dissolution is at hand. When the child of God draws nigh to eternity, the adversary makes his last effort; and as he cannot win the soul from God, as he cannot dissolve the bond which unites the soul to Christ, his great design is to awaken fears of death, to fill the mind with aversion and horror at the thoughts of dissolution from the body. Hence, what shrinking from a separation, what fear to grasp death's cold hand, and unwillingness to depart, may sometimes be observed in the people of God. But we ought to die, as well as live, like saints.

I shall offer several considerations calculated to help the people of God in time of sickness, to keep their hearts loose from all earthly objects, and cheerfully willing to die:

1. Death is harmless to the people of God; its shafts leave no sting in them. Why then are you afraid that your sickness may be unto death? If you were to die in your sins; if death were to reign over you as a tyrant, to feed upon you as a lion doth upon his prey; if death to you were to be the precursor of hell, then you might reasonably startle and shrink back from it with horror and dismay. But if your sins are blotted out; if Christ has vanquished death in your behalf, so that you have nothing to encounter but bodily pain, and possibly not even that; if death will be to you the harbinger of heaven, why should you be afraid? why not bid it welcome? It cannot hurt you; it is easy and harmless; it is like putting off your clothes, on taking rest.

2. It may keep your heart from shrinking back, to consider that death is necessary to fit you for the full enjoyment of God. Whether you are willing to die or not, there certainly is no other way to complete the happiness of your soul. Death must do you the kind office to remove this veil of flesh, this animal life which separates you from God, before you can see and enjoy him fully. "Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord." And who would not be willing to die for the perfect enjoyment of God? Methinks one should look and sigh, like a prisoner, through the grates of this mortality: "O that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest." Indeed most men need patience to die; but a saint, who understands what death will introduce him to, rather needs patience to live. On his death-bed he should often look out and listen to his Lord's coming; and when he perceives his dissolution to be near, he should say, "The voice of my beloved; behold he cometh, leaping over the mountains, skipping over the hills."

3. Consider that the happiness of heaven commences immediately after death. That happiness will not be deferred till the resurrection; but as soon as death has passed upon you, your soul will be swallowed up in life. When you have once loosed from this shore, you shall be quickly wafted to the shore of a glorious eternity. And can you not say, I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ? Did the soul and body die together, or did they sleep till the resurrection, as some have fancied, it would have been folly for Paul to desire a dissolution for the enjoyment of Christ; because he would have enjoyed more in the body than he could have enjoyed out of it. The Scripture speaks of but two ways in which the soul can properly live: viz, by faith and vision. These two comprehend its present and future existence.

Now, if when faith fails, sight should not immediately succeed, what would become of the soul? But the truth on this subject is clearly revealed in Scripture. See Luke 23:3; John 14:3, &c. What a blessed change then will death make in your condition! Rouse up, dying saint, and rejoice; let death do his work, that the angels may conduct your soul to the world of light.

4. It may increase your willingness to die, to reflect that by death God often removes his people out of the way of great troubles and temptations. When some extraordinary calamity is coming upon the world, God sometimes removes his saints out of the way of the evil. Thus Methuselah died the year before the flood; Augustine a little before the sacking of Hippo; Pareus just before the taking of Heidelburg. Luther observes that all the apostles died before the destruction of Jerusalem; and Luther himself died before the wars broke out in Germany. Now it may be that by death you will escape some grievous trial, which you could not and need not endure. But if no extraordinary trouble would come upon you in case your life were prolonged, yet God designs by death to relieve you from innumerable evils and burdens which are inseparable from the present state. Thus you will be delivered from indwelling sin, which is the greatest trouble; from all temptations from whatever source; from bodily tempers and embarrassments; and from all the afflictions and sorrows of this life. The days of your mourning will be ended, and God will wipe away all tears from your eyes. Why then should you not hasten to depart?

5. If you still linger, like Lot in Sodom, what are your pleas and pretences for a longer life? Why are you unwilling to die? Are you concerned for the welfare of your relations? If so, are you anxious for their temporal support? Then let the word of God satisfy you: “Leave thy fatherless children to me, I will keep them alive, and let thy widows trust in me.” Luther says, in his last will, “Lord, thou hast given inc a wife and children, I have nothing to leave them, but I commit them unto thee. O Father of the fatherless and Judge of widows, nourish, keep and teach them.” But are you concerned for the spiritual welfare of your relations? Remember that you cannot convert them, if you should live; and God can make your prayers and counsels effectual when you are dead.

Perhaps you desire to serve God longer in this world. But if he has nothing further for you to do here, why not say with David, “Here am I, let him do what seemeth him good.” He is calling you to higher service in heaven, and can accomplish by other hands what you desire to do further here.—Do you feel too imperfect to go to heaven? Consider that you must be imperfect until you die; your sanctification cannot be complete until you get to heaven.

‘But,’ you say, ‘I want assurance; if I had that I could die easily.’ Consider, then, that a hearty willingness to leave all the world to be freed from sin, and to be with God, is the direct way to that desired assurance; no carnal person was ever willing to die upon this ground.

Thus I have shown how the people of God, in the most difficult seasons, may keep their hearts with alt diligence.

I now proceed to improve and apply the subject: . . .

You have seen that the keeping of the heart is the great work of a Christian, in which the very soul and life of religion consists, and without which all other duties are of no value in the sight of God. Hence, to the consternation of hypocrites and formal professors, I infer:

1. That the pains and labors which many persons have undergone in religion are of no value, and will turn to no good account. Many splendid services have been performed by men, which God will utterly reject: they will not stand on record in order to an eternal acceptance, because the performers took no heed to keep their hearts with God. This is that fatal rock on which thousands of vain professors dash and ruin themselves eternally; they are exact about the externals of religion, but regardless of their hearts. O how many hours have some professors spent in hearing, praying, reading and conferring! and yet, as to the main end of religion, they might as well have sat still and done nothing, the great work, I mean heart-work, being all the while neglected. Tell me, vain professor, when did you shed a tear for the deadness, hardness, unbelief or earthliness of your heart? And do you think your easy religion can save you? If so, you must invert Christ's words, and say, Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to life, and many there be that go in thereat! Hear me, ye self-deluding hypocrite; you who have put off God with heartless duties; you who have acted in religion as if you had been blessing an idol; you who could not search your heart, and regulate it, and exercise it in your performances; how will you abide the coming of the Lord? how will you hold up your head before him, when he shall say. 'O you dissembling, false-hearted man! how could you profess religion? with what face could you so often tell me that you loved me, when you knew in your conscience that your heart was not with me?' O tremble to think what a fearful judgment it is to be given over to a heedless and careless heart, and then to have religious duties instead of a rattle to quiet and still the conscience!

2. I infer for their humiliation, that unless the people of God spend more time and pains about their hearts than they ordinarily do, they are never like to do God much service, or to possess much comfort in this world. I may say of that Christian who is remiss and careless in keeping his heart, as Jacob said of Reuben, Thou shalt not excel. It grieves me to see how many Christians there are who live at a poor, low rate, both of service and comfort, and who go up and down dejected and complaining. But how can they expect it should be otherwise, while they live so carelessly?

O how little of their time is spent in the closet, in searching, humbling, and quickening their hearts!

Christian, you say your heart is dead, and do you wonder that it is, so long as you keep it not with the fountain of life? If your body had been dieted as your soul has, that would have been dead too. And you may never expect that your heart will be in a better state until you take more pains with it.

O Christians! I fear your zeal and strength have run in the wrong channel; I fear that most of us may take up the Church's complaint: "They have made me the keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vine-yard have I not kept." Two things have eaten up the time and strength of the professors of this generation, and sadly diverted them from heart-work.

First:—Fruitless controversies, started by Satan, I doubt not for the very purpose of taking us off from practical godliness, to make us puzzle our heads when we should be inspecting our hearts. How little have we regarded the observation: "It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, and not with meats," (that is, with disputes and controversies about meats,) "which have not profited them that have been occupied therein." How much better it is to see men live exactly, than to hear them dispute with subtlety! These unfruitful questions, how have they rent the churches, wasted time and spirits, and taken Christians off from their main business! 'What think you, would it not have been better if the questions agitated among the people of God of late had been such as these:—"How shall a man distinguish the special from the common operations of the Spirit? How

may a soul discern its first backslidings from God? How may a backsliding Christian recover his first love? How may the heart be preserved from unseasonable thoughts in duty? How may a bosom-sin be discovered and mortified?“ &c. Would not this course have tended more to the honor of religion and the comfort of souls? I am ashamed that the professors of this generation are yet insensible of their folly. O that God would turn their disputes and contentions into practical godliness!

Second:—Worldly cares and incumbrances have greatly increased the neglect of our hearts. The heads and hearts of multitudes have been filled with such a crowd and noise of worldly business that they have lamentably declined in their zeal, their love, their delight in God, and their heavenly, serious, and profitable way of conversing with men. How miserably have we entangled ourselves in this wilderness of trifles! Our discourses, our conferences, nay, our very prayers are tinged with it. We have had so much to do without, that we have been able to do but little within. And how many precious opportunities have we thus lost? How many admonitions of the Spirit have passed over unfruitfully? How often has the Lord called to us, when our worldly thoughts have prevented us from hearing? But there certainly is a way to enjoy God even in our worldly employments. If we lose our views of him when engaged in our temporal affairs, the fault is our own. Alas! that Christians should stand at the door of eternity, having more work upon their hands than their time is sufficient for, and yet be filling their heads and hearts with trifles!

3. I infer, lastly, for the awakening of all, that if the keeping of the heart be the great work of a Christian, then there are but few real Christians in the world. If every one who has learned the dialect of Christianity, and who can talk like a saint; if every one who has gifts and parts, and who can make shift to preach, pray, or discourse like a Christian: in a word, if all such as associate with the people of God and partake of ordinances may pass for Christians, then indeed the number is great. But alas! how few can he found, if you judge them by this rule,—how few are there who conscientiously keep their hearts, watch their thoughts and look scrupulously to their motives! Indeed there are few closet-men among professors. It is easier for men to be reconciled to any other duties in religion than to these. The profane part of the world will not so much as meddle with the outside of any religious duties, and least of all with these; and as to the hypocrite, though he may be very particular in externals, you can never persuade him to undertake this inward, this difficult work; this work, to which there is no inducement from human applause; this work, which would quickly discover what the hypocrite cares not to know: so that by general consent this heart-work is left to the hands of a few retired ones, and I tremble to think in how few hands it is.

II. If the keeping of the heart be so important a business; if such great advantages result from it; if so many valuable interests be wrapt up in it, then let me call upon the people of God every where to engage heartily in this work. O study your hearts, watch your hearts, keep your hearts! Away with fruitless controversies and all idle questions; away with empty names and vain shows; away with unprofitable discourse and bold censures of others, and turn in upon yourselves. O that this day, this hour, you would resolve upon doing so!

Reader, methinks I shall prevail with you. All that I beg for is this, that you would step aside oftener to talk with God and your own heart; that you would not suffer every trifle to divert you; that you would keep a more true and faithful account of your thoughts and affections; that you would seriously demand of your own heart at least every evening, ‘O my heart, where hast thou been

today, and what has engaged thy thoughts?'

If all that has been said by way of inducement be not enough, I have yet some motives to offer you:

If all that has been said by way of inducement be not enough, I have yet some motives to offer you:

1. The studying, observing, and diligently keeping your own heart, will surprisingly help you to understand the deep mysteries of religion. An honest, well-experienced heart is an excellent help to the head. Such a heart will serve for a commentary on a great part of the Scriptures. By means of such a heart you will have a better understanding of divine things than the most learned (graceless) man ever had, or call have; you will not only have a clearer, but a more interesting and profitable apprehension of them. A man may discourse orthodoxy and profoundly of the nature and effects of faith, the troubles and comforts of conscience, and the sweetness of communion with God, who never felt the efficacy and sweet impression of these things upon his own soul. But how dark and dry are his notions compared with those of an experienced Christian!

2. The study and observation of your own heart will powerfully secure you against the dangerous and infecting errors of the times in which you live. For what think you is the reason why so many professors have departed from the faith, giving heed to fables? why have so many been led away by the error of the wicked? why have those who have sown corrupt doctrines had such plentiful harvests among us, but because they have met with a race of professors who never knew what belongs to practical godliness and the study and keeping of their hearts?

3. Your care and diligence in keeping your heart will prove one of the best evidences of your sincerity. I know no external act of religion which truly distinguishes the sound from the unsound professor. It is marvellous how far hypocrites go in all external duties; how plausibly they can order the outward man, hiding all their indecencies from the observation of the world. But they take no heed to their hearts; they are not in secret what they appear to be in public; and before this test no hypocrite can stand. They may, indeed, in a fit of terror, or on a death-bed, cry out of the wickedness of their hearts; but such extort ed complaints are worthy of no regard. No credit, in law, is to be given to the testimony of one upon the rack, because it may be supposed that the extremity of his torture will make him say any thing to get relief. But if self-jealousy, care and watchfulness be the daily workings and frames of your heart, you have some evidence of your sincerity.

4. How comfortable and how profitable would all ordinances and duties be to you, if your heart was faithfully kept. What lively communion might you have with God every time you approach him, if your heart was in a right frame! You might then say with David, “My meditation of Him shall be sweet.” It is the indisposition of the heart which renders ordinances, and secret duties so comfortless to some. They strive to raise their hearts to God, now pressing this argument upon them, then that, to quicken and affect them; yet they often get nearly through the exercise before their hearts begin to be interested in it; and some times they go away no better than they came. But the Christian whose heart is prepared by being constantly kept, enters immediately and heartily into his duties; he outstrips his sluggish neighbor, gets the first sight of Christ in a sermon, the first seal from Christ in a sacrament, the first communication of grace and love in secret prayer.

Now if there be any thing valuable and comfortable in ordinances and private duties, look to your heart and keep it, I beseech you.

5. An acquaintance with your own heart will furnish you a fountain of matter in prayer. The man who is diligent in heart-work, will be richly supplied with matter in his addresses to God. He will not be confused for want of thoughts; his tongue will not falter for want of expressions.

6. The most desirable thing in the world, viz, the revival of religion among a people, may be effected by means of what I am urging upon you.

O that I might see the time when professors shall not walk in a vain show; when they shall please themselves no more with a name to live, while they are spiritually dead; when they shall be no more a company of frothy, vain persons; but when holiness shall shine in their conversation, and awe the world, and command reverence from all that are around them; when they shall warm the heart of those who come near them, and cause it to be said, God is in these men of a truth. And may such a time be expected? Until heart-work becomes the business of professors, I have no hope of seeing a time so blessed! Does it not grieve you to see how religion is contemned and trampled under foot, and the professors of it ridiculed and scorned in the world? Professors, would you recover your credit? would you obtain an honorable testimony in the consciences of your very enemies? Then keep your hearts.

7. By diligence in keeping our hearts we should prevent the occasions of fatal scandals and stumbling-blocks to the world. Wo to the world because of offences!

Keep your heart faithfully, and you will be prepared for any situation or service to which you may be called. This, and this only can properly fit you for usefulness in any station; but with this you can endure prosperity or adversity; you can deny yourself, and turn your hand to any work. Thus Paul turned every circumstance to good account, and made himself so eminently useful. When he preached to others, he provided against being cast away himself: he kept his heart; and every thing in which lie excelled seems to have had a close connection with his diligence in keeping his heart.

9. If the people of God would diligently keep their hearts, their communion with each other would be unspeakably more inviting and profitable. Then “how goodly would be thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!” It is the fellowship which the people of God have with the Father and with the Son that kindles the desires of others to have communion with them. I tell you, that if saints would be persuaded to spend more time and take more pains about their hearts, there would soon be such a divine excellence in their conversation that others would account it no small privilege to be with or near them. It is the pride, passion and earthliness of our hearts, that has spoiled Christian fellowship. Why is it that when Christians meet they are often jarring and contending, but because their passions arc unmortified? Whence come their uncharitable censures of their brethren, but from their ignorance of themselves? Why are they so rigid and unfeeling toward those who have fallen, but because they do not feel their own weakness and liability to temptation? Why is their discourse so light and unprofitable when they meet, but because their hearts are earthly and vain? But now, if Christians would study their hearts more and keep them better, the beauty and glory of communion would be restored. They would divide no more, contend no more, censure rashly no more. They will feel right one toward another, when

each is daily humbled under a sense of the evil of his own heart.

10. Lastly:—Keep your heart, and then the comforts of the Spirit and the influence of all ordinances will be more fixed and lasting than they now are. And do the consolations of God seem small to you?" Ah, you have reason to be ashamed that the ordinances of God, as to their quickening and comforting effects, should make so light and transient an impression on your heart.

Now, reader, consider well these special benefits of keeping the heart which I have mentioned. Examine their importance. Are they small matters? Is it a small matter to have your understanding assisted? your endangered soul rendered safe? your sincerity proved? your communion with God sweetened? your heart filled with matter for prayer? Is it a small thing to have the power of godliness? all fatal scandals removed? an instrumental fitness to serve Christ obtained? the communion of saints restored to its primitive glory? and the influence of ordinances abiding in the souls of saints? If these are no common blessings, no ordinary benefits, then surely it is a great and in dispensable duty to keep the heart with all diligence. And now are you inclined to undertake the business of keeping your heart? are you resolved upon it? I charge you, then, to engage in it earnestly. Away with every cowardly feeling, and make up your mind to encounter difficulties. Draw your armor from the word of God. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in its commands, its promises, its threatenings; let it be fixed in your understanding, your memory, your conscience, your affections. You must learn to wield the sword of the Spirit (which is the word of God) familiarly, if you would defend your heart and conquer your enemies. You must call yourself frequently to an account; examine yourself as in the presence of the all seeing God; bring your conscience, as it were, to the bar of judgment. Beware how you plunge yourself into a multiplicity of worldly business; how you practise upon the maxims of the world; and how you venture at all to indulge your depraved propensities. You must exercise the utmost vigilance to discover and check the first symptoms of departure from God, the least decline of spirituality, or the least indisposition to meditation by yourself and holy conversation and fellowship with others. These things you must undertake, in the strength of Christ, with invincible resolution in the outset. And if you thus engage in this great work, he assured you shall not spend your strength for naught; comforts which you never felt or thought of will flow in upon you from every side. The diligent prosecution of this work will constantly afford you the most powerful excitements to vigilance and ardor in the life of faith, while it increases your strength and wears out your enemies. And when you have kept your heart with all diligence a little while; when you have fought the battles of this spiritual warfare, gained the ascendancy over the corruptions within, and vanquished the enemies without, then God will open the gate of heaven to you, and give you the portion which is promised to them that overcome. Awake then, this moment; get the world under your feet pant not for the things which a man may have, and eternally lose his soul; but bless God that you may have his service here, and the glory hereafter which he appoints to his chosen.

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

04.04a. The Time of Prosperity

The Time of Prosperity

I proceed,

Thirdly, To point out those special seasons in the life of a Christian which require our utmost diligence in keeping the heart. Though (as was observed before) the duty is always binding, and there is no time or condition of life in which we may be excused from this work; yet there are some signal seasons, critical hours, requiring more than common vigilance over the heart.

1. The first season is the time of prosperity, when Providence smiles upon us. Now, Christian, keep thy heart with all diligence; for it will be very apt to grow secure, proud and earthly. “To see a man humble in prosperity,”(says Bernard,) “is one of the greatest rarties in the world.” Even a good Hezekiah could not hide a vain-glorious temper in his temptation; hence that caution to Israel: “And it shall be, when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he aware to thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities which thou bulkiest not, and houses full of all good things which thou filledst not,” &c. “then beware lest thou forget the Lord.” So indeed it happened: for “Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked?’ How then may a Christian keep his heart from pride and carnal security under the smiles of Providence and the confluence of creature-comforts?

There are several helps to secure the heart from the dangerous snares of prosperity.

1. Consider the dangerous ensnaring temptations attending a pleasant and prosperous condition. Few, very few of those that live in the pleasures of this world, escape everlasting perdition. “It is easier” (says Christ) “for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.” “Not many mighty, not many noble are called.”

We have great reason to tremble, when the Scripture tells us in general that few shall be saved; much more when it tells us, that of that rank of which we are, but few shall be saved. When Joshua. called all the tribes of Israel to cast lots for the discovery of Achan, doubtless Achan feared; when the tribe of Judah was taken, his fear increased; but when the family of the Zarhites was taken, it was time to tremble. So when the Scriptures come so near as to tell us that of such a class of men very few shall escape, it is time to be alarmed.. “I should woner” (says Chrysostom) “if any of the rulers be saved.” O how many have been wheeled to hell in the chariots of earthly pleasures, while others have been whipped to heaven by the rod of affliction! How few, like the daughter of Tyre, come to Christ with a gift! How few among the rich entreat his favor!

2. It may keep one more humble and watchful in prosperity, to consider that among Christians many have been much the worse for it. How good had it been for some of them, if they had never known prosperity! When they were in a low condition, how humble, spiritual and heavenly they were but when advanced, what an apparent alteration has been upon their spirits! It was so with Israel; when they were in a low condition in the wilderness, then Israel was “holiness to the Lord;”

but when they came into Canaan and were richly fed, their language was, “We are lords, we will come no more unto thee." Outward gains are ordinarily attended with inward losses; as in a low condition their civil employments were wont to have a savor of their religious duties, so in an exalted condition their duties commonly have a savor of the world. He, indeed, is rich in grace whose graces are not hindered by his riches. There are but few Jehosaphats in the world, of whom it is said, “He had silver and gold in abundance, and his heart was lifted up in the way of God’s commands.” Will not this keep thy heart humble in prosperity, to think how dearly many godly men have paid for their riches; that through them they have lost that which all the world cannot purchase?

3. Keep down thy vain heart by this consideration; God values no man the more for these things. God values no man by outward excellencies, but by inward graces; they are the internal ornaments of the Spirit, which are of great price in God’s sight. God despises all worldly glory, and accepts no man’s person; “but in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him.” Indeed, if the judgment of God went by the same rule that man’s does, we might value ourselves by these things, and stand upon them: but so much every man is, as he is in the judgment of God. Does thy heart yet swell, and will neither of the former considerations keep it humble?

4. Consider how bitterly many dying persons have bewailed their folly in setting their hearts upon these things, and have wished that they had never known them. How dreadful was the situation of Pius Quintus, who died crying out despairingly, “When I was in a low condition I had some hopes of salvation, when I was advanced to be a cardinal, I greatly doubted; but since I came to the popedom I have no hope at all.” An author also tells us a real, but sad story of a rich oppressor, who had scraped up a great estate for his only son: when he came to die he called his son to him, and said, “Son, do you indeed love me?” The son answered that “Nature, besides his paternal, indulgence, obliged him to that.” “Then (said the father) express it by this: hold thy finger in the candle as long as I am saying a prayer.” The son attempted, but could not endure it. Upon that the father broke out into these expressions: “Thou canst not suffer the burning of thy finger for me; but to get this wealth I have hazarded my soul for thee and must burn, body and soul, in hell, for thy sake; thy pains would have been but for a moment, but mine will be unquenchable fire.”

5. The heart may be kept humble by considering of what a clogging nature earthly things are to a soul heartily engaged in the way to heaven. They shut out much of heaven from us at present, though they may not shut us out of heaven at last. If thou consider thyself as a stranger in this world, traveling for heaven, thou hast then as much reason to be delighted with these things as a weary horse has to be pleased with a heavy burden. There was a serious truth in the atheistical scoff of Julian: when taking away the Christians’ estates, he told them “it was to make them more fit for the kingdom of heaven.”

6. Is thy spirit still vain and lofty? Then urge upon it the consideration of that awful day of reckoning, wherein, according to our receipts of mercies shall be our account for them. Methinks this should awe and humble the vainest heart that ever was n the breast of a saint. Know for a certainty that the Lord records all the mercies that ever he gave thee, from the beginning to the end of thy life. “Remember, O my people, from Shittim unto Gilgal,” &c. Yes, they are exactly numbered and recorded in order to an account; and thy account will be suitable: “To whomsoever

much is given, of him shall, much be required." You are but a steward, and your Lord will come and take an account of you; and what a great account have you to make, who have much of this world in your hands.! What swift witnesses will your mercies be against you, if this be the best fruit of them!

7. It is a very humbling reflection, that the mercies of God should work otherwise upon my spirit than they used to do upon the spirits of others to whom they come as sanctified mercies from the love of God. Ah, Lord! what a sad consideration is this! enough to lay me in the dust, when I consider:

(1.) That their mercies have greatly humbled them, the higher God has raised them, the lower they have laid themselves before him. Thus did Jacob when God had given him much substance. "And Jacob said, I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, and all the truth which thou hast showed thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and am now become two bands." Thus also it was with holy David; when God had confirmed the promise to him, to build him a house, and not reject him as he did Saul, he goes in before the Lord and says, "Who am I, and what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" So indeed God required. When Israel brought to him the first fruits of Canaan, they were to say, "A Syrian ready to perish was my father," &c. Do others raise God the higher for his raising them? and the more God raises me, the more shall I abuse him and exalt myself? O how wicked is such conduct as this!

(2.) Others have freely ascribed the glory of all their enjoyments to God, and magnified not themselves, but him, for their mercies. Thus says David, "Let thy name be magnified and the house of thy servant be established." He does not fly upon the mercy and suck out its sweetness, looking no further than his own comfort: no, he cares for no mercy except God be magnified in it. So when God had delivered him from all his enemies, he says, "The Lord is my strength and my rock, he is become my salvation." Saints of old did not put the crown upon their own heads as I do by my vanity.

(3.) The mercies of God have been melting mercies unto others, melting their souls in love to the God of their mercies. When Hannah received the mercy of a son, she said, "My soul rejoiceth in the Lord;" not in the mercy, but in the God of the mercy. So also Mary: "My soul doth magnify the Lord; my spirit rejoiceth in God my Savior." The word signifies to make more room for God; their hearts were not contracted, but the more enlarged to God.

(4.) The mercies of God have been great restraints to keep others from sin. "Seeing thou, our God, hast given us such a deliverance as this, should we again break thy commandments?" Ingenuous souls have felt the force of the obligations of love and mercy upon them.

(5.) The mercies of God to others have been as oil to the wheels of their obedience, and made them more fit for service. Now if mercies work contrarily upon my heart, what cause have I to be afraid that they come not to me in love! It is enough to damp the spirits of any saint, to see what sweet effects mercies have had upon others, and what bitter effects upon him.

II. The second season in the life of a Christian, requiring more than common diligence to keep his heart, is the time of adversity. . .

II. The second season in the life of a Christian, requiring more than common diligence to keep his heart, is the time of adversity. When Providence frowns upon you, and blasts your outward comforts, then look to your heart; keep it with all diligence from repining against God, or fainting under his hand; for troubles, though sanctified, are troubles still. Jonah was a good man, and yet how fretful was his heart under affliction! Job was the mirror of patience, yet how was his heart discomposed by trouble! You will find it hard to get a composed spirit under great afflictions. O the hurries and tumults which they occasion even in the best hearts I—Let me show you, then, how a Christian under great afflictions may keep his heart from repining or desponding, under the hand of God.

I will here offer several helps to keep the heart in this condition.

1. By these cross providences God is faithfully pursuing the great design of electing love upon the souls of his people, and orders all these afflictions as means sanctified to that end. Afflictions come not by casualty, but by counsel. By this counsel of God they are ordained as means of much spiritual good to saints. “By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged,” &c. “But he for our profit,” &c. “All things work together for good,” &c. They are God’s workmen upon our hearts, to pull down the pride and carnal security of them; and being so, their nature is changed; they are turned into blessings and benefits. “It is good for me that I have been afflicted,” says David. Surely then thou hast no reason to quarrel with God, but rather to wonder that he should concern himself so much in thy good as to use any means for accomplishing it. Paul could bless God if by any means he might attain the resurrection of the dead. “My brethren,” says James, “count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations.” ‘My Father is about a design of love upon my soul, and do I well to be angry with him? All that he does is in pursuance of, and in reference to some eternal, glorious ends upon my soul. It is my ignorance of God’s design that makes me quarrel with him.’ He says to thee in this case, as he did to Peter, “What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.”

2. Though God has reserved to himself a liberty of afflicting his people, yet he has tied up his own hands by promise never to take away his loving kindness from them. Can I contemplate this scripture with a repining, discontented spirit: “I will be his Father, and be shall be my son: if he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of man, and with the stripes of the children of men nevertheless my mercy shall not depart away from him.” O my heart, my haughty heart! dost thou well to be discontent, when God has given thee the whole tree, with all the clusters of comfort growing on it, because he suffers the wind to blow down a few leaves? Christians have two kinds of goods, the goods of the throne and the goods of the footstool; immoveables and moveables. If God has secured those, never let my heart be troubled at the loss of these: indeed, if he had cut off his love or discovenanted my soul; I had reason to be cast down; but this he hath not done, nor can he do it.

3. It is of great efficacy to keep the heart from sinking under afflictions, to call to mind that thine own Father has the ordering of them. Not a creature moves hand or tongue against thee but by his permission. Suppose the cup be bitter, yet it is the cup which thy Father hath given thee; and canst thou suspect poison to be in it? Foolish man, put home the case to thine own heart; canst thou give thy child that which would ruin him? No! thou wouldst as soon hurt thyself as him. “If thou then, being evil, knowest how to give good gifts to thy children,” how much more does God! The

very consideration of his nature as a God of love, pity, and tender mercies; or of his relation to thee as a father, husband, friend, may be security enough, if he had not spoken a word to quiet thee in this case; and yet you have his word too, by the prophet Jeremiah: “I will do you no hurt.” You lie too near his heart for him to hurt you; nothing grieves him more than your groundless and unworthy suspicions of his designs. Would it not grieve a faithful, tender-hearted physician, when he had studied the case of his patient, and prepared the most excellent medicines to save his life, to hear him cry out, ‘O he has undone me! he has poisoned me!’ because it pains him in the operation?. O when will you be ingenuous?

4. God respects you as much in a low as in a high condition; and therefore it need not so much trouble you to be made low; nay, he manifests more of his love, grace and tenderness in the time of affliction than in the time of prosperity. As God did not at first choose you because you were high, he will not now forsake you because you are low. Men may look shy upon you, and alter their respects as your condition is altered; when Providence has blasted your estate, your summer-friends may grow strange, fearing you may be troublesome to them; but will God do so? No, no: “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” says he. If adversity and poverty could bar you from access to God, it were indeed a deplorable condition: but, so far from this, you may go to him as freely as ever. “My God will hear me,” says the church. Poor David, when stripped of all earthly comforts, could encourage himself in the Lord his God; and why cannot you? Suppose your husband or son had lost all at sea, and should come to you in rags; could you deny the relation, or refuse to entertain him? If you would not, much less will God. Why then are you so troubled? Though your condition be changed, your Father’s love is not changed.

5. What if by the loss of outward comforts God preserves your soul from the ruining power of temptation? Surely then you have little cause to sink your heart by such sad thoughts. Do not earthly enjoyments make men shrink and warp in times of trial? For the love of these many have forsaken Christ in such an hour. The young ruler “went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.” If this is God’s design, how ungrateful to murmur against him for it! We see mariners in a storm can throw overboard the most valuable goods to preserve their lives. We know it is usual for soldiers in a besieged city to destroy the finest buildings without the walls in which the enemy may take shelter; and no one doubts that it is wisely done. Those who have mortified limbs willingly stretch them out to be cut off, and not only thank, but pay the surgeon. Must God be murmured against for casting over that which would sink you in a storm; for pulling down that which would assist your enemy in the siege of temptation; for cutting off what would endanger your everlasting life? O, inconsiderate, ungrateful man! are not these things for which thou grievest, the very things that have ruined thousands of souls?

6. It would much support thy heart under adversity, to consider that God by such humbling providences maybe accomplishing that for which you have long prayed and waited. And should you be troubled at that? Say, Christian, hast thou not many prayers depending before God upon such accounts as these; that he would keep thee from sin; discover to thee the emptiness of the creature; that he would mortify and. kill thy lusts; that thy. heart may never find rest in any enjoyment but Christ? By such humbling and impoverishing strokes God may be fulfilling thy desire. Wouldst thou be kept from sin? Lo, he hath hedged up thy way with thorns. Wouldst thou see the creature’s vanity? Thy affliction is a fair glass to discover it; for the vanity of the creature is never so effectually and sensibly discovered, as in our own experience. Wouldst thou have thy

corruptions mortified? This is the way: to have the food and fuel removed that maintained them; for as prosperity begat and fed them, so adversity, when sanctified, is a means to kill them. Wouldst thou have thy heart rest no where but in the bosom of God? What better method could Providence take to accomplish thy desire than pulling from under thy head that soft pillow of creature-delights on which you rested before? And yet you fret at this: peevish child, how dost thou try thy Father's patience! If he delay to answer thy prayers, thou art ready to say he regards thee not; if he does that which really answers the end of them, though not in the way which you expect, you murmur against him for that; as if, instead of answering, he were crossing all thy hopes and aims. Is this ingenuous? Is it not enough that God is so gracious as to do what thou desirest: must thou be so impudent as to expect him to do it in the way which thou prescribest?

7. It may support thy heart, to consider that in these troubles God is performing that work in which thy soul would rejoice, if thou didst see the design of it. We are clouded with much ignorance, and are not able to discern how particular providences tend to the fulfillment of God's designs; and therefore, like Israel in the wilderness, are often murmuring, because Providence leads us about in a howling desert, where we are exposed to difficulties; though then he led them, and is now4eading us, by the right way to a city of habitations. If you could but see how God in his secret counsel has exactly laid the whole plan of your salvation, even to the smallest means and circumstances; could you but discern the admirable harmony of divine dispensations, their mutual relations, together with the general respect they all have to the last end; had you liberty to make your own choice, you would, of all conditions in the world, choose that in which you now are. Providence is like a curious piece of tapestry made of a thousand shreds, which, single, appear useless, but put together, they represent a beautiful history to the eye. As God does all things according to the counsel of his own will, of course this is ordained as the best method to effect your salvation. Such an one has a proud heart, so many humbling providences appoint for him; such an one has an earthly heart, see many impoverishing providences for him. Did you but see this, I need say no more to support the most dejected heart.

8. It would much conduce to the settlement of your heart, to consider that by fretting and discontent you do yourself more injury than all your afflictions could do. Your own discontent is that which arms your troubles with a sting; you make your burden heavy by struggling under it. Did you but lie quietly under the hand of God, your condition would be much more easy than it is. "Impatience in the sick occasions severity in the physician." This makes God afflict the more, as a father a stubborn child that receives not correction. Beside, it unfits the soul to pray over its troubles, or receive the sense of that good which God intends by them. Affliction is a pill, which, being wrapt up in patience and quiet submission, may be easily swallowed; but discontent chews the pill, and so embitters the soul. God throws away some comfort which he saw would hurt you, and you will throw away your peace after it; he shoots an arrow which sticks in your clothes, and was never intended to hurt, but only to drive you from sin, and you will thrust it deeper, to the piercing of your very heart, by despondency and discontent.

9. If thy heart (like that of Rachel) still refuses to be comforted, then do one thing more: compare the condition thou art now in, and with which thou art so much dissatisfied, with the condition in which others are, and in which thou deservest to be. 'Others are roaring in flames, howling under the scourge of vengeance; and among them I deserve to be. O my soul is this hell? is my condition as bad as that of the damned? what would thousands now in hell give to exchange conditions with

me!' I have read (says an author) that when the Duke of Conde had voluntarily subjected himself to the inconveniences of poverty, he was one day observed and pitied by a lord of Italy, who from tenderness wished him to be more careful of his person. The good duke answered, "Sir, be not troubled, and think not that I suffer from want; for I send a harbinger before me, who makes ready my lodgings and takes care that I be royally entertained." The lord asked him who was his harbinger? He answered, "The knowledge of myself, and the consideration of what I deserve for my sins, which is eternal torment; when with this knowledge I arrive at my lodging, however unprovided I find it, methinks it is much better than I deserve. Why doth the living man complain?" Thus the heart may be kept from desponding or repining under adversity.

III. The third season calling for more than ordinary diligence to keep the heart is the time of Zion's troubles. . . .

III. The third season calling for more than ordinary diligence to keep the heart is the time of Zion's troubles. When the Church, like the ship in which Christ and his disciples were, is oppressed and ready to perish in the waves of persecution, then good souls are ready to be shipwrecked too, upon the billows of their own fears. It is true, most men need the spur rather than the reins in this case; yet some men sit down discouraged under a sense of the Church's troubles. The loss of the ark cost Eli his life; the sad posture in which Jerusalem lay made good Nehemiah's countenance change in the midst of all the pleasures and accommodations of the court. But though God allows, yea, commands the most awakened apprehensions of these calamities, and in "such a day calls to mourning, weeping, and girding with sackcloth," and severely threatens the insensible; yet it will not please him to see you sit like pensive Elijah under the juniper tree. "Ah, Lord God! it is enough, take away my life also." No: a mourner in Zion you may and ought to be, but a self-tormentor you must not be; complain to God you may, but complain of God (though but by the language of your actions) you must not.

Now let us inquire how tender hearts may be relieved and supported, when they are even overwhelm-ed with the burdensome sense of Zion's troubles? I grant it is hard for him who preferreth Zion to his chief joy, to keep his heart that it sink not below the due sense of its troubles; yet this ought to, and may be done, by the use of such heart-establishing directions as these:

1. Settle this great truth in your heart, that no trouble befalls Zion but by the permission of Zion's God; and he permits nothing out of which he will not ultimately bring much good to his people. Comfort may be derived from reflections on the permitting as well as on the commanding will of God. "Let him alone, it may be God hath bidden him." "Thou couldst have no power against me, except it were given thee from above." It should much calm our spirits, that it is the will of God to suffer it; and that, had he not suffered it, it could, never have been as it is. This very consideration quieted Job, Eli, David, and Hezekiah. That the Lord did it was enough to them: and why should it not be so to us? If the Lord will have Zion ploughed as a field, and her goodly stones lie in the dust; if it be his pleasure that Anti-Christ shall rage yet longer and wear out the saints of the Most High; if it be his will that a day of trouble, and of treading down, and of perplexity by the Lord God of Hosts,, shall be upon the valley of vision, that the wicked shall devour the man that is more righteous than he; what are we that we should contend with God? It is fit that we should be resigned to that Will whence we proceeded, and that He that made us should dispose of us as he pleases: he may do what seemeth him good without our consent. Doth poor man stand upon equal

ground, that he may capitulate with his Creator; or that God should render him an account of any of his matters? That we be content, however God may dispose of us, is as reasonable as that we be obedient, whatever he may require of us. But if we pursue this argument farther, and. consider that God's permissions all meet at last in the real good of his people, this will much more quiet our spirits. Do the enemies carry away the best among the people into captivity? This looks like a distressing providence; but God sends them thither for their good. Does God take the Assyrian as a staff in his hand to beat his people with? The end of his so doing is, "that he may accomplish his whole work upon Mount Zion." If God can bring much good out of the greatest evil of sin, much more out of temporal afflictions; and that he will, is as evident as that he can do so. For it is inconsistent with the wisdom of a common agent to permit any thing (which he might prevent if he pleased) to cross his great design; and can it be imagined that the most wise God should do so? As, then, Luther said to Melancthon, so say I to you: "Let infinite wisdom, power and love alone" for by these all creatures are swayed, and all actions guided, in reference to the church. It is not our work to rule the world, but to submit to Him that does. The motions of Providence are all judicious, the wheels are full of eyes: it is enough that the affairs of Zion are in a good hand.

2. Ponder this heart-supporting truth: how many troubles soever are upon Zion, yet her King is in her. What! hath the Lord forsaken his churches? has he sold them into the enemy's hands? Does he not regard what evil befalls them that our hearts sink thus? Is it not shamefully undervaluing the great God, and too much magnifying poor impotent man, to fear and tremble at creatures while God is in the midst of us? The church's enemies are many and mighty: let that be granted, yet that argument with which Caleb and Joshua strove to raise their own hearts, is of as much force now as it was then: "The Lord is with, us, fear them not." A historian tells us, that when Antigonus overheard his soldiers reckoning how many their enemies were, and so discouraging one another, he suddenly stepped in among them with this question, "And how many do you reckon me for?" Discouraged souls, how many do you reckon the Lord for? Is he not an overmatch for all his enemies? Is not one Almighty more than many mighties? "If God be for us, who can be against us?" What think you was the reason of that great examination Gideon made? He questions, he desires a sign, and after that, another: and what was the end of all this, but that he might be sure the Lord was with him, and that he might but write this motto upon his ensign: The sword of the Lord and of Gideon. So if you can be well assured the Lord is with his people, you will thereby rise above all your discouragements: and that he is so, you need not require a sign from heaven; lo, you have a sign before you, even their marvellous preservation amidst all their enemies. If God be not with his people, how is it that they are not swallowed up quickly? Do their enemies want malice, power, or opportunity? No, but there is an invisible hand upon them. Let then his presence give us rest; and though the mountains be hurled into the sea, though heaven and earth mingle together, fear not; God is in the midst of Zion, she shall not be moved.

3. Consider the great advantages attending the people of God in an afflicted condition. If a low and an afflicted state in the world be really best for the church, then your dejection is not only irrational, but ungrateful. Indeed if you estimate the happiness of the church by its worldly ease, splendor and prosperity, then such times of affliction will appear to be unfavorable; but if you reckon its glory to consist in its humility, faith, and heavenly-mindedness, no condition so much abounds with advantages for these as an afflicted condition. It was not persecutions and prisons, but worldliness and wantonness that poisoned the church: neither was it the earthly glory of its professors, but the

blood of its martyrs that was the seed of the church. The power of godliness did never thrive better than in affliction, and was never less thriving than in times of greatest prosperity: when “we are left a poor and an afflicted people, then we learn to trust in the name of the Lord.” It is indeed for the saints’ advantage to be weaned from love of, and delight in, ensnaring earthly vanities; to be quickened and urged forward with more haste to heaven; to have clearer discoveries of their own hearts; to be taught to pray more fervently, frequently, spiritually; to look and long for the rest to come more ardently. If these be for their advantage, experience teaches us that no condition is ordinarily blessed with such fruits as these, like an afflicted condition. Is it well then to repine and droop, because your Father consults the advantage of your soul rather than the gratification of your humors? because he will bring you to heaven by a nearer way than you are willing to go? Is this a due requital of his love, who is pleased so much to concern himself in your welfare—who does more for you than he will do for thousands in the world, upon whom he will not lay a rod, dispense an affliction to them for their good? But alas! we judge by sense, and reckon things good or evil, according to our present taste.

4. Take heed that you overlook not the many precious mercies which the people of God enjoy amidst all their trouble. It is a pity that our tears on account of our troubles should so blind our eyes that we should not see our mercies. I will not insist upon the mercy of having your life given you for a prey; nor upon the many outward comforts which you enjoy, even above what were enjoyed by Christ and his precious servants, of whom the world was not worthy. But what say you to pardon of sin; interest in Christ; the covenant of promise; and an eternity of happiness in the presence of God, after a few days are over? O that a people entitled to such mercies as these should droop under any temporal affliction, or be so much concerned for the frowns of men and the loss of trifles. You have not the smiles of great men, but you have the favor of the great God; you are perhaps diminished in temporal, but you are thereby increased in spiritual and eternal goods. You cannot live so plentifully as before; but you may live as heavenly as ever. Will you grieve so much for these circumstances as to forget your substance? Shall light troubles make you forget weighty mercies? Remember the true riches of the church are laid out of the reach of all enemies. What though God do not in his outward dispensations distinguish between his own and others? Yea, what though his judgments single out the best, and spare the worst? What though an Abel be killed in love, and a Cain survive in hatred; a bloody Dionysius die in his bed, and a good Josiah fall in battle? What though the belly of the wicked be filled with hidden treasures, and the teeth of the saints with gravel-stones? Still there is much matter of praise; for electing love has distinguished, though common providence has not: and while prosperity and impunity slay the wicked, even slaying and adversity shall benefit and save the righteous.

5. Believe that how low soever the church be plunged under the waters of adversity, she shall assuredly rise again. Fear not; for as surely as Christ arose the third day, notwithstanding the seal and watch upon him; so surely Zion shall arise out of all her troubles, and lift up her victorious head over all her enemies. There is no reason to fear the ruin of that people who thrive by their losses and multiply by being diminished. Be not too hasty to bury the church before she is dead; stay till Christ has tried his skill, before you give her up for lost. The bush may be all in a flame, but shall never be consumed; and that because of the good will of Him that dwelleth in it.

6. Remember the instances of God’s care and tenderness over his people in former difficulties. For above eighteen hundred years the Christian church has been in affliction, and yet it is not

consumed; many a wave of persecution has gone over it, yet it is not drowned; many devices have been formed against it, hitherto none of them has prospered. This is not the first time that Hamans and Ahithophels have plotted its ruin; that a Herod has stretched out his hand to vex it; still it has been preserved from, supported under, or delivered out of all its troubles. Is it not as dear to God as ever? Is he not as able to save it now as formerly? Though we know not whence deliverance should arise, “yet the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations.”

7. If you can derive no comfort from any of these considerations, try to draw some out of your very trouble. Surely this trouble of yours is a good evidence of your integrity. Union is the ground of sympathy: if you had not some rich, adventure in that ship, you would not tremble as you do when it is in danger. Beside this framer of spirit may afford you this consolation, that if you are so sensible of Zion’s trouble, Jesus Christ is much more sensible of and solicitous about it than you can be, and he will have an eye of favor upon them that mourn for it.

IV. The fourth season, requiring our utmost diligence to keep our hearts, is the time of danger and public distraction. . . .

IV. The fourth season, requiring, our utmost diligence to. keep our hearts, is the time of danger and public distraction. In such times the best hearts are too apt to be surprised by slavish: fear. If Syria be confederate with Ephraim, how do the hearts of the house of David shake, even as the trees of the wood which are shaken with the wind. When there are ominous signs in the heavens, or the distress of nations with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; then the hearts of men fail for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth. Even a Paul may sometimes complain of “fightings within, when there are fears without.”

But, my brethren, these things ought not so to be; saints should be of a more elevated spirit; so was David when his heart was kept in a good frame: “The Lord is my light and my salvation whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?” Let none but the servants of sin be the slaves of fear; let them that have delighted in evil fear evil. Let not that which God has threatened as a judgment upon the wicked, ever seize upon the hearts of the righteous. “I will send faintness into their hearts in the land of their enemies, and the sound of a shaking leaf shall chase them.” What poor spirited men are those, to fly at a shaking leaf! A leaf makes a pleasant, not a terrible noise; it makes indeed a kind of natural music: but to a guilty conscience even the whistling leaves are drums and trumpets! “But God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of love and of a sound mind.” A sound mind, as it stands there in opposition to fear, is an unwounded conscience not weakened by guilt: and this should make a man as bold as a lion. I know it cannot be said of a saint, as God said of leviathan, that he is made without fear; there is a natural fear in every man, and it is as impossible to remove it wholly, as to remove the body itself. Fear is perturbation of the mind, arising from the apprehension of approaching danger; and as long as dangers can approach us, we shall find some perturbations within us. It is not my purpose to commend to you a stoical apathy, nor yet to dissuade you from such a degree of cautionary preventive fear as may fit you for trouble and be serviceable to your soul. There is a provident, fear that opens our eyes to foresee danger, and quickens us to a prudent and lawful use of means to prevent it: such was Jacob’s fear, and such his prudence when expecting to meet his angry brother Esau. But it is the fear of diffidence, from which I would persuade you to keep your heart; that tyrannical passion which invades the heart in times of danger, distracts, weakens and unfits it

for duty, drives men upon unlawful means, and brings a snare with it.

Now let us inquire how a Christian may keep his heart from distracting and tormenting fears in times of great and threatening dangers. There are several excellent rules for keeping the heart from sinful fear when imminent dangers threaten us:

1. Look upon all creatures as in the band of God, who manages them in all their motions, limiting, restraining and determining them at his pleasure. Get this great truth well settled by faith in your heart, and it will guard you against slavish fears. Ezekiel 1:1-28 contains an admirable draught of Providence: there you see the living creatures who move the wheels (that is, the great revolutions of things here below) coming unto Christ, who sits upon the throne, to receive new instructions from him. In Revelation 6:1-17, you read of white, black, and red horses, which are but the instruments God employs in executing judgments in the world, as wars, pestilence, and death. When these horses are prancing and trampling up and down in the world, here is a consideration that may quiet our hearts; God has the reins in his hand. Wicked men are sometimes like mad horses, they would stamp the people of God under their feet, but that the bridle of Providence is in their mouths. A lion at liberty is terrible to meet, but who is afraid of a lion in the keeper's hand?'

2. Remember that this God in whose hand are all creatures, is your Father, and is much more tender of you than you are, or can be, of yourself. "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye." Let me ask the most timorous woman whether there be not a great difference between the sight of a drawn sword in the hand of a bloody ruffian, and of the same sword in the hand of her own tender husband? As great a difference there is between looking upon creatures by an eye of sense, and looking on them, as in the hand of your God, by an eye of faith. Isaiah 54:5, is here very appropriate: "Thy Maker is thine husband, the Lord of hosts is his name;" he is Lord of all the hosts of creatures. Who would be afraid to pass through an army, though all the soldiers should turn their swords and guns toward him, if the commander of that army were his friend or father? A religious young man being at sea with many other passengers in a great storm, and they being half dead with fear, lie only was observed to be very cheerful, as if he were but little concerned in that danger: one of them demanding the reason of his cheerfulness, "O," said he, "it is because the pilot of the ship is my Father!" Consider Christ first as the King and supreme Lord over the providential kingdom, and then as your head, husband and friend, and you will quickly say, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul." This truth will make you cease trembling, and cause you to sing in the midst of danger, "The Lord is King of all the earth, sing ye praise with understanding." That is, 'Let every one that has understanding of this heart-reviving and establishing doctrine of the dominion of our Father over all creatures, sing praise.'

3. Urge upon your heart the express prohibitions of Christ in this case, and let your heart stand in awe of the violation of them. He hath charged you not to fear: "When we shall hear of wars and commotions, see that ye be not terrified." "In nothing be terrified by your adversaries." In Matthew 10:1-42, and within the compass of six verses, our Savior commands us thrice, "not to fear man." Does the voice of a man make thee to tremble, and shall not the voice of God? If thou art of such a timorous spirit, how is it that thou fearest not to disobey the commands of Jesus Christ? Methinks the command of Christ should have as much power to calm, as the voice of a poor worm to terrify thy heart. "I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man that shall be made as the grass, and forgettest the Lord thy

Maker?" We cannot fear creatures sinfully till we have forgotten God: did we remember what he is, and what he has said, we should not be of such feeble spirits. Bring thyself then to this reflection in times of danger: 'If I let into my heart the slavish fear of man, I must let out the reverential awe and fear of God; and dare I cast off the fear of the Almighty for the frowns of a man I shall I lift up proud dust above the great God I shall I run upon a certain sin, to shun a probable danger?'—O keep thy heart by this consideration!

4. Remember how much needless trouble your vain fears have brought upon you formerly: "And hast feared continually because of the oppressor, as if he were ready to devour; and where is the fury of the oppressor?" He seemed ready to devour, yet you are not devoured. I have not brought upon you the thing that you. feared; you have wasted your spirit, disordered your soul, and weakened your hands to no purpose: you might have all this while enjoyed your peace, and possessed your soul in patience. And here I cannot but observe a very deep policy of Satan in managing a design against the soul by these vain fears. I call them vain, with reference to the frustration of them by Providence; but certainly they are not in vain as the end at which Satan aims in raising them; for herein he acts as soldiers do in the siege of a garrison, who to wear out the besieged by constant watchings, and thereby unfit them to make resistance when they storm it in earnest, every night rouse them with false alarms, which though they come to nothing yet remarkably answer the ultimate design of the enemy.—O when will you beware of Satan's devices?

5. Consider solemnly, that though the things you fear should really happen, yet there is more evil in your own fear than in the things feared: and that, not only as the least evil of sin is worse than the greatest evil of suffering; but as this sinful fear has really more trouble in it than there is in that condition of which you are so much afraid. Fear is both a multiplying and a tormenting passion; it represents troubles as much greater than they are, and so tortures the soul much more than the suffering itself. So it was with Israel at the Red Sea; they cried out and were afraid, till they stepped into the water, and then a passage was opened through those waters which they thought would have drowned them. Thus it is with us; we, looking through the glass of carnal fear upon the waters of trouble, the swellings of Jordan, cry out, 'O they are unfordable; we must perish in them!' But when we come into the midst of those floods indeed, we find the promise made good: "God will make a way to escape." Thus it was with a blessed martyr; when he would make a trial by putting his finger to the candle, and found himself not able to endure that, he cried out, "What! cannot I bear the burning of a finger? How then shall I be able to bear the burning of my whole body to-morrow?" Yet when that morrow came he could go cheerfully into the flames with this scripture in his mouth: "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine; when thou passest through the waters I will be with you; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt."

6. Consult the many precious promises which are written for your support and comfort in all dangers. These are your refuges to which you may fly and be safe when the arrows of danger fly by night, and destruction wasteth at noon-day. There are particular promises suited to particular cases and exigencies; there are also general promises reaching all cases and conditions. Such as these: "All things shall work together for good," &c. "Though a sinner do evil an hundred times and his days be prolonged, yet it shall be well with them that fear the Lord," &c. Could you but believe the promises your heart should be established. Could you but plead them with God as Jacob did,

(“Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good,” &c.) they would relieve you in every distress.

7. Quiet your trembling heart by recording and consulting your past experiences of the care and faithfulness of God in former distresses. These experiences are food for your faith in a wilderness. By this David kept his heart in time of danger, and Paul his. It was answered by a saint, when one told him that his enemies waylaid him to take his life: “If God take no care of me, how is it that I have escaped hitherto?” You may plead with God old experiences for new ones: for it is in pleading with God for new deliverances, as it is in pleading for new pardons. Mark how Moses pleads of that account with God. “Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people, as thou hast forgiven them from Egypt until now.” He does not say as men do, ‘Lord, this is the first fault, thou hast not been troubled before to sign their pardon:’ but, ‘Lord, because thou hast pardoned them so often, I beseech thee pardon them once again.’ So in new difficulties let the saint say, ‘Lord, thou hast often heard, helped and saved, in former years; therefore now help again, for with thee there is plenteous redemption and thine arm is not shortened.’

8. Be well satisfied that you are in the way of your duty, and that will beget holy courage in times of danger. “Who, will harm you if you be a follower of that which is good?” Or if any dare attempt to harm you, “you may boldly commit yourself to God in well-doing.” It was this consideration that raised Luther’s spirit above all fear: “in the cause of God (said he) I ever am, and ever shall be stout: herein I assume this title, “I yield to none.” A good cause will bear up a man’s spirit. Hear the saying of a hea-then, to the shame of cowardly Christians: when the emperor Vespasian had commanded Fluidus Priseus not to come to the senate, or if he did come, to speak nothing but what ‘he would have him; the senator returned this noble answer, “that he was a senator, it was fit he should be at the senate; and if being there, he were required to give his advice, he would freely speak that which his conscience commanded him.” The emperor threatening that then he should die; he answered, “Did I ever tell you that I was immortal? Do what you will, and I will do what I ought. It is in your power to put me to death unjustly, and in my power to die with constancy.” Righteousness is a breastplate: let them tremble whom danger finds out of the way of duty.

9. Get your conscience sprinkled with the blood of Christ from all guilt, and that will set your heart above all fear. It is guilt upon the conscience that softens and makes cowards of our spirits: “the righteous are bold as a lion.” It was guilt in Cain’s conscience that made him cry, “Every one that findeth me will slay me.” A guilty conscience is more terrified by imagined dangers, than a pure conscience is by real ones. A guilty sinner carries a witness against himself in his own bosom. It was guilty Herod cried out, “John Baptist is risen from the dead.” Such a conscience is the devil’s anvil, on which he fabricates all those swords and spears with which the guilty sinner pierces himself. Guilt is to danger, what fire is to gun-powder: a man need not fear to walk among many barrels of powder, if he have no fire about him.

10. Exercise holy trust in times of great distress. Make it your business to trust God with your life and comforts, and then your heart will be at rest about them. So did David, “At what time I am afraid I will trust in thee;” that is, ‘Lord, if at any time a storm arise, I will shelter from it under the covert of thy wings.’ Go to God by acts of faith and trust, and never doubt that he will secure you. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee,” says Isaiah. God is pleased when you come to him thus: ‘Father, my life, my liberty and my estate are exposed, and I cannot secure them; O let me leave them in, thy hand. The poor leaveth

himself with thee; and does his God fail him? No, thou art the helper of the fatherless: that is, thou art the helper of the destitute one, that has none to go to but God. This is a comforting passage, “He shall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord;” he does not say, his ear shall be preserved from the report of evil tidings, he may hear as sad tidings as other men, but his heart shall be kept from the terror of those tidings; his heart is fixed.

11. Consult the honor of religion more, and your personal safety less. Is it for the honor of religion (think you) that Christians should be as timorous as bores to start at every sound? Will not this tempt the world to think, that whatever you talk, yet your principles are no better than other men’s? What mischief may the discovery of your fears before them do! It was nobly said by Nehemiah, “Should such a man as I flee? and who, being as I am, would flee?” Were it not better you should die than that the world should be prejudiced against Christ by your example? For alas! how apt is the world (who judge more by what they see in your practices than by what they understand of your principles) to conclude from your timidity, that how much soever you commend faith and talk of assurance, yet you dare trust to those things no more than they, when it comes to the trial. O let not your fears lay such a stumbling-block before the blind world.

12. He that would secure his heart from fear, must first secure the eternal interest of his soul in the hands of Jesus Christ., When this is done, you may say, ‘Now, world, do thy worst!’ You will not be very solicitous about a vile body, when you are once assured it shall be well to all eternity with your precious soul. “Fear not them (says Christ) that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.” The assured Christian may smile with contempt upon all his enemies, and say, ‘Is this the worst that you can do?’ What say you, Christian? Are you assured that your soul is safe; that within a few moments of your dissolution it shall be received by Christ into an everlasting habitation? If you be sure of that, never trouble yourself about the instrument and means of your death.’

04.04b. The Time of Prosperity

13. Learn to quench all slavish creature-fears in the reverential fear of God. This is a cure by diversion. It is an exercise of Christian wisdom to turn those passions of the soul which most predominate, into spiritual channels; to turn natural anger into spiritual zeal, natural mirth into holy cheerfulness, and natural fear into a holy dread and awe of God. This method of cure Christ prescribes in Matthew 10:1-42; similar to which is Isaiah 8:12-13, “Fear not their fear.” ‘But how shall we help it?’ “Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.” Natural fear may be allayed for the present by natural reason, or the removal of the occasion; but then it is like a candle blown out by a puff of breath, which is easily blown in again: but if the fear of God extinguish it, then it is like a candle quenched in water, which cannot easily be rekindled.’

14. Pour out to God in prayer those fears which the devil and your own unbelief pour in upon you in times of danger. Prayer is the best outlet to fear: where is the Christian that cannot set his seal to this direction? I will give you the greatest example to encourage you to compliance, even the example of Jesus Christ. When the hour of his danger and death drew nigh, he went into the garden, separated from his disciples, and there wrestled mightily with God in prayer, even unto agony; in reference to which the apostle says, “who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong cries and tears, to him that was able to save from death, and was heard in that he feared.” He was heard as to strength and support to carry him through it; though not as to deliverance, or exemption from it. O that these things may abide with you, and be reduced to practice in these evil days, and that many trembling souls may be established by them.’

V. The fifth season, requiring diligence in keeping the heart, is the time of outward wants. . . .

V. The fifth season, requiring diligence in keeping the heart, is the time of outward wants. Although at such times we should complain to God, not of God, (the throne of grace being erected for a “time of need,”) yet when the waters of relief run low, and want begins to press, how prone are the best hearts to distrust the fountain! When the meal in the barrel and the oil in the cruse are almost spent, our faith and patience too are almost spent. It is now difficult to keep the proud and unbelieving heart in a holy quietude and sweet submission at the foot of God. It is an easy thing to talk of trusting God for daily bread, while we have a full barn or purse; but to say as the prophet, “Though the fig-tree should not blossom, neither fruit be in the vine, &c. yet will I rejoice in the Lord:” surely this is not easy. Would you know then how a Christian may keep his heart from distrusting God, or repining against him, when outward wants are either felt or feared?—The case deserves to be seriously considered, especially now, since it seems to be the design of Providence to empty the people of God of their creature fullness, and acquaint them with those difficulties to which hitherto they have been altogether strangers. To secure the heart from the dangers attending this condition, these considerations may, through the blessing of the Spirit, prove effectual:

1. If God reduces you to necessities, he therein deals no otherwise with you than he has done with some of the holiest men that ever lived. Your condition is not singular; though you have hitherto been a stranger to want, other saints have been familiarly acquainted with it. Hear what Paul says, not of himself only, but in the name of other saints reduced to like exigencies: “Even to the present hour, we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place.” To see such a man as Paul going up and down the world naked, and hungry, and houseless; one that was so far above thee in grace and holiness; one that did more service for God in a day than perhaps thou hast done in all thy days may well put an end to your repining. Have you forgotten how much even a David has suffered? How great were his difficulties! “Give, I pray thee,” says he to Nabal, “whatsoever cometh to thy hand, to thy servants, and to thy son David.” But why speak I of these? Behold a greater than any of them, even the Son of God, who is the heir of all things, and by whom the worlds were made, sometimes would have been glad of any thing, having nothing to eat. “And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry; and seeing a fig-tree, afar off, having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon.”

Hereby then God has set no mark of hatred upon you, neither can you infer want of love from want of bread. When thy repining heart puts the question, ‘Was there ever sorrow like unto mine?’ ask these worthies, and they will tell thee that though they did not complain as thou dost, yet their condition was as necessitous as thine is.

2. If God leave you not in this condition without a promise, you have no reason to repine or despond under it. That is a sad condition indeed to which no promise belongs. Calvin in his comment on Isaiah 9:1, explains in what sense the darkness of the captivity was not so great as that of the lesser incursions made by Tiglath Pileser. In the captivity, the city was destroyed and the temple burnt with fire: there was no comparison in the affliction, yet the darkness was not so great, because, says he, “there was a certain promise made in this case, but none in the other.” It is better to be as low as hell with a promise, than to be in paradise without one. Even the darkness of hell itself would be no darkness comparatively at all, were there but a promise to enlighten it. Now, God has left many sweet promises for the faith of his poor people to live upon in this condition; such as these: “O fear the Lord, ye his saints, for there is no want to them that fear him; the lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that fear the Lord shall not want any good thing.” “The eye of the Lord is upon the righteous to keep them alive in famine.” “No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” “When the poor and the needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.” Here you see their extreme wants, water being put for their necessaries of life; and their certain relief, “I the Lord will hear them;” in which it is supposed that they cry unto him in their distress, and he hears their cry. Having therefore these promises, why should not your distrustful heart conclude like David’s, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want?”

‘But these promises imply conditions: if they were absolute, they would afford more satisfaction.’ What are those tacit conditions of which you speak but these, that he will either supply or sanctify your wants; that you shall have so much as God sees fit for you? And does this trouble you? Would you have the mercy, whether sanctified or not? whether God sees it fit for you or not? The appetites of saints after earthly things should not be so ravenous as to seize greedily upon any

enjoyment without regarding circumstances.

‘But when wants press, and I see not whence supplies should come, my faith in the promise shakes, and I, like murmuring Israel, cry, “He gave bread, can he give water also?”’ O unbelieving heart! when did his promises fail? who ever trusted them and was ashamed? May not God upbraid thee with thine unreasonable infidelity, as in Jeremiah 2:31, “Have I been a wilderness unto you?” or as Christ said to his disciples, “Since I was with you, lacked ye any thing?” Yea, may you not upbraid yourself; may you not say with good old Polycarp, “These many years I have served Christ, and found him a good Master?”

Indeed he may deny what your wantonness, but not what your want calls for. He will not regard the cry of your lusts, nor yet despise the cry of your faith: though he will not indulge your wanton appetites, yet he will not violate his. own faithful promises. These promises are your best security for eternal life; and it is strange they should not satisfy you for daily bread. Remember the words of the Lord, and solace your heart with them amidst all your wants. It is said of Epicurus, that in dreadful paroxysms of the cholic he often refreshed himself by calling to mind his inventions in philosophy; and of Possodonius the philosopher, that in an acute disorder he solaced himself with discourses on moral virtue; and when distressed, he would say, “O pain, thou dost nothing; though thou art a little troublesome, I will never confess thee to be evil.” If upon such grounds as these they could support themselves under such racking pains, and even deluded their diseases by them; how much rather should the promises of God, and the sweet experiences which have gone along step by step with them, make you forget all your wants, and comfort you in every difficulty?

3. If it be bad now, it might have been worse. Has God denied thee the comforts of this life? He might have denied thee Christ, peace, and pardon also; and then thy case had been woful indeed.

You know God has done so to millions. How many such wretched objects max your eyes behold every day, that have no comfort in hand, nor yet in hope; that are miserable here, and will be so to eternity; that have a bitter cup, and nothing to sweeten it—no, not so much as any hope that it will be better. But it is not so with you: though you be poor in this world, yet you are “rich in faith, and an heir of the kingdom which God has promised.” Learn to set spiritual riches over against temporal poverty. Balance all your present troubles with your spiritual privileges. Indeed if God has denied your soul the robe of righteousness to clothe it, the hidden manna to feed it, the heavenly mansion to receive it, you might well be pensive; but the consideration that he has not may administer comfort under any outward distress. When Luther began to be pressed by want, he said, “Let us be contented with our hard fare; for do not we feast upon Christ, the bread of life?“ “Blessed be God (said Paul) who hath abounded to us in all spiritual blessings.”

4. Though this affliction be great, God has far greater, with which he chastises the dearly beloved of his soul in this world. Should he remove this and inflict those, you would account your present state a very comfortable one, and bless God to be as you now are. Should God remove your present troubles, supply all your outward wants, give you the desire of your heart in creature-comforts; but hide his face from you, shoot his arrows into your soul, and cause the venom of them to drink up your spirit: should he leave you but a few days to the buffetings of Satan: should he hold your eyes but a few nights waking with horrors of conscience, tossing to and fro till the dawning of the day:—should he lead you through the chambers of death, show you the visions of darkness, and make his terrors set themselves in array against you: then tell me if you

would not think it a great mercy to be back again in your former necessitous condition, with peace of conscience; and account bread and water, with God's favor, a happy state? O then take heed of repining. Say not that God deals hardly with you, lest you provoke him to convince you by your own sense that he has worse rods than these for unsubmissive and froward children.

5. If it be had now, it will be better shortly. Keep thy heart by this consideration, 'the meal in the barrel is almost spent; well, be it so, why should that trouble me, if I am almost beyond the need and use of these things?' The traveler has spent almost all his money; 'well,' says he, 'though my money be almost spent, my journey is almost finished too: I am near home, and shall soon be fully supplied.' If there be no candles in the house, it is a comfort to think that it is almost day, and then there will be no need of them. I am afraid, Christian, you misreckon when you think your provision is almost spent, and you have a great way to travel, many years to live and nothing to live upon; it may be not half so many, as you suppose In this be confident, if your provision be spent, either fresh supplies are coining, though you see not whence, or you are nearer your journey's end than you reckon yourself to be. Desponding soul, does it become a man traveling upon the road to that heavenly city, and almost arrived there, within a few days' journey of his Father's house, where all his wants shall be supplied, to be so anxious about a little meat, or drink, or clothes, which he fears he shall want by the way? It was nobly said by the forty martyrs when turned out naked in a frosty night to be starved to death, " The winter indeed is sharp and cold, but heaven is warm and comfortable; here we shiver for cold, but Abraham's bosom will make amends for all."

'But,' says the desponding soul, 'I may die for want.' Who ever did so? When were the righteous forsaken? If indeed it be so, your journey is ended, and you fully supplied.

'But I am not sure of that; were I sure of heaven, it would be another matter.' Are you not sure of that? then you have other matters to trouble yourself about than these; methinks these should be the least of all your cares. I do not find that souls perplexed about the want of Christ, pardon of sin, &c. are usually very solicitous about these things. He that seriously puts such questions as these, 'What shall I do to be saved? how shall I know my sin is pardoned?' does not trouble himself with, "What shall I eat, what shall I drink, or wherewithal shall I be clothed?"

6. Does it become the children of such a Father to distrust his all-sufficiency, or repine at any of his dispensations? Do you well to question his care and love upon every new exigency? Say, have you not formerly been ashamed of this? Has not your Father's seasonable provision for you in former difficulties put you to the blush, and made you resolve never more to question his love and care? And yet will you again renew your unworthy suspicions of him? Disingenuous child! reason thus with yourself: "If I perish for want of what is good and needful for me, it must be either because my Father knows not my wants, Or has not wherewith to supply them, or regards not what becomes of me. Which of these shall I charge upon him? Not the first: for my Father knows what I have need of Not the second: for the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; his name is God All-sufficient. Not the last: for as a Father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him; the Lord is exceeding pitiful and of tender mercy; he hears the young ravens when they cry:—and will he not hear me? Consider, says Christ, the fowls of the air; not the fowls at the door, that are fed every day by hand, but the fowls of the air that have none to provide for them. Does he feed and clothe his enemies, and will he forget his children? he heard even the cry of Ishmael in distress. O my unbelieving heart, dost thou yet doubt?"

7. Your poverty is not your sin, but your affliction. If you have not by sinful means brought it upon yourself, and if it be but an affliction, it may the more easily be borne. It is hard indeed to bear an affliction coming upon us as the fruit and punishment of sin. When men are under trouble upon that account; they say, ‘O if it were but a single affliction, coming from the hand of God by way of trial, I could bear it; but I have brought it upon myself by sin, it comes as the punishment of sin; the marks of God’s displeasure are upon it: it is the guilt within that troubles and galls more than the want without.’ But it is not so here; therefore you have no reason to be cast down under it.

‘But though there be no sting of guilt, yet this condition wants not other stings; as, for instance, The discredit of religion. I cannot comply with my engagements in the world, and thereby religion is likely to suffer.’ It is well you have a heart to discharge every duty; yet if God disable you by providence, it is no discredit to your profession that you do not that which you cannot do, so long as it is your desire and endeavor to do what you can and ought to do; and in this case God’s will is, that lenity and forbearance be toward you.

‘But it grieves me to behold the necessities of others, whom I was wont to relieve and refresh, but now cannot.’ If you cannot, it ceases to be your duty, and God accepts the drawing out of your soul to the hungry in compassion and desire to help them, though you cannot draw forth a full purse to relieve and supply them.

‘But I find such a condition full of temptations, a great hinderance in the way to heaven.’ Every condition in the world has its hinderances and attending temptations; and were you in a prosperous condition, you might there meet with more temptations and fewer advantages than you now have; for though I confess poverty as well as prosperity has its temptations, yet I am confident prosperity has not those advantages that poverty has. Here you have an opportunity to discover the sincerity of your love to God, when you can live upon him, find enough in him, and constantly follow him, even when all external inducements and motives fail.

Thus I have shown you how to keep your heart from the temptations and dangers attending a low condition in the world. When want oppresses and the heart begins to sink, then improve, and bless God for these helps to keep it.

VI. The sixth season requiring this diligence in keeping the heart, is the season of duty. . . .

VI. The sixth season requiring this diligence in keeping the heart, is the season of duty. Our hearts must be closely watched and kept when we draw nigh to God in public, private, or secret duties; for the vanity of the heart seldom discovers itself more than at such times. How often does the poor soul cry out, ‘O Lord, how gladly would I serve thee, but vain thoughts will not let me: I come to open my heart to thee, to delight my soul in communion with thee, but my corruptions oppose me: Lord, call off these vain thoughts, and suffer them not to estrange the soul that is espoused to thee.’ The question then is this: How may the heart be kept from distractions by vain thoughts in time of duty? There is a two-fold distraction, or wandering of the heart in duty: First, voluntary and habitual, They set not their hearts aright, and their spirit was not steadfast with God.” This is the case of formalists, and it proceeds from the want of a holy inclination of the heart to God; their hearts are under the power of their lusts, and therefore it is no wonder that they go after their lusts, even when they are about holy things. Secondly, involuntary and lamented distractions: “I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me; O wretched man that I am,” &c. This

proceeds not from the want of a holy inclination or aim, but from the weakness of grace and the want of vigilance in opposing indwelling sin. But it is not my business to show you how these distractions come into the heart but rather how to get them out, and prevent their future admission:

1. Sequester yourself from all earthly employments, and set apart some time for solemn preparation to meet God in duty. You cannot come directly from the world into God's presence without finding a savor of the world in your duties. It is with the heart (a few minutes since plunged in the world, now in the presence of God) as it is with the sea after a storm, which still continues working, muddy and disquiet, though the wind be laid and the storm be over. Your heart must have some time to settle. Few musicians can take an instrument and play upon it without some time and labor to tune it; few Christians can say with David, "My heart is fixed, O God, it is fixed." When you go to God in any duty, take your heart aside and say, 'O my soul, I am now engaged in the greatest work that a creature was ever employed about; I am going into the awful presence of God upon business of everlasting moment. O my soul, leave trifling now; be composed, be watchful, be serious; this is no common work, it is soul-work; it is work for eternity; it is work which will bring forth fruit to life or death in the world to come.' Pause awhile and consider your sins, your wants, your troubles; keep your thoughts awhile on these before you address yourself to duty. David first mused, and then spake with his tongue.

2. Having composed your heart by previous meditation, immediately set a guard upon your senses. How often are Christians in danger of losing the eyes of their mind by those of their body! Against this David prayed, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou me in thy way." This may serve to expound the Arabian proverb: "Shut the windows that the house may be light." It were well if you could say in the commencement, as a holy man once said when he came from the performance of duty: "Be shut, O my eyes, be shut; for it is impossible that you should ever discern such beauty and glory in any creature as I have now seen in God." You must avoid all occasions of distraction from without, and imbibe that intenseness of spirit in the work of God which locks up the eye and ear against vanity.

3. Beg of God a mortified fancy. A working fancy, (saith one,) how much soever it be extolled among men, is a great snare to the soul, except it work in fellowship with right reason and a sanctified heart. The fancy is a power of the soul, placed between the senses and the understanding; it is that which first stirs itself in the soul, and by its motions the other powers of the soul are brought into exercise; it is that in which thoughts are first formed, and as that is, so are they. If imaginations be not first cast down, it is impossible that every thought of the heart should be brought into obedience to Christ. The fancy is naturally the wildest and most untameable power of the soul. Some Christians have much to do with it; and the more spiritual the heart is, the more does a wild and vain fancy disturb and perplex it. It is a sad thing that one's imagination should call off the soul from attending on God, when it is engaged in communion with him. Pray earnestly and perseveringly that your fancy may be chastened and sanctified, and when this is accomplished your thoughts will be regular and fixed.

4. If you would keep your heart from vain excursions when engaged in duties, realize to yourself, by faith, the holy and awful presence of God. If the presence of a grave man would compose you to seriousness, how much more should the presence of a holy God? Do you think that you would dare to be gay and light if you realized the presence and inspection of the Divine Being?

Remember where you are when engaged in religious duty, and act as if you believed in the omniscience of God. “All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” Realize his infinite holiness, his purity, his spirituality.

Strive to obtain such apprehensions of the greatness of God as shall suitably affect your heart; and remember his jealousy over his worship. “This is that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified.” “A man that is praying (says Bernard) should behave himself as if he were entering into the court of heaven, where he sees the Lord upon his throne, surrounded with ten thousand of his angels and saints ministering unto him.”—When you come from an exercise in which your heart has been wandering and listless, what can you say? Suppose all the vanities and impertinences which have passed through your mind during a devotional exercise were written down and interlined with your petitions, could you have the face to present them to God? Should your tongue utter all the thoughts of your heart when at tending the worship of God, would not men abhor you? Yet your thoughts are perfectly known to God. O think upon this scripture: “God is greatly to be feared in the assemblies of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are round about him.” Why did the Lord descend in thunderings and lightnings and dark clouds upon Sinai? why did the mountains smoke under him, the people quake and tremble round about him, Moses himself not excepted? but to teach the people this great truth: “Let us have grace, whereby we may serve Him acceptably, with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire.” Such apprehensions of the character and presence of God will quickly reduce a heart inclined to vanity to a more serious frame.

5. Maintain a prayerful frame of heart in the intervals of duty. What reason can be assigned why our hearts are so dull, so careless, so wandering, when we hear or pray, but that there have been long intermissions in our communion with God? If that divine unction, that spiritual fervor, and those holy impressions, which we obtain from God while engaged in the performance of one duty, were preserved to enliven and engage us in the performance of another, they would be of incalculable service to keep our hearts serious and devout. For this purpose, frequent ejaculations between stated and solemn duties are of most excellent use: they not only preserve the mind in a composed and pious frame, but they connect one stated duty, as it were, with another, and keep the attention of the soul alive to all its interests and obligations.

6. If you would have the distraction of your thoughts prevented, endeavor to raise your affections to God, and to engage them warmly in your duty. When the soul is intent upon any work, it gathers in its strength and bends all its thoughts to that work; and when it is deeply affected, it will pursue its object with intenseness, the affections will gain, an ascendancy over the thoughts and guide them. But deadness causes distraction, and distraction increases deadness. Could you but regard your duties as the medium in which you might walk in communion with God in which your soul might be filled with those ravishing and matchless delights which his presence affords, you might have no inclination to neglect them. But if you would prevent the recurrence of distracting thoughts, if you would find your happiness in the performance of duty, you must not only be careful that you engage in what is your duty, bat labor with patient and persevering exertion to interest your feelings in it. Why is your heart so inconstant, especially in secret duties; why are you ready to be gone, almost as soon as you are come into the presence of God, but because your affections are not engaged?

7. When you are disturbed by vain thoughts, humble yourself before God, and call in assistance from Heaven. When the messenger of Satan buffeted St. Paul by wicked suggestions, (as is supposed) he mourned before God on account of it. Never slight wandering thoughts in duty as small matters; follow every such thought with a deep regret. Turn to God with such words as these: 'Lord, I came hither to commune with thee, and here a busy adversary and a vain heart, conspiring together, have opposed me. O my God what a heart have I! shall I never wait upon thee without distraction? when shall I enjoy an hour of free communion with thee? Grant me thy assistance at this time; discover thy glory to me, and my heart will quickly be recovered. I came hither to enjoy thee, and shall I go away without thee? Behold my distress, and help me!' —Could you but sufficiently be wail your distractions, and repair to God for deliverance from them, you would gain relief.

8. Look upon the success and the comfort of your duties, as depending very much upon the keeping of your heart close with God in them. These two things, the success of duty and the inward comfort arising from the performance of it, are unspeakably dear to the Christian; but both of these will be lost if the heart be in a listless state. "Surely God heareth not vanity, nor doth the Almighty regard it." The promise is made to a heart engaged: "Then shall ye seek for me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your hearts." When you find your heart under the power of deadness and distraction, say to yourself, 'O what do I lose by a careless heart now! My praying seasons , are the most valuable portions of my life: could I but raise my heart to God, I might now obtain such mercies as would be matter of praise to all eternity.'

9. Regard your carefulness or carelessness in this matter as a great evidence of your sincerity, or hypocrisy. Nothing will alarm an upright heart more than this. 'What shall I give way to a customary wandering of the heart from God? Shall the spot of the hypocrite appear upon my soul? Hypocrites, indeed, can drudge on in the round of duty, never regarding the frame of their hearts; but shall I do so? Never— never let me be satisfied with empty duties. Never let me take my leave of a duty until my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.'

10. It will be of special use to keep your heart with God in duty, to consider what influence all your duties will have upon your eternity. Your religious seasons are your seed times, and in another world you must reap the fruits of what you sow in your duties here, If you sow to the flesh, you will reap corruption; if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap life everlasting. Answer seriously these questions: Are you willing to reap the fruit of vanity in the world to come? Dare you say, when your thoughts are roving to the ends of the earth in duty, when you scarce mind what you say or hear, 'Now, Lord, I am sowing to the Spirit; now I am providing and laying up for eternity; now I am seeking for glory, honor and immortality; now I am striving to enter in at the strait gate; now I am taking the kingdom of heaven by holy violence!' Such reflections are well calculated to dissipate vain thoughts.

VII. The seventh season, which requires more than common diligence to keep the heart, is when we receive injuries and abuses from men. Such is the depravity and corruption of man, that one is become as a wolf or a tiger to another. And as men are naturally cruel and oppressive one to another, so the wicked conspire to abuse and wrong the people of God, "The wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he." Now when we are thus abused and wronged, it is hard to keep the heart from revengeful motions; to make it meekly and quietly commit the cause to Him

that judgeth righteously; to prevent the exercise of any sinful affection. The spirit that is in us lusteth to revenge; but it must not be so. We have choice helps in the Gospel to keep our hearts from sinful motions against our enemies, and to sweeten our embittered spirits. Do you ask how a Christian may keep his heart from revengeful motions under the greatest injuries and abuses from men? I reply: When you find your heart begin to be inflamed by revengeful feelings, immediately reflect on the following things

1. Urge upon your heart the severe prohibitions of revenge contained in the law of God. However gratifying to your corrupt propensities revenge may be, remember that it is forbidden. Hear the word of God: “Say not, I will recompense evil.” Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me. “Recompense to no man evil for evil. Avenge not yourselves, but give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.” On the contrary. “If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink.” It was an argument urged by the Christians to prove their religion to be supernatural and pure, that it forbids revenge, which is so agreeable to nature; and it is to be wished that such an argument might not be laid aside. Awe your heart, then, with the authority of God in the Scriptures; and when carnal reason says, ‘My enemy deserves to be hated,’ let conscience reply, ‘But doth God deserve to be disobeyed?’ ‘Thus and thus hath he done, and so hath he wronged me;’ ‘But what hath God done that 1 should wrong him? If my enemy dares boldly to break the peace, shall I be so wicked as to break the precept? if he fears not to wrong me, shall not I fear to wrong God?’ Thus let the fear of God restrain and calm your feelings.

2. Set before your eyes the most eminent patterns of meekness and forgiveness, that you may feel the force of their example. This is the way to cut off the common pleas of flesh and blood for revenge: as thus, ‘No man would bear such an affront;’ yes, others have borne as bad, and worse ones. ‘But I shall be reckoned a coward, a fool, if I pass by this:’ no matter, so long as you follow the examples of the wisest and holiest of men. Never did any one suffer more or greater abuses from men than Jesus did, nor did any one ever endure insult and reproach and every kind of abuse in a more peaceful and forgiving manner; when he Was reviled he reviled not again; when he suffered. he threatened not when his murderers. crucified him he prayed Father, forgive them; and herein he hath set us an example, that we should follow his steps. Thus his apostles imitated him: “Being reviled,” say they, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat.” I have often heard it reported of the holy Mr. Dod, that when a man, enraged at his close, convincing doctrine, assaulted him, smote him on the face and dashed out two of his teeth; that meek servant of Christ spit out the teeth and blood into his hand, and said, “See here, you have knocked out two of my teeth, and that without any just provocation; but on condition that I might do your soul good, I would give you leave to knock out all the rest.” Here was exemplified the excellency of the Christian spirit. Strive then for this spirit, which constitutes the true excellence of Christians. Do what others cannot do, keep this spirit in exercise, and you will preserve peace in your own soul and gain the victory over your enemies.

2. Consider the character of the person who has wronged you. He is either a good or a wicked man. If he is a good man, there is light and tenderness in his conscience, which sooner or later will bring him to a sense of the evil of what he has done. If he is a good man, Christ has forgiven him greater injuries than he has done to you; and why should not you forgive him? Will Christ not upbraid him for any of his wrongs, but frankly forgive them all; and will you take him by the throat

for some petty abuse which he has offered you?

3. But if a wicked man has injured or insulted you, truly you have more reason to exercise pity than revenge toward him. He is in a deluded and miserable state; a slave to sin and an enemy to righteousness. If he should ever repent, he will be ready to make you reparation; if he continues impenitent, there is a day coming when .he will be punished to the extent of his deserts. You need not study revenge, God will execute vengeance upon him.

4. Remember that by revenge you can only gratify a sinful passion, which by forgiveness you might conquer. Suppose that by revenge you might destroy one enemy; yet, by exercising the Christian's temper you might conquer three—your own lust, Satan's temptation, and your enemy's heart. If by revenge you should overcome your enemy, the victory would be unhappy and inglorious, for in gaining it you would be overcome by your own corruption; but by exercising a meek and forgiving temper, you will always come off with honor and success. It must be a very disingenuous nature indeed upon which meekness and forgiveness will not operate; that must be a flinty heart which this fire will not melt. Thus David gained such a victory over Saul his persecutor, that "Saul lifted up his voice and wept, and he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I."

5. Seriously propose this question to your own heart: 'Have I got any good by means of the wrongs and injuries which I have received?' If they have done you no good, turn your revenge upon yourself. You have reason to be filled with shame and sorrow that you should have a heart which can deduce no good from such troubles; that your temper should be so unlike that of Christ. The patience and meekness of other Christians have turned all the injuries offered to them to a good account; their souls have been animated to praise God when they have been loaded with reproaches from the world. "I thank my God," said Jerome, "that I am worthy to be hated of the world." But if you have derived any benefit from the reproaches and wrongs which you have received, if they have put you upon examining your own heart, if they have made you more careful how you conduct, if they have convinced you of the value of a sanctified temper; will you not forgive them? will you not forgive one who has been instrumental of so much good to you? What though he meant it for evil? if through the Divine blessing your happiness has been promoted by what he has done, why should you even have a hard thought of him?

6. Consider by whom all your troubles are ordered. This will be of great use to keep your heart from revenge; this will quickly calm and sweeten your temper. When Shimei railed at David and cursed him, the spirit of that good man was not at all poisoned by revenge; for when Abishai offered him. if he pleased, the head of Shimei, the king said, "Let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David: who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?" It may be that God uses him as his rod to chastise me, because by my sin I gave the enemies of God occasion to blaspheme; and shall I be angry with the instrument? how irrational were that! Thus Job was quieted; he did not rail and meditate revenge upon the Chaldeans and Sabeans, but regarded God as the orderer of his troubles, and said, "The Lord hath taken away, blessed be his name."

7. Consider how you are daily and hourly wronging God, and you will not be so easily inflawed with revenge against those who have wronged you. You are constantly affronting God, yet he does not take vengeance on you, but bears with you and forgives; and will you rise up and avenge yourself

upon others? Reflect on this cutting rebuke: “O thou wicked and slothful servant! I forgave thee all that debt because thou desiredst me; shouldst thou not also have compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?” None should be so filled with forbearance and mercy to such as wrong them, as those who have experienced the riches of mercy themselves. The mercy of God to us should melt our hearts into mercy toward others. It is impossible that we should be cruel to others, except we forget how kind and compassionate God hath been to us. And if kindness cannot prevail in us, methinks fear should:—“If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

04.04c. The Time of Prosperity

8. Let the consideration that the day of the Lord draweth nigh, restrain you from anticipating it by acts of revenge. Why are you so hasty? is not the Lord at hand to avenge all his abused servants? “Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth, &c. Be ye also patient, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned. Behold, the Judge standeth at the door. Vengeance belongeth unto God, and will you wrong yourself so much as to assume his work?

VIII. The next season in which special exertion is necessary to keep the heart, is when we meet with great trials. . . .

VIII. The next season in which special exertion is necessary to keep the heart, is when we meet with great trials. In such cases the heart is apt to be suddenly transported with pride, impatience, or other sinful passions. Many good people are guilty of hasty and very sinful conduct in such instances; and all have need to use diligently the following means to keep their hearts submissive and patient under great trials:

1. Get humble and abasing thoughts of yourself. The humble is ever the patient man. Pride is the source of irregular and sinful passions. A lofty, will be an unyielding and peevish spirit. When we over-rate ourselves, we think that we are treated unworthily, that our trials are too severe: thus we cavil and repine. Christian, you should have such thoughts of yourself as would put a stop to these murmurings. You should have lower and more humiliating views of yourself than any other one can have of you. Get humility, and you will have peace whatever be your trial.

2. Cultivate a habit of communion with God. This will prepare you for whatever may take place. This will so sweeten your temper and calm your mind as to secure you against surprisals. This will produce that inward peace which will make you superior to your trials. Habitual communion with God will afford you enjoyment, which you can never be willing to interrupt by sinful feeling. When a Christian is calm and submissive under his afflictions, probably he derives support and comfort in this way; but he who is discomposed, impatient, or fretful, shows that `all is not right within—he cannot be supposed to practise communion with God.

3. Let your mind be deeply impressed with an apprehension of the evil nature and effects of an unsubmissive and restless temper. It grieves the Spirit of God, and induces his departure. His gracious presence and influence are enjoyed only where peace and quiet submission prevail. The indulgence of such a temper gives the adversary an advantage. Satan is an angry and discontented spirit. He finds no rest but in restless hearts. He bestirs himself when the spirits are in commotion; sometimes he fills the heart with ungrateful and rebellious thoughts; sometimes he inflames the tongue with indecent language. Again, such a temper brings great guilt upon the conscience, unfits the soul for any duty, and dishonors the Christian name. O keep your heart, and let the power and excellence of your religion be chiefly manifested when you are brought into the greatest straits.

4. Consider how desirable it is for a Christian to overcome his evil propensities. How much more present happiness it affords; how much better it is in every respect to mortify and subdue unholy feelings, than to give way to them. When upon your death-bed you come calmly to review your life, how comfortable will it be to reflect on the conquest which you have made over the depraved feelings of your heart. It was a memorable saying of Valentinian the emperor, when he was about to die: “Amongst all my conquests, there is but one that now comforts me” Being asked what that was, he answered, “I have overcome my worst enemy, my own sinful heart!”

5. Shame yourself, by contemplating the character of those who have been most eminent for meekness and submission. Above all, compare your temper with the Spirit of Christ. “Learn of me,” saith he, “for I am meek and lowly.” It is said of Calvin and Ursin, though both of choleric natures, that they had so imbibed and cultivated the meekness of Christ as not to utter an unbecoming word under the greatest provocations. And even many of the heathens have manifested great moderation and forbearance under their severest afflictions. Is it not a shame and a reproach that you should be outdone by them?

6. Avoid every thing which is calculated to irritate your feelings. It is true spiritual valor to keep as far as we can out of sins way. If you can but avoid the excitements to impetuous and rebellious feelings, or check them in their first beginnings, you will have but little to fear. The first workings of common sins are comparatively weak, they gain their strength by degrees; but in times of trial the motions of sin are strongest at first, the unsubdued temper breaks out suddenly and violently. But if you resolutely with. stand it at first, it will yield and give you the victory.

IX. The ninth season wherein the greatest diligence and skill are necessary to keep the heart, is the hour of temptation, when Satan besets the Christians heart, and takes the unwary by surprise. . . .

IX. The ninth season wherein the greatest diligence arid skill are necessary to keep the heart, is the hour of temptation, when Satan besets the Christians heart, and takes the unwary by surprise. To keep the heart at such times, is not less a mercy than a duty. Few Christians are so skillful in detecting the fallacies, and repelling the arguments by which the adversary incites them to sin, as to come off safe and whole in these encounters. Many eminent saints have smarted severely for their want of watchfulness and diligence at such times. How then may a Christian keep his heart from yielding to temptation? There are several principal ways in which the adversary insinuates temptation, and urges compliance:

1. Satan suggests that here is pleasure to be enjoyed; the temptation is presented with a smiling aspect and an enticing voice: `What, are you so dull and phlegmatic as not to feel the powerful charms of pleasure? Who can withhold himself from such delights? Reader, you may be rescued from the danger of such temptations by repelling the proposal of pleasure. It is urged that the commission of sin will afford you pleasure. Suppose this were true, will the accusing and condemning rebukes of conscience and the flames of hell be pleasant too? Is there pleasure in the scourges of conscience? If so why did Peter weep so bitterly? why did David cry out of broken bones? You hear what is said of the pleasure of sin, and have you not read what David said of the effects of it? “Thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore; there is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger, neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin,” &c. If you yield to temptation, you must feel such inward distress on account of it, or the miseries of hell.

But why should the pretended pleasure of sin allure you, when you know that unspeakably more real pleasure will arise from the mortification than can arise from the commission of sin. Will you prefer the gratification of some unhallowed passion, with the deadly poison which it will leave behind, to that sacred pleasure which arises from fearing and obeying God, complying with the dictates of conscience, and maintaining inward peace? Can sin afford any such delight as he feels who, by resisting temptation, has manifested the sincerity of his heart, and obtained evidence that he fears God, loves holiness, and hates sin?

2. The secrecy with which you may commit sin is made use of to induce compliance with temptation. The tempter insinuates that this indulgence will never disgrace you among men, for no one will know it. But recollect yourself. Does not God behold you? Is not the divine presence every where? What if you might hide your sin from the eyes of the world, you cannot hide it from God. No darkness nor shadow of death can screen you from his inspection. Besides have you no reverence for yourself? Can you do that by yourself which you dare not have others observe? Is not your conscience as a thousand witnesses? Even a heathen could say, “When thou art tempted to commit sin, fear thyself without any other witness.”

3. The prospect of worldly advantage often enforces temptation. It is suggested, `Why should you be so nice and scrupulous? Give yourself a little liberty, and you may better your condition: now is your time. This is a dangerous temptation, and must be promptly resisted. Yielding to such a temptation will do your soul more injury than any temporal acquisition can possibly do you good. And what would it profit you, if you should gain the whole world and lose your own soul? What can be compared with the value of your spiritual interests? or what can at all compensate for the smallest injury of them?

4. Perhaps the smallness of the sin is urged as a reason why you may commit it; thus: `It is but a little one, a small matter, a trifle; who Would stand upon such niceties? But is the Majesty of heaven little too? If you commit this sin you will offend a great God. Is there any little hell to torment little sinners in? No; the least sinners in hell are full of misery. There is great wrath treasured up for those whom the world regard as little sinners. But the less the sin, the less the inducement to commit it. Will you provoke God for a trifle? will you destroy your peace, wound your conscience, and grieve the Spirit, all for nothing? What madness is this!

5. An argument to enforce temptation is sometimes drawn from the mercy of God and the hope of pardon —God is merciful, he will pass by this as an infirmity, he will not be severe to mark it. But stay: where do you find a promise of mercy to presumptuous sinners? Involuntary reprisals and lamented infirmities may be pardoned, “but the soul that doth aught presumptuously, the same reproacheth the Lord, and that soul shall be cut off from among his people.” If God is a being of so much mercy, how can you affront him? How can you make so glorious an attribute as the divine mercy an occasion of sin? Will you wrong him because he is good? Rather let his goodness lead you to repentance, and keep you from transgression.

6. Sometimes Satan encourages to the commission of sin, from the examples of holy men. Thus and thus they sinned, and were restored; therefore you may commit this sin, and yet. be a saint and be saved. Such suggestions must be instantly repelled. If good men have committed sins similar to that with which you are beset, did any good man ever sin upon such ground and from such encouragement as is here presented? Did God cause their examples to be recorded for your

imitation, or for your warning? Are they not set up as beacons that you may avoid the rocks upon which they split? Are you willing to feel what they felt for sin? Dare you follow them in sin, and plunge yourself into such distress and danger as they incurred?—Reader, in these ways learn to keep your heart in the hour of temptation.

X. The time of doubting and of spiritual darkness constitutes another season when it is very difficult to keep the heart. . . .

X. The time of doubting and of spiritual darkness constitutes another season when it is very difficult to keep the heart. When the light and comfort of the divine presence is withdrawn; when the believer, from the prevalence of indwelling sin in one form or other, is ready to renounce his hopes, to infer desperate conclusions with respect to himself, to regard his former comforts as vain delusions, and his professions as hypocrisy; at such a time much diligence is necessary to keep the heart from despondency. The Christian's distress arises from his apprehension of his spiritual state, and in general he argues against his possessing true religion, either from his having relapsed into the same sins from which he had formerly been recovered with shame and sorrow; or from the sensible declining of his affections from God; or from the strength of his affections toward creature enjoyments; or from his enlargement in public, while he is often confined and barren in private duties; or from some horrible suggestions of Satan, with which his soul is greatly perplexed; or, lastly, from God's silence and seeming denial of his long depending prayers. Now in order to the establishment and support of the heart under these circumstances, it is necessary that you be acquainted with some general truths which have a tendency to calm the trembling and doubting soul; and that you be rightly instructed with regard to the above-mentioned causes of disquiet. Let me direct your attention to the following general truths:

1. Every appearance of hypocrisy does not prove the person who manifests it to be a hypocrite. You should carefully distinguish between the appearance and the predominance of hypocrisy. There are remains of deceitfulness in the best hearts; this was exemplified in David and Peter; but the prevailing frame of their hearts being upright, they were not denominated hypocrites for their conduct.

2. We ought to regard what can be said in our favor, as well as what may be said against us. It is the sin of upright persons sometimes, to exercise an unreasonable severity against themselves. They do not impartially consider the state of their souls. To make their state appear butter than it really is, indeed is the damning sin of self-flattering hypocrites; and to make their state appear worse than it really is, is the sin and folly of some good persons. But why should you be such an enemy to your own peace? Why read over the evidences of God's love to your soul, as a man does a book which he intends to confute? Why do you study evasions, and turn off those comforts which are due to you?

3. Every thing which may be an occasion of grief to the people of God, is not a sufficient ground for their questioning the reality of their religion. Many things may trouble, which ought not to stumble you. If upon every occasion you should call in question all that had ever been wrought upon you, your life would be made up of doubtings and fears, and you could never attain that settled inward peace, and live that life of praise and thankfulness which the Gospel requires.

4. The soul is not at all times in a suitable state to pass a right judgment upon itself. It is peculiarly unqualified for this in the hour of desertion or temptation. Such seasons must be improved rather for watching and resisting, than for judging and determining.

5. Whatever be the ground of one's distress, it should drive him to, not from God. Suppose you have sinned thus and so, or that you have been thus long and sadly deserted, yet you have no right to infer that you ought to be discouraged, as if there was no help for you in God. When you have well digested these truths, if your doubts and distress remain, consider what is now to be offered:

1. Are you ready to conclude that you have no part in the favor of God, because you are visited with some extraordinary affliction? If so, do you then rightly conclude that great trials are tokens of God's hatred? Does the Scripture teach this? And dare you infer the same with respect to all who have been as much or more afflicted than yourself? If the argument is good in your case, it is good in application to theirs, and more conclusive with respect to them, in proportion as their trials were greater than yours. Wo then to David, Job, Paul, and all who have been afflicted as they were! But had you passed along in quietness and prosperity; had God withheld those chastisements with which he ordinarily visits his people, would you not have had far more reason for doubts and distress than you now have?

2. Do you rashly infer that the Lord has no love to you, because he has withdrawn the light of his countenance? Do you imagine your state to be hopeless, because it is dark and uncomfortable? Be not hasty in forming this conclusion. If any of the dispensations of God to his people will bear a favorable as well as a harsh construction, why should they not be construed in the best sense? And may not God have a design of love rather than of hatred in the dispensation under which you mourn? May he not depart for a season, without departing for ever? You are not the first that have mistaken the design of God in withdrawing himself. "Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, my Lord hath forgotten me." But was it so? What saith the answer of God? "Can a woman forget her sucking child?" &c. But do you sink down under the apprehension that the evidences of a total and final desertion are discoverable in your experience? Have you then lost your conscientious tenderness with regard to sin? and are you inclined to forsake God? If so, you have reason indeed to be alarmed. But if your conscience is tenderly alive; if you are resolved to cleave to the Lord; if the language of your heart is, I cannot forsake God, I cannot live without his presence; though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: then you have reason to hope that he will visit you again. It is by these exercises that he still maintains his interest in you.

Once more. Are sense and feelings suitable to judge of the dispensations of God by? Can their testimony be safely relied on? Is it safe to argue thus: 'If God bad any love for my soul, I should feel it now as well as in former times; but I cannot feel it, therefore it is gone?' May you not as well conclude, when the sun is invisible to you, that he has ceased to exist? Read Isaiah 1:10.

Now if there is nothing in the divine dealings with you which is a reasonable ground of your despondency and distress, let us inquire what there is in your own conduct for which you should be so cast down:

1. Have you committed sins from which you were formerly recovered with shame and sorrow? And do you thence conclude that you sin allowedly and habitually, and that your oppositions to sin were

hypocritical? But do not too hastily give up all for lost. Is not your repentance and care renewed as often as you commit sin? Is it not the sin itself which troubles you, and is it not true, that the oftener you sin the more you are distressed? It is not so in customary sinning; of which Bernard excellently discourses thus: “When a man accustomed to restrain, sins grievously, it seems insupportable to him, yea he seems to descend alive into hell. In process of time it seems not insupportable, but heavy, and between insupportable and heavy there is no small descent. Next, such sinning becomes light, his conscience smites but faintly, and he regards not her rebukes. Then he is not only insensible to his guilt, but that which was bitter and displeasing has become in some degree sweet and pleasant. Now it is made a custom, and not only pleases, but pleases habitually. At length custom becomes nature; he cannot be dissuaded from it, but defends and pleads for it.” This is allowed and customary sinning, this is the way of the wicked. But is not your way the contrary of this?

2. Do you apprehend a decline of your affections from God and from spiritual subjects? This may be your case, and yet there may be hope. But possibly you are mistaken with regard to this. There are many things to be learnt in Christian experience; it has relation to a great variety of subjects. You may now be learning what it is very necessary for you to know as a Christian. Now, what if you are not sensible of so lively affections, of such ravishing views as you had at first; may not your piety be growing more solid and consistent, and better adapted to practical purposes? Does it follow from your not always being in the same frame of mind, or from the fact that the same objects do not at all times excite the same feelings, that you have no true religion? Perhaps you deceive yourself by looking forward to what you would be, rather than contemplating what you are, compared with what you once were.

3. If the strength of your love to creature-enjoyments is the ground of desperate conclusions respecting yourself, perhaps you argue thus: “I fear that I love the creature more than God, if so, I have not true love to God. I sometimes feel stronger affections toward earthly comforts than I do toward heavenly objects, therefore my soul is not upright within me.” If, indeed, you love the creature for itself, if you make it your end, and religion but a means, then you conclude rightly; for this is incompatible with supreme love to God. But may not a man love God more ardently and unchangeably than he does any thing, or all things else, and yet, when God is not the direct object of his thoughts, may he not be sensible of more violent affection for the creature than he has at that time for God? As rooted malice indicates a stronger hatred than sudden though inure violent passion; so we must judge of our love, not by a violent motion of it now and then, but by the depth of its root and the constancy of its exercise. Perhaps your difficulty results from bringing your love to some foreign and improper test. Many persons have feared that when brought to some eminent trial they should renounce Christ and cleave to the creature; but when the trial came, Christ was every thing, and the world as nothing in their esteem. Such were the fears of some martyrs whose victory was complete. But you may expect divine assistance only at the time of, and in proportion to your necessity. If you would try your love, see whether you are willing to forsake Christ now.

4. Is the want of that enlargement in private which you find in public exercises an occasion of doubts and fears? Consider then whether there are not some circumstances attending public duties which are peculiarly calculated to excite your feelings and elevate your mind, and which cannot affect you in private. If so, your exercises in secret, if performed faithfully and in a suitable manner, may he profitable, though they have not all the characteristics of those in public. If you

imagine that you have spiritual enlargement and enjoyment in public exercises while you neglect private duties, doubtless you deceive yourself. Indeed if you live in the neglect of secret duties, or are careless about them, you have great reason to fear. But if you regularly and faithfully perform them, it does not follow that they are vain and worthless, or that they are not of great value, because they are not attended with so much enlargement as you sometimes find in public. And what if the Spirit is pleased more highly to favor you with his gracious influence in one place and at one time than another, should this be a reason for murmuring and unbelief, or for thankfulness?

5. The vile or blasphemous suggestions of Satan sometimes occasion great perplexity and distress.— They seem to lay open an abyss of corruption in the heart, and to say there can be no grace here. But there may be grace in the heart where such thoughts are injected, though not, in the heart which consents to and cherishes them. Do you then abhor and oppose them? do you utterly refuse to give up yourself to their influence, and strive to keep holy and reverend thoughts of God, and of all religious objects? If so, such suggestions are involuntary, and no evidence against your piety.

6. Is the seeming denial of your prayers an occasion of despondency? Are you disposed to say, “If God had any regard for my soul he would have heard my petitions before now; but I have no answer from him, and therefore no interest in him?” But stay: though God’s abhorring and finally rejecting prayer is an evidence that he rejects the person who prays, yet, dare you conclude that he has rejected you, because an answer to your prayers is delayed, or because you do not discover it if granted? “May not God bear long with his own elect, that cry unto him day and night?”

Others have stumbled upon the same ground with you: “I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardst the voice of my supplication.” Now are there not some things in your experience which indicate that your prayers are not rejected, though answer to them is deferred? Are you not disposed to continue praying though you do not discover an answer? Are you not disposed still to ascribe righteousness to God, while you consider the cause of his silence as being in yourself? Thus did David: “O my God, I cry in the day time, and thou hearest not; and in the night, and am not silent: but thou art holy,” &c. Does not the delay of an answer to your prayers excite you to examine your own heart and try your ways, that you may find and remove the difficulty? If so, you may have reason for humiliation, but not for despair.

Thus I have shown you how to keep your heart in dark and doubting seasons. God forbid that any false heart should encourage itself from these things. It is lamentable, that when we give saints and sinners their proper portions, each is so prone to take up the other’s part.

XI. Another season, wherein the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when sufferings for religion are laid upon us. . . .

XI. Another season, wherein the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when sufferings for religion are laid upon us. Blessed is the man who in such a season is not offended in Christ. Now, whatever may be the kind or degree of your sufferings, if they are sufferings for Christ’s sake and the Gospel’s, spare no diligence to keep your heart. If you are tempted to shrink or waver under them, let what follows help you to repel and to surmount the instigation:

1. What reproach would you cast upon the Redeemer and his religion by deserting him at such a time as this! You would proclaim to the world, that how much soever you have boasted of the

promises when you are put to the proof you dare hazard no thing upon your faith in them; and this will give the enemies of Christ an occasion to blaspheme. And will you thus furnish the triumphs of the uncircumcised? Ah, if you did but value the name of Christ as much as many wicked men value their names, you could never endure that his should be exposed to contempt. Will proud dust and ashes hazard death or hell rather than have their names disgraced, and will you endure nothing to maintain the honor of Christ?

2. Dare you violate your conscience out of complaisance to flesh and blood? Who will comfort you when your conscience accuses and condemns you? What happiness can there be in life, liberty or friends, when inward peace is taken away? Consider well what you do.

3. Is not the public interest of Christ and his cause infinitely more important than any interest of your own, and should you not prefer his glory and the welfare of his kingdom before every thing else? Should any temporary suffering, or any sacrifice which you can be called to make, be suffered to come into competition with the honor of his name?

4. Did the Redeemer neglect your interest and think lightly of you, when for your sake he endured sufferings between which and yours there can be no comparison? Did he hesitate and shrink back? No: “He endured the cross, despising the shame.” And did he with unbroken patience and constancy endure so much for you; and will you flinch from momentary suffering in his cause?

5. Can you so easily cast off the society and the privileges of the saints and go over to the enemy’s side? Are you willing to withhold your support from those who are determined to persevere, and throw your influence in the scale against them? Rather let your body and soul be rent asunder. “If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”

6. How can you stand before Christ in the day of judgment, if you desert him now? “He that is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” Yet a little while, and the Son of man will come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, to judge the world. He will sit upon the throne of judgment, while all the nations are brought before him. Imagine yourself now to be witnessing the transactions of that day. Behold the wicked; behold the apostates; and hear the consuming sentence which is pronounced upon them, and see them sinking in the gulf of infinite and everlasting wo! And will you desert Christ now, will you forsake his cause to save a little suffering, or to protract an unprofitable life on earth, and thus expose yourself to the doom of the apostate? Remember, that if you can silence the remonstrances of conscience now, you cannot hinder the sentence of the Judge then. By these means keep your heart, that it depart not from the living God.

XII. The last season which I shall mention, in which the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when we are warned by sickness that our dissolution is at hand. . . .

XII. The last season which I shall mention, in which the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when we are warned by sickness that our dissolution is at hand. When the child of God draws nigh to eternity, the adversary makes his last effort; and as he cannot win the soul from God, as he cannot dissolve the bond which unites the soul to Christ, his great design is to awaken fears of death, to fill the mind with aversion and horror at the thoughts of dissolution from the body. Hence, what shrinking from a separation, what fear to grasp death’s cold hand, and unwillingness to

depart, may sometimes be observed in the people of God. But we ought to die, as well as live, like saints.

I shall offer several considerations calculated to help the people of God in time of sickness, to keep their hearts loose from all earthly objects, and cheerfully willing to die:

1. Death is harmless to the people of God; its shafts leave no sting in them. Why then are you afraid that your sickness may be unto death? If you were to die in your sins; if death were to reign over you as a tyrant, to feed upon you as a lion doth upon his prey; if death to you were to be the precursor of hell, then you might reasonably startle and shrink back from it with horror and dismay. But if your sins are blotted out; if Christ has vanquished death in your behalf, so that you have nothing to encounter but bodily pain, and possibly not even that; if death will be to you the harbinger of heaven, why should you be afraid? why not bid it welcome? It cannot hurt you; it is easy and harmless; it is like putting off your clothes, on taking rest.

2. It may keep your heart from shrinking back, to consider that death is necessary to fit you for the full enjoyment of God. Whether you are willing to die or not, there certainly is no other way to complete the happiness of your soul. Death must do you the kind office to remove this veil of flesh, this animal life which separates you from God, before you can see and enjoy him fully. “Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.” And who would not be willing to die for the perfect enjoyment of God? Methinks one should look and sigh, like a prisoner, through the grates of this mortality: “O that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest.” Indeed most men need patience to die; but a saint, who understands what death will introduce him to, rather needs patience to live. On his death-bed he should often look out and listen to his Lord’s coming; and when he perceives his dissolution to be near, he should say, “The voice of my beloved; behold he cometh, leaping over the mountains, skipping over the hills.”

3. Consider that the happiness of heaven commences immediately after death. That happiness will not be deferred till the resurrection; but as soon as death has passed upon you, your soul will be swallowed up in life. When you have once loosed from this shore, you shall be quickly wafted to the shore of a glorious eternity. And can you not say, I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ? Did the soul and body die together, or did they sleep till the resurrection, as some have fancied, it would have been folly for Paul to desire a dissolution for the enjoyment of Christ; because he would have enjoyed more in the body than he could have enjoyed out of it. The Scripture speaks of but two ways in which the soul can properly live: viz, by faith and vision. These two comprehend its present and future existence.

Now, if when faith fails, sight should not immediately succeed, what would become of the soul? But the truth on this subject is clearly revealed in Scripture. See Luke 23:3; John 14:3, &c. What a blessed change then will death make in your condition! Rouse up, dying saint, and rejoice; let death do his work, that the angels may conduct your soul to the world of light.

4. It may increase your willingness to die, to reflect that by death God often removes his people out of the way of great troubles and temptations. When some extraordinary calamity is coming upon the world, God sometimes removes his saints out of the way of the evil. Thus Methuselah died the year before the flood; Augustine a little before the sacking of Hippo; Pareus just before the taking of Heidelburg. Luther observes that all the apostles died before the destruction of

Jerusalem; and Luther himself died before the wars broke out in Germany. Now it may be that by death you will escape some grievous trial, which you could not and need not endure. But if no extraordinary trouble would come upon you in case your life were prolonged, yet God designs by death to relieve you from innumerable evils and burdens which are inseparable from the present state. Thus you will be delivered from indwelling sin, which is the greatest trouble; from all temptations from whatever source; from bodily tempers and embarrassments; and from all the afflictions and sorrows of this life. The days of your mourning will be ended, and God will wipe away all tears from your eyes. Why then should you not hasten to depart?

5. If you still linger, like Lot in Sodom, what are your pleas and pretences for a longer life? Why are you unwilling to die? Are you concerned for the welfare of your relations? If so, are you anxious for their temporal support? Then let the word of God satisfy you: “Leave thy fatherless children to me, I will keep them alive, and let thy widows trust in me.” Luther says, in his last will, “Lord, thou hast given inc a wife and children, I have nothing to leave them, but I commit them unto thee. O Father of the fatherless and Judge of widows, nourish, keep and teach them.” But are you concerned for the spiritual welfare of your relations? Remember that you cannot convert them, if you should live; and God can make your prayers and counsels effectual when you are dead.

Perhaps you desire to serve God longer in this world. But if he has nothing further for you to do here, why not say with David, “Here am I, let him do what seemeth him good.” He is calling you to higher service in heaven, and can accomplish by other hands what you desire to do further here.—Do you feel too imperfect to go to heaven? Consider that you must be imperfect until you die; your sanctification cannot be complete until you get to heaven.

‘But,’ you say, ‘I want assurance; if I had that I could die easily.’ Consider, then, that a hearty willingness to leave all the world to be freed from sin, and to be with God, is the direct way to that desired assurance; no carnal person was ever willing to die upon this ground.

Thus I have shown how the people of God, in the most difficult seasons, may keep their hearts with alt diligence.

I now proceed to improve and apply the subject: . . .

You have seen that the keeping of the heart is the great work of a Christian, in which the very soul and life of religion consists, and without which all other duties are of no value in the sight of God. Hence, to the consternation of hypocrites and formal professors, I infer:

1. That the pains and labors which many persons have undergone in religion are of no value, and will turn to no good account. Many splendid services have been performed by men, which God will utterly reject: they will not stand on record in order to an eternal acceptance, because the performers took no heed to keep their hearts with God. This is that fatal rock on which thousands of vain professors dash and ruin themselves eternally; they are exact about the externals of religion, but regardless of their hearts. O how many hours have some professors spent in hearing, praying, reading and conferring! and yet, as to the main end of religion, they might as well have sat still and done nothing, the great work, I mean heart-work, being all the while neglected. Tell me, vain professor, when did you shed a tear for the deadness, hardness, unbelief or earthliness of your heart? And do you think your easy religion can save you? If so, you must invert Christ’s words, and say, Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to life, and many there be that

go in thereat! Hear me, ye self-deluding hypocrite; you who have put off God with heartless duties; you who have acted in religion as if you had been blessing an idol; you who could not search your heart, and regulate it, and exercise it in your performances; how will you abide the coming of the Lord? how will you hold up your head before him, when he shall say. 'O you dissembling, false-hearted man! how could you profess religion? with what face could you so often tell me that you loved me, when you knew in your conscience that your heart was not with me?' O tremble to think what a fearful judgment it is to be given over to a heedless and careless heart, and then to have religious duties instead of a rattle to quiet and still the conscience!

2. I infer for their humiliation, that unless the people of God spend more time and pains about their hearts than they ordinarily do, they are never like to do God much service, or to possess much comfort in this world. I may say of that Christian who is remiss and careless in keeping his heart, as Jacob said of Reuben, Thou shalt not excel. It grieves me to see how many Christians there are who live at a poor, low rate, both of service and comfort, and who go up and down dejected and complaining. But how can they expect it should be otherwise, while they live so carelessly?

O how little of their time is spent in the closet, in searching, humbling, and quickening their hearts!

Christian, you say your heart is dead, and do you wonder that it is, so long as you keep it not with the fountain of life? If your body had been dieted as your soul has, that would have been dead too. And you may never expect that your heart will be in a better state until you take more pains with it.

O Christians! I fear your zeal and strength have run in the wrong channel; I fear that most of us may take up the Church's complaint: "They have made me the keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vine-yard have I not kept." Two things have eaten up the time and strength of the professors of this generation, and sadly diverted them from heart-work.

First:—Fruitless controversies, started by Satan, I doubt not for the very purpose of taking us off from practical godliness, to make us puzzle our heads when we should be inspecting our hearts. How little have we regarded the observation: "It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, and not with meats," (that is, with disputes and controversies about meats,) "which have not profited them that have been occupied therein." How much better it is to see men live exactly, than to hear them dispute with subtlety! These unfruitful questions, how have they rent the churches, wasted time and spirits, and taken Christians off from their main business! 'What think you, would it not have been better if the questions agitated among the people of God of late had been such as these:—"How shall a man distinguish the special from the common operations of the Spirit? How may a soul discern its first backslidings from God? How may a backsliding Christian recover his first love? How may the heart be preserved from unseasonable thoughts in duty? How may a bosom-sin be discovered and mortified?" &c. Would not this course have tended more to the honor of religion and the comfort of souls? I am ashamed that the professors of this generation are yet insensible of their folly. O that God would turn their disputes and contentions into practical godliness!

Second:—Worldly cares and incumbrances have greatly increased the neglect of our hearts. The heads and hearts of multitudes have been filled with such a crowd and noise of worldly business that they have lamentably declined in their zeal, their love, their delight in God, and their heavenly, serious, and profitable way of conversing with men. How miserably have we entangled ourselves

in this wilderness of trifles! Our discourses, our conferences, nay, our very prayers are tinged with it. We have had so much to do without, that we have been able to do but little within. And how many precious opportunities have we thus lost? How many admonitions of the Spirit have passed over unfruitfully? How often has the Lord called to us, when our worldly thoughts have prevented us from hearing? But there certainly is a way to enjoy God even in our worldly employments. If we lose our views of him when engaged in our temporal affairs, the fault is our own. Alas! that Christians should stand at the door of eternity, having more work upon their hands than their time is sufficient for, and yet be filling their heads and hearts with trifles!

3. I infer, lastly, for the awakening of all, that if the keeping of the heart be the great work of a Christian, then there are but few real Christians in the world. If every one who has learned the dialect of Christianity, and who can talk like a saint; if every one who has gifts and parts, and who can make shift to preach, pray, or discourse like a Christian: in a word, if all such as associate with the people of God and partake of ordinances may pass for Christians, then indeed the number is great. But alas! how few can he found, if you judge them by this rule,—how few are there who conscientiously keep their hearts, watch their thoughts and look scrupulously to their motives! Indeed there are few closet-men among professors. It is easier for men to be reconciled to any other duties in religion than to these. The profane part of the world will not so much as meddle with the outside of any religious duties, and least of all with these; and as to the hypocrite, though he may be very particular in externals, you can never persuade him to undertake this inward, this difficult work; this work, to which there is no inducement from human applause; this work, which would quickly discover what the hypocrite cares not to know: so that by general consent this heart-work is left to the hands of a few retired ones, and I tremble to think in how few hands it is.

II. If the keeping of the heart be so important a business; if such great advantages result from it; if so many valuable interests be wrapt up in it, then let me call upon the people of God every where to engage heartily in this work. O study your hearts, watch your hearts, keep your hearts! Away with fruitless controversies and all idle questions; away with empty names and vain shows; away with unprofitable discourse and bold censures of others, and turn in upon yourselves. O that this day, this hour, you would resolve upon doing so!

Reader, methinks I shall prevail with you. All that I beg for is this, that you would step aside oftener to talk with God and your own heart; that you would not suffer every trifle to divert you; that you would keep a more true and faithful account of your thoughts and affections; that you would seriously demand of your own heart at least every evening, ‘O my heart, where hast thou been today, and what has engaged thy thoughts?’

If all that has been said by way of inducement be not enough, I have yet some motives to offer you:

If all that has been said by way of inducement be not enough, I have yet some motives to offer you:

1. The studying, observing, and diligently keeping your own heart, will surprisingly help you to understand the deep mysteries of religion. An honest, well-experienced heart is an excellent help to the head. Such a heart will serve for a commentary on a great part of the Scriptures. By means of such a heart you will have a better understanding of divine things than the most learned

(graceless) man ever had, or call have; you will not only have a clearer, but a more interesting and profitable apprehension of them. A man may discourse orthodoxy and profoundly of the nature and effects of faith, the troubles and comforts of conscience, and the sweetness of communion with God, who never felt the efficacy and sweet impression of these things upon his own soul. But how dark and dry are his notions compared with those of an experienced Christian!

2. The study and observation of your own heart will powerfully secure you against the dangerous and infecting errors of the times in which you live. For what think you is the reason why so many professors have departed from the faith, giving heed to fables? why have so many been led away by the error of the wicked? why have those who have sown corrupt doctrines had such plentiful harvests among us, but because they have met with a race of professors who never knew what belongs to practical godliness and the study and keeping of their hearts?

3. Your care and diligence in keeping your heart will prove one of the best evidences of your sincerity. I know no external act of religion which truly distinguishes the sound from the unsound professor. It is marvellous how far hypocrites go in all external duties; how plausibly they can order the outward man, hiding all their indecencies from the observation of the world. But they take no heed to their hearts; they are not in secret what they appear to be in public; and before this test no hypocrite can stand. They may, indeed, in a fit of terror, or on a death-bed, cry out of the wickedness of their hearts; but such extort ed complaints are worthy of no regard. No credit, in law, is to be given to the testimony of one upon the rack, because it may be supposed that the extremity of his torture will make him say any thing to get relief. But if self-jealousy, care and watchfulness be the daily workings and frames of your heart, you have some evidence of your sincerity.

4. How comfortable and how profitable would all ordinances and duties be to you, if your heart was faithfully kept. What lively communion might you have with God every time you approach him, if your heart was in a right frame! You might then say with David, “My meditation of Him shall be sweet.” It is the indisposition of the heart which renders ordinances, and secret duties so comfortless to some. They strive to raise their hearts to God, now pressing this argument upon them, then that, to quicken and affect them; yet they often get nearly through the exercise before their hearts begin to be interested in it; and some times they go away no better than they came. But the Christian whose heart is prepared by being constantly kept, enters immediately and heartily into his duties; he outstrips his sluggish neighbor, gets the first sight of Christ in a sermon, the first seal from Christ in a sacrament, the first communication of grace and love in secret prayer. Now if there be any thing valuable and comfortable in ordinances and private duties, look to your heart and keep it, I beseech you.

5. An acquaintance with your own heart will furnish you a fountain of matter in prayer. The man who is diligent in heart-work, will be richly supplied with matter in his addresses to God. He will not be confused for want of thoughts; his tongue will not falter for want of expressions.

6. The most desirable thing in the world, viz, the revival of religion among a people, may be effected by means of what I am urging upon you.

O that I might see the time when professors shall not walk in a vain show; when they shall please themselves no more with a name to live, while they are spiritually dead; when they shall be no

more a company of frothy, vain persons; but when holiness shall shine in their conversation, and awe the world, and command reverence from all that are around them; when they shall warm the heart of those who come near them, and cause it to be said, God is in these men of a truth. And may such a time be expected? Until heart-work becomes the business of professors, I have no hope of seeing a time so blessed! Does it not grieve you to see how religion is contemned and trampled under foot, and the professors of it ridiculed and scorned in the world? Professors, would you recover your credit? would you obtain an honorable testimony in the consciences of your very enemies? Then keep your hearts.

7. By diligence in keeping our hearts we should prevent the occasions of fatal scandals and stumbling-blocks to the world. Wo to the world because of offences!

Keep your heart faithfully, and you will be prepared for any situation or service to which you may be called. This, and this only can properly fit you for usefulness in any station; but with this you can endure prosperity or adversity; you can deny yourself, and turn your hand to any work. Thus Paul turned every circumstance to good account, and made himself so eminently useful. When he preached to others, he provided against being cast away himself: he kept his heart; and every thing in which lie excelled seems to have had a close connection with his diligence in keeping his heart.

9. If the people of God would diligently keep their hearts, their communion with each other would be unspeakably more inviting and profitable. Then “how goodly would be thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!” It is the fellowship which the people of God have with the Father and with the Son that kindles the desires of others to have communion with them. I tell you, that if saints would be persuaded to spend more time and take more pains about their hearts, there would soon be such a divine excellence in their conversation that others would account it no small privilege to be with or near them. It is the pride, passion and earthliness of our hearts, that has spoiled Christian fellowship. Why is it that when Christians meet they are often jarring and contending, but because their passions arc unmortified? Whence come their uncharitable censures of their brethren, but from their ignorance of themselves? Why are they so rigid and unfeeling toward those who have fallen, but because they do not feel their own weakness and liability to temptation? Why is their discourse so light and unprofitable when they meet, but because their hearts are earthly and vain? But now, if Christians would study their hearts more and keep them better, the beauty and glory of communion would be restored. They would divide no more, contend no more, censure rashly no more. They will feel right one toward another, when each is daily humbled under a sense of the evil of his own heart.

10. Lastly:—Keep your heart, and then the comforts of the Spirit and the influence of all ordinances will be more fixed and lasting than they now are. And do the consolations of God seem small to you?” Ah, you have reason to be ashamed that the ordinances of God, as to their quickening and comforting effects, should make so light and transient an impression on your heart.

Now, reader, consider well these special benefits of keeping the heart which I have mentioned. Examine their importance. Are they small matters? Is it a small matter to have your understanding assisted? your endangered soul rendered safe? your sincerity proved? your communion with God sweetened? your heart filled with matter for prayer? Is it a small thing to have the power of godliness? all fatal scandals removed? an instrumental fitness to serve Christ obtained? the

communion of saints restored to its primitive glory? and the influence of ordinances abiding in the souls of saints? If these are no common blessings, no ordinary benefits, then surely it is a great and in dispensable duty to keep the heart with all diligence. And now are you inclined to undertake the business of keeping your heart? are you resolved upon it? I charge you, then, to engage in it earnestly. Away with every cowardly feeling, and make up your mind to encounter difficulties. Draw your armor from the word of God. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in its commands, its promises, its threatenings; let it be fixed in your understanding, your memory, your conscience, your affections. You must learn to wield the sword of the Spirit (which is the word of God) familiarly, if you would defend your heart and conquer your enemies. You must call yourself frequently to an account; examine yourself as in the presence of the all seeing God; bring your conscience, as it were, to the bar of judgment. Beware how you plunge yourself into a multiplicity of worldly business; how you practise upon the maxims of the world; and how you venture at all to indulge your depraved propensities. You must exercise the utmost vigilance to discover and check the first symptoms of departure from God, the least decline of spirituality, or the least indisposition to meditation by yourself and holy conversation and fellowship with others. These things you must undertake, in the strength of Christ, with invincible resolution in the outset. And if you thus engage in this great work, he assured you shall not spend your strength for naught; comforts which you never felt or thought of will flow in upon you from every side. The diligent prosecution of this work will constantly afford you the most powerful excitements to vigilance and ardor in the life of faith, while it increases your strength and wears out your enemies. And when you have kept your heart with all diligence a little while; when you have fought the battles of this spiritual warfare, gained the ascendancy over the corruptions within, and vanquished the enemies without, then God will open the gate of heaven to you, and give you the portion which is promised to them that overcome. Awake then, this moment; get the world under your feet pant not for the things which a man may have, and eternally lose his soul; but bless God that you may have his service here, and the glory hereafter which he appoints to his chosen.

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

04.05a. Keeping the Heart in the Time of Adversity

Keeping the Heart in the Time of Adversity

II. The second season in the life of a Christian, requiring more than common diligence to keep his heart, is the time of adversity. . .

II. The second season in the life of a Christian, requiring more than common diligence to keep his heart, is the time of adversity. When Providence frowns upon you, and blasts your outward comforts, then look to your heart; keep it with all diligence from repining against God, or fainting under his hand; for troubles, though sanctified, are troubles still. Jonah was a good man, and yet how fretful was his heart under affliction! Job was the mirror of patience, yet how was his heart discomposed by trouble! You will find it hard to get a composed spirit under great afflictions. O the hurries and tumults which they occasion even in the best hearts I—Let me show you, then, how a Christian under great afflictions may keep his heart from repining or desponding, under the hand of God.

I will here offer several helps to keep the heart in this condition.

1. By these cross providences God is faithfully pursuing the great design of electing love upon the souls of his people, and orders all these afflictions as means sanctified to that end. Afflictions come not by casualty, but by counsel. By this counsel of God they are ordained as means of much spiritual good to saints. “By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged,” &c. “But he for our profit,” &c. “All things work together for good,” &c. They are God’s workmen upon our hearts, to pull down the pride and carnal security of them; and being so, their nature is changed; they are turned into blessings and benefits. “It is good for me that I have been afflicted,” says David. Surely then thou hast no reason to quarrel with God, but rather to wonder that he should concern himself so much in thy good as to use any means for accomplishing it. Paul could bless God if by any means he might attain the resurrection of the dead. “My brethren,” says James, “count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations.” ‘My Father is about a design of love upon my soul, and do I well to be angry with him? All that he does is in pursuance of, and in reference to some eternal, glorious ends upon my soul. It is my ignorance of God’s design that makes me quarrel with him.’ He says to thee in this case, as he did to Peter, “What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.”

2. Though God has reserved to himself a liberty of afflicting his people, yet he has tied up his own hands by promise never to take away his loving kindness from them. Can I contemplate this scripture with a repining, discontented spirit: “I will be his Father, and be shall be my son: if he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of man, and with the stripes of the children of men nevertheless my mercy shall not depart away from him.” O my heart, my haughty heart! dost thou well to be discontent, when God has given thee the whole tree, with all the clusters of comfort growing on it, because he suffers the wind to blow down a few leaves? Christians have two kinds of goods, the goods of the throne and the goods of the footstool; immoveables and moveables. If

God has secured those, never let my heart be troubled at the loss of these: indeed, if he had cut off his love or discovenanted my soul; I had reason to be cast down; but this he hath not done, nor can he do it.

3. It is of great efficacy to keep the heart from sinking under afflictions, to call to mind that thine own Father has the ordering of them. Not a creature moves hand or tongue against thee but by his permission. Suppose the cup be bitter, yet it is the cup which thy Father hath given thee; and canst thou suspect poison to be in it? Foolish man, put home the case to thine own heart; canst thou give thy child that which would ruin him? No! thou wouldst as soon hurt thyself as him. “If thou then, being evil, knowest how to give good gifts to thy children,” how much more does God! The very consideration of his nature as a God of love, pity, and tender mercies; or of his relation to thee as a father, husband, friend, may be security enough, if he had not spoken a word to quiet thee in this case; and yet you have his word too, by the prophet Jeremiah: “I will do you no hurt.” You lie too near his heart for him to hurt you; nothing grieves him more than your groundless and unworthy suspicions of his designs. Would it not grieve a faithful, tender-hearted physician, when he had studied the case of his patient, and prepared the most excellent medicines to save his life, to hear him cry out, ‘O he has undone me! he has poisoned me!’ because it pains him in the operation?. O when will you be ingenuous?

4. God respects you as much in a low as in a high condition; and therefore it need not so much trouble you to be made low; nay, he manifests more of his love, grace and tenderness in the time of affliction than in the time of prosperity. As God did not at first choose you because you were high, he will not now forsake you because you are low. Men may look shy upon you, and alter their respects as your condition is altered; when Providence has blasted your estate, your summer-friends may grow strange, fearing you may be troublesome to them; but will God do so? No, no: “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” says he. If adversity and poverty could bar you from access to God, it were indeed a deplorable condition: but, so far from this, you may go to him as freely as ever. “My God will hear me,” says the church. Poor David, when stripped of all earthly comforts, could encourage himself in the Lord his God; and why cannot you? Suppose your husband or son had lost all at sea, and should come to you in rags; could you deny the relation, or refuse to entertain him? If you would not, much less will God. Why then are you so troubled? Though your condition be changed, your Father’s love is not changed.

5. What if by the loss of outward comforts God preserves your soul from the ruining power of temptation? Surely then you have little cause to sink your heart by such sad thoughts. Do not earthly enjoyments make men shrink and warp in times of trial? For the love of these many have forsaken Christ in such an hour. The young ruler “went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.” If this is God’s design, how ungrateful to murmur against him for it! We see mariners in a storm can throw overboard the most valuable goods to preserve their lives. We know it is usual for soldiers in a besieged city to destroy the finest buildings without the walls in which the enemy may take shelter; and no one doubts that it is wisely done. Those who have mortified limbs willingly stretch them out to be cut off, and not only thank, but pay the surgeon. Must God be murmured against for casting over that which would sink you in a storm; for pulling down that which would assist your enemy in the siege of temptation; for cutting off what would endanger your everlasting life? O, inconsiderate, ungrateful man! are not these things for which thou grievest, the very things that have ruined thousands of souls?

6. It would much support thy heart under adversity, to consider that God by such humbling providences maybe accomplishing that for which you have long prayed and waited. And should you be troubled at that? Say, Christian, hast thou not many prayers depending before God upon such accounts as these; that he would keep thee from sin; discover to thee the emptiness of the creature; that he would mortify and. kill thy lusts; that thy. heart may never find rest in any enjoyment but Christ? By such humbling and impoverishing strokes God may be fulfilling thy desire. Wouldst thou be kept from sin? Lo, he hath hedged up thy way with thorns. Wouldst thou see the creature's vanity? Thy affliction is a fair glass to discover it; for the vanity of the creature is never so effectually and sensibly discovered, as in our own experience. Wouldst thou have thy corruptions mortified? This is the way: to have the food and fuel removed that maintained them; for as prosperity begat and fed them, so adversity, when sanctified, is a means to kill them. Wouldst thou have thy heart rest no where but in the bosom of God? What better method could Providence take to accomplish thy desire than pulling from under thy head that soft pillow of creature-delights on which you rested before? And yet you fret at this: peevish child, how dost thou try thy Father's patience! If he delay to answer thy prayers, thou art ready to say he regards thee not; if he does that which really answers the end of them, though not in the way which you expect, you murmur against him for that; as if, instead of answering, he were crossing all thy hopes and aims. Is this ingenuous? Is it not enough that God is so gracious as to do what thou desirest: must thou be so impudent as to expect him to do it in the way which thou prescribest?

7. It may support thy heart, to consider that in these troubles God is performing that work in which thy soul would rejoice, if thou didst see the design of it. We are clouded with much ignorance, and are not able to discern how particular providences tend to the fulfillment of God's designs; and therefore, like Israel in the wilderness, are often murmuring, because Providence leads us about in a howling desert, where we are exposed to difficulties; though then he led them, and is now4eading us, by the right way to a city of habitations. If you could but see how God in his secret counsel has exactly laid the whole plan of your salvation, even to the smallest means and circumstances; could you but discern the admirable harmony of divine dispensations, their mutual relations, together with the general respect they all have to the last end; had you liberty to make your own choice, you would, of all conditions in the world, choose that in which you now are. Providence is like a curious piece of tapestry made of a thousand shreds, which, single, appear useless, but put together, they represent a beautiful history to the eye. As God does all things according to the counsel of his own will, of course this is ordained as the best method to effect your salvation. Such an one has a proud heart, so many humbling providences appoint for him; such an one has an earthly heart, see many impoverishing providences for him. Did you but see this, I need say no more to support the most dejected heart.

8. It would much conduce to the settlement of your heart, to consider that by fretting and discontent you do yourself more injury than all your afflictions could do. Your own discontent is that which arms your troubles with a sting; you make your burden heavy by struggling under it. Did you but lie quietly under the hand of God, your condition would be much more easy than it is. "Impatience in the sick occasions severity in the physician." This makes God afflict the more, as a father a stubborn child that receives not correction. Beside, it unfits the soul to pray over its troubles, or receive the sense of that good which God intends by them. Affliction is a pill, which, being wrapt up in patience and quiet submission, may be easily swallowed; but discontent chews

the pill, and so embitters the soul. God throws away some comfort which he saw would hurt you, and you will throw away your peace after it; he shoots an arrow which sticks in your clothes, and was never intended to hurt, but only to drive you from sin, and you will thrust it deeper, to the piercing of your very heart, by despondency and discontent.

9. If thy heart (like that of Rachel) still refuses to be comforted, then do one thing more: compare the condition thou art now in, and with which thou art so much dissatisfied, with the condition in which others are, and in which thou deservest to be. ‘Others are roaring in flames, howling under the scourge of vengeance; and among them I deserve to be. O my soul is this hell? is my condition as bad as that of the damned? what would thousands now in hell give to exchange conditions with me!’ I have read (says an author) that when the Duke of Conde had voluntarily subjected himself to the inconveniences of poverty, he was one day observed and pitied by a lord of Italy, who from tenderness wished him to be more careful of his person. The good duke answered, “Sir, be not troubled, and think not that I suffer from want; for I send a harbinger before me, who makes ready my lodgings and takes care that I be royally entertained.” The lord asked him who was his harbinger? He answered, “The knowledge of myself, and the consideration of what I deserve for my sins, which is eternal torment; when with this knowledge I arrive at my lodging, however unprovided I find it, methinks it is much better than I deserve. Why doth the living man complain?” Thus the heart may be kept from desponding or repining under adversity.

III. The third season calling for more than ordinary diligence to keep the heart is the time of Zion’s troubles. . . .

III. The third season calling for more than ordinary diligence to keep the heart is the time of Zion’s troubles. When the Church, like the ship in which Christ and his disciples were, is oppressed and ready to perish in the waves of persecution, then good souls are ready to be shipwrecked too, upon the billows of their own fears. It is true, most men need the spur rather than the reins in this case; yet some men sit down discouraged under a sense of the Church’s troubles. The loss of the ark cost Eli his life; the sad posture in which Jerusalem lay made good Nehemiah’s countenance change in the midst of all the pleasures and accommodations of the court. But though God allows, yea, commands the most awakened apprehensions of these calamities, and in “such a day calls to mourning, weeping, and girding with sackcloth,” and severely threatens the insensible; yet it will not please him to see you sit like pensive Elijah under the juniper tree. “Ah, Lord God! it is enough, take away my life also.” No: a mourner in Zion you may and ought to be, but a self-tormentor you must not be; complain to God you may, but complain of God (though but by the language of your actions) you must not.

Now let us inquire how tender hearts may be relieved and supported, when they are even overwhelm-ed with the burdensome sense of Zion’s troubles? I grant it is hard for him who preferreth Zion to his chief joy, to keep his heart that it sink not below the due sense of its troubles; yet this ought to, and may be done, by the use of such heart-establishing directions as these:

1. Settle this great truth in your heart, that no trouble befalls Zion but by the permission of Zion’s God; and he permits nothing out of which he will not ultimately bring much good to his people. Comfort may be derived from reflections on the permitting as well as on the commanding will of God. “Let him alone, it may be God hath bidden him.” “Thou couldst have no power against me, except it were given thee from above.” It should much calm our spirits, that it is the will of God to

suffer it; and that, had he not suffered it, it could, never have been as it is. This very consideration quieted Job, Eli, David, and Hezekiah. That the Lord did it was enough to them: and why should it not be so to us? If the Lord will have Zion ploughed as a field, and her goodly stones lie in the dust; if it be his pleasure that Anti-Christ shall rage yet longer and wear out the saints of the Most High; if it be his will that a day of trouble, and of treading down, and of perplexity by the Lord God of Hosts,, shall be upon the valley of vision, that the wicked shall devour the man that is more righteous than he; what are we that we should contend with God? It is fit that we should be resigned to that Will whence we proceeded, and that He that made us should dispose of us as he pleases: he may do what seemeth him good without our consent. Doth poor man stand upon equal ground, that he may capitulate with his Creator; or that God should render him an account of any of his matters? That we be content, however God may dispose of us, is as reasonable as that we be obedient, whatever he may require of us. But if we pursue this argument farther, and. consider that God's permissions all meet at last in the real good of his people, this will much more quiet our spirits. Do the enemies carry away the best among the people into captivity? This looks like a distressing providence; but God sends them thither for their good. Does God take the Assyrian as a staff in his hand to beat his people with? The end of his so doing is, "that he may accomplish his whole work upon Mount Zion." If God can bring much good out of the greatest evil of sin, much more out of temporal afflictions; and that he will, is as evident as that he can do so. For it is inconsistent with the wisdom of a common agent to permit any thing (which he might prevent if he pleased) to cross his great design; and can it be imagined that the most wise God should do so? As, then, Luther said to Melancthon, so say I to you: "Let infinite wisdom, power and love alone" for by these all creatures are swayed, and all actions guided, in reference to the church. It is not our work to rule the world, but to submit to Him that does. The motions of Providence are all judicious, the wheels are full of eyes: it is enough that the affairs of Zion are in a good hand.

2. Ponder this heart-supporting truth: how many troubles soever are upon Zion, yet her King is in her. What! hath the Lord forsaken his churches? has he sold them into the enemy's hands? Does he not regard what evil befalls them that our hearts sink thus? Is it not shamefully undervaluing the great God, and too much magnifying poor impotent man, to fear and tremble at creatures while God is in the midst of us? The church's enemies are many and mighty: let that be granted, yet that argument with which Caleb and Joshua strove to raise their own hearts, is of as much force now as it was then: "The Lord is with, us, fear them not." A historian tells us, that when Antigonus overheard his soldiers reckoning how many their enemies were, and so discouraging one another, he suddenly stepped in among them with this question, "And how many do you reckon me for?" Discouraged souls, how many do you reckon the Lord for? Is he not an overmatch for all his enemies? Is not one Almighty more than many mighties? "If God be for us, who can be against us?" What think you was the reason of that great examination Gideon made? He questions, he desires a sign, and after that, another: and what was the end of all this, but that he might be sure the Lord was with him, and that he might but write this motto upon his ensign: The sword of the Lord and of Gideon. So if you can be well assured the Lord is with his people, you will thereby rise above all your discouragements: and that he is so, you need not require a sign from heaven; lo, you have a sign before you, even their marvellous preservation amidst all their enemies. If God be not with his people, how is it that they are not swallowed up quickly? Do their enemies want malice, power, or opportunity? No, but there is an invisible hand upon them. Let then his presence give us rest; and though the mountains be hurled into the sea, though heaven and earth mingle

together, fear not; God is in the midst of Zion, she shall not be moved.

3. Consider the great advantages attending the people of God in an afflicted condition. If a low and an afflicted state in the world be really best for the church, then your dejection is not only irrational, but ungrateful. Indeed if you estimate the happiness of the church by its worldly ease, splendor and prosperity, then such times of affliction will appear to be unfavorable; but if you reckon its glory to consist in its humility, faith, and heavenly-mindedness, no condition so much abounds with advantages for these as an afflicted condition. It was not persecutions and prisons, but worldliness and wantonness that poisoned the church: neither was it the earthly glory of its professors, but the blood of its martyrs that was the seed of the church. The power of godliness did never thrive better than in affliction, and was never less thriving than in times of greatest prosperity: when “we are left a poor and an afflicted people, then we learn to trust in the name of the Lord.” It is indeed for the saints’ advantage to be weaned from love of, and delight in, ensnaring earthly vanities; to be quickened and urged forward with more haste to heaven; to have clearer discoveries of their own hearts; to be taught to pray more fervently, frequently, spiritually; to look and long for the rest to come more ardently. If these be for their advantage, experience teaches us that no condition is ordinarily blessed with such fruits as these, like an afflicted condition. Is it well then to repine and droop, because your Father consults the advantage of your soul rather than the gratification of your humors? because he will bring you to heaven by a nearer way than you are willing to go? Is this a due requital of his love, who is pleased so much to concern himself in your welfare—who does more for you than he will do for thousands in the world, upon whom he will not lay a rod, dispense an affliction to them for their good? But alas! we judge by sense, and reckon things good or evil, according to our present taste.

4. Take heed that you overlook not the many precious mercies which the people of God enjoy amidst all their trouble. It is a pity that our tears on account of our troubles should so blind our eyes that we should not see our mercies. I will not insist upon the mercy of having your life given you for a prey; nor upon the many outward comforts which you enjoy, even above what were enjoyed by Christ and his precious servants, of whom the world was not worthy. But what say you to pardon of sin; interest in Christ; the covenant of promise; and an eternity of happiness in the presence of God, after a few days are over? O that a people entitled to such mercies as these should droop under any temporal affliction, or be so much concerned for the frowns of men and the loss of trifles. You have not the smiles of great men, but you have the favor of the great God; you are perhaps diminished in temporal, but you are thereby increased in spiritual and eternal goods. You cannot live so plentifully as before; but you may live as heavenly as ever. Will you grieve so much for these circumstances as to forget your substance? Shall light troubles make you forget weighty mercies? Remember the true riches of the church are laid out of the reach of all enemies. What though God do not in his outward dispensations distinguish between his own and others? Yea, what though his judgments single out the best, and spare the worst? What though an Abel be killed in love, and a Cain survive in hatred; a bloody Dionysius die in his bed, and a good Josiah fall in battle? What though the belly of the wicked be filled with hidden treasures, and the teeth of the saints with gravel-stones? Still there is much matter of praise; for electing love has distinguished, though common providence has not: and while prosperity and impunity slay the wicked, even slaying and adversity shall benefit and save the righteous.

5. Believe that how low soever the church be plunged under the waters of adversity, she shall assuredly rise again. Fear not; for as surely as Christ arose the third day, notwithstanding the seal and watch upon him; so surely Zion shall arise out of all her troubles, and lift up her victorious head over all her enemies. There is no reason to fear the ruin of that people who thrive by their losses and multiply by being diminished. Be not too hasty to bury the church before she is dead; stay till Christ has tried his skill, before you give her up for lost. The bush may be all in a flame, but shall never be consumed; and that because of the good will of Him that dwelleth in it.

6. Remember the instances of God's care and tenderness over his people in former difficulties. For above eighteen hundred years the Christian church has been in affliction, and yet it is not consumed; many a wave of persecution has gone over it, yet it is not drowned; many devices have been formed against it, hitherto none of them has prospered. This is not the first time that Hamans and Ahithophels have plotted its ruin; that a Herod has stretched out his hand to vex it; still it has been preserved from, supported under, or delivered out of all its troubles. Is it not as dear to God as ever? Is he not as able to save it now as formerly? Though we know not whence deliverance should arise, "yet the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations."

7. If you can derive no comfort from any of these considerations, try to draw some out of your very trouble. Surely this trouble of yours is a good evidence of your integrity. Union is the ground of sympathy: if you had not some rich, adventure in that ship, you would not tremble as you do when it is in danger. Beside this framer of spirit may afford you this consolation, that if you are so sensible of Zion's trouble, Jesus Christ is much more sensible of and solicitous about it than you can be, and he will have an eye of favor upon them that mourn for it.

IV. The fourth season, requiring our utmost diligence to keep our hearts, is the time of danger and public distraction. . . .

IV. The fourth season, requiring, our utmost diligence to. keep our hearts, is the time of danger and public distraction. In such times the best hearts are too apt to be surprised by slavish: fear. If Syria be confederate with Ephraim, how do the hearts of the house of David shake, even as the trees of the wood which are shaken with the wind. When there are ominous signs in the heavens, or the distress of nations with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; then the hearts of men fail for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth. Even a Paul may sometimes complain of "fightings within, when there are fears without."

But, my brethren, these things ought not so to be; saints should be of a more elevated spirit; so was David when his heart was kept in a good frame: "The Lord is my light and my salvation whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" Let none but the servants of sin be the slaves of fear; let them that have delighted in evil fear evil. Let not that which God has threatened as a judgment upon the wicked, ever seize upon the hearts of the righteous. "I will send faintness into their hearts in the land of their enemies, and the sound of a shaking leaf shall chase them." What poor spirited men are those, to fly at a shaking leaf! A leaf makes a pleasant, not a terrible noise; it makes indeed a kind of natural music: but to a guilty conscience even the whistling leaves are drums and trumpets! "But God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of love and of a sound mind." A sound mind, as it stands there in opposition to fear, is an unwounded conscience not weakened by guilt: and this should make a man as bold as a lion. I know it cannot be said of a saint, as God said of leviathan, that he is made without fear; there is a

natural fear in every man, and it is as impossible to remove it wholly, as to remove the body itself. Fear is perturbation of the mind, arising from the apprehension of approaching danger; and as long as dangers can approach us, we shall find some perturbations within us. It is not my purpose to commend to you a stoical apathy, nor yet to dissuade you from such a degree of cautionary preventive fear as may fit you for trouble and be serviceable to your soul. There is a provident, fear that opens our eyes to foresee danger, and quickens us to a prudent and lawful use of means to prevent it: such was Jacob's fear, and such his prudence when expecting to meet his angry brother Esau. But it is the fear of diffidence, from which I would persuade you to keep your heart; that tyrannical passion which invades the heart in times of danger, distracts, weakens and unfits it for duty, drives men upon unlawful means, and brings a snare with it.

Now let us inquire how a Christian may keep his heart from distracting and tormenting fears in times of great and threatening dangers. There are several excellent rules for keeping the heart from sinful fear when imminent dangers threaten us:

1. Look upon all creatures as in the band of God, who manages them in all their motions, limiting, restraining and determining them at his pleasure. Get this great truth well settled by faith in your heart, and it will guard you against slavish fears. Ezekiel 1:1-28 contains an admirable draught of Providence: there you see the living creatures who move the wheels (that is, the great revolutions of things here below) coming unto Christ, who sits upon the throne, to receive new instructions from him. In Revelation 6:1-17, you read of white, black, and red horses, which are but the instruments God employs in executing judgments in the world, as wars, pestilence, and death. When these horses are prancing and trampling up and down in the world, here is a consideration that may quiet our hearts; God has the reins in his hand. Wicked men are sometimes like mad horses, they would stamp the people of God under their feet, but that the bridle of Providence is in their mouths. A lion at liberty is terrible to meet, but who is afraid of a lion in the keeper's hand?'

2. Remember that this God in whose hand are all creatures, is your Father, and is much more tender of you than you are, or can be, of yourself. "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye." Let me ask the most timorous woman whether there be not a great difference between the sight of a drawn sword in the hand of a bloody ruffian, and of the same sword in the hand of her own tender husband? As great a difference there is between looking upon creatures by an eye of sense, and looking on them, as in the hand of your God, by an eye of faith. Isaiah 54:5, is here very appropriate: "Thy Maker is thine husband, the Lord of hosts is his name;" he is Lord of all the hosts of creatures. Who would be afraid to pass through an army, though all the soldiers should turn their swords and guns toward him, if the commander of that army were his friend or father? A religious young man being at sea with many other passengers in a great storm, and they being half dead with fear, lie only was observed to be very cheerful, as if he were but little concerned in that danger: one of them demanding the reason of his cheerfulness, "O," said he, "it is because the pilot of the ship is my Father!" Consider Christ first as the King and supreme Lord over the providential kingdom, and then as your head, husband and friend, and you will quickly say, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul." This truth will make you cease trembling, and cause you to sing in the midst of danger, "The Lord is King of all the earth, sing ye praise with understanding." That is, 'Let every one that has understanding of this heart-reviving and establishing doctrine of the dominion of our Father over all creatures, sing praise.'

3. Urge upon your heart the express prohibitions of Christ in this case, and let your heart stand in awe of the violation of them. He hath charged you not to fear: “When we shall hear of wars and commotions, see that ye be not terrified.” “In nothing be terrified by your adversaries.” In Matthew 10:1-42, and within the compass of six verses, our Savior commands us thrice, “not to fear man.” Does the voice of a man make thee to tremble, and shall not the voice of God? If thou art of such a timorous spirit, how is it that thou fearest not to disobey the commands of Jesus Christ? Methinks the command of Christ should have as much power to calm, as the voice of a poor worm to terrify thy heart. “I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man that shall be made as the grass, and forgettest the Lord thy Maker?” We cannot fear creatures sinfully till we have forgotten God: did we remember what he is, and what he has said, we should not be of such feeble spirits. Bring thyself then to this reflection in times of danger: ‘If I let into my heart the slavish fear of man, I must let out the reverential awe and fear of God; and dare I cast off the fear of the Almighty for the frowns of a man I shall I lift up proud dust above the great God I shall I run upon a certain sin, to shun a probable danger?’—O keep thy heart by this consideration!

4. Remember how much needless trouble your vain fears have brought upon you formerly: “And hast feared continually because of the oppressor, as if he were ready to devour; and where is the fury of the oppressor?” He seemed ready to devour, yet you are not devoured. I have not brought upon you the thing that you. feared; you have wasted your spirit, disordered your soul, and weakened your hands to no purpose: you might have all this while enjoyed your peace, and possessed your soul in patience. And here I cannot but observe a very deep policy of Satan in managing a design against the soul by these vain fears. I call them vain, with reference to the frustration of them by Providence; but certainly they are not in vain as the end at which Satan aims in raising them; for herein he acts as soldiers do in the siege of a garrison, who to wear out the besieged by constant watchings, and thereby unfit them to make resistance when they storm it in earnest, every night rouse them with false alarms, which though they come to nothing yet remarkably answer the ultimate design of the enemy.—O when will you beware of Satan’s devices?

5. Consider solemnly, that though the things you fear should really happen, yet there is more evil in your own fear than in the things feared: and that, not only as the least evil of sin is worse than the greatest evil of suffering; but as this sinful fear has really more trouble in it than there is in that condition of which you are so much afraid. Fear is both a multiplying and a tormenting passion; it represents troubles as much greater than they are, and so tortures the soul much more than the suffering itself. So it was with Israel at the Red Sea; they cried out and were afraid, till they stepped into the water, and then a passage was opened through those waters which they thought would have drowned them. Thus it is with us; we, looking through the glass of carnal fear upon the waters of trouble, the swellings of Jordan, cry out, ‘O they are unfordable; we must perish in them!’ But when we come into the midst of those floods indeed, we find the promise made good: “God will make a way to escape.” Thus it was with a blessed martyr; when he would make a trial by putting his finger to the candle, and found himself not able to endure that, he cried out, “What! cannot I bear the burning of a finger? How then shall I be able to bear the burning of my whole body to-morrow?” Yet when that morrow came he could go cheerfully into the flames with this scripture in his mouth: “Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name, thou

art mine; when thou passest through the waters I will be with you; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt."

6. Consult the many precious promises which are written for your support and comfort in all dangers. These are your refuges to which you may fly and be safe when the arrows of danger fly by night, and destruction wasteth at noon-day. There are particular promises suited to particular cases and exigencies; there are also general promises reaching all cases and conditions. Such as these: "All things shall work together for good," &c. "Though a sinner do evil an hundred times and his days be prolonged, yet it shall be well with them that fear the Lord," &c. Could you but believe the promises your heart should be established. Could you but plead them with God as Jacob did, ("Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good," &c.) they would relieve you in every distress.

7. Quiet your trembling heart by recording and consulting your past experiences of the care and faithfulness of God in former distresses. These experiences are food for your faith in a wilderness. By this David kept his heart in time of danger, and Paul his. It was answered by a saint, when one told him that his enemies waylaid him to take his life: "If God take no care of me, how is it that I have escaped hitherto?" You may plead with God old experiences for new ones: for it is in pleading with God for new deliverances, as it is in pleading for new pardons. Mark how Moses pleads of that account with God. "Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people, as thou hast forgiven them from Egypt until now." He does not say as men do, 'Lord, this is the first fault, thou hast not been troubled before to sign their pardon:' but, 'Lord, because thou hast pardoned them so often, I beseech thee pardon them once again.' So in new difficulties let the saint say, 'Lord, thou hast often heard, helped and saved, in former years; therefore now help again, for with thee there is plenteous redemption and thine arm is not shortened.'

8. Be well satisfied that you are in the way of your duty, and that will beget holy courage in times of danger. "Who, will harm you if you be a follower of that which is good?" Or if any dare attempt to harm you, "you may boldly commit yourself to God in well-doing." It was this consideration that raised Luther's spirit above all fear: "in the cause of God (said he) I ever am, and ever shall be stout: herein I assume this title, "I yield to none." A good cause will bear up a man's spirit. Hear the saying of a hea-then, to the shame of cowardly Christians: when the emperor Vespasian had commanded Fluidus Priseus not to come to the senate, or if he did come, to speak nothing but what 'he would have him; the senator returned this noble answer, "that he was a senator, it was fit he should be at the senate; and if being there, he were required to give his advice, he would freely speak that which his conscience commanded him." The emperor threatening that then he should die; he answered, "Did I ever tell you that I was immortal? Do what you will, and I will do what I ought. It is in your power to put me to death unjustly, and in my power to die with constancy." Righteousness is a breastplate: let them tremble whom danger finds out of the way of duty.

9. Get your conscience sprinkled with the blood of Christ from all guilt, and that will set your heart above all fear. It is guilt upon the conscience that softens and makes cowards of our spirits: "the righteous are bold as a lion." It was guilt in Cain's conscience that made him cry, "Every one that findeth me will slay me." A guilty conscience is more terrified by imagined dangers, than a pure conscience is by real ones. A guilty sinner carries a witness against himself in his own bosom. It was guilty Herod cried out, "John Baptist is risen from the dead." Such a conscience is the devil's anvil, on which he fabricates all those swords and spears with which the guilty sinner pierces

himself. Guilt is to danger, what fire is to gun-powder: a man need not fear to walk among many barrels of powder, if he have no fire about him.

10. Exercise holy trust in times of great distress. Make it your business to trust God with your life and comforts, and then your heart will be at rest about them. So did David, “At what time I am afraid I will trust in thee;” that is, ‘Lord, if at any time a storm arise, I will shelter from it under the covert of thy wings.’ Go to God by acts of faith and trust, and never doubt that he will secure you. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee,” says Isaiah. God is pleased when you come to him thus: ‘Father, my life, my liberty and my estate are exposed, and I cannot secure them; O let me leave them in, thy hand. The poor leaveth himself with thee; and does his God fail him? No, thou art the helper of the fatherless: that is, thou art the helper of the destitute one, that has none to go to but God. This is a comforting passage, “He shall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord;” he does not say, his ear shall be preserved from the report of evil tidings, he may hear as sad tidings as other men, but his heart shall be kept from the terror of those tidings; his heart is fixed.

11. Consult the honor of religion more, and your personal safety less. Is it for the honor of religion (think you) that Christians should be as timorous as bores to start at every sound? Will not this tempt the world to think, that whatever you talk, yet your principles are no better than other men’s? What mischief may the discovery of your fears before them do! It was nobly said by Nehemiah, “Should such a man as I flee? and who, being as I am, would flee?” Were it not better you should die than that the world should be prejudiced against Christ by your example? For alas! how apt is the world (who judge more by what they see in your practices than by what they understand of your principles) to conclude from your timidity, that how much soever you commend faith and talk of assurance, yet you dare trust to those things no more than they, when it comes to the trial. O let not your fears lay such a stumbling-block before the blind world.

12. He that would secure his heart from fear, must first secure the eternal interest of his soul in the hands of Jesus Christ., When this is done, you may say, ‘Now, world, do thy worst!’ You will not be very solicitous about a vile body, when you are once assured it shall be well to all eternity with your precious soul. “Fear not them (says Christ) that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.” The assured Christian may smile with contempt upon all his enemies, and say, ‘Is this the worst that you can do?’ What say you, Christian? Are you assured that your soul is safe; that within a few moments of your dissolution it shall be received by Christ into an everlasting habitation? If you be sure of that, never trouble yourself about the instrument and means of your death.’

13. Learn to quench all slavish creature-fears in the reverential fear of God. This is a cure by diversion. It is an exercise of Christian wisdom to turn those passions of the soul which most predominate, into spiritual channels; to turn natural anger into spiritual zeal, natural mirth into holy cheerfulness, and natural fear into a holy dread and awe of God. This method of cure Christ prescribes in Matthew 10:1-42; similar to which is Isaiah 8:12-13, “Fear not their fear.” ‘But how shall we help it?’ “Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.” Natural fear may be allayed for the present by natural reason, or the removal of the occasion; but then it is like a candle blown out by a puff of breath, which is easily blown in again: but if the fear of God extinguish it, then it is like a candle quenched in water, which cannot easily

be rekindled.'

14. Pour out to God in prayer those fears which the devil and your own unbelief pour in upon you in times of danger. Prayer is the best outlet to fear: where is the Christian that cannot set his seal to this direction? I will give you the greatest example to encourage you to compliance, even the example of Jesus Christ. When the hour of his danger and death drew nigh, he went into the garden, separated from his disciples, and there wrestled mightily with God in prayer, even unto agony; in reference to which the apostle says, "who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong cries and tears, to him that was able to save from death, and was heard in that he feared." He was heard as to strength and support to carry him through it; though not as to deliverance, or exemption from it. O that these things may abide with you, and be reduced to practice in these evil days, and that many trembling souls may be established by them.'

V. The fifth season, requiring diligence in keeping the heart, is the time of outward wants. . . .

V. The fifth season, requiring diligence in keeping the heart, is the time of outward wants. Although at such times we should complain to God, not of God, (the throne of grace being erected for a "time of need,") yet when the waters of relief run low, and want begins to press, how prone are the best hearts to distrust the fountain! When the meal in the barrel and the oil in the cruse are almost spent, our faith and patience too are almost spent. It is now difficult to keep the proud and unbelieving heart in a holy quietude and sweet submission at the foot of God. It is an easy thing to talk of trusting God for daily bread, while we have a full barn or purse; but to say as the prophet, "Though the fig-tree should not blossom, neither fruit be in the vine, &c. yet will I rejoice in the Lord:" surely this is not easy. Would you know then how a Christian may keep his heart from distrusting God, or repining against him, when outward wants are either felt or feared?—The case deserves to be seriously considered, especially now, since it seems to be the design of Providence to empty the people of God of their creature fullness, and acquaint them with those difficulties to which hitherto they have been altogether strangers. To secure the heart from the dangers attending this condition, these considerations may, through the blessing of the Spirit, prove effectual:

1. If God reduces you to necessities, he therein deals no otherwise with you than he has done with some of the holiest men that ever lived. Your condition is not singular; though you have hitherto been a stranger to want, other saints have been familiarly acquainted with it. Hear what Paul says, not of himself only, but in the name of other saints reduced to like exigencies: "Even to the present hour, we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place." To see such a man as Paul going up and down the world naked, and hungry, and houseless; one that was so far above thee in grace and holiness; one that did more service for God in a day than perhaps thou hast done in all thy days may well put an end to your repining. Have you forgotten how much even a David has suffered? How great were his difficulties! "Give, I pray thee," says he to Nabal, "whatsoever cometh to thy hand, to thy servants, and to thy son David." But why speak I of these? Behold a greater than any of them, even the Son of God, who is the heir of all things, and by whom the worlds were made, sometimes would have been glad of any thing, having nothing to eat. "And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry; and seeing a fig-tree, afar off, having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon."

Hereby then God has set no mark of hatred upon you, neither can you infer want of love from want of bread. When thy repining heart puts the question, ‘Was there ever sorrow like unto mine?’ ask these worthies, and they will tell thee that though they did not complain as thou dost, yet their condition was as necessitous as thine is.

2. If God leave you not in this condition without a promise, you have no reason to repine or despond under it. That is a sad condition indeed to which no promise belongs. Calvin in his comment on Isaiah 9:1, explains in what sense the darkness of the captivity was not so great as that of the lesser incursions made by Tiglath Pileser. In the captivity, the city was destroyed and the temple burnt with fire: there was no comparison in the affliction, yet the darkness was not so great, because, says he, “there was a certain promise made in this case, but none in the other.” It is better to be as low as hell with a promise, than to be in paradise without one. Even the darkness of hell itself would be no darkness comparatively at all, were there but a promise to enlighten it. Now, God has left many sweet promises for the faith of his poor people to live upon in this condition; such as these: “O fear the Lord, ye his saints, for there is no want to them that fear him; the lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that fear the Lord shall not want any good thing.” “The eye of the Lord is upon the righteous to keep them alive in famine.” “No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” “When the poor and the needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.” Here you see their extreme wants, water being put for their necessaries of life; and their certain relief, “I the Lord will hear them;” in which it is supposed that they cry unto him in their distress, and he hears their cry. Having therefore these promises, why should not your distrustful heart conclude like David’s, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want?”

‘But these promises imply conditions: if they were absolute, they would afford more satisfaction.’ What are those tacit conditions of which you speak but these, that he will either supply or sanctify your wants; that you shall have so much as God sees fit for you? And does this trouble you? Would you have the mercy, whether sanctified or not? whether God sees it fit for you or not? The appetites of saints after earthly things should not be so ravenous as to seize greedily upon any enjoyment without regarding circumstances.

‘But when wants press, and I see not whence supplies should come, my faith in the promise shakes, and I, like murmuring Israel, cry, “He gave bread, can he give water also?”’ O unbelieving heart! when did his promises fail? who ever trusted them and was ashamed? May not God upbraid thee with thine unreasonable infidelity, as in Jeremiah 2:31, “Have I been a wilderness unto you?” or as Christ said to his disciples, “Since I was with you, lacked ye any thing?” Yea, may you not upbraid yourself; may you not say with good old Polycarp, “These many years I have served Christ, and found him a good Master?”

Indeed he may deny what your wantonness, but not what your want calls for. He will not regard the cry of your lusts, nor yet despise the cry of your faith: though he will not indulge your wanton appetites, yet he will not violate his. own faithful promises. These promises are your best security for eternal life; and it is strange they should not satisfy you for daily bread. Remember the words of the Lord, and solace your heart with them amidst all your wants. It is said of Epicurus, that in dreadful paroxysms of the cholic he often refreshed himself by calling to mind his inventions in

philosophy; and of Possodonius the philosopher, that in an acute disorder he solaced himself with discourses on moral virtue; and when distressed, he would say, “O pain, thou dost nothing; though thou art a little troublesome, I will never confess thee to be evil.” If upon such grounds as these they could support themselves under such racking pains, and even deluded their diseases by them; how much rather should the promises of God, and the sweet experiences which have gone along step by step with them, make you forget all your wants, and comfort you in every difficulty?

04.05b. Keeping the Heart in the Time of Adversity

3. If it be bad now, it might have been worse. Has God denied thee the comforts of this life? He might have denied thee Christ, peace, and pardon also; and then thy case had been woful indeed.

You know God has done so to millions. How many such wretched objects max your eyes behold every day, that have no comfort in hand, nor yet in hope; that are miserable here, and will be so to eternity; that have a bitter cup, and nothing to sweeten it—no, not so much as any hope that it will be better. But it is not so with you: though you be poor in this world, yet you are “rich in faith, and an heir of the kingdom which God has promised.” Learn to set spiritual riches over against temporal poverty. Balance all your present troubles with your spiritual privileges. Indeed if God has denied your soul the robe of righteousness to clothe it, the hidden manna to feed it, the heavenly mansion to receive it, you might well be pensive; but the consideration that he has not may administer comfort under any outward distress. When Luther began to be pressed by want, he said, “Let us be contented with our hard fare; for do not we feast upon Christ, the bread of life?“ “Blessed be God (said Paul) who hath abounded to us in all spiritual blessings.”

4. Though this affliction be great, God has far greater, with which he chastises the dearly beloved of his soul in this world. Should he remove this and inflict those, you would account your present state a very comfortable one, and bless God to be as you now are. Should God remove your present troubles, supply all your outward wants, give you the desire of your heart in creature-comforts; but hide his face from you, shoot his arrows into your soul, and cause the venom of them to drink up your spirit: should he leave you but a few days to the buffetings of Satan: should he hold your eyes but a few nights waking with horrors of conscience, tossing to and fro till the dawning of the day:—should he lead you through the chambers of death, show you the visions of darkness, and make his terrors set themselves in array against you: then tell me if you would not think it a great mercy to be back again in your former necessitous condition, with peace of conscience; and account bread and water, with God’s favor, a happy state? O then take heed of repining. Say not that God deals hardly with you, lest you provoke him to convince you by your own sense that he has worse rods than these for unsubmissive and froward children.

5. If it be had now, it will be better shortly. Keep thy heart by this consideration, ‘the meal in the barrel is almost spent; well, be it so, why should that trouble me, if I am almost beyond the need and use of these things?’ The traveler has spent almost all his money; ‘well,’ says he, ‘though my money be almost spent, my journey is almost finished too: I am near home, and shall soon be fully supplied.’ If there be no candles in the house, it is a comfort to think that it is almost day, and then there will be no need of them. I am afraid, Christian, you misreckon when you think your provision is almost spent, and you have a great way to travel, many years to live and nothing to live upon; it may be not half so many, as you suppose In this be confident, if your provision be spent, either fresh supplies are coining, though you see not whence, or you are nearer your journey’s end than you reckon yourself to be. Desponding soul, does it become a man traveling upon the road to that heavenly city, and almost arrived there, within a few days’ journey of his Father’s house, where all

his wants shall be supplied, to be so anxious about a little meat, or drink, or clothes, which he fears he shall want by the way? It was nobly said by the forty martyrs when turned out naked in a frosty night to be starved to death, " The winter indeed is sharp and cold, but heaven is warm and comfortable; here we shiver for cold, but Abraham's bosom will make amends for all."

'But,' says the desponding soul, 'I may die for want.' Who ever did so? When were the righteous forsaken? If indeed it be so, your journey is ended, and you fully supplied.

'But I am not sure of that; were I sure of heaven, it would be another matter.' Are you not sure of that? then you have other matters to trouble yourself about than these; methinks these should be the least of all your cares. I do not find that souls perplexed about the want of Christ, pardon of sin, &c. are usually very solicitous about these things. He that seriously puts such questions as these, 'What shall I do to be saved? how shall I know my sin is pardoned?' does not trouble himself with, "What shall I eat, what shall I drink, or wherewithal shall I be clothed?"

6. Does it become the children of such a Father to distrust his all-sufficiency, or repine at any of his dispensations? Do you well to question his care and love upon every new exigency? Say, have you not formerly been ashamed of this? Has not your Father's seasonable provision for you in former difficulties put you to the blush, and made you resolve never more to question his love and care? And yet will you again renew your unworthy suspicions of him? Disingenuous child! reason thus with yourself: "If I perish for want of what is good and needful for me, it must be either because my Father knows not my wants, Or has not wherewith to supply them, or regards not what becomes of me. Which of these shall I charge upon him? Not the first: for my Father knows what I have need of Not the second: for the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; his name is God All-sufficient. Not the last: for as a Father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him; the Lord is exceeding pitiful and of tender mercy; he hears the young ravens when they cry:—and will he not hear me? Consider, says Christ, the fowls of the air; not the fowls at the door, that are fed every day by hand, but the fowls of the air that have none to provide for them. Does he feed and clothe his enemies, and will he forget his children? he heard even the cry of Ishmael in distress. O my unbelieving heart, dost thou yet doubt?"

7. Your poverty is not your sin, but your affliction. If you have not by sinful means brought it upon yourself, and if it be but an affliction, it may the more easily be borne. It is hard indeed to bear an affliction coming upon us as the fruit and punishment of sin. When men are under trouble upon that account; they say, 'O if it were but a single affliction, coming from the hand of God by way of trial, I could bear it; but I have brought it upon myself by sin, it comes as the punishment of sin; the marks of God's displeasure are upon it: it is the guilt within that troubles and galls more than the want without.' But it is not so here; therefore you have no reason to be cast down under it.

'But though there be no sting of guilt, yet this condition wants not other stings; as, for instance, The discredit of religion. I cannot comply with my engagements in the world, and thereby religion is likely to suffer.' It is well you have a heart to discharge every duty; yet if God disable you by providence, it is no discredit to your profession that you do not that which you cannot do, so long as it is your desire and endeavor to do what you can and ought to do; and in this case God's will is, that lenity and forbearance be toward you.

‘But it grieves me to behold the necessities of others, whom I was wont to relieve and refresh, but now cannot.’ If you cannot, it ceases to be your duty, and God accepts the drawing out of your soul to the hungry in compassion and desire to help them, though you cannot draw forth a full purse to relieve and supply them.

‘But I find such a condition full of temptations, a great hinderance in the way to heaven.’ Every condition in the world has its hinderances and attending temptations; and were you in a prosperous condition, you might there meet with more temptations and fewer advantages than you now have; for though I confess poverty as well as prosperity has its temptations, yet I am confident prosperity has not those advantages that poverty has. Here you have an opportunity to discover the sincerity of your love to God, when you can live upon him, find enough in him, and constantly follow him, even when all external inducements and motives fail.

Thus I have shown you how to keep your heart from the temptations and dangers attending a low condition in the world. When want oppresses and the heart begins to sink, then improve, and bless God for these helps to keep it.

VI. The sixth season requiring this diligence in keeping the heart, is the season of duty. . . .

VI. The sixth season requiring this diligence in keeping the heart, is the season of duty. Our hearts must be closely watched and kept when we draw nigh to God in public, private, or secret duties; for the vanity of the heart seldom discovers itself more than at such times. How often does the poor soul cry out, ‘O Lord, how gladly would I serve thee, but vain thoughts will not let me: I come to open my heart to thee, to delight my soul in communion with thee, but my corruptions oppose me: Lord, call off these vain thoughts, and suffer them not to estrange the soul that is espoused to thee.’ The question then is this: How may the heart be kept from distractions by vain thoughts in time of duty? There is a two-fold distraction, or wandering of the heart in duty: First, voluntary and habitual, They set not their hearts aright, and their spirit was not steadfast with God.” This is the case of formalists, and it proceeds from the want of a holy inclination of the heart to God; their hearts are under the power of their lusts, and therefore it is no wonder that they go after their lusts, even when they are about holy things. Secondly, involuntary and lamented distractions: “I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me; O wretched man that I am,” &c. This proceeds not from the want of a holy inclination or aim, but from the weakness of grace and the want of vigilance in opposing indwelling sin. But it is not my business to show you how these distractions come into the heart but rather how to get them out, and prevent their future admission:

1. Sequester yourself from all earthly employments, and set apart some time for solemn preparation to meet God in duty. You cannot come directly from the world into God’s presence without finding a savor of the world in your duties. It is with the heart (a few minutes since plunged in the world, now in the presence of God) as it is with the sea after a storm, which still continues working, muddy and disquiet, though the wind be laid and the storm be over. Your heart must have some time to settle. Few musicians can take an instrument and play upon it without some time and labor to tune it; few Christians can say with David, “My heart is fixed, O God, it is fixed.” When you go to God in any duty, take your heart aside and say, ‘O my soul, I am now engaged in the greatest work that a creature was ever employed about; I am going into the awful presence of God upon business of everlasting moment. O my soul, leave trifling now; be composed, be watchful, be serious; this is no common work, it is soul-work; it is work for eternity; it is work which will bring

forth fruit to life or death in the world to come.' Pause awhile and consider your sins, your wants, your troubles; keep your thoughts awhile on these before you address yourself to duty. David first mused, and then spake with his tongue.

2. Having composed your heart by previous meditation, immediately set a guard upon your senses. How often are Christians in danger of losing the eyes of their mind by those of their body! Against this David prayed, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou me in thy way." This may serve to expound the Arabian proverb: "Shut the windows that the house may be light." It were well if you could say in the commencement, as a holy man once said when he came from the performance of duty: "Be shut, O my eyes, be shut; for it is impossible that you should ever discern such beauty and glory in any creature as I have now seen in God." You must avoid all occasions of distraction from without, and imbibe that intenseness of spirit in the work of God which locks up the eye and ear against vanity.

3. Beg of God a mortified fancy. A working fancy, (saith one,) how much soever it be extolled among men, is a great snare to the soul, except it work in fellowship with right reason and a sanctified heart. The fancy is a power of the soul, placed between the senses and the understanding; it is that which first stirs itself in the soul, and by its motions the other powers of the soul are brought into exercise; it is that in which thoughts are first formed, and as that is, so are they. If imaginations be not first cast down, it is impossible that every thought of the heart should be brought into obedience to Christ. The fancy is naturally the wildest and most untameable power of the soul. Some Christians have much to do with it; and the more spiritual the heart is, the more does a wild and vain fancy disturb and perplex it. It is a sad thing that one's imagination should call off the soul from attending on God, when it is engaged in communion with him. Pray earnestly and perseveringly that your fancy may be chastened and sanctified, and when this is accomplished your thoughts will be regular and fixed.

4. If you would keep your heart from vain excursions when engaged in duties, realize to yourself, by faith, the holy and awful presence of God. If the presence of a grave man would compose you to seriousness, how much more should the presence of a holy God? Do you think that you would dare to be gay and light if you realized the presence and inspection of the Divine Being? Remember where you are when engaged in religious duty, and act as if you believed in the omniscience of God. "All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." Realize his infinite holiness, his purity, his spirituality.

Strive to obtain such apprehensions of the greatness of God as shall suitably affect your heart; and remember his jealousy over his worship. "This is that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified." "A man that is praying (says Bernard) should behave himself as if he were entering into the court of heaven, where he sees the Lord upon his throne, surrounded with ten thousand of his angels and saints ministering unto him."—When you come from an exercise in which your heart has been wandering and listless, what can you say? Suppose all the vanities and impertinences which have passed through your mind during a devotional exercise were written down and interlined with your petitions, could you have the face to present them to God? Should your tongue utter all the thoughts of your heart when at tending the worship of God, would not men abhor you? Yet your thoughts are perfectly known to God. O think upon this scripture: "God is greatly to be feared in the

assemblies of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are round about him." Why did the Lord descend in thunderings and lightnings and dark clouds upon Sinai? why did the mountains smoke under him, the people quake and tremble round about him, Moses himself not excepted? but to teach the people this great truth: "Let us have grace, whereby we may serve Him acceptably, with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire." Such apprehensions of the character and presence of God will quickly reduce a heart inclined to vanity to a more serious frame.

5. Maintain a prayerful frame of heart in the intervals of duty. What reason can be assigned why our hearts are so dull, so careless, so wandering, when we hear or pray, but that there have been long intermissions in our communion with God? If that divine unction, that spiritual fervor, and those holy impressions, which we obtain from God while engaged in the performance of one duty, were preserved to enliven and engage us in the performance of another, they would be of incalculable service to keep our hearts serious and devout. For this purpose, frequent ejaculations between stated and solemn duties are of most excellent use: they not only preserve the mind in a composed and pious frame, but they connect one stated duty, as it were, with another, and keep the attention of the soul alive to all its interests and obligations.

6. If you would have the distraction of your thoughts prevented, endeavor to raise your affections to God, and to engage them warmly in your duty. When the soul is intent upon any work, it gathers in its strength and bends all its thoughts to that work; and when it is deeply affected, it will pursue its object with intenseness, the affections will gain, an ascendancy over the thoughts and guide them. But deadness causes distraction, and distraction increases deadness. Could you but regard your duties as the medium in which you might walk in communion with God in which your soul might be filled with those ravishing and matchless delights which his presence affords, you might have no inclination to neglect them. But if you would prevent the recurrence of distracting thoughts, if you would find your happiness in the performance of duty, you must not only be careful that you engage in what is your duty, bat labor with patient and persevering exertion to interest your feelings in it. Why is your heart so inconstant, especially in secret duties; why are you ready to be gone, almost as soon as you are come into the presence of God, but because your affections are not engaged?

7. When you are disturbed by vain thoughts, humble yourself before God, and call in assistance from Heaven. When the messenger of Satan buffeted St. Paul by wicked suggestions, (as is supposed) he mourned before God on account of it. Never slight wandering thoughts in duty as small matters; follow every such thought with a deep regret. Turn to God with such words as these: 'Lord, I came hither to commune with thee, and here a busy adversary and a vain heart, conspiring together, have opposed me. O my God what a heart have I! shall I never wait upon thee without distraction? when shall I enjoy an hour of free communion with thee? Grant me thy assistance at this time; discover thy glory to me, and my heart will quickly be recovered. I came hither to enjoy thee, and shall I go away without thee? Behold my distress, and help me!' —Could you but sufficiently be wail your distractions, and repair to God for deliverance from them, you would gain relief.

8. Look upon the success and the comfort of your duties, as depending very much upon the keeping of your heart close with God in them. These two things, the success of duty and the

inward comfort arising from the performance of it, are unspeakably dear to the Christian; but both of these will be lost if the heart be in a listless state. “Surely God heareth not vanity, nor doth the Almighty regard it.” The promise is made to a heart engaged: “Then shall ye seek for me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your hearts.” When you find your heart under the power of deadness and distraction, say to yourself, ‘O what do I lose by a careless heart now! My praying seasons , are the most valuable portions of my life: could I but raise my heart to God, I might now obtain such mercies as would be matter of praise to all eternity.’

9. Regard your carefulness or carelessness in this matter as a great evidence of your sincerity, or hypocrisy. Nothing will alarm an upright heart more than this. ‘What shall I give way to a customary wandering of the heart from God? Shall the spot of the hypocrite appear upon my soul? Hypocrites, indeed, can drudge on in the round of duty, never regarding the frame of their hearts; but shall I do so? Never— never let me be satisfied with empty duties. Never let me take my leave of a duty until my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.’

10. It will be of special use to keep your heart with God in duty, to consider what influence all your duties will have upon your eternity. Your religious seasons are your seed times, and in another world you must reap the fruits of what you sow in your duties here, If you sow to the flesh, you will reap corruption; if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap life everlasting. Answer seriously these questions: Are you willing to reap the fruit of vanity in the world to come? Dare you say, when your thoughts are roving to the ends of the earth in duty, when you scarce mind what you say or hear, ‘Now, Lord, I am sowing to the Spirit; now I am providing and laying up for eternity; now I am seeking for glory, honor and immortality; now I am striving to enter in at the strait gate; now I am taking the kingdom of heaven by holy violence!’ Such reflections are well calculated to dissipate vain thoughts.

VII. The seventh season, which requires more than common diligence to keep the heart, is when we receive injuries and abuses from men. Such is the depravity and corruption of man, that one is become as a wolf or a tiger to another. And as men are naturally cruel and oppressive one to another, so the wicked conspire to abuse and wrong the people of God, “The wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he.” Now when we are thus abused and wronged, it is hard to keep the heart from revengeful motions; to make it meekly and quietly commit the cause to Him that judgeth righteously; to prevent the exercise of any sinful affection. The spirit that is in us lusteth to revenge; but it must not be so. We have choice helps in the Gospel to keep our hearts from sinful motions against our enemies, and to sweeten our embittered spirits. Do you ask how a Christian may keep his heart from revengeful motions under the greatest injuries and abuses from men? I reply: When you find your heart begin to be inflamed by revengeful feelings, immediately reflect on the following things

1. Urge upon your heart the severe prohibitions of revenge contained in the law of God. However gratifying to your corrupt propensities revenge may be, remember that it is forbidden. Hear the word of God: “Say not, I will recompense evil.” Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me. “Recompense to no man evil for evil. Avenge not yourselves, but give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.” On the contrary. “If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink.” It was an argument urged by the Christians to prove their religion to be supernatural and pure, that it forbids revenge, which is so agreeable to nature; and it

is to be wished that such an argument might not be laid aside. Awe your heart, then, with the authority of God in the Scriptures; and when carnal reason says, ‘My enemy deserves to be hated,’ let conscience reply, ‘But doth God deserve to be disobeyed?’ ‘Thus and thus hath he done, and so hath he wronged me;’ ‘But what hath God done that 1 should wrong him? If my enemy dares boldly to break the peace, shall I be so wicked as to break the precept? if he fears not to wrong me, shall not I fear to wrong God?’ Thus let the fear of God restrain and calm your feelings.

2. Set before your eyes the most eminent patterns of meekness and forgiveness, that you may feel the force of their example. This is the way to cut off the common pleas of flesh and blood for revenge: as thus, ‘No man would bear such an affront;’ yes, others have borne as bad, and worse ones. ‘But I shall be reckoned a coward, a fool, if I pass by this:’ no matter, so long as you follow the examples of the wisest and holiest of men. Never did any one suffer more or greater abuses from men than Jesus did, nor did any one ever endure insult and reproach and every kind of abuse in a more peaceful and forgiving manner; when he Was reviled he reviled not again; when he suffered. he threatened not when his murderers. crucified him he prayed Father, forgive them; and herein he hath set us an example, that we should follow his steps. Thus his apostles imitated him: “Being reviled,” say they, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat.” I have often heard it reported of the holy Mr. Dod, that when a man, enraged at his close, convincing doctrine, assaulted him, smote him on the face and dashed out two of his teeth; that meek servant of Christ spit out the teeth and blood into his hand, and said, “See here, you have knocked out two of my teeth, and that without any just provocation; but on condition that I might do your soul good, I would give you leave to knock out all the rest.” Here was exemplified the excellency of the Christian spirit. Strive then for this spirit, which constitutes the true excellence of Christians. Do what others cannot do, keep this spirit in exercise, and you will preserve peace in your own soul and gain the victory over your enemies.

2. Consider the character of the person who has wronged you. He is either a good or a wicked man. If he is a good man, there is light and tenderness in his conscience, which sooner or later will bring him to a sense of the evil of what he has done. If he is a good man, Christ has forgiven him greater injuries than he has done to you; and why should not you forgive him? Will Christ not upbraid him for any of his wrongs, but frankly forgive them all; and will you take him by the throat for some petty abuse which he has offered you?

3. But if a wicked man has injured or insulted you, truly you have more reason to exercise pity than revenge toward him. He is in a deluded and miserable state; a slave to sin and an enemy to righteousness. If he should ever repent, he will be ready to make you reparation; if he continues impenitent, there is a day coming when .he will be punished to the extent of his deserts. You need not study revenge, God will execute vengeance upon him.

4. Remember that by revenge you can only gratify a sinful passion, which by forgiveness you might conquer. Suppose that by revenge you might destroy one enemy; yet, by exercising the Christian’s temper you might conquer three—your own lust, Satan’s temptation, and your enemy’s heart. If by revenge you should overcome your enemy, the victory would be unhappy and inglorious, for in gaining it you would be overcome by your own corruption; but by exercising a meek and forgiving temper, you will always come off with honor and success. It must be a very

disingenuous nature indeed upon which meekness and forgiveness will not operate; that must be a flinty heart which this fire will not melt. Thus David gained such a victory over Saul his persecutor, that “Saul lifted up his voice and wept, and he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I.”

5. Seriously propose this question to your own heart: ‘Have I got any good by means of the wrongs and injuries which I have received?’ If they have done you no good, turn your revenge upon yourself. You have reason to be filled with shame and sorrow that you should have a heart which can deduce no good from such troubles; that your temper should be so unlike that of Christ. The patience and meekness of other Christians have turned all the injuries offered to them to a good account; their souls have been animated to praise God when they have been loaded with reproaches from the world. “I thank my God,” said Jerome, “that I am worthy to be hated of the world.” But if you have derived any benefit from the reproaches and wrongs which you have received, if they have put you upon examining your own heart, if they have made you more careful how you conduct, if they have convinced you of the value of a sanctified temper; will you not forgive them? will you not forgive one who has been instrumental of so much good to you? What though he meant it for evil? if through the Divine blessing your happiness has been promoted by what he has done, why should you even have a hard thought of him?

6. Consider by whom all your troubles are ordered. This will be of great use to keep your heart from revenge; this will quickly calm and sweeten your temper. When Shimei railed at David and cursed him, the spirit of that good man was not at all poisoned by revenge; for when Abishai offered him. if he pleased, the head of Shimei, the king said, “Let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David: who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?” It may be that God uses him as his rod to chastise me, because by my sin I gave the enemies of God occasion to blaspheme; and shall I be angry with the instrument? how irrational were that! Thus Job was quieted; he did not rail and meditate revenge upon the Chaldeans and Sabeans, but regarded God as the orderer of his troubles, and said, “The Lord hath taken away, blessed be his name.”

7. Consider how you are daily and hourly wronging God, and you will not be so easily inflawed with revenge against those who have wronged you. You are constantly affronting God, yet he does not take vengeance on you, but bears with you and forgives; and will you rise up and avenge yourself upon others? Reflect on this cutting rebuke: “O thou wicked and slothful servant! I forgave thee all that debt because thou desiredst me; shouldst thou not also have compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?” None should be so filled with forbearance and mercy to such as wrong them, as those who have experienced the riches of mercy themselves. The mercy of God to us should melt our hearts into mercy toward others. It is impossible that we should be cruel to others, except we forget how kind and compassionate God hath been to us. And if kindness cannot prevail in us, methinks fear should:—“If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

8. Let the consideration that the day of the Lord draweth nigh, restrain you from anticipating it by acts of revenge. Why are you so hasty? is not the Lord at hand to avenge all his abused servants? “Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth, &c. Be ye also patient, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge not one against another,

brethren, lest ye be condemned. Behold, the Judge standeth at the door. Vengeance belongeth unto God, and will you wrong yourself so much as to assume his work?

VIII. The next season in which special exertion is necessary to keep the heart, is when we meet with great trials. . . .

VIII. The next season in which special exertion is necessary to keep the heart, is when we meet with great trials. In such cases the heart is apt to be suddenly transported with pride, impatience, or other sinful passions. Many good people are guilty of hasty and very sinful conduct in such instances; and all have need to use diligently the following means to keep their hearts submissive and patient under great trials:

1. Get humble and abasing thoughts of yourself. The humble is ever the patient man. Pride is the source of irregular and sinful passions. A lofty, will be an unyielding and peevish spirit. When we over-rate ourselves, we think that we are treated unworthily, that our trials are too severe: thus we cavil and repine. Christian, you should have such thoughts of yourself as would put a stop to these murmurings. You should have lower and more humiliating views of yourself than any other one can have of you. Get humility, and you will have peace whatever be your trial.

2. Cultivate a habit of communion with God. This will prepare you for whatever may take place. This will so sweeten your temper and calm your mind as to secure you against surprisals. This will produce that inward peace which will make you superior to your trials. Habitual communion with God will afford you enjoyment, which you can never be willing to interrupt by sinful feeling. When a Christian is calm and submissive under his afflictions, probably he derives support and comfort in this way; but he who is discomposed, impatient, or fretful, shows that `all is not right within—he cannot be supposed to practise communion with God.

3. Let your mind be deeply impressed with an apprehension of the evil nature and effects of an unsubmissive and restless temper. It grieves the Spirit of God, and induces his departure. His gracious presence and influence are enjoyed only where peace and quiet submission prevail. The indulgence of such a temper gives the adversary an advantage. Satan is an angry and discontented spirit. He finds no rest but in restless hearts. He bestirs himself when the spirits are in commotion; sometimes he fills the heart with ungrateful and rebellious thoughts; sometimes he inflames the tongue with indecent language. Again, such a temper brings great guilt upon the conscience, unfits the soul for any duty, and dishonors the Christian name. O keep your heart, and let the power and excellence of your religion be chiefly manifested when you are brought into the greatest straits.

4. Consider how desirable it is for a Christian to overcome his evil propensities. How much more present happiness it affords; how much better it is in every respect to mortify and subdue unholy feelings, than to give way to them. When upon your death-bed you come calmly to review your life, how comfortable will it be to reflect on the conquest which you have made over the depraved feelings of your heart. It was a memorable saying of Valentinian the emperor, when he was about to die: “Amongst all my conquests, there is but one that now comforts me” Being asked what that was, he answered, “I have overcome my worst enemy, my own sinful heart!”

5. Shame yourself, by contemplating the character of those who have been most eminent for meekness and submission. Above all, compare your temper with the Spirit of Christ. “Learn of me,”

saith he, “for I am meek and lowly.” It is said of Calvin and Ursin, though both of choleric natures, that they had so imbibed and cultivated the meekness of Christ as not to utter an unbecoming word under the greatest provocations. And even many of the heathens have manifested great moderation and forbearance under their severest afflictions. Is it not a shame and a reproach that you should be outdone by them?

6. Avoid every thing which is calculated to irritate your feelings. It is true spiritual valor to keep as far as we can out of sins way. If you can but avoid the excitements to impetuous and rebellious feelings, or check them in their first beginnings, you will have but little to fear. The first workings of common sins are comparatively weak, they gain their strength by degrees; but in times of trial the motions of sin are strongest at first, the unsubdued temper breaks out suddenly and violently. But if you resolutely with. stand it at first, it will yield and give you the victory.

IX. The ninth season wherein the greatest diligence and skill are necessary to keep the heart, is the hour of temptation, when Satan besets the Christians heart, and takes the unwary by surprise. . . .

IX. The ninth season wherein the greatest diligence arid skill are necessary to keep the heart, is the hour of temptation, when Satan besets the Christians heart, and takes the unwary by surprise. To keep the heart at such times, is not less a mercy than a duty. Few Christians are so skillful in detecting the fallacies, and repelling the arguments by which the adversary incites them to sin, as to come off safe and whole in these encounters. Many eminent saints have smarted severely for their want of watchfulness and diligence at such times. How then may a Christian keep his heart from yielding to temptation? There are several principal ways in which the adversary insinuates temptation, and urges compliance:

1. Satan suggests that here is pleasure to be enjoyed; the temptation is presented with a smiling aspect and an enticing voice: `What, are you so dull and phlegmatic as not to feel the powerful charms of pleasure? Who can withhold himself from such delights? Reader, you may be rescued from the danger of such temptations by repelling the proposal of pleasure. It is urged that the commission of sin will afford you pleasure. Suppose this were true, will the accusing and condemning rebukes of conscience and the flames of hell be pleasant too? Is there pleasure in the scourges of conscience? If so why did Peter weep so bitterly? why did David cry out of broken bones? You hear what is said of the pleasure of sin, and have you not read what David said of the effects of it? “Thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore; there is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger, neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin,” &c. If you yield to temptation, you must feel such inward distress on account of it, or the miseries of hell. But why should the pretended pleasure of sin allure you, when you know that unspeakably more real pleasure will arise from the mortification than can arise from the commission of sin. Will you prefer the gratification of some unhallowed passion, with the deadly poison which it will leave behind, to that sacred pleasure which arises from fearing and obeying God, complying with the dictates of conscience, and maintaining inward peace? Can sin afford any such delight as he feels who, by resisting temptation, has manifested the sincerity of his heart, and obtained evidence that he fears God, loves holiness, and hates sin?

2. The secrecy with which you may commit sin is made use of to induce compliance with temptation. The tempter insinuates that this indulgence will never disgrace you among men, for no

one will know it. But recollect yourself. Does not God behold you? Is not the divine presence every where? What if you might hide your sin from the eyes of the world, you cannot hide it from God. No darkness nor shadow of death can screen you from his inspection. Besides have you no reverence for yourself? Can you do that by yourself which you dare not have others observe? Is not your conscience as a thousand witnesses? Even a heathen could say, “When thou art tempted to commit sin, fear thyself without any other witness.”

3. The prospect of worldly advantage often enforces temptation. It is suggested, `Why should you be so nice and scrupulous? Give yourself a little liberty, and you may better your condition: now is your time. This is a dangerous temptation, and must be promptly resisted. Yielding to such a temptation will do your soul more injury than any temporal acquisition can possibly do you good. And what would it profit you, if you should gain the whole world and lose your own soul? What can be compared with the value of your spiritual interests? or what can at all compensate for the smallest injury of them?

4. Perhaps the smallness of the sin is urged as a reason why you may commit it; thus: `It is but a little one, a small matter, a trifle; who Would stand upon such niceties? But is the Majesty of heaven little too? If you commit this sin you will offend a great God. Is there any little hell to torment little sinners in? No; the least sinners in hell are full of misery. There is great wrath treasured up for those whom the world regard as little sinners. But the less the sin, the less the inducement to commit it. Will you provoke God for a trifle? will you destroy your peace, wound your conscience, and grieve the Spirit, all for nothing? What madness is this!

5. An argument to enforce temptation is sometimes drawn from the mercy of God and the hope of pardon —God is merciful, he will pass by this as an infirmity, he will not be severe to mark it. But stay: where do you find a promise of mercy to presumptuous sinners? Involuntary reprisals and lamented infirmities may be pardoned, “but the soul that doth aught presumptuously, the same reproacheth the Lord, and that soul shall be cut off from among his people.” If God is a being of so much mercy, how can you affront him? How can you make so glorious an attribute as the divine mercy an occasion of sin? Will you wrong him because he is good? Rather let his goodness lead you to repentance, and keep you from transgression.

6. Sometimes Satan encourages to the commission of sin, from the examples of holy men. Thus and thus they sinned, and were restored; therefore you may commit this sin, and yet. be a saint and be saved. Such suggestions must be instantly repelled. If good men have committed sins similar to that with which you are beset, did any good man ever sin upon such ground and from such encouragement as is here presented? Did God cause their examples to be recorded for your imitation, or for your warning? Are they not set up as beacons that you may avoid the rocks upon which they split? Are you willing to feel what they felt for sin? Dare you follow them in sin, and plunge yourself into such distress and danger as they incurred?—Reader, in these ways learn to keep your heart in the hour of temptation.

04.05c. Keeping the Heart in the Time of Adversity

X. The time of doubting and of spiritual darkness constitutes another season when it is very difficult to keep the heart. . . .

X. The time of doubting and of spiritual darkness constitutes another season when it is very difficult to keep the heart. When the light and comfort of the divine presence is withdrawn; when the believer, from the prevalence of indwelling sin in one form or other, is ready to renounce his hopes, to infer desperate conclusions with respect to himself, to regard his former comforts as vain delusions, and his professions as hypocrisy; at such a time much diligence is necessary to keep the heart from despondency. The Christian's distress arises from his apprehension of his spiritual state, and in general he argues against his possessing true religion, either from his having relapsed into the same sins from which he had formerly been recovered with shame and sorrow; or from the sensible declining of his affections from God; or from the strength of his affections toward creature enjoyments; or from his enlargement in public, while he is often confined and barren in private duties; or from some horrible suggestions of Satan, with which his soul is greatly perplexed; or, lastly, from God's silence and seeming denial of his long depending prayers. Now in order to the establishment and support of the heart under these circumstances, it is necessary that you be acquainted with some general truths which have a tendency to calm the trembling and doubting soul; and that you be rightly instructed with regard to the above-mentioned causes of disquiet. Let me direct your attention to the following general truths:

1. Every appearance of hypocrisy does not prove the person who manifests it to be a hypocrite. You should carefully distinguish between the appearance and the predominance of hypocrisy. There are remains of deceitfulness in the best hearts; this was exemplified in David and Peter; but the prevailing frame of their hearts being upright, they were not denominated hypocrites for their conduct.

2. We ought to regard what can be said in our favor, as well as what may be said against us. It is the sin of upright persons sometimes, to exercise an unreasonable severity against themselves. They do not impartially consider the state of their souls. To make their state appear butter than it really is, indeed is the damning sin of self-flattering hypocrites; and to make their state appear worse than it really is, is the sin and folly of some good persons. But why should you be such an enemy to your own peace? Why read over the evidences of God's love to your soul, as a man does a book which he intends to confute? Why do you study evasions, and turn off those comforts which are due to you?

3. Every thing which may be an occasion of grief to the people of God, is not a sufficient ground for their questioning the reality of their religion. Many things may trouble, which ought not to stumble you. If upon every occasion you should call in question all that had ever been wrought upon you, your life would be made up of doubtings and fears, and you could never attain that settled inward peace, and live that life of praise and thankfulness which the Gospel requires.

4. The soul is not at all times in a suitable state to pass a right judgment upon itself. It is peculiarly unqualified for this in the hour of desertion or temptation. Such seasons must be improved rather for watching and resisting, than for judging and determining.

5. Whatever be the ground of one's distress, it should drive him to, not from God. Suppose you have sinned thus and so, or that you have been thus long and sadly deserted, yet you have no right to infer that you ought to be discouraged, as if there was no help for you in God. When you have well digested these truths, if your doubts and distress remain, consider what is now to be offered:

1. Are you ready to conclude that you have no part in the favor of God, because you are visited with some extraordinary affliction? If so, do you then rightly conclude that great trials are tokens of God's hatred? Does the Scripture teach this? And dare you infer the same with respect to all who have been as much or more afflicted than yourself? If the argument is good in your case, it is good in application to theirs, and more conclusive with respect to them, in proportion as their trials were greater than yours. Wo then to David, Job, Paul, and all who have been afflicted as they were! But had you passed along in quietness and prosperity; had God withheld those chastisements with which he ordinarily visits his people, would you not have had far more reason for doubts and distress than you now have?

2. Do you rashly infer that the Lord has no love to you, because he has withdrawn the light of his countenance? Do you imagine your state to be hopeless, because it is dark and uncomfortable? Be not hasty in forming this conclusion. If any of the dispensations of God to his people will bear a favorable as well as a harsh construction, why should they not be construed in the best sense? And may not God have a design of love rather than of hatred in the dispensation under which you mourn? May he not depart for a season, without departing for ever? You are not the first that have mistaken the design of God in withdrawing himself. "Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, my Lord hath forgotten me." But was it so? What saith the answer of God? "Can a woman forget her sucking child?" &c. But do you sink down under the apprehension that the evidences of a total and final desertion are discoverable in your experience? Have you then lost your conscientious tenderness with regard to sin? and are you inclined to forsake God? If so, you have reason indeed to be alarmed. But if your conscience is tenderly alive; if you are resolved to cleave to the Lord; if the language of your heart is, I cannot forsake God, I cannot live without his presence; though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: then you have reason to hope that he will visit you again. It is by these exercises that he still maintains his interest in you.

Once more. Are sense and feelings suitable to judge of the dispensations of God by? Can their testimony be safely relied on? Is it safe to argue thus: 'If God bad any love for my soul, I should feel it now as well as in former times; but I cannot feel it, therefore it is gone?' May you not as well conclude, when the sun is invisible to you, that he has ceased to exist? Read Isaiah 1:10.

Now if there is nothing in the divine dealings with you which is a reasonable ground of your despondency and distress, let us inquire what there is in your own conduct for which you should be so cast down:

1. Have you committed sins from which you were formerly recovered with shame and sorrow? And do you thence conclude that you sin allowedly and habitually, and that your oppositions to sin were

hypocritical? But do not too hastily give up all for lost. Is not your repentance and care renewed as often as you commit sin? Is it not the sin itself which troubles you, and is it not true, that the oftener you sin the more you are distressed? It is not so in customary sinning; of which Bernard excellently discourses thus: “When a man accustomed to restrain, sins grievously, it seems insupportable to him, yea he seems to descend alive into hell. In process of time it seems not insupportable, but heavy, and between insupportable and heavy there is no small descent. Next, such sinning becomes light, his conscience smites but faintly, and he regards not her rebukes. Then he is not only insensible to his guilt, but that which was bitter and displeasing has become in some degree sweet and pleasant. Now it is made a custom, and not only pleases, but pleases habitually. At length custom becomes nature; he cannot be dissuaded from it, but defends and pleads for it.” This is allowed and customary sinning, this is the way of the wicked. But is not your way the contrary of this?

2. Do you apprehend a decline of your affections from God and from spiritual subjects? This may be your case, and yet there may be hope. But possibly you are mistaken with regard to this. There are many things to be learnt in Christian experience; it has relation to a great variety of subjects. You may now be learning what it is very necessary for you to know as a Christian. Now, what if you are not sensible of so lively affections, of such ravishing views as you had at first; may not your piety be growing more solid and consistent, and better adapted to practical purposes? Does it follow from your not always being in the same frame of mind, or from the fact that the same objects do not at all times excite the same feelings, that you have no true religion? Perhaps you deceive yourself by looking forward to what you would be, rather than contemplating what you are, compared with what you once were.

3. If the strength of your love to creature-enjoyments is the ground of desperate conclusions respecting yourself, perhaps you argue thus: “I fear that I love the creature more than God, if so, I have not true love to God. I sometimes feel stronger affections toward earthly comforts than I do toward heavenly objects, therefore my soul is not upright within me.” If, indeed, you love the creature for itself, if you make it your end, and religion but a means, then you conclude rightly; for this is incompatible with supreme love to God. But may not a man love God more ardently and unchangeably than he does any thing, or all things else, and yet, when God is not the direct object of his thoughts, may he not be sensible of more violent affection for the creature than he has at that time for God? As rooted malice indicates a stronger hatred than sudden though inure violent passion; so we must judge of our love, not by a violent motion of it now and then, but by the depth of its root and the constancy of its exercise. Perhaps your difficulty results from bringing your love to some foreign and improper test. Many persons have feared that when brought to some eminent trial they should renounce Christ and cleave to the creature; but when the trial came, Christ was every thing, and the world as nothing in their esteem. Such were the fears of some martyrs whose victory was complete. But you may expect divine assistance only at the time of, and in proportion to your necessity. If you would try your love, see whether you are willing to forsake Christ now.

4. Is the want of that enlargement in private which you find in public exercises an occasion of doubts and fears? Consider then whether there are not some circumstances attending public duties which are peculiarly calculated to excite your feelings and elevate your mind, and which cannot affect you in private. If so, your exercises in secret, if performed faithfully and in a suitable manner, may he profitable, though they have not all the characteristics of those in public. If you

imagine that you have spiritual enlargement and enjoyment in public exercises while you neglect private duties, doubtless you deceive yourself. Indeed if you live in the neglect of secret duties, or are careless about them, you have great reason to fear. But if you regularly and faithfully perform them, it does not follow that they are vain and worthless, or that they are not of great value, because they are not attended with so much enlargement as you sometimes find in public. And what if the Spirit is pleased more highly to favor you with his gracious influence in one place and at one time than another, should this be a reason for murmuring and unbelief, or for thankfulness?

5. The vile or blasphemous suggestions of Satan sometimes occasion great perplexity and distress.— They seem to lay open an abyss of corruption in the heart, and to say there can be no grace here. But there may be grace in the heart where such thoughts are injected, though not, in the heart which consents to and cherishes them. Do you then abhor and oppose them? do you utterly refuse to give up yourself to their influence, and strive to keep holy and reverend thoughts of God, and of all religious objects? If so, such suggestions are involuntary, and no evidence against your piety.

6. Is the seeming denial of your prayers an occasion of despondency? Are you disposed to say, “If God had any regard for my soul he would have heard my petitions before now; but I have no answer from him, and therefore no interest in him?” But stay: though God’s abhorring and finally rejecting prayer is an evidence that he rejects the person who prays, yet, dare you conclude that he has rejected you, because an answer to your prayers is delayed, or because you do not discover it if granted? “May not God bear long with his own elect, that cry unto him day and night?”

Others have stumbled upon the same ground with you: “I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardst the voice of my supplication.” Now are there not some things in your experience which indicate that your prayers are not rejected, though answer to them is deferred? Are you not disposed to continue praying though you do not discover an answer? Are you not disposed still to ascribe righteousness to God, while you consider the cause of his silence as being in yourself? Thus did David: “O my God, I cry in the day time, and thou hearest not; and in the night, and am not silent: but thou art holy,” &c. Does not the delay of an answer to your prayers excite you to examine your own heart and try your ways, that you may find and remove the difficulty? If so, you may have reason for humiliation, but not for despair.

Thus I have shown you how to keep your heart in dark and doubting seasons. God forbid that any false heart should encourage itself from these things. It is lamentable, that when we give saints and sinners their proper portions, each is so prone to take up the other’s part.

XI. Another season, wherein the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when sufferings for religion are laid upon us. . . .

XI. Another season, wherein the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when sufferings for religion are laid upon us. Blessed is the man who in such a season is not offended in Christ. Now, whatever may be the kind or degree of your sufferings, if they are sufferings for Christ’s sake and the Gospel’s, spare no diligence to keep your heart. If you are tempted to shrink or waver under them, let what follows help you to repel and to surmount the instigation:

1. What reproach would you cast upon the Redeemer and his religion by deserting him at such a time as this! You would proclaim to the world, that how much soever you have boasted of the

promises when you are put to the proof you dare hazard no thing upon your faith in them; and this will give the enemies of Christ an occasion to blaspheme. And will you thus furnish the triumphs of the uncircumcised? Ah, if you did but value the name of Christ as much as many wicked men value their names, you could never endure that his should be exposed to contempt. Will proud dust and ashes hazard death or hell rather than have their names disgraced, and will you endure nothing to maintain the honor of Christ?

2. Dare you violate your conscience out of complaisance to flesh and blood? Who will comfort you when your conscience accuses and condemns you? What happiness can there be in life, liberty or friends, when inward peace is taken away? Consider well what you do.

3. Is not the public interest of Christ and his cause infinitely more important than any interest of your own, and should you not prefer his glory and the welfare of his kingdom before every thing else? Should any temporary suffering, or any sacrifice which you can be called to make, be suffered to come into competition with the honor of his name?

4. Did the Redeemer neglect your interest and think lightly of you, when for your sake he endured sufferings between which and yours there can be no comparison? Did he hesitate and shrink back? No: “He endured the cross, despising the shame.” And did he with unbroken patience and constancy endure so much for you; and will you flinch from momentary suffering in his cause?

5. Can you so easily cast off the society and the privileges of the saints and go over to the enemy’s side? Are you willing to withhold your support from those who are determined to persevere, and throw your influence in the scale against them? Rather let your body and soul be rent asunder. “If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”

6. How can you stand before Christ in the day of judgment, if you desert him now? “He that is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” Yet a little while, and the Son of man will come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, to judge the world. He will sit upon the throne of judgment, while all the nations are brought before him. Imagine yourself now to be witnessing the transactions of that day. Behold the wicked; behold the apostates; and hear the consuming sentence which is pronounced upon them, and see them sinking in the gulf of infinite and everlasting wo! And will you desert Christ now, will you forsake his cause to save a little suffering, or to protract an unprofitable life on earth, and thus expose yourself to the doom of the apostate? Remember, that if you can silence the remonstrances of conscience now, you cannot hinder the sentence of the Judge then. By these means keep your heart, that it depart not from the living God.

XII. The last season which I shall mention, in which the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when we are warned by sickness that our dissolution is at hand. . . .

XII. The last season which I shall mention, in which the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when we are warned by sickness that our dissolution is at hand. When the child of God draws nigh to eternity, the adversary makes his last effort; and as he cannot win the soul from God, as he cannot dissolve the bond which unites the soul to Christ, his great design is to awaken fears of death, to fill the mind with aversion and horror at the thoughts of dissolution from the body. Hence, what shrinking from a separation, what fear to grasp death’s cold hand, and unwillingness to

depart, may sometimes be observed in the people of God. But we ought to die, as well as live, like saints.

I shall offer several considerations calculated to help the people of God in time of sickness, to keep their hearts loose from all earthly objects, and cheerfully willing to die:

1. Death is harmless to the people of God; its shafts leave no sting in them. Why then are you afraid that your sickness may be unto death? If you were to die in your sins; if death were to reign over you as a tyrant, to feed upon you as a lion doth upon his prey; if death to you were to be the precursor of hell, then you might reasonably startle and shrink back from it with horror and dismay. But if your sins are blotted out; if Christ has vanquished death in your behalf, so that you have nothing to encounter but bodily pain, and possibly not even that; if death will be to you the harbinger of heaven, why should you be afraid? why not bid it welcome? It cannot hurt you; it is easy and harmless; it is like putting off your clothes, on taking rest.

2. It may keep your heart from shrinking back, to consider that death is necessary to fit you for the full enjoyment of God. Whether you are willing to die or not, there certainly is no other way to complete the happiness of your soul. Death must do you the kind office to remove this veil of flesh, this animal life which separates you from God, before you can see and enjoy him fully. “Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.” And who would not be willing to die for the perfect enjoyment of God? Methinks one should look and sigh, like a prisoner, through the grates of this mortality: “O that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest.” Indeed most men need patience to die; but a saint, who understands what death will introduce him to, rather needs patience to live. On his death-bed he should often look out and listen to his Lord’s coming; and when he perceives his dissolution to be near, he should say, “The voice of my beloved; behold he cometh, leaping over the mountains, skipping over the hills.”

3. Consider that the happiness of heaven commences immediately after death. That happiness will not be deferred till the resurrection; but as soon as death has passed upon you, your soul will be swallowed up in life. When you have once loosed from this shore, you shall be quickly wafted to the shore of a glorious eternity. And can you not say, I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ? Did the soul and body die together, or did they sleep till the resurrection, as some have fancied, it would have been folly for Paul to desire a dissolution for the enjoyment of Christ; because he would have enjoyed more in the body than he could have enjoyed out of it. The Scripture speaks of but two ways in which the soul can properly live: viz, by faith and vision. These two comprehend its present and future existence.

Now, if when faith fails, sight should not immediately succeed, what would become of the soul? But the truth on this subject is clearly revealed in Scripture. See Luke 23:3; John 14:3, &c. What a blessed change then will death make in your condition! Rouse up, dying saint, and rejoice; let death do his work, that the angels may conduct your soul to the world of light.

4. It may increase your willingness to die, to reflect that by death God often removes his people out of the way of great troubles and temptations. When some extraordinary calamity is coming upon the world, God sometimes removes his saints out of the way of the evil. Thus Methuselah died the year before the flood; Augustine a little before the sacking of Hippo; Pareus just before the taking of Heidelburg. Luther observes that all the apostles died before the destruction of

Jerusalem; and Luther himself died before the wars broke out in Germany. Now it may be that by death you will escape some grievous trial, which you could not and need not endure. But if no extraordinary trouble would come upon you in case your life were prolonged, yet God designs by death to relieve you from innumerable evils and burdens which are inseparable from the present state. Thus you will be delivered from indwelling sin, which is the greatest trouble; from all temptations from whatever source; from bodily tempers and embarrassments; and from all the afflictions and sorrows of this life. The days of your mourning will be ended, and God will wipe away all tears from your eyes. Why then should you not hasten to depart?

5. If you still linger, like Lot in Sodom, what are your pleas and pretences for a longer life? Why are you unwilling to die? Are you concerned for the welfare of your relations? If so, are you anxious for their temporal support? Then let the word of God satisfy you: “Leave thy fatherless children to me, I will keep them alive, and let thy widows trust in me.” Luther says, in his last will, “Lord, thou hast given inc a wife and children, I have nothing to leave them, but I commit them unto thee. O Father of the fatherless and Judge of widows, nourish, keep and teach them.” But are you concerned for the spiritual welfare of your relations? Remember that you cannot convert them, if you should live; and God can make your prayers and counsels effectual when you are dead.

Perhaps you desire to serve God longer in this world. But if he has nothing further for you to do here, why not say with David, “Here am I, let him do what seemeth him good.” He is calling you to higher service in heaven, and can accomplish by other hands what you desire to do further here.—Do you feel too imperfect to go to heaven? Consider that you must be imperfect until you die; your sanctification cannot be complete until you get to heaven.

‘But,’ you say, ‘I want assurance; if I had that I could die easily.’ Consider, then, that a hearty willingness to leave all the world to be freed from sin, and to be with God, is the direct way to that desired assurance; no carnal person was ever willing to die upon this ground.

Thus I have shown how the people of God, in the most difficult seasons, may keep their hearts with alt diligence.

I now proceed to improve and apply the subject: . . .

You have seen that the keeping of the heart is the great work of a Christian, in which the very soul and life of religion consists, and without which all other duties are of no value in the sight of God. Hence, to the consternation of hypocrites and formal professors, I infer:

1. That the pains and labors which many persons have undergone in religion are of no value, and will turn to no good account. Many splendid services have been performed by men, which God will utterly reject: they will not stand on record in order to an eternal acceptance, because the performers took no heed to keep their hearts with God. This is that fatal rock on which thousands of vain professors dash and ruin themselves eternally; they are exact about the externals of religion, but regardless of their hearts. O how many hours have some professors spent in hearing, praying, reading and conferring! and yet, as to the main end of religion, they might as well have sat still and done nothing, the great work, I mean heart-work, being all the while neglected. Tell me, vain professor, when did you shed a tear for the deadness, hardness, unbelief or earthliness of your heart? And do you think your easy religion can save you? If so, you must invert Christ’s words, and say, Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to life, and many there be that

go in thereat! Hear me, ye self-deluding hypocrite; you who have put off God with heartless duties; you who have acted in religion as if you had been blessing an idol; you who could not search your heart, and regulate it, and exercise it in your performances; how will you abide the coming of the Lord? how will you hold up your head before him, when he shall say. 'O you dissembling, false-hearted man! how could you profess religion? with what face could you so often tell me that you loved me, when you knew in your conscience that your heart was not with me?' O tremble to think what a fearful judgment it is to be given over to a heedless and careless heart, and then to have religious duties instead of a rattle to quiet and still the conscience!

2. I infer for their humiliation, that unless the people of God spend more time and pains about their hearts than they ordinarily do, they are never like to do God much service, or to possess much comfort in this world. I may say of that Christian who is remiss and careless in keeping his heart, as Jacob said of Reuben, Thou shalt not excel. It grieves me to see how many Christians there are who live at a poor, low rate, both of service and comfort, and who go up and down dejected and complaining. But how can they expect it should be otherwise, while they live so carelessly?

O how little of their time is spent in the closet, in searching, humbling, and quickening their hearts!

Christian, you say your heart is dead, and do you wonder that it is, so long as you keep it not with the fountain of life? If your body had been dieted as your soul has, that would have been dead too. And you may never expect that your heart will be in a better state until you take more pains with it.

O Christians! I fear your zeal and strength have run in the wrong channel; I fear that most of us may take up the Church's complaint: "They have made me the keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vine-yard have I not kept." Two things have eaten up the time and strength of the professors of this generation, and sadly diverted them from heart-work.

First:—Fruitless controversies, started by Satan, I doubt not for the very purpose of taking us off from practical godliness, to make us puzzle our heads when we should be inspecting our hearts. How little have we regarded the observation: "It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, and not with meats," (that is, with disputes and controversies about meats,) "which have not profited them that have been occupied therein." How much better it is to see men live exactly, than to hear them dispute with subtlety! These unfruitful questions, how have they rent the churches, wasted time and spirits, and taken Christians off from their main business! 'What think you, would it not have been better if the questions agitated among the people of God of late had been such as these:—"How shall a man distinguish the special from the common operations of the Spirit? How may a soul discern its first backslidings from God? How may a backsliding Christian recover his first love? How may the heart be preserved from unseasonable thoughts in duty? How may a bosom-sin be discovered and mortified?" &c. Would not this course have tended more to the honor of religion and the comfort of souls? I am ashamed that the professors of this generation are yet insensible of their folly. O that God would turn their disputes and contentions into practical godliness!

Second:—Worldly cares and incumbrances have greatly increased the neglect of our hearts. The heads and hearts of multitudes have been filled with such a crowd and noise of worldly business that they have lamentably declined in their zeal, their love, their delight in God, and their heavenly, serious, and profitable way of conversing with men. How miserably have we entangled ourselves

in this wilderness of trifles! Our discourses, our conferences, nay, our very prayers are tinged with it. We have had so much to do without, that we have been able to do but little within. And how many precious opportunities have we thus lost? How many admonitions of the Spirit have passed over unfruitfully? How often has the Lord called to us, when our worldly thoughts have prevented us from hearing? But there certainly is a way to enjoy God even in our worldly employments. If we lose our views of him when engaged in our temporal affairs, the fault is our own. Alas! that Christians should stand at the door of eternity, having more work upon their hands than their time is sufficient for, and yet be filling their heads and hearts with trifles!

3. I infer, lastly, for the awakening of all, that if the keeping of the heart be the great work of a Christian, then there are but few real Christians in the world. If every one who has learned the dialect of Christianity, and who can talk like a saint; if every one who has gifts and parts, and who can make shift to preach, pray, or discourse like a Christian: in a word, if all such as associate with the people of God and partake of ordinances may pass for Christians, then indeed the number is great. But alas! how few can he found, if you judge them by this rule,—how few are there who conscientiously keep their hearts, watch their thoughts and look scrupulously to their motives! Indeed there are few closet-men among professors. It is easier for men to be reconciled to any other duties in religion than to these. The profane part of the world will not so much as meddle with the outside of any religious duties, and least of all with these; and as to the hypocrite, though he may be very particular in externals, you can never persuade him to undertake this inward, this difficult work; this work, to which there is no inducement from human applause; this work, which would quickly discover what the hypocrite cares not to know: so that by general consent this heart-work is left to the hands of a few retired ones, and I tremble to think in how few hands it is.

II. If the keeping of the heart be so important a business; if such great advantages result from it; if so many valuable interests be wrapt up in it, then let me call upon the people of God every where to engage heartily in this work. O study your hearts, watch your hearts, keep your hearts! Away with fruitless controversies and all idle questions; away with empty names and vain shows; away with unprofitable discourse and bold censures of others, and turn in upon yourselves. O that this day, this hour, you would resolve upon doing so!

Reader, methinks I shall prevail with you. All that I beg for is this, that you would step aside oftener to talk with God and your own heart; that you would not suffer every trifle to divert you; that you would keep a more true and faithful account of your thoughts and affections; that you would seriously demand of your own heart at least every evening, ‘O my heart, where hast thou been today, and what has engaged thy thoughts?’

If all that has been said by way of inducement be not enough, I have yet some motives to offer you:

If all that has been said by way of inducement be not enough, I have yet some motives to offer you:

1. The studying, observing, and diligently keeping your own heart, will surprisingly help you to understand the deep mysteries of religion. An honest, well-experienced heart is an excellent help to the head. Such a heart will serve for a commentary on a great part of the Scriptures. By means of such a heart you will have a better understanding of divine things than the most learned

(graceless) man ever had, or call have; you will not only have a clearer, but a more interesting and profitable apprehension of them. A man may discourse orthodoxy and profoundly of the nature and effects of faith, the troubles and comforts of conscience, and the sweetness of communion with God, who never felt the efficacy and sweet impression of these things upon his own soul. But how dark and dry are his notions compared with those of an experienced Christian!

2. The study and observation of your own heart will powerfully secure you against the dangerous and infecting errors of the times in which you live. For what think you is the reason why so many professors have departed from the faith, giving heed to fables? why have so many been led away by the error of the wicked? why have those who have sown corrupt doctrines had such plentiful harvests among us, but because they have met with a race of professors who never knew what belongs to practical godliness and the study and keeping of their hearts?

3. Your care and diligence in keeping your heart will prove one of the best evidences of your sincerity. I know no external act of religion which truly distinguishes the sound from the unsound professor. It is marvellous how far hypocrites go in all external duties; how plausibly they can order the outward man, hiding all their indecencies from the observation of the world. But they take no heed to their hearts; they are not in secret what they appear to be in public; and before this test no hypocrite can stand. They may, indeed, in a fit of terror, or on a death-bed, cry out of the wickedness of their hearts; but such extort ed complaints are worthy of no regard. No credit, in law, is to be given to the testimony of one upon the rack, because it may be supposed that the extremity of his torture will make him say any thing to get relief. But if self-jealousy, care and watchfulness be the daily workings and frames of your heart, you have some evidence of your sincerity.

4. How comfortable and how profitable would all ordinances and duties be to you, if your heart was faithfully kept. What lively communion might you have with God every time you approach him, if your heart was in a right frame! You might then say with David, “My meditation of Him shall be sweet.” It is the indisposition of the heart which renders ordinances, and secret duties so comfortless to some. They strive to raise their hearts to God, now pressing this argument upon them, then that, to quicken and affect them; yet they often get nearly through the exercise before their hearts begin to be interested in it; and some times they go away no better than they came. But the Christian whose heart is prepared by being constantly kept, enters immediately and heartily into his duties; he outstrips his sluggish neighbor, gets the first sight of Christ in a sermon, the first seal from Christ in a sacrament, the first communication of grace and love in secret prayer. Now if there be any thing valuable and comfortable in ordinances and private duties, look to your heart and keep it, I beseech you.

5. An acquaintance with your own heart will furnish you a fountain of matter in prayer. The man who is diligent in heart-work, will be richly supplied with matter in his addresses to God. He will not be confused for want of thoughts; his tongue will not falter for want of expressions.

6. The most desirable thing in the world, viz, the revival of religion among a people, may be effected by means of what I am urging upon you.

O that I might see the time when professors shall not walk in a vain show; when they shall please themselves no more with a name to live, while they are spiritually dead; when they shall be no

more a company of frothy, vain persons; but when holiness shall shine in their conversation, and awe the world, and command reverence from all that are around them; when they shall warm the heart of those who come near them, and cause it to be said, God is in these men of a truth. And may such a time be expected? Until heart-work becomes the business of professors, I have no hope of seeing a time so blessed! Does it not grieve you to see how religion is contemned and trampled under foot, and the professors of it ridiculed and scorned in the world? Professors, would you recover your credit? would you obtain an honorable testimony in the consciences of your very enemies? Then keep your hearts.

7. By diligence in keeping our hearts we should prevent the occasions of fatal scandals and stumbling-blocks to the world. Wo to the world because of offences!

Keep your heart faithfully, and you will be prepared for any situation or service to which you may be called. This, and this only can properly fit you for usefulness in any station; but with this you can endure prosperity or adversity; you can deny yourself, and turn your hand to any work. Thus Paul turned every circumstance to good account, and made himself so eminently useful. When he preached to others, he provided against being cast away himself: he kept his heart; and every thing in which lie excelled seems to have had a close connection with his diligence in keeping his heart.

9. If the people of God would diligently keep their hearts, their communion with each other would be unspeakably more inviting and profitable. Then “how goodly would be thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!” It is the fellowship which the people of God have with the Father and with the Son that kindles the desires of others to have communion with them. I tell you, that if saints would be persuaded to spend more time and take more pains about their hearts, there would soon be such a divine excellence in their conversation that others would account it no small privilege to be with or near them. It is the pride, passion and earthliness of our hearts, that has spoiled Christian fellowship. Why is it that when Christians meet they are often jarring and contending, but because their passions arc unmortified? Whence come their uncharitable censures of their brethren, but from their ignorance of themselves? Why are they so rigid and unfeeling toward those who have fallen, but because they do not feel their own weakness and liability to temptation? Why is their discourse so light and unprofitable when they meet, but because their hearts are earthly and vain? But now, if Christians would study their hearts more and keep them better, the beauty and glory of communion would be restored. They would divide no more, contend no more, censure rashly no more. They will feel right one toward another, when each is daily humbled under a sense of the evil of his own heart.

10. Lastly:—Keep your heart, and then the comforts of the Spirit and the influence of all ordinances will be more fixed and lasting than they now are. And do the consolations of God seem small to you?” Ah, you have reason to be ashamed that the ordinances of God, as to their quickening and comforting effects, should make so light and transient an impression on your heart.

Now, reader, consider well these special benefits of keeping the heart which I have mentioned. Examine their importance. Are they small matters? Is it a small matter to have your understanding assisted? your endangered soul rendered safe? your sincerity proved? your communion with God sweetened? your heart filled with matter for prayer? Is it a small thing to have the power of godliness? all fatal scandals removed? an instrumental fitness to serve Christ obtained? the

communion of saints restored to its primitive glory? and the influence of ordinances abiding in the souls of saints? If these are no common blessings, no ordinary benefits, then surely it is a great and in dispensable duty to keep the heart with all diligence. And now are you inclined to undertake the business of keeping your heart? are you resolved upon it? I charge you, then, to engage in it earnestly. Away with every cowardly feeling, and make up your mind to encounter difficulties. Draw your armor from the word of God. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in its commands, its promises, its threatenings; let it be fixed in your understanding, your memory, your conscience, your affections. You must learn to wield the sword of the Spirit (which is the word of God) familiarly, if you would defend your heart and conquer your enemies. You must call yourself frequently to an account; examine yourself as in the presence of the all seeing God; bring your conscience, as it were, to the bar of judgment. Beware how you plunge yourself into a multiplicity of worldly business; how you practise upon the maxims of the world; and how you venture at all to indulge your depraved propensities. You must exercise the utmost vigilance to discover and check the first symptoms of departure from God, the least decline of spirituality, or the least indisposition to meditation by yourself and holy conversation and fellowship with others. These things you must undertake, in the strength of Christ, with invincible resolution in the outset. And if you thus engage in this great work, he assured you shall not spend your strength for naught; comforts which you never felt or thought of will flow in upon you from every side. The diligent prosecution of this work will constantly afford you the most powerful excitements to vigilance and ardor in the life of faith, while it increases your strength and wears out your enemies. And when you have kept your heart with all diligence a little while; when you have fought the battles of this spiritual warfare, gained the ascendancy over the corruptions within, and vanquished the enemies without, then God will open the gate of heaven to you, and give you the portion which is promised to them that overcome. Awake then, this moment; get the world under your feet pant not for the things which a man may have, and eternally lose his soul; but bless God that you may have his service here, and the glory hereafter which he appoints to his chosen.

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

04.06a. Keeping the Heart in Time of Zion's Troubles

Keeping the Heart in the Time of Zion’s Troubles

III. The third season calling for more than ordinary diligence to keep the heart is the time of Zion’s troubles. . . .

III. The third season calling for more than ordinary diligence to keep the heart is the time of Zion’s troubles. When the Church, like the ship in which Christ and his disciples were, is oppressed and ready to perish in the waves of persecution, then good souls are ready to be shipwrecked too, upon the billows of their own fears. It is true, most men need the spur rather than the reins in this case; yet some men sit down discouraged under a sense of the Church’s troubles. The loss of the ark cost Eli his life; the sad posture in which Jerusalem lay made good Nehemiah’s countenance change in the midst of all the pleasures and accommodations of the court. But though God allows, yea, commands the most awakened apprehensions of these calamities, and in “such a day calls to mourning, weeping, and girding with sackcloth,” and severely threatens the insensible; yet it will not please him to see you sit like pensive Elijah under the juniper tree. “Ah, Lord God! it is enough, take away my life also.” No: a mourner in Zion you may and ought to be, but a self-tormentor you must not be; complain to God you may, but complain of God (though but by the language of your actions) you must not.

Now let us inquire how tender hearts may be relieved and supported, when they are even overwhelm-ed with the burdensome sense of Zion’s troubles? I grant it is hard for him who preferreth Zion to his chief joy, to keep his heart that it sink not below the due sense of its troubles; yet this ought to, and may be done, by the use of such heart-establishing directions as these:

1. Settle this great truth in your heart, that no trouble befalls Zion but by the permission of Zion’s God; and he permits nothing out of which he will not ultimately bring much good to his people. Comfort may be derived from reflections on the permitting as well as on the commanding will of God. “Let him alone, it may be God hath bidden him.” “Thou couldst have no power against me, except it were given thee from above.” It should much calm our spirits, that it is the will of God to suffer it; and that, had he not suffered it, it could, never have been as it is. This very consideration quieted Job, Eli, David, and Hezekiah. That the Lord did it was enough to them: and why should it not be so to us? If the Lord will have Zion ploughed as a field, and her goodly stones lie in the dust; if it be his pleasure that Anti-Christ shall rage yet longer and wear out the saints of the Most High; if it be his will that a day of trouble, and of treading down, and of perplexity by the Lord God of Hosts,, shall be upon the valley of vision, that the wicked shall devour the man that is more righteous than he; what are we that we should contend with God? It is fit that we should be resigned to that Will whence we proceeded, and that He that made us should dispose of us as he pleases: he may do what seemeth him good without our consent. Doth poor man stand upon equal ground, that he may capitulate with his Creator; or that God should render him an account of any of his matters? That we be content, however God may dispose of us, is as reasonable as that we be obedient, whatever he may require of us. But if we pursue this argument farther, and. consider

that God's permissions all meet at last in the real good of his people, this will much more quiet our spirits. Do the enemies carry away the best among the people into captivity? This looks like a distressing providence; but God sends them thither for their good. Does God take the Assyrian as a staff in his hand to beat his people with? The end of his so doing is, "that he may accomplish his whole work upon Mount Zion." If God can bring much good out of the greatest evil of sin, much more out of temporal afflictions; and that he will, is as evident as that he can do so. For it is inconsistent with the wisdom of a common agent to permit any thing (which he might prevent if he pleased) to cross his great design; and can it be imagined that the most wise God should do so? As, then, Luther said to Melancthon, so say I to you: "Let infinite wisdom, power and love alone" for by these all creatures are swayed, and all actions guided, in reference to the church. It is not our work to rule the world, but to submit to Him that does. The motions of Providence are all judicious, the wheels are full of eyes: it is enough that the affairs of Zion are in a good hand.

2. Ponder this heart-supporting truth: how many troubles soever are upon Zion, yet her King is in her. What! hath the Lord forsaken his churches? has he sold them into the enemy's hands? Does he not regard what evil befalls them that our hearts sink thus? Is it not shamefully undervaluing the great God, and too much magnifying poor impotent man, to fear and tremble at creatures while God is in the midst of us? The church's enemies are many and mighty: let that be granted, yet that argument with which Caleb and Joshua strove to raise their own hearts, is of as much force now as it was then: "The Lord is with, us, fear them not." A historian tells us, that when Antigonus overheard his soldiers reckoning how many their enemies were, and so discouraging one another, he suddenly stepped in among them with this question, "And how many do you reckon me for?" Discouraged souls, how many do you reckon the Lord for? Is he not an overmatch for all his enemies? Is not one Almighty more than many mighties? "If God be for us, who can be against us?" What think you was the reason of that great examination Gideon made? He questions, he desires a sign, and after that, another: and what was the end of all this, but that he might be sure the Lord was with him, and that he might but write this motto upon his ensign: The sword of the Lord and of Gideon. So if you can be well assured the Lord is with his people, you will thereby rise above all your discouragements: and that he is so, you need not require a sign from heaven; lo, you have a sign before you, even their marvellous preservation amidst all their enemies. If God be not with his people, how is it that they are not swallowed up quickly? Do their enemies want malice, power, or opportunity? No, but there is an invisible hand upon them. Let then his presence give us rest; and though the mountains be hurled into the sea, though heaven and earth mingle together, fear not; God is in the midst of Zion, she shall not be moved.

3. Consider the great advantages attending the people of God in an afflicted condition. If a low and an afflicted state in the world be really best for the church, then your dejection is not only irrational, but ungrateful. Indeed if you estimate the happiness of the church by its worldly ease, splendor and prosperity, then such times of affliction will appear to be unfavorable; but if you reckon its glory to consist in its humility, faith, and heavenly-mindedness, no condition so much abounds with advantages for these as an afflicted condition. It was not persecutions and prisons, but worldliness and wantonness that poisoned the church: neither was it the earthly glory of its professors, but the blood of its martyrs that was the seed of the church. The power of godliness did never thrive better than in affliction, and was never less thriving than in times of greatest prosperity: when "we are left a poor and an afflicted people, then we learn to trust in the name of the Lord." It is indeed for the

saints' advantage to be weaned from love of, and delight in, ensnaring earthly vanities; to be quickened and urged forward with more haste to heaven; to have clearer discoveries of their own hearts; to be taught to pray more fervently, frequently, spiritually; to look and long for the rest to come more ardently. If these be for their advantage, experience teaches us that no condition is ordinarily blessed with such fruits as these, like an afflicted condition. Is it well then to repine and droop, because your Father consults the advantage of your soul rather than the gratification of your humors? because he will bring you to heaven by a nearer way than you are willing to go? Is this a due requital of his love, who is pleased so much to concern himself in your welfare—who does more for you than he will do for thousands in the world, upon whom he will not lay a rod, dispense an affliction to them for their good? But alas! we judge by sense, and reckon things good or evil, according to our present taste.

4. Take heed that you overlook not the many precious mercies which the people of God enjoy amidst all their trouble. It is a pity that our tears on account of our troubles should so blind our eyes that we should not see our mercies. I will not insist upon the mercy of having your life given you for a prey; nor upon the many outward comforts which you enjoy, even above what were enjoyed by Christ and his precious servants, of whom the world was not worthy. But what say you to pardon of sin; interest in Christ; the covenant of promise; and an eternity of happiness in the presence of God, after a few days are over? O that a people entitled to such mercies as these should droop under any temporal affliction, or be so much concerned for the frowns of men and the loss of trifles. You have not the smiles of great men, but you have the favor of the great God; you are perhaps diminished in temporal, but you are thereby increased in spiritual and eternal goods. You cannot live so plentifully as before; but you may live as heavenly as ever. Will you grieve so much for these circumstances as to forget your substance? Shall light troubles make you forget weighty mercies? Remember the true riches of the church are laid out of the reach of all enemies. What though God do not in his outward dispensations distinguish between his own and others? Yea, what though his judgments single out the best, and spare the worst? What though an Abel be killed in love, and a Cain survive in hatred; a bloody Dionysius die in his bed, and a good Josiah fall in battle? What though the belly of the wicked be filled with hidden treasures, and the teeth of the saints with gravel-stones? Still there is much matter of praise; for electing love has distinguished, though common providence has not: and while prosperity and impunity slay the wicked, even slaying and adversity shall benefit and save the righteous.

5. Believe that how low soever the church be plunged under the waters of adversity, she shall assuredly rise again. Fear not; for as surely as Christ arose the third day, notwithstanding the seal and watch upon him; so surely Zion shall arise out of all her troubles, and lift up her victorious head over all her enemies. There is no reason to fear the ruin of that people who thrive by their losses and multiply by being diminished. Be not too hasty to bury the church before she is dead; stay till Christ has tried his skill, before you give her up for lost. The bush may be all in a flame, but shall never be consumed; and that because of the good will of Him that dwelleth in it.

6. Remember the instances of God's care and tenderness over his people in former difficulties. For above eighteen hundred years the Christian church has been in affliction, and yet it is not consumed; many a wave of persecution has gone over it, yet it is not drowned; many devices have been formed against it, hitherto none of them has prospered. This is not the first time that Hamans and Ahithophels have plotted its ruin; that a Herod has stretched out his hand to vex it; still it has

been preserved from, supported under, or delivered out of all its troubles. Is it not as dear to God as ever? Is he not as able to save it now as formerly? Though we know not whence deliverance should arise, “yet the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations.”

7. If you can derive no comfort from any of these considerations, try to draw some out of your very trouble. Surely this trouble of yours is a good evidence of your integrity. Union is the ground of sympathy: if you had not some rich, adventure in that ship, you would not tremble as you do when it is in danger. Beside this framer of spirit may afford you this consolation, that if you are so sensible of Zion’s trouble, Jesus Christ is much more sensible of and solicitous about it than you can be, and he will have an eye of favor upon them that mourn for it.

IV. The fourth season, requiring our utmost diligence to keep our hearts, is the time of danger and public distraction. . . .

IV. The fourth season, requiring, our utmost diligence to. keep our hearts, is the time of danger and public distraction. In such times the best hearts are too apt to be surprised by slavish: fear. If Syria be confederate with Ephraim, how do the hearts of the house of David shake, even as the trees of the wood which are shaken with the wind. When there are ominous signs in the heavens, or the distress of nations with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; then the hearts of men fail for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth. Even a Paul may sometimes complain of “fightings within, when there are fears without.”

But, my brethren, these things ought not so to be; saints should be of a more elevated spirit; so was David when his heart was kept in a good frame: “The Lord is my light and my salvation whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?” Let none but the servants of sin be the slaves of fear; let them that have delighted in evil fear evil. Let not that which God has threatened as a judgment upon the wicked, ever seize upon the hearts of the righteous. “I will send faintness into their hearts in the land of their enemies, and the sound of a shaking leaf shall chase them.” What poor spirited men are those, to fly at a shaking leaf! A leaf makes a pleasant, not a terrible noise; it makes indeed a kind of natural music: but to a guilty conscience even the whistling leaves are drums and trumpets! “But God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of love and of a sound mind.” A sound mind, as it stands there in opposition to fear, is an unwounded conscience not weakened by guilt: and this should make a man as bold as a lion. I know it cannot be said of a saint, as God said of leviathan, that he is made without fear; there is a natural fear in every man, and it is as impossible to remove it wholly, as to remove the body itself. Fear is perturbation of the mind, arising from the apprehension of approaching danger; and as long as dangers can approach us, we shall find some perturbations within us. It is not my purpose to commend to you a stoical apathy, nor yet to dissuade you from such a degree of cautionary preventive fear as may fit you for trouble and be serviceable to your soul. There is a provident, fear that opens our eyes to foresee danger, and quickens us to a prudent and lawful use of means to prevent it: such was Jacob’s fear, and such his prudence when expecting to meet his angry brother Esau. But it is the fear of diffidence, from which I would persuade you to keep your heart; that tyrannical passion which invades the heart in times of danger, distracts, weakens and unfits it for duty, drives men upon unlawful means, and brings a snare with it.

Now let us inquire how a Christian may keep his heart from distracting and tormenting fears in times of great and threatening dangers. There are several excellent rules for keeping the heart

from sinful fear when imminent dangers threaten us:

1. Look upon all creatures as in the band of God, who manages them in all their motions, limiting, restraining and determining them at his pleasure. Get this great truth well settled by faith in your heart, and it will guard you against slavish fears. Ezekiel 1:1-28 contains an admirable draught of Providence: there you see the living creatures who move the wheels (that is, the great revolutions of things here below) coming unto Christ, who sits upon the throne, to receive new instructions from him. In Revelation 6:1-17, you read of white, black, and red horses, which are but the instruments God employs in executing judgments in the world, as wars, pestilence, and death. When these horses are prancing and trampling up and down in the world, here is a consideration that may quiet our hearts; God has the reins in his hand. Wicked men are sometimes like mad horses, they would stamp the people of God under their feet, but that the bridle of Providence is in their mouths. A lion at liberty is terrible to meet, but who is afraid of a lion in the keeper's hand?'

2. Remember that this God in whose hand are all creatures, is your Father, and is much more tender of you than you are, or can be, of yourself. "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye." Let me ask the most timorous woman whether there be not a great difference between the sight of a drawn sword in the hand of a bloody ruffian, and of the same sword in the hand of her own tender husband? As great a difference there is between looking upon creatures by an eye of sense, and looking on them, as in the hand of your God, by an eye of faith. Isaiah 54:5, is here very appropriate: "Thy Maker is thine husband, the Lord of hosts is his name;" he is Lord of all the hosts of creatures. Who would be afraid to pass through an army, though all the soldiers should turn their swords and guns toward him, if the commander of that army were his friend or father? A religious young man being at sea with many other passengers in a great storm, and they being half dead with fear, lie only was observed to be very cheerful, as if he were but little concerned in that danger: one of them demanding the reason of his cheerfulness, "O," said he, "it is because the pilot of the ship is my Father!" Consider Christ first as the King and supreme Lord over the providential kingdom, and then as your head, husband and friend, and you will quickly say, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul." This truth will make you cease trembling, and cause you to sing in the midst of danger, "The Lord is King of all the earth, sing ye praise with understanding." That is, 'Let every one that has understanding of this heart-reviving and establishing doctrine of the dominion of our Father over all creatures, sing praise.'

3. Urge upon your heart the express prohibitions of Christ in this case, and let your heart stand in awe of the violation of them. He hath charged you not to fear: "When we shall hear of wars and commotions, see that ye be not terrified." "In nothing be terrified by your adversaries." In Matthew 10:1-42, and within the compass of six verses, our Savior commands us thrice, "not to fear man." Does the voice of a man make thee to tremble, and shall not the voice of God? If thou art of such a timorous spirit, how is it that thou fearest not to disobey the commands of Jesus Christ? Methinks the command of Christ should have as much power to calm, as the voice of a poor worm to terrify thy heart. "I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man that shall be made as the grass, and forgettest the Lord thy Maker?" We cannot fear creatures sinfully till we have forgotten God: did we remember what he is, and what he has said, we should not be of such feeble spirits. Bring thyself then to this reflection in times of danger: 'If I let into my heart the slavish fear of man, I must let out the reverential awe and fear of God; and dare I cast off the fear of the Almighty for the frowns of a man I shall I lift up proud

dust above the great God I shall I run upon a certain sin, to shun a probable danger?'—O keep thy heart by this consideration!

4. Remember how much needless trouble your vain fears have brought upon you formerly: "And hast feared continually because of the oppressor, as if he were ready to devour; and where is the fury of the oppressor?" He seemed ready to devour, yet you are not devoured. I have not brought upon you the thing that you. feared; you have wasted your spirit, disordered your soul, and weakened your hands to no purpose: you might have all this while enjoyed your peace, and possessed your soul in patience. And here I cannot but observe a very deep policy of Satan in managing a design against the soul by these vain fears. I call them vain, with reference to the frustration of them by Providence; but certainly they are not in vain as the end at which Satan aims in raising them; for herein he acts as soldiers do in the siege of a garrison, who to wear out the besieged by constant watchings, and thereby unfit them to make resistance when they storm it in earnest, every night rouse them with false alarms, which though they come to nothing yet remarkably answer the ultimate design of the enemy.—O when will you beware of Satan's devices?

5. Consider solemnly, that though the things you fear should really happen, yet there is more evil in your own fear than in the things feared: and that, not only as the least evil of sin is worse than the greatest evil of suffering; but as this sinful fear has really more trouble in it than there is in that condition of which you are so much afraid. Fear is both a multiplying and a tormenting passion; it represents troubles as much greater than they are, and so tortures the soul much more than the suffering itself. So it was with Israel at the Red Sea; they cried out and were afraid, till they stepped into the water, and then a passage was opened through those waters which they thought would have drowned them. Thus it is with us; we, looking through the glass of carnal fear upon the waters of trouble, the swellings of Jordan, cry out, 'O they are unfordable; we must perish in them!' But when we come into the midst of those floods indeed, we find the promise made good: "God will make a way to escape." Thus it was with a blessed martyr; when he would make a trial by putting his finger to the candle, and found himself not able to endure that, he cried out, "What! cannot I bear the burning of a finger? How then shall I be able to bear the burning of my whole body to-morrow?" Yet when that morrow came he could go cheerfully into the flames with this scripture in his mouth: "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine; when thou passest through the waters I will be with you; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt."

6. Consult the many precious promises which are written for your support and comfort in all dangers. These are your refuges to which you may fly and be safe when the arrows of danger fly by night, and destruction wasteth at noon-day. There are particular promises suited to particular cases and exigencies; there are also general promises reaching all cases and conditions. Such as these: "All things shall work together for good," &c. "Though a sinner do evil an hundred times and his days be prolonged, yet it shall be well with them that fear the Lord," &c. Could you but believe the promises your heart should be established. Could you but plead them with God as Jacob did, ("Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good," &c.) they would relieve you in every distress.

7. Quiet your trembling heart by recording and consulting your past experiences of the care and faithfulness of God in former distresses. These experiences are food for your faith in a wilderness.

By this David kept his heart in time of danger, and Paul his. It was answered by a saint, when one told him that his enemies waylaid him to take his life: “If God take no care of me, how is it that I have escaped hitherto?” You may plead with God old experiences for new ones: for it is in pleading with God for new deliverances, as it is in pleading for new pardons. Mark how Moses pleads of that account with God. “Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people, as thou hast forgiven them from Egypt until now.” He does not say as men do, ‘Lord, this is the first fault, thou hast not been troubled before to sign their pardon:’ but, ‘Lord, because thou hast pardoned them so often, I beseech thee pardon them once again.’ So in new difficulties let the saint say, ‘Lord, thou hast often heard, helped and saved, in former years; therefore now help again, for with thee there is plenteous redemption and thine arm is not shortened.’

8. Be well satisfied that you are in the way of your duty, and that will beget holy courage in times of danger. “Who, will harm you if you be a follower of that which is good?” Or if any dare attempt to harm you, “you may boldly commit yourself to God in well-doing.” It was this consideration that raised Luther’s spirit above all fear: “in the cause of God (said he) I ever am, and ever shall be stout: herein I assume this title, “I yield to none.” A good cause will bear up a man’s spirit. Hear the saying of a hea-then, to the shame of cowardly Christians: when the emperor Vespasian had commanded Fluidus Priseus not to come to the senate, or if he did come, to speak nothing but what ‘he would have him; the senator returned this noble answer, “that he was a senator, it was fit he should be at the senate; and if being there, he were required to give his advice, he would freely speak that which his conscience commanded him.” The emperor threatening that then he should die; he answered, “Did I ever tell you that I was immortal? Do what you will, and I will do what I ought. It is in your power to put me to death unjustly, and in my power to die with constancy.” Righteousness is a breastplate: let them tremble whom danger finds out of the way of duty.

9. Get your conscience sprinkled with the blood of Christ from all guilt, and that will set your heart above all fear. It is guilt upon the conscience that softens and makes cowards of our spirits: “the righteous are bold as a lion.” It was guilt in Cain’s conscience that made him cry, “Every one that findeth me will slay me.” A guilty conscience is more terrified by imagined dangers, than a pure conscience is by real ones. A guilty sinner carries a witness against himself in his own bosom. It was guilty Herod cried out, “John Baptist is risen from the dead.” Such a conscience is the devil’s anvil, on which he fabricates all those swords and spears with which the guilty sinner pierces himself. Guilt is to danger, what fire is to gun-powder: a man need not fear to walk among many barrels of powder, if he have no fire about him.

10. Exercise holy trust in times of great distress. Make it your business to trust God with your life and comforts, and then your heart will be at rest about them. So did David, “At what time I am afraid I will trust in thee;” that is, ‘Lord, if at any time a storm arise, I will shelter from it under the covert of thy wings.’ Go to God by acts of faith and trust, and never doubt that he will secure you. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee,” says Isaiah. God is pleased when you come to him thus: ‘Father, my life, my liberty and my estate are exposed, and I cannot secure them; O let me leave them in, thy hand. The poor leaveth himself with thee; and does his God fail him? No, thou art the helper of the fatherless: that is, thou art the helper of the destitute one, that has none to go to but God. This is a comforting passage, “He shall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord;” he does not say, his ear shall be preserved from the report of evil tidings, he may hear as sad tidings as other men, but

his heart shall be kept from the terror of those tidings; his heart is fixed.

11. Consult the honor of religion more, and your personal safety less. Is it for the honor of religion (think you) that Christians should be as timorous as bores to start at every sound? Will not this tempt the world to think, that whatever you talk, yet your principles are no better than other men's? What mischief may the discovery of your fears before them do! It was nobly said by Nehemiah, "Should such a man as I flee? and who, being as I am, would flee?" Were it not better you should die than that the world should be prejudiced against Christ by your example? For alas! how apt is the world (who judge more by what they see in your practices than by what they understand of your principles) to conclude from your timidity, that how much soever you commend faith and talk of assurance, yet you dare trust to those things no more than they, when it comes to the trial. O let not your fears lay such a stumbling-block before the blind world.

12. He that would secure his heart from fear, must first secure the eternal interest of his soul in the hands of Jesus Christ., When this is done, you may say, 'Now, world, do thy worst!' You will not be very solicitous about a vile body, when you are once assured it shall be well to all eternity with your precious soul. "Fear not them (says Christ) that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." The assured Christian may smile with contempt upon all his enemies, and say, 'Is this the worst that you can do?' What say you, Christian? Are you assured that your soul is safe; that within a few moments of your dissolution it shall be received by Christ into an everlasting habitation? If you be sure of that, never trouble yourself about the instrument and means of your death.'

13. Learn to quench all slavish creature-fears in the reverential fear of God. This is a cure by diversion. It is an exercise of Christian wisdom to turn those passions of the soul which most predominate, into spiritual channels; to turn natural anger into spiritual zeal, natural mirth into holy cheerfulness, and natural fear into a holy dread and awe of God. This method of cure Christ prescribes in Matthew 10:1-42; similar to which is Isaiah 8:12-13, "Fear not their fear." 'But how shall we help it?' "Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." Natural fear may be allayed for the present by natural reason, or the removal of the occasion; but then it is like a candle blown out by a puff of breath, which is easily blown in again: but if the fear of God extinguish it, then it is like a candle quenched in water, which cannot easily be rekindled.'

14. Pour out to God in prayer those fears which the devil and your own unbelief pour in upon you in times of danger. Prayer is the best outlet to fear: where is the Christian that cannot set his seal to this direction? I will give you the greatest example to encourage you to compliance, even the example of Jesus Christ. When the hour of his danger and death drew nigh, he went into the garden, separated from his disciples, and there wrestled mightily with God in prayer, even unto agony; in reference to which the apostle says, "who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong cries and tears, to him that was able to save from death, and was heard in that he feared." He was heard as to strength and support to carry him through it; though not as to deliverance, or exemption from it. O that these things may abide with you, and be reduced to practice in these evil days, and that many trembling souls may be established by them.'

V. The fifth season, requiring diligence in keeping the heart, is the time of outward wants. . . .

V. The fifth season, requiring diligence in keeping the heart, is the time of outward wants. Although at such times we should complain to God, not of God, (the throne of grace being erected for a "time of need,") yet when the waters of relief run low, and want begins to press, how prone are the best hearts to distrust the fountain! When the meal in the barrel and the oil in the cruse are almost spent, our faith and patience too are almost spent. It is now difficult to keep the proud and unbelieving heart in a holy quietude and sweet submission at the foot of God. It is an easy thing to talk of trusting God for daily bread, while we have a full barn or purse; but to say as the prophet, "Though the fig-tree should not blossom, neither fruit be in the vine, &c. yet will I rejoice in the Lord:" surely this is not easy. Would you know then how a Christian may keep his heart from distrusting God, or repining against him, when outward wants are either felt or feared?—The case deserves to be seriously considered, especially now, since it seems to be the design of Providence to empty the people of God of their creature fullness, and acquaint them with those difficulties to which hitherto they have been altogether strangers. To secure the heart from the dangers attending this condition, these considerations may, through the blessing of the Spirit, prove effectual:

1. If God reduces you to necessities, he therein deals no otherwise with you than he has done with some of the holiest men that ever lived. Your condition is not singular; though you have hitherto been a stranger to want, other saints have been familiarly acquainted with it. Hear what Paul says, not of himself only, but in the name of other saints reduced to like exigencies: "Even to the present hour, we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place." To see such a man as Paul going up and down the world naked, and hungry, and houseless; one that was so far above thee in grace and holiness; one that did more service for God in a day than perhaps thou hast done in all thy days may well put an end to your repining. Have you forgotten how much even a David has suffered? How great were his difficulties! "Give, I pray thee," says he to Nabal, "whatsoever cometh to thy hand, to thy servants, and to thy son David." But why speak I of these? Behold a greater than any of them, even the Son of God, who is the heir of all things, and by whom the worlds were made, sometimes would have been glad of any thing, having nothing to eat. "And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry; and seeing a fig-tree, afar off, having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon."

Hereby then God has set no mark of hatred upon you, neither can you infer want of love from want of bread. When thy repining heart puts the question, 'Was there ever sorrow like unto mine?' ask these worthies, and they will tell thee that though they did not complain as thou dost, yet their condition was as necessitous as thine is.

2. If God leave you not in this condition without a promise, you have no reason to repine or despond under it. That is a sad condition indeed to which no promise belongs. Calvin in his comment on Isaiah 9:1, explains in what sense the darkness of the captivity was not so great as that of the lesser incursions made by Tiglath Pileser. In the captivity, the city was destroyed and the temple burnt with fire: there was no comparison in the affliction, yet the darkness was not so great, because, says he, "there was a certain promise made in this case, but none in the other." It is better to be as low as hell with a promise, than to be in paradise without one. Even the darkness of hell itself would be no darkness comparatively at all, were there but a promise to enlighten it. Now, God has left many sweet promises for the faith of his poor people to live upon in this

condition; such as these: “O fear the Lord, ye his saints, for there is no want to them that fear him; the lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that fear the Lord shall not want any good thing.” “The eye of the Lord is upon the righteous to keep them alive in famine.” “No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” “When the poor and the needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.” Here you see their extreme wants, water being put for their necessaries of life; and their certain relief, “I the Lord will hear them;” in which it is supposed that they cry unto him in their distress, and he hears their cry. Having therefore these promises, why should not your distrustful heart conclude like David’s, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want?”

‘But these promises imply conditions: if they were absolute, they would afford more satisfaction.’ What are those tacit conditions of which you speak but these, that he will either supply or sanctify your wants; that you shall have so much as God sees fit for you? And does this trouble you? Would you have the mercy, whether sanctified or not? whether God sees it fit for you or not? The appetites of saints after earthly things should not be so ravenous as to seize greedily upon any enjoyment without regarding circumstances.

‘But when wants press, and I see not whence supplies should come, my faith in the promise shakes, and I, like murmuring Israel, cry, “He gave bread, can he give water also?”’ O unbelieving heart! when did his promises fail? who ever trusted them and was ashamed? May not God upbraid thee with thine unreasonable infidelity, as in Jeremiah 2:31, “Have I been a wilderness unto you?” or as Christ said to his disciples, “Since I was with you, lacked ye any thing?” Yea, may you not upbraid yourself; may you not say with good old Polycarp, “These many years I have served Christ, and found him a good Master?”

Indeed he may deny what your wantonness, but not what your want calls for. He will not regard the cry of your lusts, nor yet despise the cry of your faith: though he will not indulge your wanton appetites, yet he will not violate his. own faithful promises. These promises are your best security for eternal life; and it is strange they should not satisfy you for daily bread. Remember the words of the Lord, and solace your heart with them amidst all your wants. It is said of Epicurus, that in dreadful paroxysms of the cholic he often refreshed himself by calling to mind his inventions in philosophy; and of Possodonius the philosopher, that in an acute disorder he solaced himself with discourses on moral virtue; and when distressed, he would say, “O pain, thou dost nothing; though thou art a little troublesome, I will never confess thee to be evil.” If upon such grounds as these they could support themselves under such racking pains, and even deluded their diseases by them; how much rather should the promises of God, and the sweet experiences which have gone along step by step with them, make you forget all your wants, and comfort you in every difficulty?

3. If it be bad now, it might have been worse. Has God denied thee the comforts of this life? He might have denied thee Christ, peace, and pardon also; and then thy case had been woful indeed.

You know God has done so to millions. How many such wretched objects max your eyes behold every day, that have no comfort in hand, nor yet in hope; that are miserable here, and will be so to eternity; that have a bitter cup, and nothing to sweeten it—no, not so much as any hope that it will be better. But it is not so with you: though you be poor in this world, yet you are “rich in faith, and an heir of the kingdom which God has promised.” Learn to set spiritual riches over against

temporal poverty. Balance all your present troubles with your spiritual privileges. Indeed if God has denied your soul the robe of righteousness to clothe it, the hidden manna to feed it, the heavenly mansion to receive it, you might well be pensive; but the consideration that he has not may administer comfort under any outward distress. When Luther began to be pressed by want, he said, “Let us be contented with our hard fare; for do not we feast upon Christ, the bread of life?“ “Blessed be God (said Paul) who hath abounded to us in all spiritual blessings.”

4. Though this affliction be great, God has far greater, with which he chastises the dearly beloved of his soul in this world. Should he remove this and inflict those, you would account your present state a very comfortable one, and bless God to be as you now are. Should God remove your present troubles, supply all your outward wants, give you the desire of your heart in creature-comforts; but hide his face from you, shoot his arrows into your soul, and cause the venom of them to drink up your spirit: should he leave you but a few days to the buffetings of Satan: should he hold your eyes but a few nights waking with horrors of conscience, tossing to and fro till the dawning of the day:—should he lead you through the chambers of death, show you the visions of darkness, and make his terrors set themselves in array against you: then tell me if you would not think it a great mercy to be back again in your former necessitous condition, with peace of conscience; and account bread and water, with God’s favor, a happy state? O then take heed of repining. Say not that God deals hardly with you, lest you provoke him to convince you by your own sense that he has worse rods than these for unsubmissive and froward children.

5. If it be had now, it will be better shortly. Keep thy heart by this consideration, ‘the meal in the barrel is almost spent; well, be it so, why should that trouble me, if I am almost beyond the need and use of these things?’ The traveler has spent almost all his money; ‘well,’ says he, ‘though my money be almost spent, my journey is almost finished too: I am near home, and shall soon be fully supplied.’ If there be no candles in the house, it is a comfort to think that it is almost day, and then there will be no need of them. I am afraid, Christian, you misreckon when you think your provision is almost spent, and you have a great way to travel, many years to live and nothing to live upon; it may be not half so many, as you suppose In this be confident, if your provision be spent, either fresh supplies are coining, though you see not whence, or you are nearer your journey’s end than you reckon yourself to be. Desponding soul, does it become a man traveling upon the road to that heavenly city, and almost arrived there, within a few days’ journey of his Father’s house, where all his wants shall be supplied, to be so anxious about a little meat, or drink, or clothes, which he fears he shall want by the way? It was nobly said by the forty martyrs when turned out naked in a frosty night to be starved to death, “ The winter indeed is sharp and cold, but heaven is warm and comfortable; here we shiver for cold, but Abraham’s bosom will make amends for all.”

‘But,’ says the desponding soul, ‘I may die for want.’ Who ever did so? When were the righteous forsaken? If indeed it be so, your journey is ended, and you fully supplied.

‘But I am not sure of that; were I sure of heaven, it would be another matter.’ Are you not sure of that? then you have other matters to trouble yourself about than these; methinks these should be the least of all your cares. I do not find that souls perplexed about the want of Christ, pardon of sin, &c. are usually very solicitous about these things. He that seriously puts such questions as these, ‘What shall I do to be saved? how shall I know my sin is pardoned?’ does not trouble himself with, “What shall I eat, what shall I drink, or wherewithal shall I be clothed?”

6. Does it become the children of such a Father to distrust his all-sufficiency, or repine at any of his dispensations? Do you well to question his care and love upon every new exigency? Say, have you not formerly been ashamed of this? Has not your Father's seasonable provision for you in former difficulties put you to the blush, and made you resolve never more to question his love and care? And yet will you again renew your unworthy suspicions of him? Disingenuous child! reason thus with yourself: "If I perish for want of what is good and needful for me, it must be either because my Father knows not my wants, Or has not wherewith to supply them, or regards not what becomes of me. Which of these shall I charge upon him? Not the first: for my Father knows what I have need of Not the second: for the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; his name is God All-sufficient. Not the last: for as a Father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him; the Lord is exceeding pitiful and of tender mercy; he hears the young ravens when they cry:—and will he not hear me? Consider, says Christ, the fowls of the air; not the fowls at the door, that are fed every day by hand, but the fowls of the air that have none to provide for them. Does he feed and clothe his enemies, and will he forget his children? he heard even the cry of Ishmael in distress. O my unbelieving heart, dost thou yet doubt?"

7. Your poverty is not your sin, but your affliction. If you have not by sinful means brought it upon yourself, and if it be but an affliction, it may the more easily be borne. It is hard indeed to bear an affliction coming upon us as the fruit and punishment of sin. When men are under trouble upon that account; they say, 'O if it were but a single affliction, coming from the hand of God by way of trial, I could bear it; but I have brought it upon myself by sin, it comes as the punishment of sin; the marks of God's displeasure are upon it: it is the guilt within that troubles and galls more than the want without.' But it is not so here; therefore you have no reason to be cast down under it.

04.06b. Keeping the Heart in Time of Zion's Troubles

‘But though there be no sting of guilt, yet this condition wants not other stings; as, for instance, The discredit of religion. I cannot comply with my engagements in the world, and thereby religion is likely to suffer.’ It is well you have a heart to discharge every duty; yet if God disable you by providence, it is no discredit to your profession that you do not that which you cannot do, so long as it is your desire and endeavor to do what you can and ought to do; and in this case God’s will is, that lenity and forbearance be toward you.

‘But it grieves me to behold the necessities of others, whom I was wont to relieve and refresh, but now cannot.’ If you cannot, it ceases to be your duty, and God accepts the drawing out of your soul to the hungry in compassion and desire to help them, though you cannot draw forth a full purse to relieve and supply them.

‘But I find such a condition full of temptations, a great hinderance in the way to heaven.’ Every condition in the world has its hinderances and attending temptations; and were you in a prosperous condition, you might there meet with more temptations and fewer advantages than you now have; for though I confess poverty as well as prosperity has its temptations, yet I am confident prosperity has not those advantages that poverty has. Here you have an opportunity to discover the sincerity of your love to God, when you can live upon him, find enough in him, and constantly follow him, even when all external inducements and motives fail.

Thus I have shown you how to keep your heart from the temptations and dangers attending a low condition in the world. When want oppresses and the heart begins to sink, then improve, and bless God for these helps to keep it.

VI. The sixth season requiring this diligence in keeping the heart, is the season of duty. . . .

VI. The sixth season requiring this diligence in keeping the heart, is the season of duty. Our hearts must be closely watched and kept when we draw nigh to God in public, private, or secret duties; for the vanity of the heart seldom discovers itself more than at such times. How often does the poor soul cry out, ‘O Lord, how gladly would I serve thee, but vain thoughts will not let me: I come to open my heart to thee, to delight my soul in communion with thee, but my corruptions oppose me: Lord, call off these vain thoughts, and suffer them not to estrange the soul that is espoused to thee.’ The question then is this: How may the heart be kept from distractions by vain thoughts in time of duty? There is a two-fold distraction, or wandering of the heart in duty: First, voluntary and habitual, They set not their hearts aright, and their spirit was not steadfast with God.” This is the case of formalists, and it proceeds from the want of a holy inclination of the heart to God; their hearts are under the power of their lusts, and therefore it is no wonder that they go after their lusts, even when they are about holy things. Secondly, involuntary and lamented distractions: “I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me; O wretched man that I am,” &c. This proceeds not from the want of a holy inclination or aim, but from the weakness of grace and the want of vigilance in opposing indwelling sin. But it is not my business to show you how these

distractions come into the heart but rather how to get them out, and prevent their future admission:

1. Sequester yourself from all earthly employments, and set apart some time for solemn preparation to meet God in duty. You cannot come directly from the world into God's presence without finding a savor of the world in your duties. It is with the heart (a few minutes since plunged in the world, now in the presence of God) as it is with the sea after a storm, which still continues working, muddy and disquiet, though the wind be laid and the storm be over. Your heart must have some time to settle. Few musicians can take an instrument and play upon it without some time and labor to tune it; few Christians can say with David, "My heart is fixed, O God, it is fixed." When you go to God in any duty, take your heart aside and say, 'O my soul, I am now engaged in the greatest work that a creature was ever employed about; I am going into the awful presence of God upon business of everlasting moment. O my soul, leave trifling now; be composed, be watchful, be serious; this is no common work, it is soul-work; it is work for eternity; it is work which will bring forth fruit to life or death in the world to come.' Pause awhile and consider your sins, your wants, your troubles; keep your thoughts awhile on these before you address yourself to duty. David first mused, and then spake with his tongue.

2. Having composed your heart by previous meditation, immediately set a guard upon your senses. How often are Christians in danger of losing the eyes of their mind by those of their body! Against this David prayed, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou me in thy way." This may serve to expound the Arabian proverb: "Shut the windows that the house may be light." It were well if you could say in the commencement, as a holy man once said when he came from the performance of duty: "Be shut, O my eyes, be shut; for it is impossible that you should ever discern such beauty and glory in any creature as I have now seen in God." You must avoid all occasions of distraction from without, and imbibe that intenseness of spirit in the work of God which locks up the eye and ear against vanity.

3. Beg of God a mortified fancy. A working fancy, (saith one,) how much soever it be extolled among men, is a great snare to the soul, except it work in fellowship with right reason and a sanctified heart. The fancy is a power of the soul, placed between the senses and the understanding; it is that which first stirs itself in the soul, and by its motions the other powers of the soul are brought into exercise; it is that in which thoughts are first formed, and as that is, so are they. If imaginations be not first cast down, it is impossible that every thought of the heart should be brought into obedience to Christ. The fancy is naturally the wildest and most untameable power of the soul. Some Christians have much to do with it; and the more spiritual the heart is, the more does a wild and vain fancy disturb and perplex it. It is a sad thing that one's imagination should call off the soul from attending on God, when it is engaged in communion with him. Pray earnestly and perseveringly that your fancy may be chastened and sanctified, and when this is accomplished your thoughts will be regular and fixed.

4. If you would keep your heart from vain excursions when engaged in duties, realize to yourself, by faith, the holy and awful presence of God. If the presence of a grave man would compose you to seriousness, how much more should the presence of a holy God? Do you think that you would dare to be gay and light if you realized the presence and inspection of the Divine Being? Remember where you are when engaged in religious duty, and act as if you believed in the omniscience of God. "All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

Realize his infinite holiness, his purity, his spirituality.

Strive to obtain such apprehensions of the greatness of God as shall suitably affect your heart; and remember his jealousy over his worship. “This is that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified.” “A man that is praying (says Bernard) should behave himself as if he were entering into the court of heaven, where he sees the Lord upon his throne, surrounded with ten thousand of his angels and saints ministering unto him.”—When you come from an exercise in which your heart has been wandering and listless, what can you say? Suppose all the vanities and impertinences which have passed through your mind during a devotional exercise were written down and interlined with your petitions, could you have the face to present them to God? Should your tongue utter all the thoughts of your heart when at tending the worship of God, would not men abhor you? Yet your thoughts are perfectly known to God. O think upon this scripture: “God is greatly to be feared in the assemblies of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are round about him.” Why did the Lord descend in thunderings and lightnings and dark clouds upon Sinai? why did the mountains smoke under him, the people quake and tremble round about him, Moses himself not excepted? but to teach the people this great truth: “Let us have grace, whereby we may serve Him acceptably, with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire.” Such apprehensions of the character and presence of God will quickly reduce a heart inclined to vanity to a more serious frame.

5. Maintain a prayerful frame of heart in the intervals of duty. What reason can be assigned why our hearts are so dull, so careless, so wandering, when we hear or pray, but that there have been long intermissions in our communion with God? If that divine unction, that spiritual fervor, and those holy impressions, which we obtain from God while engaged in the performance of one duty, were preserved to enliven and engage us in the performance of another, they would be of incalculable service to keep our hearts serious and devout. For this purpose, frequent ejaculations between stated and solemn duties are of most excellent use: they not only preserve the mind in a composed and pious frame, but they connect one stated duty, as it were, with another, and keep the attention of the soul alive to all its interests and obligations.

6. If you would have the distraction of your thoughts prevented, endeavor to raise your affections to God, and to engage them warmly in your duty. When the soul is intent upon any work, it gathers in its strength and bends all its thoughts to that work; and when it is deeply affected, it will pursue its object with intenseness, the affections will gain, an ascendancy over the thoughts and guide them. But deadness causes distraction, and distraction increases deadness. Could you but regard your duties as the medium in which you might walk in communion with God in which your soul might be filled with those ravishing and matchless delights which his presence affords, you might have no inclination to neglect them. But if you would prevent the recurrence of distracting thoughts, if you would find your happiness in the performance of duty, you must not only be careful that you engage in what is your duty, bat labor with patient and persevering exertion to interest your feelings in it. Why is your heart so inconstant, especially in secret duties; why are you ready to be gone, almost as soon as you are come into the presence of God, but because your affections are not engaged?

7. When you are disturbed by vain thoughts, humble yourself before God, and call in assistance from Heaven. When the messenger of Satan buffeted St. Paul by wicked suggestions, (as is supposed) he mourned before God on account of it. Never slight wandering thoughts in duty as small matters; follow every such thought with a deep regret. Turn to God with such words as these: 'Lord, I came hither to commune with thee, and here a busy adversary and a vain heart, conspiring together, have opposed me. O my God what a heart have I! shall I never wait upon thee without distraction? when shall I enjoy an hour of free communion with thee? Grant me thy assistance at this time; discover thy glory to me, and my heart will quickly be recovered. I came hither to enjoy thee, and shall I go away without thee? Behold my distress, and help me!' —Could you but sufficiently be wail your distractions, and repair to God for deliverance from them, you would gain relief.

8. Look upon the success and the comfort of your duties, as depending very much upon the keeping of your heart close with God in them. These two things, the success of duty and the inward comfort arising from the performance of it, are unspeakably dear to the Christian; but both of these will be lost if the heart be in a listless state. "Surely God heareth not vanity, nor doth the Almighty regard it." The promise is made to a heart engaged: "Then shall ye seek for me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your hearts." When you find your heart under the power of deadness and distraction, say to yourself, 'O what do I lose by a careless heart now! My praying seasons , are the most valuable portions of my life: could I but raise my heart to God, I might now obtain such mercies as would be matter of praise to all eternity.'

9. Regard your carefulness or carelessness in this matter as a great evidence of your sincerity, or hypocrisy. Nothing will alarm an upright heart more than this. 'What shall I give way to a customary wandering of the heart from God? Shall the spot of the hypocrite appear upon my soul? Hypocrites, indeed, can drudge on in the round of duty, never regarding the frame of their hearts; but shall I do so? Never— never let me be satisfied with empty duties. Never let me take my leave of a duty until my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.'

10. It will be of special use to keep your heart with God in duty, to consider what influence all your duties will have upon your eternity. Your religious seasons are your seed times, and in another world you must reap the fruits of what you sow in your duties here, If you sow to the flesh, you will reap corruption; if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap life everlasting. Answer seriously these questions: Are you willing to reap the fruit of vanity in the world to come? Dare you say, when your thoughts are roving to the ends of the earth in duty, when you scarce mind what you say or hear, 'Now, Lord, I am sowing to the Spirit; now I am providing and laying up for eternity; now I am seeking for glory, honor and immortality; now I am striving to enter in at the strait gate; now I am taking the kingdom of heaven by holy violence!' Such reflections are well calculated to dissipate vain thoughts.

VII. The seventh season, which requires more than common diligence to keep the heart, is when we receive injuries and abuses from men. Such is the depravity and corruption of man, that one is become as a wolf or a tiger to another. And as men are naturally cruel and oppressive one to another, so the wicked conspire to abuse and wrong the people of God, "The wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he." Now when we are thus abused and wronged, it is hard to keep the heart from revengeful motions; to make it meekly and quietly commit the cause to Him

that judgeth righteously; to prevent the exercise of any sinful affection. The spirit that is in us lusteth to revenge; but it must not be so. We have choice helps in the Gospel to keep our hearts from sinful motions against our enemies, and to sweeten our embittered spirits. Do you ask how a Christian may keep his heart from revengeful motions under the greatest injuries and abuses from men? I reply: When you find your heart begin to be inflamed by revengeful feelings, immediately reflect on the following things

1. Urge upon your heart the severe prohibitions of revenge contained in the law of God. However gratifying to your corrupt propensities revenge may be, remember that it is forbidden. Hear the word of God: “Say not, I will recompense evil.” Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me. “Recompense to no man evil for evil. Avenge not yourselves, but give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.” On the contrary. “If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink.” It was an argument urged by the Christians to prove their religion to be supernatural and pure, that it forbids revenge, which is so agreeable to nature; and it is to be wished that such an argument might not be laid aside. Awe your heart, then, with the authority of God in the Scriptures; and when carnal reason says, ‘My enemy deserves to be hated,’ let conscience reply, ‘But doth God deserve to be disobeyed?’ ‘Thus and thus hath he done, and so hath he wronged me;’ ‘But what hath God done that 1 should wrong him? If my enemy dares boldly to break the peace, shall I be so wicked as to break the precept? if he fears not to wrong me, shall not I fear to wrong God?’ Thus let the fear of God restrain and calm your feelings.

2. Set before your eyes the most eminent patterns of meekness and forgiveness, that you may feel the force of their example. This is the way to cut off the common pleas of flesh and blood for revenge: as thus, ‘No man would bear such an affront;’ yes, others have borne as bad, and worse ones. ‘But I shall be reckoned a coward, a fool, if I pass by this:’ no matter, so long as you follow the examples of the wisest and holiest of men. Never did any one suffer more or greater abuses from men than Jesus did, nor did any one ever endure insult and reproach and every kind of abuse in a more peaceful and forgiving manner; when he Was reviled he reviled not again; when he suffered. he threatened not when his murderers. crucified him he prayed Father, forgive them; and herein he hath set us an example, that we should follow his steps. Thus his apostles imitated him: “Being reviled,” say they, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat.” I have often heard it reported of the holy Mr. Dod, that when a man, enraged at his close, convincing doctrine, assaulted him, smote him on the face and dashed out two of his teeth; that meek servant of Christ spit out the teeth and blood into his hand, and said, “See here, you have knocked out two of my teeth, and that without any just provocation; but on condition that I might do your soul good, I would give you leave to knock out all the rest.” Here was exemplified the excellency of the Christian spirit. Strive then for this spirit, which constitutes the true excellence of Christians. Do what others cannot do, keep this spirit in exercise, and you will preserve peace in your own soul and gain the victory over your enemies.

2. Consider the character of the person who has wronged you. He is either a good or a wicked man. If he is a good man, there is light and tenderness in his conscience, which sooner or later will bring him to a sense of the evil of what he has done. If he is a good man, Christ has forgiven him greater injuries than he has done to you; and why should not you forgive him? Will Christ not upbraid him for any of his wrongs, but frankly forgive them all; and will you take him by the throat

for some petty abuse which he has offered you?

3. But if a wicked man has injured or insulted you, truly you have more reason to exercise pity than revenge toward him. He is in a deluded and miserable state; a slave to sin and an enemy to righteousness. If he should ever repent, he will be ready to make you reparation; if he continues impenitent, there is a day coming when .he will be punished to the extent of his deserts. You need not study revenge, God will execute vengeance upon him.

4. Remember that by revenge you can only gratify a sinful passion, which by forgiveness you might conquer. Suppose that by revenge you might destroy one enemy; yet, by exercising the Christian's temper you might conquer three—your own lust, Satan's temptation, and your enemy's heart. If by revenge you should overcome your enemy, the victory would be unhappy and inglorious, for in gaining it you would be overcome by your own corruption; but by exercising a meek and forgiving temper, you will always come off with honor and success. It must be a very disingenuous nature indeed upon which meekness and forgiveness will not operate; that must be a flinty heart which this fire will not melt. Thus David gained such a victory over Saul his persecutor, that "Saul lifted up his voice and wept, and he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I."

5. Seriously propose this question to your own heart: 'Have I got any good by means of the wrongs and injuries which I have received?' If they have done you no good, turn your revenge upon yourself. You have reason to be filled with shame and sorrow that you should have a heart which can deduce no good from such troubles; that your temper should be so unlike that of Christ. The patience and meekness of other Christians have turned all the injuries offered to them to a good account; their souls have been animated to praise God when they have been loaded with reproaches from the world. "I thank my God," said Jerome, "that I am worthy to be hated of the world." But if you have derived any benefit from the reproaches and wrongs which you have received, if they have put you upon examining your own heart, if they have made you more careful how you conduct, if they have convinced you of the value of a sanctified temper; will you not forgive them? will you not forgive one who has been instrumental of so much good to you? What though he meant it for evil? if through the Divine blessing your happiness has been promoted by what he has done, why should you even have a hard thought of him?

6. Consider by whom all your troubles are ordered. This will be of great use to keep your heart from revenge; this will quickly calm and sweeten your temper. When Shimei railed at David and cursed him, the spirit of that good man was not at all poisoned by revenge; for when Abishai offered him. if he pleased, the head of Shimei, the king said, "Let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David: who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?" It may be that God uses him as his rod to chastise me, because by my sin I gave the enemies of God occasion to blaspheme; and shall I be angry with the instrument? how irrational were that! Thus Job was quieted; he did not rail and meditate revenge upon the Chaldeans and Sabeans, but regarded God as the orderer of his troubles, and said, "The Lord hath taken away, blessed be his name."

7. Consider how you are daily and hourly wronging God, and you will not be so easily inflawed with revenge against those who have wronged you. You are constantly affronting God, yet he does not take vengeance on you, but bears with you and forgives; and will you rise up and avenge yourself

upon others? Reflect on this cutting rebuke: “O thou wicked and slothful servant! I forgave thee all that debt because thou desiredst me; shouldst thou not also have compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?” None should be so filled with forbearance and mercy to such as wrong them, as those who have experienced the riches of mercy themselves. The mercy of God to us should melt our hearts into mercy toward others. It is impossible that we should be cruel to others, except we forget how kind and compassionate God hath been to us. And if kindness cannot prevail in us, methinks fear should:—“If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

8. Let the consideration that the day of the Lord draweth nigh, restrain you from anticipating it by acts of revenge. Why are you so hasty? is not the Lord at hand to avenge all his abused servants? “Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth, &c. Be ye also patient, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned. Behold, the Judge standeth at the door. Vengeance belongeth unto God, and will you wrong yourself so much as to assume his work?

VIII. The next season in which special exertion is necessary to keep the heart, is when we meet with great trials. . . .

VIII. The next season in which special exertion is necessary to keep the heart, is when we meet with great trials. In such cases the heart is apt to be suddenly transported with pride, impatience, or other sinful passions. Many good people are guilty of hasty and very sinful conduct in such instances; and all have need to use diligently the following means to keep their hearts submissive and patient under great trials:

1. Get humble and abasing thoughts of yourself. The humble is ever the patient man. Pride is the source of irregular and sinful passions. A lofty, will be an unyielding and peevish spirit. When we over-rate ourselves, we think that we are treated unworthily, that our trials are too severe: thus we cavil and repine. Christian, you should have such thoughts of yourself as would put a stop to these murmurings. You should have lower and more humiliating views of yourself than any other one can have of you. Get humility, and you will have peace whatever be your trial.

2. Cultivate a habit of communion with God. This will prepare you for whatever may take place. This will so sweeten your temper and calm your mind as to secure you against surprisals. This will produce that inward peace which will make you superior to your trials. Habitual communion with God will afford you enjoyment, which you can never be willing to interrupt by sinful feeling. When a Christian is calm and submissive under his afflictions, probably he derives support and comfort in this way; but he who is discomposed, impatient, or fretful, shows that `all is not right within—he cannot be supposed to practise communion with God.

3. Let your mind be deeply impressed with an apprehension of the evil nature and effects of an unsubmissive and restless temper. It grieves the Spirit of God, and induces his departure. His gracious presence and influence are enjoyed only where peace and quiet submission prevail. The indulgence of such a temper gives the adversary an advantage. Satan is an angry and discontented spirit. He finds no rest but in restless hearts. He bestirs himself when the spirits are in commotion; sometimes he fills the heart with ungrateful and rebellious thoughts; sometimes he inflames the tongue with indecent language. Again, such a temper brings great guilt upon the

conscience, unfits the soul for any duty, and dishonors the Christian name. O keep your heart, and let the power and excellence of your religion be chiefly manifested when you are brought into the greatest straits.

4. Consider how desirable it is for a Christian to overcome his evil propensities. How much more present happiness it affords; how much better it is in every respect to mortify and subdue unholy feelings, than to give way to them. When upon your death-bed you come calmly to review your life, how comfortable will it be to reflect on the conquest which you have made over the depraved feelings of your heart. It was a memorable saying of Valentinian the emperor, when he was about to die: “Amongst all my conquests, there is but one that now comforts me” Being asked what that was, he answered, “I have overcome my worst enemy, my own sinful heart!”

5. Shame yourself, by contemplating the character of those who have been most eminent for meekness and submission. Above all, compare your temper with the Spirit of Christ. “Learn of me,” saith he, “for I am meek and lowly.” It is said of Calvin and Ursin, though both of choleric natures, that they had so imbibed and cultivated the meekness of Christ as not to utter an unbecoming word under the greatest provocations. And even many of the heathens have manifested great moderation and forbearance under their severest afflictions. Is it not a shame and a reproach that you should be outdone by them?

6. Avoid every thing which is calculated to irritate your feelings. It is true spiritual valor to keep as far as we can out of sins way. If you can but avoid the excitements to impetuous and rebellious feelings, or check them in their first beginnings, you will have but little to fear. The first workings of common sins are comparatively weak, they gain their strength by degrees; but in times of trial the motions of sin are strongest at first, the unsubdued temper breaks out suddenly and violently. But if you resolutely with. stand it at first, it will yield and give you the victory.

IX. The ninth season wherein the greatest diligence and skill are necessary to keep the heart, is the hour of temptation, when Satan besets the Christians heart, and takes the unwary by surprise. . . .

IX. The ninth season wherein the greatest diligence arid skill are necessary to keep the heart, is the hour of temptation, when Satan besets the Christians heart, and takes the unwary by surprise. To keep the heart at such times, is not less a mercy than a duty. Few Christians are so skillful in detecting the fallacies, and repelling the arguments by which the adversary incites them to sin, as to come off safe and whole in these encounters. Many eminent saints have smarted severely for their want of watchfulness and diligence at such times. How then may a Christian keep his heart from yielding to temptation? There are several principal ways in which the adversary insinuates temptation, and urges compliance:

1. Satan suggests that here is pleasure to be enjoyed; the temptation is presented with a smiling aspect and an enticing voice: `What, are you so dull and phlegmatic as not to feel the powerful charms of pleasure? Who can withhold himself from such delights? Reader, you may be rescued from the danger of such temptations by repelling the proposal of pleasure. It is urged that the commission of sin will afford you pleasure. Suppose this were true, will the accusing and condemning rebukes of conscience and the flames of hell be pleasant too? Is there pleasure in the scourges of conscience? If so why did Peter weep so bitterly? why did David cry out of broken

bones? You hear what is said of the pleasure of sin, and have you not read what David said of the effects of it? “Thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore; there is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger, neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin,” &c. If you yield to temptation, you must feel such inward distress on account of it, or the miseries of hell. But why should the pretended pleasure of sin allure you, when you know that unspeakably more real pleasure will arise from the mortification than can arise from the commission of sin. Will you prefer the gratification of some unhallowed passion, with the deadly poison which it will leave behind, to that sacred pleasure which arises from fearing and obeying God, complying with the dictates of conscience, and maintaining inward peace? Can sin afford any such delight as he feels who, by resisting temptation, has manifested the sincerity of his heart, and obtained evidence that he fears God, loves holiness, and hates sin?

2. The secrecy with which you may commit sin is made use of to induce compliance with temptation. The tempter insinuates that this indulgence will never disgrace you among men, for no one will know it. But recollect yourself. Does not God behold you? Is not the divine presence every where? What if you might hide your sin from the eyes of the world, you cannot hide it from God. No darkness nor shadow of death can screen you from his inspection. Besides have you no reverence for yourself? Can you do that by yourself which you dare not have others observe? Is not your conscience as a thousand witnesses? Even a heathen could say, “When thou art tempted to commit sin, fear thyself without any other witness.”

3. The prospect of worldly advantage often enforces temptation. It is suggested, `Why should you be so nice and scrupulous? Give yourself a little liberty, and you may better your condition: now is your time. This is a dangerous temptation, and must be promptly resisted. Yielding to such a temptation will do your soul more injury than any temporal acquisition can possibly do you good. And what would it profit you, if you should gain the whole world and lose your own soul? What can be compared with the value of your spiritual interests? or what can at all compensate for the smallest injury of them?

4. Perhaps the smallness of the sin is urged as a reason why you may commit it; thus: `It is but a little one, a small matter, a trifle; who Would stand upon such niceties? But is the Majesty of heaven little too? If you commit this sin you will offend a great God. Is there any little hell to torment little sinners in? No; the least sinners in hell are full of misery. There is great wrath treasured up for those whom the world regard as little sinners. But the less the sin, the less the inducement to commit it. Will you provoke God for a trifle? will you destroy your peace, wound your conscience, and grieve the Spirit, all for nothing? What madness is this!

5. An argument to enforce temptation is sometimes drawn from the mercy of God and the hope of pardon —God is merciful, he will pass by this as an infirmity, he will not be severe to mark it. But stay: where do you find a promise of mercy to presumptuous sinners? Involuntary reprisals and lamented infirmities may be pardoned, “but the soul that doth aught presumptuously, the same reproacheth the Lord, and that soul shall be cut off from among his people.” If God is a being of so much mercy, how can you affront him? How can you make so glorious an attribute as the divine mercy an occasion of sin? Will you wrong him because he is good? Rather let his goodness lead you to repentance, and keep you from transgression.

6. Sometimes Satan encourages to the commission of sin, from the examples of holy men. Thus and thus they sinned, and were restored; therefore you may commit this sin, and yet. be a saint and be saved. Such suggestions must be instantly repelled. If good men have committed sins similar to that with which you are beset, did any good man ever sin upon such ground and from such encouragement as is here presented? Did God cause their examples to be recorded for your imitation, or for your warning? Are they not set up as beacons that you may avoid the rocks upon which they split? Are you willing to feel what they felt for sin? Dare you follow them in sin, and plunge yourself into such distress and danger as they incurred?—Reader, in these ways learn to keep your heart in the hour of temptation.

X. The time of doubting and of spiritual darkness constitutes another season when it is very difficult to keep the heart. . . .

X. The time of doubting and of spiritual darkness constitutes another season when it is very difficult to keep the heart. When the light and comfort of the divine presence is withdrawn; when the believer, from the prevalence of indwelling sin in one form or other, is ready to renounce his hopes, to infer desperate conclusions with respect to himself, to regard his former comforts as vain delusions, and his professions as hypocrisy; at such a time much diligence is necessary to keep the heart from despondency. The Christian's distress arises from his apprehension of his spiritual state, and in general he argues against his possessing true religion, either from his having relapsed into the same sins from which he had formerly been recovered with shame and sorrow; or from the sensible declining of his affections from God; or from the strength of his affections toward creature enjoyments; or from his enlargement in public, while he is often confined and barren in private duties; or from some horrible suggestions of Satan, with which his soul is greatly perplexed; or, lastly, from God's silence and seeming denial of his long depending prayers. Now in order to the establishment and support of the heart under these circumstances, it is necessary that you be acquainted with some general truths which have a tendency to calm the trembling and doubting soul; and that you be rightly instructed with regard to the above-mentioned causes of disquiet. Let me direct your attention to the following general truths:

1. Every appearance of hypocrisy does not prove the person who manifests it to be a hypocrite. You should carefully distinguish between the appearance and the predominance of hypocrisy. There are remains of deceitfulness in the best hearts; this was exemplified in David and Peter; but the prevailing frame of their hearts being upright, they were not denominated hypocrites for their conduct.

2. We ought to regard what can be said in our favor, as well as what may be said against us. It is the sin of upright persons sometimes, to exercise an unreasonable severity against themselves. They do not impartially consider the state of their souls. To make their state appear butter than it really is, indeed is the damning sin of self-flattering hypocrites; and to make their state appear worse than it really is, is the sin and folly of some good persons. But why should you be such an enemy to your own peace? Why read over the evidences of God's love to your soul, as a man does a book which he intends to confute? Why do you study evasions, and turn off those comforts which are due to you?

3. Every thing which may be an occasion of grief to the people of God, is not a sufficient ground for their questioning the reality of their religion. Many things may trouble, which ought not to stumble

you. If upon every occasion you should call in question all that had ever been wrought upon you, your life would be made up of doubtings and fears, and you could never attain that settled inward peace, and live that life of praise and thankfulness which the Gospel requires.

4. The soul is not at all times in a suitable state to pass a right judgment upon itself. It is peculiarly unqualified for this in the hour of desertion or temptation. Such seasons must be improved rather for watching and resisting, than for judging and determining.

5. Whatever be the ground of one's distress, it should drive him to, not from God. Suppose you have sinned thus and so, or that you have been thus long and sadly deserted, yet you have no right to infer that you ought to be discouraged, as if there was no help for you in God. When you have well digested these truths, if your doubts and distress remain, consider what is now to be offered:

1. Are you ready to conclude that you have no part in the favor of God, because you are visited with some extraordinary affliction? If so, do you then rightly conclude that great trials are tokens of God's hatred? Does the Scripture teach this? And dare you infer the same with respect to all who have been as much or more afflicted than yourself? If the argument is good in your case, it is good in application to theirs, and more conclusive with respect to them, in proportion as their trials were greater than yours. Wo then to David, Job, Paul, and all who have been afflicted as they were! But had you passed along in quietness and prosperity; had God withheld those chastisements with which he ordinarily visits his people, would you not have had far more reason for doubts and distress than you now have?

2. Do you rashly infer that the Lord has no love to you, because he has withdrawn the light of his countenance? Do you imagine your state to be hopeless, because it is dark and uncomfortable? Be not hasty in forming this conclusion. If any of the dispensations of God to his people will bear a favorable as well as a harsh construction, why should they not be construed in the best sense? And may not God have a design of love rather than of hatred in the dispensation under which you mourn? May he not depart for a season, without departing for ever? You are not the first that have mistaken the design of God in withdrawing himself. "Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, my Lord hath forgotten me." But was it so? What saith the answer of God? "Can a woman forget her sucking child?" &c. But do you sink down under the apprehension that the evidences of a total and final desertion are discoverable in your experience? Have you then lost your conscientious tenderness with regard to sin? and are you inclined to forsake God? If so, you have reason indeed to be alarmed. But if your conscience is tenderly alive; if you are resolved to cleave to the Lord; if the language of your heart is, I cannot forsake God, I cannot live without his presence; though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: then you have reason to hope that he will visit you again. It is by these exercises that he still maintains his interest in you.

Once more. Are sense and feelings suitable to judge of the dispensations of God by? Can their testimony be safely relied on? Is it safe to argue thus: 'If God bad any love for my soul, I should feel it now as well as in former times; but I cannot feel it, therefore it is gone?' May you not as well conclude, when the sun is invisible to you, that he has ceased to exist? Read Isaiah 1:10.

Now if there is nothing in the divine dealings with you which is a reasonable ground of your despondency and distress, let us inquire what there is in your own conduct for which you should

be so cast down:

1. Have you committed sins from which you were formerly recovered with shame and sorrow? And do you thence conclude that you sin allowedly and habitually, and that your oppositions to sin were hypocritical? But do not too hastily give up all for lost. Is not your repentance and care renewed as often as you commit sin? Is it not the sin itself which troubles you, and is it not true, that the oftener you sin the more you are distressed? It is not so in customary sinning; of which Bernard excellently discourses thus: “When a man accustomed to restrain, sins grievously, it seems insupportable to him, yea he seems to descend alive into hell. In process of time it seems not insupportable, but heavy, and between insupportable and heavy there is no small descent. Next, such sinning becomes light, his conscience smites but faintly, and he regards not her rebukes. Then he is not only insensible to his guilt, but that which was bitter and displeasing has become in some degree sweet and pleasant. Now it is made a custom, and not only pleases, but pleases habitually. At length custom becomes nature; he cannot be dissuaded from it, but defends and pleads for it.” This is allowed and customary sinning, this is the way of the wicked. But is not your way the contrary of this?

2. Do you apprehend a decline of your affections from God and from spiritual subjects? This may be your case, and yet there may be hope. But possibly you are mistaken with regard to this. There are many things to be learnt in Christian experience; it has relation to a great variety of subjects. You may now be learning what it is very necessary for you to know as a Christian. Now, what if you are not sensible of so lively affections, of such ravishing views as you had at first; may not your piety be growing more solid and consistent, and better adapted to practical purposes? Does it follow from your not always being in the same frame of mind, or from the fact that the same objects do not at all times excite the same feelings, that you have no true religion? Perhaps you deceive yourself by looking forward to what you would be, rather than contemplating what you are, compared with what you once were.

3. If the strength of your love to creature-enjoyments is the ground of desperate conclusions respecting yourself, perhaps you argue thus: “I fear that I love the creature more than God, if so, I have not true love to God. I sometimes feel stronger affections toward earthly comforts than I do toward heavenly objects, therefore my soul is not upright within me.” If, indeed, you love the creature for itself, if you make it your end, and religion but a means, then you conclude rightly; for this is incompatible with supreme love to God. But may not a man love God more ardently and unchangeably than he does any thing, or all things else, and yet, when God is not the direct object of his thoughts, may he not be sensible of more violent affection for the creature than he has at that time for God? As rooted malice indicates a stronger hatred than sudden though inure violent passion; so we must judge of our love, not by a violent motion of it now and then, but by the depth of its root and the constancy of its exercise. Perhaps your difficulty results from bringing your love to some foreign and improper test. Many persons have feared that when brought to some eminent trial they should renounce Christ and cleave to the creature; but when the trial came, Christ was every thing, and the world as nothing in their esteem. Such were the fears of some martyrs whose victory was complete. But you may expect divine assistance only at the time of, and in proportion to your necessity. If you would try your love, see whether you are willing to forsake Christ now.

4. Is the want of that enlargement in private which you find in public exercises an occasion of doubts and fears? Consider then whether there are not some circumstances attending public duties which are peculiarly calculated to excite your feelings and elevate your mind, and which cannot affect you in private. If so, your exercises in secret, if performed faithfully and in a suitable manner, may he profitable, though they have not all the characteristics of those in public. If you imagine that you have spiritual enlargement and enjoyment in public exercises while you neglect private duties, doubtless you deceive yourself. Indeed if you live in the neglect of secret duties, or are careless about them, you have great reason to fear. But if you regularly and faithfully perform them, it does not follow that they are vain and worthless, or that they are not of great value, because they are not attended with so much enlargement as you sometimes find in public. And what if the Spirit is pleased more highly to favor you with his gracious influence in one place and at one time than another, should this be a reason for murmuring and unbelief, or for thankfulness?

5. The vile or blasphemous suggestions of Satan sometimes occasion great perplexity and distress.— They seem to lay open an abyss of corruption in the heart, and to say there can be no grace here. But there may be grace in the heart where such thoughts are injected, though not, in the heart which consents to and cherishes them. Do you then abhor and oppose them? do you utterly refuse to give up yourself to their influence, and strive to keep holy and reverend thoughts of God, and of all religious objects? If so, such suggestions are involuntary, and no evidence against your piety.

6. Is the seeming denial of your prayers an occasion of despondency? Are you disposed to say, “If God had any regard for my soul he would have heard my petitions before now; but I have no answer from him, and therefore no interest in him?” But stay: though God’s abhorring and finally rejecting prayer is an evidence that he rejects the person who prays, yet, dare you conclude that he has rejected you, because an answer to your prayers is delayed, or because you do not discover it if granted? “May not God bear long with his own elect, that cry unto him day and night?”

Others have stumbled upon the same ground with you: “I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardst the voice of my supplication.” Now are there not some things in your experience which indicate that your prayers are not rejected, though answer to them is deferred? Are you not disposed to continue praying though you do not discover an answer? Are you not disposed still to ascribe righteousness to God, while you consider the cause of his silence as being in yourself? Thus did David: “O my God, I cry in the day time, and thou hearest not; and in the night, and am not silent: but thou art holy,” &c. Does not the delay of an answer to your prayers excite you to examine your own heart and try your ways, that you may find and remove the difficulty? If so, you may have reason for humiliation, but not for despair.

Thus I have shown you how to keep your heart in dark and doubting seasons. God forbid that any false heart should encourage itself from these things. It is lamentable, that when we give saints and sinners their proper portions, each is so prone to take up the other’s part.

XI. Another season, wherein the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when sufferings for religion are laid upon us. . . .

XI. Another season, wherein the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when sufferings for religion are laid upon us. Blessed is the man who in such a season is not offended in Christ. Now,

whatever may be the kind or degree of your sufferings, if they are sufferings for Christ's sake and the Gospel's, spare no diligence to keep your heart. If you are tempted to shrink or waver under them, let what follows help you to repel and to surmount the instigation:

Chapter 45

04.06c. Keeping the Heart in Time of Zion's Troubles

1. What reproach would you cast upon the Redeemer and his religion by deserting him at such a time as this! You would proclaim to the world, that how much soever you have boasted of the promises when you are put to the proof you dare hazard no thing upon your faith in them; and this will give the enemies of Christ an occasion to blaspheme. And will you thus furnish the triumphs of the uncircumcised? Ah, if you did but value the name of Christ as much as many wicked men value their names, you could never endure that his should be exposed to contempt. Will proud dust and ashes hazard death or hell rather than have their names disgraced, and will you endure nothing to maintain the honor of Christ?

2. Dare you violate your conscience out of complaisance to flesh and blood? Who will comfort you when your conscience accuses and condemns you? What happiness can there be in life, liberty or friends, when inward peace is taken away? Consider well what you do.

3. Is not the public interest of Christ and his cause infinitely more important than any interest of your own, and should you not prefer his glory and the welfare of his kingdom before every thing else? Should any temporary suffering, or any sacrifice which you can be called to make, be suffered to come into competition with the honor of his name?

4. Did the Redeemer neglect your interest and think lightly of you, when for your sake he endured sufferings between which and yours there can be no comparison? Did he hesitate and shrink back? No: “He endured the cross, despising the shame.” And did he with unbroken patience and constancy endure so much for you; and will you flinch from momentary suffering in his cause?

5. Can you so easily cast off the society and the privileges of the saints and go over to the enemy’s side? Are you willing to withhold your support from those who are determined to persevere, and throw your influence in the scale against them? Rather let your body and soul be rent asunder. “If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”

6. How can you stand before Christ in the day of judgment, if you desert him now? “He that is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” Yet a little while, and the Son of man will come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, to judge the world. He will sit upon the throne of judgment, while all the nations are brought before him. Imagine yourself now to be witnessing the transactions of that day. Behold the wicked; behold the apostates; and hear the consuming sentence which is pronounced upon them, and see them sinking in the gulf of infinite and everlasting wo! And will you desert Christ now, will you forsake his cause to save a little suffering, or to protract an unprofitable life on earth, and thus expose yourself to the doom of the apostate? Remember, that if you can silence the remonstrances of conscience now, you cannot hinder the sentence of the Judge then. By these means keep your heart, that it depart not from the living God.

XII. The last season which I shall mention, in which the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when we are warned by sickness that our dissolution is at hand. . . .

XII. The last season which I shall mention, in which the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when we are warned by sickness that our dissolution is at hand. When the child of God draws nigh to eternity, the adversary makes his last effort; and as he cannot win the soul from God, as he cannot dissolve the bond which unites the soul to Christ, his great design is to awaken fears of death, to fill the mind with aversion and horror at the thoughts of dissolution from the body. Hence, what shrinking from a separation, what fear to grasp death's cold hand, and unwillingness to depart, may sometimes be observed in the people of God. But we ought to die, as well as live, like saints.

I shall offer several considerations calculated to help the people of God in time of sickness, to keep their hearts loose from all earthly objects, and cheerfully willing to die:

1. Death is harmless to the people of God; its shafts leave no sting in them. Why then are you afraid that your sickness may be unto death? If you were to die in your sins; if death were to reign over you as a tyrant, to feed upon you as a lion doth upon his prey; if death to you were to be the precursor of hell, then you might reasonably startle and shrink back from it with horror and dismay. But if your sins are blotted out; if Christ has vanquished death in your behalf, so that you have nothing to encounter but bodily pain, and possibly not even that; if death will be to you the harbinger of heaven, why should you be afraid? why not bid it welcome? It cannot hurt you; it is easy and harmless; it is like putting off your clothes, on taking rest.

2. It may keep your heart from shrinking back, to consider that death is necessary to fit you for the full enjoyment of God. Whether you are willing to die or not, there certainly is no other way to complete the happiness of your soul. Death must do you the kind office to remove this veil of flesh, this animal life which separates you from God, before you can see and enjoy him fully. "Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord." And who would not be willing to die for the perfect enjoyment of God? Methinks one should look and sigh, like a prisoner, through the grates of this mortality: "O that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest." Indeed most men need patience to die; but a saint, who understands what death will introduce him to, rather needs patience to live. On his death-bed he should often look out and listen to his Lord's coming; and when he perceives his dissolution to be near, he should say, "The voice of my beloved; behold he cometh, leaping over the mountains, skipping over the hills."

3. Consider that the happiness of heaven commences immediately after death. That happiness will not be deferred till the resurrection; but as soon as death has passed upon you, your soul will be swallowed up in life. When you have once loosed from this shore, you shall be quickly wafted to the shore of a glorious eternity. And can you not say, I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ? Did the soul and body die together, or did they sleep till the resurrection, as some have fancied, it would have been folly for Paul to desire a dissolution for the enjoyment of Christ; because he would have enjoyed more in the body than he could have enjoyed out of it. The Scripture speaks of but two ways in which the soul can properly live: viz, by faith and vision. These two comprehend its present and future existence.

Now, if when faith fails, sight should not immediately succeed, what would become of the soul? But the truth on this subject is clearly revealed in Scripture. See Luke 23:3; John 14:3, &c. What a blessed change then will death make in your condition! Rouse up, dying saint, and rejoice; let death do his work, that the angels may conduct your soul to the world of light.

4. It may increase your willingness to die, to reflect that by death God often removes his people out of the way of great troubles and temptations. When some extraordinary calamity is coming upon the world, God sometimes removes his saints out of the way of the evil. Thus Methuselah died the year before the flood; Augustine a little before the sacking of Hippo; Pareus just before the taking of Heidelburg. Luther observes that all the apostles died before the destruction of Jerusalem; and Luther himself died before the wars broke out in Germany. Now it may be that by death you will escape some grievous trial, which you could not and need not endure. But if no extraordinary trouble would come upon you in case your life were prolonged, yet God designs by death to relieve you from innumerable evils and burdens which are inseparable from the present state. Thus you will be delivered from indwelling sin, which is the greatest trouble; from all temptations from whatever source; from bodily tempers and embarrassments; and from all the afflictions and sorrows of this life. The days of your mourning will be ended, and God will wipe away all tears from your eyes. Why then should you not hasten to depart?

5. If you still linger, like Lot in Sodom, what are your pleas and pretences for a longer life? Why are you unwilling to die? Are you concerned for the welfare of your relations? If so, are you anxious for their temporal support? Then let the word of God satisfy you: “Leave thy fatherless children to me, I will keep them alive, and let thy widows trust in me.” Luther says, in his last will, “Lord, thou hast given inc a wife and children, I have nothing to leave them, but I commit them unto thee. O Father of the fatherless and Judge of widows, nourish, keep and teach them.” But are you concerned for the spiritual welfare of your relations? Remember that you cannot convert them, if you should live; and God can make your prayers and counsels effectual when you are dead.

Perhaps you desire to serve God longer in this world. But if he has nothing further for you to do here, why not say with David, “Here am I, let him do what seemeth him good.” He is calling you to higher service in heaven, and can accomplish by other hands what you desire to do further here.—Do you feel too imperfect to go to heaven? Consider that you must be imperfect until you die; your sanctification cannot be complete until you get to heaven.

‘But,’ you say, ‘I want assurance; if I had that I could die easily.’ Consider, then, that a hearty willingness to leave all the world to be freed from sin, and to be with God, is the direct way to that desired assurance; no carnal person was ever willing to die upon this ground.

Thus I have shown how the people of God, in the most difficult seasons, may keep their hearts with alt diligence.

I now proceed to improve and apply the subject: . . .

You have seen that the keeping of the heart is the great work of a Christian, in which the very soul and life of religion consists, and without which all other duties are of no value in the sight of God. Hence, to the consternation of hypocrites and formal professors, I infer:

1. That the pains and labors which many persons have undergone in religion are of no value, and will turn to no good account. Many splendid services have been performed by men, which God will utterly reject: they will not stand on record in order to an eternal acceptance, because the performers took no heed to keep their hearts with God. This is that fatal rock on which thousands of vain professors dash and ruin themselves eternally; they are exact about the externals of religion, but regardless of their hearts. O how many hours have some professors spent in hearing, praying, reading and conferring! and yet, as to the main end of religion, they might as well have sat still and done nothing, the great work, I mean heart-work, being all the while neglected. Tell me, vain professor, when did you shed a tear for the deadness, hardness, unbelief or earthliness of your heart? And do you think your easy religion can save you? If so, you must invert Christ's words, and say, Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to life, and many there be that go in thereat! Hear me, ye self-deluding hypocrite; you who have put off God with heartless duties; you who have acted in religion as if you had been blessing an idol; you who could not search your heart, and regulate it, and exercise it in your performances; how will you abide the coming of the Lord? how will you hold up your head before him, when he shall say. 'O you dissembling, false-hearted man! how could you profess religion? with what face could you so often tell me that you loved me, when you knew in your conscience that your heart was not with me?' O tremble to think what a fearful judgment it is to be given over to a heedless and careless heart, and then to have religious duties instead of a rattle to quiet and still the conscience!

2. I infer for their humiliation, that unless the people of God spend more time and pains about their hearts than they ordinarily do, they are never like to do God much service, or to possess much comfort in this world. I may say of that Christian who is remiss and careless in keeping his heart, as Jacob said of Reuben, Thou shalt not excel. It grieves me to see how many Christians there are who live at a poor, low rate, both of service and comfort, and who go up and down dejected and complaining. But how can they expect it should be otherwise, while they live so carelessly?

O how little of their time is spent in the closet, in searching, humbling, and quickening their hearts!

Christian, you say your heart is dead, and do you wonder that it is, so long as you keep it not with the fountain of life? If your body had been dieted as your soul has, that would have been dead too. And you may never expect that your heart will be in a better state until you take more pains with it.

O Christians! I fear your zeal and strength have run in the wrong channel; I fear that most of us may take up the Church's complaint: "They have made me the keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vine-yard have I not kept." Two things have eaten up the time and strength of the professors of this generation, and sadly diverted them from heart-work.

First:—Fruitless controversies, started by Satan, I doubt not for the very purpose of taking us off from practical godliness, to make us puzzle our heads when we should be inspecting our hearts. How little have we regarded the observation: "It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, and not with meats," (that is, with disputes and controversies about meats,) "which have not profited them that have been occupied therein." How much better it is to see men live exactly, than to hear them dispute with subtlety! These unfruitful questions, how have they rent the churches, wasted time and spirits, and taken Christians off from their main business! 'What think you, would it not have been better if the questions agitated among the people of God of late had been such as these:—"How shall a man distinguish the special from the common operations of the Spirit? How

may a soul discern its first backslidings from God? How may a backsliding Christian recover his first love? How may the heart be preserved from unseasonable thoughts in duty? How may a bosom-sin be discovered and mortified?“ &c. Would not this course have tended more to the honor of religion and the comfort of souls? I am ashamed that the professors of this generation are yet insensible of their folly. O that God would turn their disputes and contentions into practical godliness!

Second:—Worldly cares and incumbrances have greatly increased the neglect of our hearts. The heads and hearts of multitudes have been filled with such a crowd and noise of worldly business that they have lamentably declined in their zeal, their love, their delight in God, and their heavenly, serious, and profitable way of conversing with men. How miserably have we entangled ourselves in this wilderness of trifles! Our discourses, our conferences, nay, our very prayers are tinged with it. We have had so much to do without, that we have been able to do but little within. And how many precious opportunities have we thus lost? How many admonitions of the Spirit have passed over unfruitfully? How often has the Lord called to us, when our worldly thoughts have prevented us from hearing? But there certainly is a way to enjoy God even in our worldly employments. If we lose our views of him when engaged in our temporal affairs, the fault is our own. Alas! that Christians should stand at the door of eternity, having more work upon their hands than their time is sufficient for, and yet be filling their heads and hearts with trifles!

3. I infer, lastly, for the awakening of all, that if the keeping of the heart be the great work of a Christian, then there are but few real Christians in the world. If every one who has learned the dialect of Christianity, and who can talk like a saint; if every one who has gifts and parts, and who can make shift to preach, pray, or discourse like a Christian: in a word, if all such as associate with the people of God and partake of ordinances may pass for Christians, then indeed the number is great. But alas! how few can he found, if you judge them by this rule,—how few are there who conscientiously keep their hearts, watch their thoughts and look scrupulously to their motives! Indeed there are few closet-men among professors. It is easier for men to be reconciled to any other duties in religion than to these. The profane part of the world will not so much as meddle with the outside of any religious duties, and least of all with these; and as to the hypocrite, though he may be very particular in externals, you can never persuade him to undertake this inward, this difficult work; this work, to which there is no inducement from human applause; this work, which would quickly discover what the hypocrite cares not to know: so that by general consent this heart-work is left to the hands of a few retired ones, and I tremble to think in how few hands it is.

II. If the keeping of the heart be so important a business; if such great advantages result from it; if so many valuable interests be wrapt up in it, then let me call upon the people of God every where to engage heartily in this work. O study your hearts, watch your hearts, keep your hearts! Away with fruitless controversies and all idle questions; away with empty names and vain shows; away with unprofitable discourse and bold censures of others, and turn in upon yourselves. O that this day, this hour, you would resolve upon doing so!

Reader, methinks I shall prevail with you. All that I beg for is this, that you would step aside oftener to talk with God and your own heart; that you would not suffer every trifle to divert you; that you would keep a more true and faithful account of your thoughts and affections; that you would seriously demand of your own heart at least every evening, ‘O my heart, where hast thou been

today, and what has engaged thy thoughts?'

If all that has been said by way of inducement be not enough, I have yet some motives to offer you:

If all that has been said by way of inducement be not enough, I have yet some motives to offer you:

1. The studying, observing, and diligently keeping your own heart, will surprisingly help you to understand the deep mysteries of religion. An honest, well-experienced heart is an excellent help to the head. Such a heart will serve for a commentary on a great part of the Scriptures. By means of such a heart you will have a better understanding of divine things than the most learned (graceless) man ever had, or call have; you will not only have a clearer, but a more interesting and profitable apprehension of them. A man may discourse orthodoxy and profoundly of the nature and effects of faith, the troubles and comforts of conscience, and the sweetness of communion with God, who never felt the efficacy and sweet impression of these things upon his own soul. But how dark and dry are his notions compared with those of an experienced Christian!

2. The study and observation of your own heart will powerfully secure you against the dangerous and infecting errors of the times in which you live. For what think you is the reason why so many professors have departed from the faith, giving heed to fables? why have so many been led away by the error of the wicked? why have those who have sown corrupt doctrines had such plentiful harvests among us, but because they have met with a race of professors who never knew what belongs to practical godliness and the study and keeping of their hearts?

3. Your care and diligence in keeping your heart will prove one of the best evidences of your sincerity. I know no external act of religion which truly distinguishes the sound from the unsound professor. It is marvellous how far hypocrites go in all external duties; how plausibly they can order the outward man, hiding all their indecencies from the observation of the world. But they take no heed to their hearts; they are not in secret what they appear to be in public; and before this test no hypocrite can stand. They may, indeed, in a fit of terror, or on a death-bed, cry out of the wickedness of their hearts; but such extort ed complaints are worthy of no regard. No credit, in law, is to be given to the testimony of one upon the rack, because it may be supposed that the extremity of his torture will make him say any thing to get relief. But if self-jealousy, care and watchfulness be the daily workings and frames of your heart, you have some evidence of your sincerity.

4. How comfortable and how profitable would all ordinances and duties be to you, if your heart was faithfully kept. What lively communion might you have with God every time you approach him, if your heart was in a right frame! You might then say with David, “My meditation of Him shall be sweet.” It is the indisposition of the heart which renders ordinances, and secret duties so comfortless to some. They strive to raise their hearts to God, now pressing this argument upon them, then that, to quicken and affect them; yet they often get nearly through the exercise before their hearts begin to be interested in it; and some times they go away no better than they came. But the Christian whose heart is prepared by being constantly kept, enters immediately and heartily into his duties; he outstrips his sluggish neighbor, gets the first sight of Christ in a sermon, the first seal from Christ in a sacrament, the first communication of grace and love in secret prayer.

Now if there be any thing valuable and comfortable in ordinances and private duties, look to your heart and keep it, I beseech you.

5. An acquaintance with your own heart will furnish you a fountain of matter in prayer. The man who is diligent in heart-work, will be richly supplied with matter in his addresses to God. He will not be confused for want of thoughts; his tongue will not falter for want of expressions.

6. The most desirable thing in the world, viz, the revival of religion among a people, may be effected by means of what I am urging upon you.

O that I might see the time when professors shall not walk in a vain show; when they shall please themselves no more with a name to live, while they are spiritually dead; when they shall be no more a company of frothy, vain persons; but when holiness shall shine in their conversation, and awe the world, and command reverence from all that are around them; when they shall warm the heart of those who come near them, and cause it to be said, God is in these men of a truth. And may such a time be expected? Until heart-work becomes the business of professors, I have no hope of seeing a time so blessed! Does it not grieve you to see how religion is contemned and trampled under foot, and the professors of it ridiculed and scorned in the world? Professors, would you recover your credit? would you obtain an honorable testimony in the consciences of your very enemies? Then keep your hearts.

7. By diligence in keeping our hearts we should prevent the occasions of fatal scandals and stumbling-blocks to the world. Wo to the world because of offences!

Keep your heart faithfully, and you will be prepared for any situation or service to which you may be called. This, and this only can properly fit you for usefulness in any station; but with this you can endure prosperity or adversity; you can deny yourself, and turn your hand to any work. Thus Paul turned every circumstance to good account, and made himself so eminently useful. When he preached to others, he provided against being cast away himself: he kept his heart; and every thing in which lie excelled seems to have had a close connection with his diligence in keeping his heart.

9. If the people of God would diligently keep their hearts, their communion with each other would be unspeakably more inviting and profitable. Then “how goodly would be thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!” It is the fellowship which the people of God have with the Father and with the Son that kindles the desires of others to have communion with them. I tell you, that if saints would be persuaded to spend more time and take more pains about their hearts, there would soon be such a divine excellence in their conversation that others would account it no small privilege to be with or near them. It is the pride, passion and earthliness of our hearts, that has spoiled Christian fellowship. Why is it that when Christians meet they are often jarring and contending, but because their passions arc unmortified? Whence come their uncharitable censures of their brethren, but from their ignorance of themselves? Why are they so rigid and unfeeling toward those who have fallen, but because they do not feel their own weakness and liability to temptation? Why is their discourse so light and unprofitable when they meet, but because their hearts are earthly and vain? But now, if Christians would study their hearts more and keep them better, the beauty and glory of communion would be restored. They would divide no more, contend no more, censure rashly no more. They will feel right one toward another, when

each is daily humbled under a sense of the evil of his own heart.

10. Lastly:—Keep your heart, and then the comforts of the Spirit and the influence of all ordinances will be more fixed and lasting than they now are. And do the consolations of God seem small to you?" Ah, you have reason to be ashamed that the ordinances of God, as to their quickening and comforting effects, should make so light and transient an impression on your heart.

Now, reader, consider well these special benefits of keeping the heart which I have mentioned. Examine their importance. Are they small matters? Is it a small matter to have your understanding assisted? your endangered soul rendered safe? your sincerity proved? your communion with God sweetened? your heart filled with matter for prayer? Is it a small thing to have the power of godliness? all fatal scandals removed? an instrumental fitness to serve Christ obtained? the communion of saints restored to its primitive glory? and the influence of ordinances abiding in the souls of saints? If these are no common blessings, no ordinary benefits, then surely it is a great and in dispensable duty to keep the heart with all diligence. And now are you inclined to undertake the business of keeping your heart? are you resolved upon it? I charge you, then, to engage in it earnestly. Away with every cowardly feeling, and make up your mind to encounter difficulties. Draw your armor from the word of God. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in its commands, its promises, its threatenings; let it be fixed in your understanding, your memory, your conscience, your affections. You must learn to wield the sword of the Spirit (which is the word of God) familiarly, if you would defend your heart and conquer your enemies. You must call yourself frequently to an account; examine yourself as in the presence of the all seeing God; bring your conscience, as it were, to the bar of judgment. Beware how you plunge yourself into a multiplicity of worldly business; how you practise upon the maxims of the world; and how you venture at all to indulge your depraved propensities. You must exercise the utmost vigilance to discover and check the first symptoms of departure from God, the least decline of spirituality, or the least indisposition to meditation by yourself and holy conversation and fellowship with others. These things you must undertake, in the strength of Christ, with invincible resolution in the outset. And if you thus engage in this great work, he assured you shall not spend your strength for naught; comforts which you never felt or thought of will flow in upon you from every side. The diligent prosecution of this work will constantly afford you the most powerful excitements to vigilance and ardor in the life of faith, while it increases your strength and wears out your enemies. And when you have kept your heart with all diligence a little while; when you have fought the battles of this spiritual warfare, gained the ascendancy over the corruptions within, and vanquished the enemies without, then God will open the gate of heaven to you, and give you the portion which is promised to them that overcome. Awake then, this moment; get the world under your feet pant not for the things which a man may have, and eternally lose his soul; but bless God that you may have his service here, and the glory hereafter which he appoints to his chosen.

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Chapter 46

04.07a. Keep Heart in Time danger &Public Distraction

Keeping the Heart in Time of danger and Public Distraction

IV. The fourth season, requiring our utmost diligence to keep our hearts, is the time of danger and public distraction. . . .

IV. The fourth season, requiring, our utmost diligence to. keep our hearts, is the time of danger and public distraction. In such times the best hearts are too apt to be surprised by slavish: fear. If Syria be confederate with Ephraim, how do the hearts of the house of David shake, even as the trees of the wood which are shaken with the wind. When there are ominous signs in the heavens, or the distress of nations with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; then the hearts of men fail for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth. Even a Paul may sometimes complain of “fightings within, when there are fears without.”

But, my brethren, these things ought not so to be; saints should be of a more elevated spirit; so was David when his heart was kept in a good frame: “The Lord is my light and my salvation whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?” Let none but the servants of sin be the slaves of fear; let them that have delighted in evil fear evil. Let not that which God has threatened as a judgment upon the wicked, ever seize upon the hearts of the righteous. “I will send faintness into their hearts in the land of their enemies, and the sound of a shaking leaf shall chase them.” What poor spirited men are those, to fly at a shaking leaf! A leaf makes a pleasant, not a terrible noise; it makes indeed a kind of natural music: but to a guilty conscience even the whistling leaves are drums and trumpets! “But God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of love and of a sound mind.” A sound mind, as it stands there in opposition to fear, is an unwounded conscience not weakened by guilt: and this should make a man as bold as a lion. I know it cannot be said of a saint, as God said of leviathan, that he is made without fear; there is a natural fear in every man, and it is as impossible to remove it wholly, as to remove the body itself. Fear is perturbation of the mind, arising from the apprehension of approaching danger; and as long as dangers can approach us, we shall find some perturbations within us. It is not my purpose to commend to you a stoical apathy, nor yet to dissuade you from such a degree of cautionary preventive fear as may fit you for trouble and be serviceable to your soul. There is a provident, fear that opens our eyes to foresee danger, and quickens us to a prudent and lawful use of means to prevent it: such was Jacob’s fear, and such his prudence when expecting to meet his angry brother Esau. But it is the fear of diffidence, from which I would persuade you to keep your heart; that tyrannical passion which invades the heart in times of danger, distracts, weakens and unfits it for duty, drives men upon unlawful means, and brings a snare with it.

Now let us inquire how a Christian may keep his heart from distracting and tormenting fears in times of great and threatening dangers. There are several excellent rules for keeping the heart from sinful fear when imminent dangers threaten us:

1. Look upon all creatures as in the band of God, who manages them in all their motions, limiting, restraining and determining them at his pleasure. Get this great truth well settled by faith in your heart, and it will guard you against slavish fears. Ezekiel 1:1-28 contains an admirable draught of Providence: there you see the living creatures who move the wheels (that is, the great revolutions of things here below) coming unto Christ, who sits upon the throne, to receive new instructions from him. In Revelation 6:1-17, you read of white, black, and red horses, which are but the instruments God employs in executing judgments in the world, as wars, pestilence, and death. When these horses are prancing and trampling up and down in the world, here is a consideration that may quiet our hearts; God has the reins in his hand. Wicked men are sometimes like mad horses, they would stamp the people of God under their feet, but that the bridle of Providence is in their mouths. A lion at liberty is terrible to meet, but who is afraid of a lion in the keeper's hand?'

2. Remember that this God in whose hand are all creatures, is your Father, and is much more tender of you than you are, or can be, of yourself. "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye." Let me ask the most timorous woman whether there be not a great difference between the sight of a drawn sword in the hand of a bloody ruffian, and of the same sword in the hand of her own tender husband? As great a difference there is between looking upon creatures by an eye of sense, and looking on them, as in the hand of your God, by an eye of faith. Isaiah 54:5, is here very appropriate: "Thy Maker is thine husband, the Lord of hosts is his name;" he is Lord of all the hosts of creatures. Who would be afraid to pass through an army, though all the soldiers should turn their swords and guns toward him, if the commander of that army were his friend or father? A religious young man being at sea with many other passengers in a great storm, and they being half dead with fear, lie only was observed to be very cheerful, as if he were but little concerned in that danger: one of them demanding the reason of his cheerfulness, "O," said he, "it is because the pilot of the ship is my Father!" Consider Christ first as the King and supreme Lord over the providential kingdom, and then as your head, husband and friend, and you will quickly say, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul." This truth will make you cease trembling, and cause you to sing in the midst of danger, "The Lord is King of all the earth, sing ye praise with understanding." That is, 'Let every one that has understanding of this heart-reviving and establishing doctrine of the dominion of our Father over all creatures, sing praise.'

3. Urge upon your heart the express prohibitions of Christ in this case, and let your heart stand in awe of the violation of them. He hath charged you not to fear: "When we shall hear of wars and commotions, see that ye be not terrified." "In nothing be terrified by your adversaries." In Matthew 10:1-42, and within the compass of six verses, our Savior commands us thrice, "not to fear man." Does the voice of a man make thee to tremble, and shall not the voice of God? If thou art of such a timorous spirit, how is it that thou fearest not to disobey the commands of Jesus Christ? Methinks the command of Christ should have as much power to calm, as the voice of a poor worm to terrify thy heart. "I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man that shall be made as the grass, and forgettest the Lord thy Maker?" We cannot fear creatures sinfully till we have forgotten God: did we remember what he is, and what he has said, we should not be of such feeble spirits. Bring thyself then to this reflection in times of danger: 'If I let into my heart the slavish fear of man, I must let out the reverential awe and fear of God; and dare I cast off the fear of the Almighty for the frowns of a man I shall I lift up proud dust above the great God I shall I run upon a certain sin, to shun a probable danger?'—O keep thy

heart by this consideration!

4. Remember how much needless trouble your vain fears have brought upon you formerly: “And hast feared continually because of the oppressor, as if he were ready to devour; and where is the fury of the oppressor?” He seemed ready to devour, yet you are not devoured. I have not brought upon you the thing that you. feared; you have wasted your spirit, disordered your soul, and weakened your hands to no purpose: you might have all this while enjoyed your peace, and possessed your soul in patience. And here I cannot but observe a very deep policy of Satan in managing a design against the soul by these vain fears. I call them vain, with reference to the frustration of them by Providence; but certainly they are not in vain as the end at which Satan aims in raising them; for herein he acts as soldiers do in the siege of a garrison, who to wear out the besieged by constant watchings, and thereby unfit them to make resistance when they storm it in earnest, every night rouse them with false alarms, which though they come to nothing yet remarkably answer the ultimate design of the enemy.—O when will you beware of Satan’s devices?

5. Consider solemnly, that though the things you fear should really happen, yet there is more evil in your own fear than in the things feared: and that, not only as the least evil of sin is worse than the greatest evil of suffering; but as this sinful fear has really more trouble in it than there is in that condition of which you are so much afraid. Fear is both a multiplying and a tormenting passion; it represents troubles as much greater than they are, and so tortures the soul much more than the suffering itself. So it was with Israel at the Red Sea; they cried out and were afraid, till they stepped into the water, and then a passage was opened through those waters which they thought would have drowned them. Thus it is with us; we, looking through the glass of carnal fear upon the waters of trouble, the swellings of Jordan, cry out, ‘O they are unfordable; we must perish in them!’ But when we come into the midst of those floods indeed, we find the promise made good: “God will make a way to escape.” Thus it was with a blessed martyr; when he would make a trial by putting his finger to the candle, and found himself not able to endure that, he cried out, “What! cannot I bear the burning of a finger? How then shall I be able to bear the burning of my whole body to-morrow?” Yet when that morrow came he could go cheerfully into the flames with this scripture in his mouth: “Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine; when thou passest through the waters I will be with you; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt.”

6. Consult the many precious promises which are written for your support and comfort in all dangers. These are your refuges to which you may fly and be safe when the arrows of danger fly by night, and destruction wasteth at noon-day. There are particular promises suited to particular cases and exigencies; there are also general promises reaching all cases and conditions. Such as these: “All things shall work together for good,” &c. “Though a sinner do evil an hundred times and his days be prolonged, yet it shall be well with them that fear the Lord,” &c. Could you but believe the promises your heart should be established. Could you but plead them with God as Jacob did, (“Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good,” &c.) they would relieve you in every distress.

7. Quiet your trembling heart by recording and consulting your past experiences of the care and faithfulness of God in former distresses. These experiences are food for your faith in a wilderness. By this David kept his heart in time of danger, and Paul his. It was answered by a saint, when one

told him that his enemies waylaid him to take his life: “If God take no care of me, how is it that I have escaped hitherto?” You may plead with God old experiences for new ones: for it is in pleading with God for new deliverances, as it is in pleading for new pardons. Mark how Moses pleads of that account with God. “Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people, as thou hast forgiven them from Egypt until now.” He does not say as men do, ‘Lord, this is the first fault, thou hast not been troubled before to sign their pardon:’ but, ‘Lord, because thou hast pardoned them so often, I beseech thee pardon them once again.’ So in new difficulties let the saint say, ‘Lord, thou hast often heard, helped and saved, in former years; therefore now help again, for with thee there is plenteous redemption and thine arm is not shortened.’

8. Be well satisfied that you are in the way of your duty, and that will beget holy courage in times of danger. “Who, will harm you if you be a follower of that which is good?” Or if any dare attempt to harm you, “you may boldly commit yourself to God in well-doing.” It was this consideration that raised Luther’s spirit above all fear: “in the cause of God (said he) I ever am, and ever shall be stout: herein I assume this title, “I yield to none.” A good cause will bear up a man’s spirit. Hear the saying of a hea-then, to the shame of cowardly Christians: when the emperor Vespasian had commanded Fluidus Priseus not to come to the senate, or if he did come, to speak nothing but what ‘he would have him; the senator returned this noble answer, “that he was a senator, it was fit he should be at the senate; and if being there, he were required to give his advice, he would freely speak that which his conscience commanded him.” The emperor threatening that then he should die; he answered, “Did I ever tell you that I was immortal? Do what you will, and I will do what I ought. It is in your power to put me to death unjustly, and in my power to die with constancy.” Righteousness is a breastplate: let them tremble whom danger finds out of the way of duty.

9. Get your conscience sprinkled with the blood of Christ from all guilt, and that will set your heart above all fear. It is guilt upon the conscience that softens and makes cowards of our spirits: “the righteous are bold as a lion.” It was guilt in Cain’s conscience that made him cry, “Every one that findeth me will slay me.” A guilty conscience is more terrified by imagined dangers, than a pure conscience is by real ones. A guilty sinner carries a witness against himself in his own bosom. It was guilty Herod cried out, “John Baptist is risen from the dead.” Such a conscience is the devil’s anvil, on which he fabricates all those swords and spears with which the guilty sinner pierces himself. Guilt is to danger, what fire is to gun-powder: a man need not fear to walk among many barrels of powder, if he have no fire about him.

10. Exercise holy trust in times of great distress. Make it your business to trust God with your life and comforts, and then your heart will be at rest about them. So did David, “At what time I am afraid I will trust in thee;” that is, ‘Lord, if at any time a storm arise, I will shelter from it under the covert of thy wings.’ Go to God by acts of faith and trust, and never doubt that he will secure you. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee,” says Isaiah. God is pleased when you come to him thus: ‘Father, my life, my liberty and my estate are exposed, and I cannot secure them; O let me leave them in, thy hand. The poor leaveth himself with thee; and does his God fail him? No, thou art the helper of the fatherless: that is, thou art the helper of the destitute one, that has none to go to but God. This is a comforting passage, “He shall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord;” he does not say, his ear shall be preserved from the report of evil tidings, he may hear as sad tidings as other men, but his heart shall be kept from the terror of those tidings; his heart is fixed.

11. Consult the honor of religion more, and your personal safety less. Is it for the honor of religion (think you) that Christians should be as timorous as bores to start at every sound? Will not this tempt the world to think, that whatever you talk, yet your principles are no better than other men's? What mischief may the discovery of your fears before them do! It was nobly said by Nehemiah, "Should such a man as I flee? and who, being as I am, would flee?" Were it not better you should die than that the world should be prejudiced against Christ by your example? For alas! how apt is the world (who judge more by what they see in your practices than by what they understand of your principles) to conclude from your timidity, that how much soever you commend faith and talk of assurance, yet you dare trust to those things no more than they, when it comes to the trial. O let not your fears lay such a stumbling-block before the blind world.

12. He that would secure his heart from fear, must first secure the eternal interest of his soul in the hands of Jesus Christ., When this is done, you may say, 'Now, world, do thy worst!' You will not be very solicitous about a vile body, when you are once assured it shall be well to all eternity with your precious soul. "Fear not them (says Christ) that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." The assured Christian may smile with contempt upon all his enemies, and say, 'Is this the worst that you can do?' What say you, Christian? Are you assured that your soul is safe; that within a few moments of your dissolution it shall be received by Christ into an everlasting habitation? If you be sure of that, never trouble yourself about the instrument and means of your death.'

13. Learn to quench all slavish creature-fears in the reverential fear of God. This is a cure by diversion. It is an exercise of Christian wisdom to turn those passions of the soul which most predominate, into spiritual channels; to turn natural anger into spiritual zeal, natural mirth into holy cheerfulness, and natural fear into a holy dread and awe of God. This method of cure Christ prescribes in Matthew 10:1-42; similar to which is Isaiah 8:12-13, "Fear not their fear." 'But how shall we help it?' "Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." Natural fear may be allayed for the present by natural reason, or the removal of the occasion; but then it is like a candle blown out by a puff of breath, which is easily blown in again: but if the fear of God extinguish it, then it is like a candle quenched in water, which cannot easily be rekindled.'

14. Pour out to God in prayer those fears which the devil and your own unbelief pour in upon you in times of danger. Prayer is the best outlet to fear: where is the Christian that cannot set his seal to this direction? I will give you the greatest example to encourage you to compliance, even the example of Jesus Christ. When the hour of his danger and death drew nigh, he went into the garden, separated from his disciples, and there wrestled mightily with God in prayer, even unto agony; in reference to which the apostle says, "who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong cries and tears, to him that was able to save from death, and was heard in that he feared." He was heard as to strength and support to carry him through it; though not as to deliverance, or exemption from it. O that these things may abide with you, and be reduced to practice in these evil days, and that many trembling souls may be established by them.'

V. The fifth season, requiring diligence in keeping the heart, is the time of outward wants. . . .

V. The fifth season, requiring diligence in keeping the heart, is the time of outward wants. Although at such times we should complain to God, not of God, (the throne of grace being erected for a

“time of need,”) yet when the waters of relief run low, and want begins to press, how prone are the best hearts to distrust the fountain! When the meal in the barrel and the oil in the cruse are almost spent, our faith and patience too are almost spent. It is now difficult to keep the proud and unbelieving heart in a holy quietude and sweet submission at the foot of God. It is an easy thing to talk of trusting God for daily bread, while we have a full barn or purse; but to say as the prophet, “Though the fig-tree should not blossom, neither fruit be in the vine, &c. yet will I rejoice in the Lord:” surely this is not easy. Would you know then how a Christian may keep his heart from distrusting God, or repining against him, when outward wants are either felt or feared?—The case deserves to be seriously considered, especially now, since it seems to be the design of Providence to empty the people of God of their creature fullness, and acquaint them with those difficulties to which hitherto they have been altogether strangers. To secure the heart from the dangers attending this condition, these considerations may, through the blessing of the Spirit, prove effectual:

1. If God reduces you to necessities, he therein deals no otherwise with you than he has done with some of the holiest men that ever lived. Your condition is not singular; though you have hitherto been a stranger to want, other saints have been familiarly acquainted with it. Hear what Paul says, not of himself only, but in the name of other saints reduced to like exigencies: “Even to the present hour, we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place.” To see such a man as Paul going up and down the world naked, and hungry, and houseless; one that was so far above thee in grace and holiness; one that did more service for God in a day than perhaps thou hast done in all thy days may well put an end to your repining. Have you forgotten how much even a David has suffered? How great were his difficulties! “Give, I pray thee,” says he to Nabal, “whatsoever cometh to thy hand, to thy servants, and to thy son David.” But why speak I of these? Behold a greater than any of them, even the Son of God, who is the heir of all things, and by whom the worlds were made, sometimes would have been glad of any thing, having nothing to eat. “And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry; and seeing a fig-tree, afar off, having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon.”

Hereby then God has set no mark of hatred upon you, neither can you infer want of love from want of bread. When thy repining heart puts the question, ‘Was there ever sorrow like unto mine?’ ask these worthies, and they will tell thee that though they did not complain as thou dost, yet their condition was as necessitous as thine is.

2. If God leave you not in this condition without a promise, you have no reason to repine or despond under it. That is a sad condition indeed to which no promise belongs. Calvin in his comment on Isaiah 9:1, explains in what sense the darkness of the captivity was not so great as that of the lesser incursions made by Tiglath Pileser. In the captivity, the city was destroyed and the temple burnt with fire: there was no comparison in the affliction, yet the darkness was not so great, because, says he, “there was a certain promise made in this case, but none in the other.” It is better to be as low as hell with a promise, than to be in paradise without one. Even the darkness of hell itself would be no darkness comparatively at all, were there but a promise to enlighten it. Now, God has left many sweet promises for the faith of his poor people to live upon in this condition; such as these: “O fear the Lord, ye his saints, for there is no want to them that fear him; the lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that fear the Lord shall not want any good thing.” “The

eye of the Lord is upon the righteous to keep them alive in famine." "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" "When the poor and the needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them." Here you see their extreme wants, water being put for their necessaries of life; and their certain relief, "I the Lord will hear them;" in which it is supposed that they cry unto him in their distress, and he hears their cry. Having therefore these promises, why should not your distrustful heart conclude like David's, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want?"

'But these promises imply conditions: if they were absolute, they would afford more satisfaction.' What are those tacit conditions of which you speak but these, that he will either supply or sanctify your wants; that you shall have so much as God sees fit for you? And does this trouble you? Would you have the mercy, whether sanctified or not? whether God sees it fit for you or not? The appetites of saints after earthly things should not be so ravenous as to seize greedily upon any enjoyment without regarding circumstances.

'But when wants press, and I see not whence supplies should come, my faith in the promise shakes, and I, like murmuring Israel, cry, "He gave bread, can he give water also?"' O unbelieving heart! when did his promises fail? who ever trusted them and was ashamed? May not God upbraid thee with thine unreasonable infidelity, as in Jeremiah 2:31, "Have I been a wilderness unto you?" or as Christ said to his disciples, "Since I was with you, lacked ye any thing?" Yea, may you not upbraid yourself; may you not say with good old Polycarp, "These many years I have served Christ, and found him a good Master?"

Indeed he may deny what your wantonness, but not what your want calls for. He will not regard the cry of your lusts, nor yet despise the cry of your faith: though he will not indulge your wanton appetites, yet he will not violate his. own faithful promises. These promises are your best security for eternal life; and it is strange they should not satisfy you for daily bread. Remember the words of the Lord, and solace your heart with them amidst all your wants. It is said of Epicurus, that in dreadful paroxysms of the cholic he often refreshed himself by calling to mind his inventions in philosophy; and of Possodonius the philosopher, that in an acute disorder he solaced himself with discourses on moral virtue; and when distressed, he would say, "O pain, thou dost nothing; though thou art a little troublesome, I will never confess thee to be evil." If upon such grounds as these they could support themselves under such racking pains, and even deluded their diseases by them; how much rather should the promises of God, and the sweet experiences which have gone along step by step with them, make you forget all your wants, and comfort you in every difficulty?

3. If it be bad now, it might have been worse. Has God denied thee the comforts of this life? He might have denied thee Christ, peace, and pardon also; and then thy case had been woful indeed.

You know God has done so to millions. How many such wretched objects max your eyes behold every day, that have no comfort in hand, nor yet in hope; that are miserable here, and will be so to eternity; that have a bitter cup, and nothing to sweeten it—no, not so much as any hope that it will be better. But it is not so with you: though you be poor in this world, yet you are "rich in faith, and an heir of the kingdom which God has promised." Learn to set spiritual riches over against temporal poverty. Balance all your present troubles with your spiritual privileges. Indeed if God has denied your soul the robe of righteousness to clothe it, the hidden manna to feed it, the heavenly

mansion to receive it, you might well be pensive; but the consideration that he has not may administer comfort under any outward distress. When Luther began to be pressed by want, he said, “Let us be contented with our hard fare; for do not we feast upon Christ, the bread of life?“ “Blessed be God (said Paul) who hath abounded to us in all spiritual blessings.”

4. Though this affliction be great, God has far greater, with which he chastises the dearly beloved of his soul in this world. Should he remove this and inflict those, you would account your present state a very comfortable one, and bless God to be as you now are. Should God remove your present troubles, supply all your outward wants, give you the desire of your heart in creature-comforts; but hide his face from you, shoot his arrows into your soul, and cause the venom of them to drink up your spirit: should he leave you but a few days to the buffetings of Satan: should he hold your eyes but a few nights waking with horrors of conscience, tossing to and fro till the dawning of the day:—should he lead you through the chambers of death, show you the visions of darkness, and make his terrors set themselves in array against you: then tell me if you would not think it a great mercy to be back again in your former necessitous condition, with peace of conscience; and account bread and water, with God’s favor, a happy state? O then take heed of repining. Say not that God deals hardly with you, lest you provoke him to convince you by your own sense that he has worse rods than these for unsubmissive and froward children.

5. If it be had now, it will be better shortly. Keep thy heart by this consideration, ‘the meal in the barrel is almost spent; well, be it so, why should that trouble me, if I am almost beyond the need and use of these things?’ The traveler has spent almost all his money; ‘well,’ says he, ‘though my money be almost spent, my journey is almost finished too: I am near home, and shall soon be fully supplied.’ If there be no candles in the house, it is a comfort to think that it is almost day, and then there will be no need of them. I am afraid, Christian, you misreckon when you think your provision is almost spent, and you have a great way to travel, many years to live and nothing to live upon; it may be not half so many, as you suppose In this be confident, if your provision be spent, either fresh supplies are coining, though you see not whence, or you are nearer your journey’s end than you reckon yourself to be. Desponding soul, does it become a man traveling upon the road to that heavenly city, and almost arrived there, within a few days’ journey of his Father’s house, where all his wants shall be supplied, to be so anxious about a little meat, or drink, or clothes, which he fears he shall want by the way? It was nobly said by the forty martyrs when turned out naked in a frosty night to be starved to death, “ The winter indeed is sharp and cold, but heaven is warm and comfortable; here we shiver for cold, but Abraham’s bosom will make amends for all.”

‘But,’ says the desponding soul, ‘I may die for want.’ Who ever did so? When were the righteous forsaken? If indeed it be so, your journey is ended, and you fully supplied.

‘But I am not sure of that; were I sure of heaven, it would be another matter.’ Are you not sure of that? then you have other matters to trouble yourself about than these; methinks these should be the least of all your cares. I do not find that souls perplexed about the want of Christ, pardon of sin, &c. are usually very solicitous about these things. He that seriously puts such questions as these, ‘What shall I do to be saved? how shall I know my sin is pardoned?’ does not trouble himself with, “What shall I eat, what shall I drink, or wherewithal shall I be clothed?”

6. Does it become the children of such a Father to distrust his all-sufficiency, or repine at any of his dispensations? Do you well to question his care and love upon every new exigency? Say, have

you not formerly been ashamed of this? Has not your Father's seasonable provision for you in former difficulties put you to the blush, and made you resolve never more to question his love and care? And yet will you again renew your unworthy suspicions of him? Disingenuous child! reason thus with yourself: "If I perish for want of what is good and needful for me, it must be either because my Father knows not my wants, Or has not wherewith to supply them, or regards not what becomes of me. Which of these shall I charge upon him? Not the first: for my Father knows what I have need of Not the second: for the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; his name is God All-sufficient. Not the last: for as a Father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him; the Lord is exceeding pitiful and of tender mercy; he hears the young ravens when they cry:—and will he not hear me? Consider, says Christ, the fowls of the air; not the fowls at the door, that are fed every day by hand, but the fowls of the air that have none to provide for them. Does he feed and clothe his enemies, and will he forget his children? he heard even the cry of Ishmael in distress. O my unbelieving heart, dost thou yet doubt?"

7. Your poverty is not your sin, but your affliction. If you have not by sinful means brought it upon yourself, and if it be but an affliction, it may the more easily be borne. It is hard indeed to bear an affliction coming upon us as the fruit and punishment of sin. When men are under trouble upon that account; they say, 'O if it were but a single affliction, coming from the hand of God by way of trial, I could bear it; but I have brought it upon myself by sin, it comes as the punishment of sin; the marks of God's displeasure are upon it: it is the guilt within that troubles and galls more than the want without.' But it is not so here; therefore you have no reason to be cast down under it.

'But though there be no sting of guilt, yet this condition wants not other stings; as, for instance, The discredit of religion. I cannot comply with my engagements in the world, and thereby religion is likely to suffer.' It is well you have a heart to discharge every duty; yet if God disable you by providence, it is no discredit to your profession that you do not that which you cannot do, so long as it is your desire and endeavor to do what you can and ought to do; and in this case God's will is, that lenity and forbearance be toward you.

'But it grieves me to behold the necessities of others, whom I was wont to relieve and refresh, but now cannot.' If you cannot, it ceases to be your duty, and God accepts the drawing out of your soul to the hungry in compassion and desire to help them, though you cannot draw forth a full purse to relieve and supply them.

'But I find such a condition full of temptations, a great hinderance in the way to heaven.' Every condition in the world has its hinderances and attending temptations; and were you in a prosperous condition, you might there meet with more temptations and fewer advantages than you now have; for though I confess poverty as well as prosperity has its temptations, yet I am confident prosperity has not those advantages that poverty has. Here you have an opportunity to discover the sincerity of your love to God, when you can live upon him, find enough in him, and constantly follow him, even when all external inducements and motives fail.

Thus I have shown you how to keep your heart from the temptations and dangers attending a low condition in the world. When want oppresses and the heart begins to sink, then improve, and bless God for these helps to keep it.

VI. The sixth season requiring this diligence in keeping the heart, is the season of duty. . . .

VI. The sixth season requiring this diligence in keeping the heart, is the season of duty. Our hearts must be closely watched and kept when we draw nigh to God in public, private, or secret duties; for the vanity of the heart seldom discovers itself more than at such times. How often does the poor soul cry out, 'O Lord, how gladly would I serve thee, but vain thoughts will not let me: I come to open my heart to thee, to delight my soul in communion with thee, but my corruptions oppose me: Lord, call off these vain thoughts, and suffer them not to estrange the soul that is espoused to thee.' The question then is this: How may the heart be kept from distractions by vain thoughts in time of duty? There is a two-fold distraction, or wandering of the heart in duty: First, voluntary and habitual, They set not their hearts aright, and their spirit was not steadfast with God." This is the case of formalists, and it proceeds from the want of a holy inclination of the heart to God; their hearts are under the power of their lusts, and therefore it is no wonder that they go after their lusts, even when they are about holy things. Secondly, involuntary and lamented distractions: "I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me; O wretched man that I am," &c. This proceeds not from the want of a holy inclination or aim, but from the weakness of grace and the want of vigilance in opposing indwelling sin. But it is not my business to show you how these distractions come into the heart but rather how to get them out, and prevent their future admission:

1. Sequester yourself from all earthly employments, and set apart some time for solemn preparation to meet God in duty. You cannot come directly from the world into God's presence without finding a savor of the world in your duties. It is with the heart (a few minutes since plunged in the world, now in the presence of God) as it is with the sea after a storm, which still continues working, muddy and disquiet, though the wind be laid and the storm be over. Your heart must have some time to settle. Few musicians can take an instrument and play upon it without some time and labor to tune it; few Christians can say with David, "My heart is fixed, O God, it is fixed." When you go to God in any duty, take your heart aside and say, 'O my soul, I am now engaged in the greatest work that a creature was ever employed about; I am going into the awful presence of God upon business of everlasting moment. O my soul, leave trifling now; be composed, be watchful, be serious; this is no common work, it is soul-work; it is work for eternity; it is work which will bring forth fruit to life or death in the world to come.' Pause awhile and consider your sins, your wants, your troubles; keep your thoughts awhile on these before you address yourself to duty. David first mused, and then spake with his tongue.

2. Having composed your heart by previous meditation, immediately set a guard upon your senses. How often are Christians in danger of losing the eyes of their mind by those of their body! Against this David prayed, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou me in thy way." This may serve to expound the Arabian proverb: "Shut the windows that the house may be light." It were well if you could say in the commencement, as a holy man once said when he came from the performance of duty: "Be shut, O my eyes, be shut; for it is impossible that you should ever discern such beauty and glory in any creature as I have now seen in God." You must avoid all occasions of distraction from without, and imbibe that intenseness of spirit in the work of God which locks up the eye and ear against vanity.

3. Beg of God a mortified fancy. A working fancy, (saith one,) how much soever it be extolled among men, is a great snare to the soul, except it work in fellowship with right reason and a sanctified heart. The fancy is a power of the soul, placed between the senses and the understanding; it is that which first stirs itself in the soul, and by its motions the other powers of the

soul are brought into exercise; it is that in which thoughts are first formed, and as that is, so are they. If imaginations be not first cast down, it is impossible that every thought of the heart should be brought into obedience to Christ. The fancy is naturally the wildest and most untameable power of the soul. Some Christians have much to do with it; and the more spiritual the heart is, the more does a wild and vain fancy disturb and perplex it. It is a sad thing that one's imagination should call off the soul from attending on God, when it is engaged in communion with him. Pray earnestly and perseveringly that your fancy may be chastened and sanctified, and when this is accomplished your thoughts will be regular and fixed.

04.07b. Keep Heart in Time danger &Public Distraction

4. If you would keep your heart from vain excursions when engaged in duties, realize to yourself, by faith, the holy and awful presence of God. If the presence of a grave man would compose you to seriousness, how much more should the presence of a holy God? Do you think that you would dare to be gay and light if you realized the presence and inspection of the Divine Being? Remember where you are when engaged in religious duty, and act as if you believed in the omniscience of God. “All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” Realize his infinite holiness, his purity, his spirituality.

Strive to obtain such apprehensions of the greatness of God as shall suitably affect your heart; and remember his jealousy over his worship. “This is that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified.” “A man that is praying (says Bernard) should behave himself as if he were entering into the court of heaven, where he sees the Lord upon his throne, surrounded with ten thousand of his angels and saints ministering unto him.”—When you come from an exercise in which your heart has been wandering and listless, what can you say? Suppose all the vanities and impertinences which have passed through your mind during a devotional exercise were written down and interlined with your petitions, could you have the face to present them to God? Should your tongue utter all the thoughts of your heart when at tending the worship of God, would not men abhor you? Yet your thoughts are perfectly known to God. O think upon this scripture: “God is greatly to be feared in the assemblies of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are round about him.” Why did the Lord descend in thunderings and lightnings and dark clouds upon Sinai? why did the mountains smoke under him, the people quake and tremble round about him, Moses himself not excepted? but to teach the people this great truth: “Let us have grace, whereby we may serve Him acceptably, with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire.” Such apprehensions of the character and presence of God will quickly reduce a heart inclined to vanity to a more serious frame.

5. Maintain a prayerful frame of heart in the intervals of duty. What reason can be assigned why our hearts are so dull, so careless, so wandering, when we hear or pray, but that there have been long intermissions in our communion with God? If that divine unction, that spiritual fervor, and those holy impressions, which we obtain from God while engaged in the performance of one duty, were preserved to enliven and engage us in the performance of another, they would be of incalculable service to keep our hearts serious and devout. For this purpose, frequent ejaculations between stated and solemn duties are of most excellent use: they not only preserve the mind in a composed and pious frame, but they connect one stated duty, as it were, with another, and keep the attention of the soul alive to all its interests and obligations.

6. If you would have the distraction of your thoughts prevented, endeavor to raise your affections to God, and to engage them warmly in your duty. When the soul is intent upon any work, it gathers in its strength and bends all its thoughts to that work; and when it is deeply affected, it will pursue

its object with intenseness, the affections will gain, an ascendancy over the thoughts and guide them. But deadness causes distraction, and distraction increases deadness. Could you but regard your duties as the medium in which you might walk in communion with God in which your soul might be filled with those ravishing and matchless delights which his presence affords, you might have no inclination to neglect them. But if you would prevent the recurrence of distracting thoughts, if you would find your happiness in the performance of duty, you must not only be careful that you engage in what is your duty, bat labor with patient and persevering exertion to interest your feelings in it. Why is your heart so inconstant, especially in secret duties; why are you ready to be gone, almost as soon as you are come into the presence of God, but because your affections are not engaged?

7. When you are disturbed by vain thoughts, humble yourself before God, and call in assistance from Heaven. When the messenger of Satan buffeted St. Paul by wicked suggestions, (as is supposed) he mourned before God on account of it. Never slight wandering thoughts in duty as small matters; follow every such thought with a deep regret. Turn to God with such words as these: 'Lord, I came hither to commune with thee, and here a busy adversary and a vain heart, conspiring together, have opposed me. O my God what a heart have I! shall I never wait upon thee without distraction? when shall I enjoy an hour of free communion with thee? Grant me thy assistance at this time; discover thy glory to me, and my heart will quickly be recovered. I came hither to enjoy thee, and shall I go away without thee? Behold my distress, and help me!' —Could you but sufficiently be wail your distractions, and repair to God for deliverance from them, you would gain relief.

8. Look upon the success and the comfort of your duties, as depending very much upon the keeping of your heart close with God in them. These two things, the success of duty and the inward comfort arising from the performance of it, are unspeakably dear to the Christian; but both of these will be lost if the heart be in a listless state. "Surely God heareth not vanity, nor doth the Almighty regard it." The promise is made to a heart engaged: "Then shall ye seek for me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your hearts." When you find your heart under the power of deadness and distraction, say to yourself, 'O what do I lose by a careless heart now! My praying seasons , are the most valuable portions of my life: could I but raise my heart to God, I might now obtain such mercies as would be matter of praise to all eternity.'

9. Regard your carefulness or carelessness in this matter as a great evidence of your sincerity, or hypocrisy. Nothing will alarm an upright heart more than this. 'What shall I give way to a customary wandering of the heart from God? Shall the spot of the hypocrite appear upon my soul? Hypocrites, indeed, can drudge on in the round of duty, never regarding the frame of their hearts; but shall I do so? Never— never let me be satisfied with empty duties. Never let me take my leave of a duty until my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.'

10. It will be of special use to keep your heart with God in duty, to consider what influence all your duties will have upon your eternity. Your religious seasons are your seed times, and in another world you must reap the fruits of what you sow in your duties here, If you sow to the flesh, you will reap corruption; if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap life everlasting. Answer seriously these questions: Are you willing to reap the fruit of vanity in the world to come? Dare you say, when your thoughts are roving to the ends of the earth in duty, when you scarce mind what you say or hear,

‘Now, Lord, I am sowing to the Spirit; now I am providing and laying up for eternity; now I am seeking for glory, honor and immortality; now I am striving to enter in at the strait gate; now I am taking the kingdom of heaven by holy violence!’ Such reflections are well calculated to dissipate vain thoughts.

VII. The seventh season, which requires more than common diligence to keep the heart, is when we receive injuries and abuses from men. Such is the depravity and corruption of man, that one is become as a wolf or a tiger to another. And as men are naturally cruel and oppressive one to another, so the wicked conspire to abuse and wrong the people of God, “The wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he.” Now when we are thus abused and wronged, it is hard to keep the heart from revengeful motions; to make it meekly and quietly commit the cause to Him that judgeth righteously; to prevent the exercise of any sinful affection. The spirit that is in us lusteth to revenge; but it must not be so. We have choice helps in the Gospel to keep our hearts from sinful motions against our enemies, and to sweeten our embittered spirits. Do you ask how a Christian may keep his heart from revengeful motions under the greatest injuries and abuses from men? I reply: When you find your heart begin to be inflamed by revengeful feelings, immediately reflect on the following things

1. Urge upon your heart the severe prohibitions of revenge contained in the law of God. However gratifying to your corrupt propensities revenge may be, remember that it is forbidden. Hear the word of God: “Say not, I will recompense evil.” Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me. “Recompense to no man evil for evil. Avenge not yourselves, but give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.” On the contrary. “If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink.” It was an argument urged by the Christians to prove their religion to be supernatural and pure, that it forbids revenge, which is so agreeable to nature; and it is to be wished that such an argument might not be laid aside. Awe your heart, then, with the authority of God in the Scriptures; and when carnal reason says, ‘My enemy deserves to be hated,’ let conscience reply, ‘But doth God deserve to be disobeyed?’ ‘Thus and thus hath he done, and so hath he wronged me;’ ‘But what hath God done that 1 should wrong him? If my enemy dares boldly to break the peace, shall I be so wicked as to break the precept? if he fears not to wrong me, shall not I fear to wrong God?’ Thus let the fear of God restrain and calm your feelings.

2. Set before your eyes the most eminent patterns of meekness and forgiveness, that you may feel the force of their example. This is the way to cut off the common pleas of flesh and blood for revenge: as thus, ‘No man would bear such an affront;’ yes, others have borne as bad, and worse ones. ‘But I shall be reckoned a coward, a fool, if I pass by this:’ no matter, so long as you follow the examples of the wisest and holiest of men. Never did any one suffer more or greater abuses from men than Jesus did, nor did any one ever endure insult and reproach and every kind of abuse in a more peaceful and forgiving manner; when he Was reviled he reviled not again; when he suffered. he threatened not when his murderers. crucified him he prayed Father, forgive them; and herein he hath set us an example, that we should follow his steps. Thus his apostles imitated him: “Being reviled,” say they, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat.” I have often heard it reported of the holy Mr. Dod, that when a man, enraged at his close, convincing doctrine, assaulted him, smote him on the face and dashed out two of his teeth; that meek servant of Christ spit out the teeth and blood into his hand, and said, “See here, you have

knocked out two of my teeth, and that without any just provocation; but on condition that I might do your soul good, I would give you leave to knock out all the rest." Here was exemplified the excellency of the Christian spirit. Strive then for this spirit, which constitutes the true excellence of Christians. Do what others cannot do, keep this spirit in exercise, and you will preserve peace in your own soul and gain the victory over your enemies.

2. Consider the character of the person who has wronged you. He is either a good or a wicked man. If he is a good man, there is light and tenderness in his conscience, which sooner or later will bring him to a sense of the evil of what he has done. If he is a good man, Christ has forgiven him greater injuries than he has done to you; and why should not you forgive him? Will Christ not upbraid him for any of his wrongs, but frankly forgive them all; and will you take him by the throat for some petty abuse which he has offered you?

3. But if a wicked man has injured or insulted you, truly you have more reason to exercise pity than revenge toward him. He is in a deluded and miserable state; a slave to sin and an enemy to righteousness. If he should ever repent, he will be ready to make you reparation; if he continues impenitent, there is a day coming when .he will be punished to the extent of his deserts. You need not study revenge, God will execute vengeance upon him.

4. Remember that by revenge you can only gratify a sinful passion, which by forgiveness you might conquer. Suppose that by revenge you might destroy one enemy; yet, by exercising the Christian's temper you might conquer three—your own lust, Satan's temptation, and your enemy's heart. If by revenge you should overcome your enemy, the victory would be unhappy and inglorious, for in gaining it you would be overcome by your own corruption; but by exercising a meek and forgiving temper, you will always come off with honor and success. It must be a very disingenuous nature indeed upon which meekness and forgiveness will not operate; that must be a flinty heart which this fire will not melt. Thus David gained such a victory over Saul his persecutor, that "Saul lifted up his voice and wept, and he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I."

5. Seriously propose this question to your own heart: 'Have I got any good by means of the wrongs and injuries which I have received?' If they have done you no good, turn your revenge upon yourself. You have reason to be filled with shame and sorrow that you should have a heart which can deduce no good from such troubles; that your temper should be so unlike that of Christ. The patience and meekness of other Christians have turned all the injuries offered to them to a good account; their souls have been animated to praise God when they have been loaded with reproaches from the world. "I thank my God," said Jerome, "that I am worthy to be hated of the world." But if you have derived any benefit from the reproaches and wrongs which you have received, if they have put you upon examining your own heart, if they have made you more careful how you conduct, if they have convinced you of the value of a sanctified temper; will you not forgive them? will you not forgive one who has been instrumental of so much good to you? What though he meant it for evil? if through the Divine blessing your happiness has been promoted by what he has done, why should you even have a hard thought of him?

6. Consider by whom all your troubles are ordered. This will be of great use to keep your heart from revenge; this will quickly calm and sweeten your temper. When Shimei railed at David and cursed him, the spirit of that good man was not at all poisoned by revenge; for when Abishai

offered him. if he pleased, the head of Shimei, the king said, “Let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David: who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?” It may be that God uses him as his rod to chastise me, because by my sin I gave the enemies of God occasion to blaspheme; and shall I be angry with the instrument? how irrational were that! Thus Job was quieted; he did not rail and meditate revenge upon the Chaldeans and Sabeans, but regarded God as the orderer of his troubles, and said, “The Lord hath taken away, blessed be his name.”

7. Consider how you are daily and hourly wronging God, and you will not be so easily inflawed with revenge against those who have wronged you. You are constantly affronting God, yet he does not take vengeance on you, but bears with you and forgives; and will you rise up and avenge yourself upon others? Reflect on this cutting rebuke: “O thou wicked and slothful servant! I forgave thee all that debt because thou desiredst me; shouldst thou not also have compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?” None should be so filled with forbearance and mercy to such as wrong them, as those who have experienced the riches of mercy themselves. The mercy of God to us should melt our hearts into mercy toward others. It is impossible that we should be cruel to others, except we forget how kind and compassionate God hath been to us. And if kindness cannot prevail in us, methinks fear should:—“If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

8. Let the consideration that the day of the Lord draweth nigh, restrain you from anticipating it by acts of revenge. Why are you so hasty? is not the Lord at hand to avenge all his abused servants? “Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth, &c. Be ye also patient, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned. Behold, the Judge standeth at the door. Vengeance belongeth unto God, and will you wrong yourself so much as to assume his work?

VIII. The next season in which special exertion is necessary to keep the heart, is when we meet with great trials. . . .

VIII. The next season in which special exertion is necessary to keep the heart, is when we meet with great trials. In such cases the heart is apt to be suddenly transported with pride, impatience, or other sinful passions. Many good people are guilty of hasty and very sinful conduct in such instances; and all have need to use diligently the following means to keep their hearts submissive and patient under great trials:

1. Get humble and abasing thoughts of yourself. The humble is ever the patient man. Pride is the source of irregular and sinful passions. A lofty, will be an unyielding and peevish spirit. When we over-rate ourselves, we think that we are treated unworthily, that our trials are too severe: thus we cavil and repine. Christian, you should have such thoughts of yourself as would put a stop to these murmurings. You should have lower and more humiliating views of yourself than any other one can have of you. Get humility, and you will have peace whatever be your trial.

2. Cultivate a habit of communion with God. This will prepare you for whatever may take place. This will so sweeten your temper and calm your mind as to secure you against surprisals. This will produce that inward peace which will make you superior to your trials. Habitual communion with God will afford you enjoyment, which you can never be willing to interrupt by sinful feeling. When a

Christian is calm and submissive under his afflictions, probably he derives support and comfort in this way; but he who is discomposed, impatient, or fretful, shows that `all is not right within—he cannot be supposed to practise communion with God.

3. Let your mind be deeply impressed with an apprehension of the evil nature and effects of an unsubmissive and restless temper. It grieves the Spirit of God, and induces his departure. His gracious presence and influence are enjoyed only where peace and quiet submission prevail. The indulgence of such a temper gives the adversary an advantage. Satan is an angry and discontented spirit. He finds no rest but in restless hearts. He bestirs himself when the spirits are in commotion; sometimes he fills the heart with ungrateful and rebellious thoughts; sometimes he inflames the tongue with indecent language. Again, such a temper brings great guilt upon the conscience, unfits the soul for any duty, and dishonors the Christian name. O keep your heart, and let the power and excellence of your religion be chiefly manifested when you are brought into the greatest straits.

4. Consider how desirable it is for a Christian to overcome his evil propensities. How much more present happiness it affords; how much better it is in every respect to mortify and subdue unholy feelings, than to give way to them. When upon your death-bed you come calmly to review your life, how comfortable will it be to reflect on the conquest which you have made over the depraved feelings of your heart. It was a memorable saying of Valentinian the emperor, when he was about to die: “Amongst all my conquests, there is but one that now comforts me” Being asked what that was, he answered, “I have overcome my worst enemy, my own sinful heart!”

5. Shame yourself, by contemplating the character of those who have been most eminent for meekness and submission. Above all, compare your temper with the Spirit of Christ. “Learn of me,” saith he, “for I am meek and lowly.” It is said of Calvin and Ursin, though both of choleric natures, that they had so imbibed and cultivated the meekness of Christ as not to utter an unbecoming word under the greatest provocations. And even many of the heathens have manifested great moderation and forbearance under their severest afflictions. Is it not a shame and a reproach that you should be outdone by them?

6. Avoid every thing which is calculated to irritate your feelings. It is true spiritual valor to keep as far as we can out of sins way. If you can but avoid the excitements to impetuous and rebellious feelings, or check them in their first beginnings, you will have but little to fear. The first workings of common sins are comparatively weak, they gain their strength by degrees; but in times of trial the motions of sin are strongest at first, the unsubdued temper breaks out suddenly and violently. But if you resolutely with. stand it at first, it will yield and give you the victory.

IX. The ninth season wherein the greatest diligence and skill are necessary to keep the heart, is the hour of temptation, when Satan besets the Christians heart, and takes the unwary by surprise. . . .

IX. The ninth season wherein the greatest diligence arid skill are necessary to keep the heart, is the hour of temptation, when Satan besets the Christians heart, and takes the unwary by surprise. To keep the heart at such times, is not less a mercy than a duty. Few Christians are so skillful in detecting the fallacies, and repelling the arguments by which the adversary incites them to sin, as to come off safe and whole in these encounters. Many eminent saints have smarted severely for

their want of watchfulness and diligence at such times. How then may a Christian keep his heart from yielding to temptation? There are several principal ways in which the adversary insinuates temptation, and urges compliance:

1. Satan suggests that here is pleasure to be enjoyed; the temptation is presented with a smiling aspect and an enticing voice: `What, are you so dull and phlegmatic as not to feel the powerful charms of pleasure? Who can withhold himself from such delights? Reader, you may be rescued from the danger of such temptations by repelling the proposal of pleasure. It is urged that the commission of sin will afford you pleasure. Suppose this were true, will the accusing and condemning rebukes of conscience and the flames of hell be pleasant too? Is there pleasure in the scourges of conscience? If so why did Peter weep so bitterly? why did David cry out of broken bones? You hear what is said of the pleasure of sin, and have you not read what David said of the effects of it? “Thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore; there is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger, neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin,” &c. If you yield to temptation, you must feel such inward distress on account of it, or the miseries of hell. But why should the pretended pleasure of sin allure you, when you know that unspeakably more real pleasure will arise from the mortification than can arise from the commission of sin. Will you prefer the gratification of some unhallowed passion, with the deadly poison which it will leave behind, to that sacred pleasure which arises from fearing and obeying God, complying with the dictates of conscience, and maintaining inward peace? Can sin afford any such delight as he feels who, by resisting temptation, has manifested the sincerity of his heart, and obtained evidence that he fears God, loves holiness, and hates sin?

2. The secrecy with which you may commit sin is made use of to induce compliance with temptation. The tempter insinuates that this indulgence will never disgrace you among men, for no one will know it. But recollect yourself. Does not God behold you? Is not the divine presence every where? What if you might hide your sin from the eyes of the world, you cannot hide it from God. No darkness nor shadow of death can screen you from his inspection. Besides have you no reverence for yourself? Can you do that by yourself which you dare not have others observe? Is not your conscience as a thousand witnesses? Even a heathen could say, “When thou art tempted to commit sin, fear thyself without any other witness.”

3. The prospect of worldly advantage often enforces temptation. It is suggested, `Why should you be so nice and scrupulous? Give yourself a little liberty, and you may better your condition: now is your time. This is a dangerous temptation, and must be promptly resisted. Yielding to such a temptation will do your soul more injury than any temporal acquisition can possibly do you good. And what would it profit you, if you should gain the whole world and lose your own soul? What can be compared with the value of your spiritual interests? or what can at all compensate for the smallest injury of them?

4. Perhaps the smallness of the sin is urged as a reason why you may commit it; thus: `It is but a little one, a small matter, a trifle; who Would stand upon such niceties? But is the Majesty of heaven little too? If you commit this sin you will offend a great God. Is there any little hell to torment little sinners in? No; the least sinners in hell are full of misery. There is great wrath treasured up for those whom the world regard as little sinners. But the less the sin, the less the inducement to commit it. Will you provoke God for a trifle? will you destroy your peace, wound

your conscience, and grieve the Spirit, all for nothing? What madness is this!

5. An argument to enforce temptation is sometimes drawn from the mercy of God and the hope of pardon —God is merciful, he will pass by this as an infirmity, he will not be severe to mark it. But stay: where do you find a promise of mercy to presumptuous sinners? Involuntary reprisals and lamented infirmities may be pardoned, “but the soul that doth aught presumptuously, the same reproacheth the Lord, and that soul shall be cut off from among his people.” If God is a being of so much mercy, how can you affront him? How can you make so glorious an attribute as the divine mercy an occasion of sin? Will you wrong him because he is good? Rather let his goodness lead you to repentance, and keep you from transgression.

6. Sometimes Satan encourages to the commission of sin, from the examples of holy men. Thus and thus they sinned, and were restored; therefore you may commit this sin, and yet. be a saint and be saved. Such suggestions must be instantly repelled. If good men have committed sins similar to that with which you are beset, did any good man ever sin upon such ground and from such encouragement as is here presented? Did God cause their examples to be recorded for your imitation, or for your warning? Are they not set up as beacons that you may avoid the rocks upon which they split? Are you willing to feel what they felt for sin? Dare you follow them in sin, and plunge yourself into such distress and danger as they incurred?—Reader, in these ways learn to keep your heart in the hour of temptation.

X. The time of doubting and of spiritual darkness constitutes another season when it is very difficult to keep the heart. . . .

X. The time of doubting and of spiritual darkness constitutes another season when it is very difficult to keep the heart. When the light and comfort of the divine presence is withdrawn; when the believer, from the prevalence of indwelling sin in one form or other, is ready to renounce his hopes, to infer desperate conclusions with respect to himself, to regard his former comforts as vain delusions, and his professions as hypocrisy; at such a time much diligence is necessary to keep the heart from despondency. The Christian’s distress arises from his apprehension of his spiritual state, and in general he argues against his possessing true religion, either from his having relapsed into the same sins from which he had formerly been recovered with shame and sorrow; or from the sensible declining of his affections from God; or from the strength of his affections toward creature enjoyments; or from his enlargement in public, while he is often confined and barren in private duties; or from some horrible suggestions of Satan, with which his soul is greatly perplexed; or, lastly, from God’s silence and seeming denial of his long depending prayers. Now in order to the establishment and support of the heart under these circumstances, it is necessary that you be acquainted with some general truths which have a tendency to calm the trembling and doubting soul; and that you be rightly instructed with regard to the above-mentioned causes of disquiet. Let me direct your attention to the following general truths:

1. Every appearance of hypocrisy does not prove the person who manifests it to be a hypocrite. You should carefully distinguish between the appearance and the predominance of hypocrisy. There are remains of deceitfulness in the best hearts; this was exemplified in David and Peter; but the prevailing frame of their hearts being upright, they were not denominated hypocrites for their conduct.

2. We ought to regard what can be said in our favor, as well as what may be said against us. It is the sin of upright persons sometimes, to exercise an unreasonable severity against themselves. They do not impartially consider the state of their souls. To make their state appear butter than it really is, indeed is the damning sin of self-flattering hypocrites; and to make their state appear worse than it really is, is the sin and folly of some good persons. But why should you be such an enemy to your own peace? Why read over the evidences of God's love to your soul, as a man does a book which he intends to confute? Why do you study evasions, and turn off those comforts which are due to you?

3. Every thing which may be an occasion of grief to the people of God, is not a sufficient ground for their questioning the reality of their religion. Many things may trouble, which ought not to stumble you. If upon every occasion you should call in question all that had ever been wrought upon you, your life would be made up of doubtings and fears, and you could never attain that settled inward peace, and live that life of praise and thankfulness which the Gospel requires.

4. The soul is not at all times in a suitable state to pass a right judgment upon itself. It is peculiarly unqualified for this in the hour of desertion or temptation. Such seasons must be improved rather for watching and resisting, than for judging and determining.

5. Whatever be the ground of one's distress, it should drive him to, not from God. Suppose you have sinned thus and so, or that you have been thus long and sadly deserted, yet you have no right to infer that you ought to be discouraged, as if there was no help for you in God. When you have well digested these truths, if your doubts and distress remain, consider what is now to be offered:

1. Are you ready to conclude that you have no part in the favor of God, because you are visited with some extraordinary affliction? If so, do you then rightly conclude that great trials are tokens of God's hatred? Does the Scripture teach this? And dare you infer the same with respect to all who have been as much or more afflicted than yourself? If the argument is good in your case, it is good in application to theirs, and more conclusive with respect to them, in proportion as their trials were greater than yours. Wo then to David, Job, Paul, and all who have been afflicted as they were! But had you passed along in quietness and prosperity; had God withheld those chastisements with which he ordinarily visits his people, would you not have had far more reason for doubts and distress than you now have?

2. Do you rashly infer that the Lord has no love to you, because he has withdrawn the light of his countenance? Do you imagine your state to be hopeless, because it is dark and uncomfortable? Be not hasty in forming this conclusion. If any of the dispensations of God to his people will bear a favorable as well as a harsh construction, why should they not be construed in the best sense? And may not God have a design of love rather than of hatred in the dispensation under which you mourn? May he not depart for a season, without departing for ever? You are not the first that have mistaken the design of God in withdrawing himself. "Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, my Lord hath forgotten me." But was it so? What saith the answer of God? "Can a woman forget her sucking child?" &c. But do you sink down under the apprehension that the evidences of a total and final desertion are discoverable in your experience? Have you then lost your conscientious tenderness with regard to sin? and are you inclined to forsake God? If so, you have reason indeed to be alarmed. But if your conscience is tenderly alive; if you are resolved to cleave to the Lord; if

the language of your heart is, I cannot forsake God, I cannot live without his presence; though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: then you have reason to hope that he will visit you again. It is by these exercises that he still maintains his interest in you.

Once more. Are sense and feelings suitable to judge of the dispensations of God by? Can their testimony be safely relied on? Is it safe to argue thus: 'If God bad any love for my soul, I should feel it now as well as in former times; but I cannot feel it, therefore it is gone?' May you not as well conclude, when the sun is invisible to you, that he has ceased to exist? Read Isaiah 1:10.

Now if there is nothing in the divine dealings with you which is a reasonable ground of your despondency and distress, let us inquire what there is in your own conduct for which you should be so cast down:

1. Have you committed sins from which you were formerly recovered with shame and sorrow? And do you thence conclude that you sin allowedly and habitually, and that your oppositions to sin were hypocritical? But do not too hastily give up all for lost. Is not your repentance and care renewed as often as you commit sin? Is it not the sin itself which troubles you, and is it not true, that the oftener you sin the more you are distressed? It is not so in customary sinning; of which Bernard excellently discourses thus: "When a man accustomed to restrain, sins grievously, it seems insupportable to him, yea he seems to descend alive into hell. In process of time it seems not insupportable, but heavy, and between insupportable and heavy there is no small descent. Next, such sinning becomes light, his conscience smites but faintly, and he regards not her rebukes. Then he is not only insensible to his guilt, but that which was bitter and displeasing has become in some degree sweet and pleasant. Now it is made a custom, and not only pleases, but pleases habitually. At length custom becomes nature; he cannot be dissuaded from it, but defends and pleads for it." This is allowed and customary sinning, this is the way of the wicked. But is not your way the contrary of this?

2. Do you apprehend a decline of your affections from God and from spiritual subjects? This may be your case, and yet there may be hope. But possibly you are mistaken with regard to this. There are many things to be learnt in Christian experience; it has relation to a great variety of subjects. You may now be learning what it is very necessary for you to know as a Christian. Now, what if you are not sensible of so lively affections, of such ravishing views as you had at first; may not your piety be growing more solid and consistent, and better adapted to practical purposes? Does it follow from your not always being in the same frame of mind, or from the fact that the same objects do not at all times excite the same feelings, that you have no true religion? Perhaps you deceive yourself by looking forward to what you would be, rather than contemplating what you are, compared with what you once were.

3. If the strength of your love to creature-enjoyments is the ground of desperate conclusions respecting yourself, perhaps you argue thus: "I fear that I love the creature more than God, if so, I have not true love to God. I sometimes feel stronger affections toward earthly comforts than I do toward heavenly objects, therefore my soul is not upright within me." If, indeed, you love the creature for itself, if you make it your end, and religion but a means, then you conclude rightly; for this is incompatible with supreme love to God. But may not a man love God more ardently and unchangeably than he does any thing, or all things else, and yet, when God is not the direct object of his thoughts, may he not be sensible of more violent affection for the creature than he has at

that time for God? As rooted malice indicates a stronger hatred than sudden though inure violent passion; so we must judge of our love, not by a violent motion of it now and then, but by the depth of its root and the constancy of its exercise. Perhaps your difficulty results from bringing your love to some foreign and improper test. Many persons have feared that when brought to some eminent trial they should renounce Christ and cleave to the creature; but when the trial came, Christ was every thing, and the world as nothing in their esteem. Such were the fears of some martyrs whose victory was complete. But you may expect divine assistance only at the time of, and in proportion to your necessity. If you would try your love, see whether you are willing to forsake Christ now.

4. Is the want of that enlargement in private which you find in public exercises an occasion of doubts and fears? Consider then whether there are not some circumstances attending public duties which are peculiarly calculated to excite your feelings and elevate your mind, and which cannot affect you in private. If so, your exercises in secret, if performed faithfully and in a suitable manner, may he profitable, though they have not all the characteristics of those in public. If you imagine that you have spiritual enlargement and enjoyment in public exercises while you neglect private duties, doubtless you deceive yourself. Indeed if you live in the neglect of secret duties, or are careless about them, you have great reason to fear. But if you regularly and faithfully perform them, it does not follow that they are vain and worthless, or that they are not of great value, because they are not attended with so much enlargement as you sometimes find in public. And what if the Spirit is pleased more highly to favor you with his gracious influence in one place and at one time than another, should this be a reason for murmuring and unbelief, or for thankfulness?

04.07c. Keep Heart in Time danger &Public Distraction

5. The vile or blasphemous suggestions of Satan sometimes occasion great perplexity and distress.— They seem to lay open an abyss of corruption in the heart, and to say there can be no grace here. But there may be grace in the heart where such thoughts are injected, though not, in the heart which consents to and cherishes them. Do you then abhor and oppose them? do you utterly refuse to give up yourself to their influence, and strive to keep holy and reverend thoughts of God, and of all religious objects? If so, such suggestions are involuntary, and no evidence against your piety.

6. Is the seeming denial of your prayers an occasion of despondency? Are you disposed to say, “If God had any regard for my soul he would have heard my petitions before now; but I have no answer from him, and therefore no interest in him?” But stay: though God’s abhorring and finally rejecting prayer is an evidence that he rejects the person who prays, yet, dare you conclude that he has rejected you, because an answer to your prayers is delayed, or because you do not discover it if granted? “May not God bear long with his own elect, that cry unto him day and night?”

Others have stumbled upon the same ground with you: “I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardst the voice of my supplication.” Now are there not some things in your experience which indicate that your prayers are not rejected, though answer to them is deferred? Are you not disposed to continue praying though you do not discover an answer? Are you not disposed still to ascribe righteousness to God, while you consider the cause of his silence as being in yourself? Thus did David: “O my God, I cry in the day time, and thou hearest not; and in the night, and am not silent: but thou art holy,” &c. Does not the delay of an answer to your prayers excite you to examine your own heart and try your ways, that you may find and remove the difficulty? If so, you may have reason for humiliation, but not for despair.

Thus I have shown you how to keep your heart in dark and doubting seasons. God forbid that any false heart should encourage itself from these things. It is lamentable, that when we give saints and sinners their proper portions, each is so prone to take up the other’s part.

XI. Another season, wherein the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when sufferings for religion are laid upon us. . . .

XI. Another season, wherein the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when sufferings for religion are laid upon us. Blessed is the man who in such a season is not offended in Christ. Now, whatever may be the kind or degree of your sufferings, if they are sufferings for Christ’s sake and the Gospel’s, spare no diligence to keep your heart. If you are tempted to shrink or waver under them, let what follows help you to repel and to surmount the instigation:

1. What reproach would you cast upon the Redeemer and his religion by deserting him at such a time as this! You would proclaim to the world, that how much soever you have boasted of the promises when you are put to the proof you dare hazard no thing upon your faith in them; and this will give the enemies of Christ an occasion to blaspheme. And will you thus furnish the triumphs of

the uncircumcised? Ah, if you did but value the name of Christ as much as many wicked men value their names, you could never endure that his should be exposed to contempt. Will proud dust and ashes hazard death or hell rather than have their names disgraced, and will you endure nothing to maintain the honor of Christ?

2. Dare you violate your conscience out of complaisance to flesh and blood? Who will comfort you when your conscience accuses and condemns you? What happiness can there be in life, liberty or friends, when inward peace is taken away? Consider well what you do.

3. Is not the public interest of Christ and his cause infinitely more important than any interest of your own, and should you not prefer his glory and the welfare of his kingdom before every thing else? Should any temporary suffering, or any sacrifice which you can be called to make, be suffered to come into competition with the honor of his name?

4. Did the Redeemer neglect your interest and think lightly of you, when for your sake he endured sufferings between which and yours there can be no comparison? Did he hesitate and shrink back? No: “He endured the cross, despising the shame.” And did he with unbroken patience and constancy endure so much for you; and will you flinch from momentary suffering in his cause?

5. Can you so easily cast off the society and the privileges of the saints and go over to the enemy’s side? Are you willing to withhold your support from those who are determined to persevere, and throw your influence in the scale against them? Rather let your body and soul be rent asunder. “If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”

6. How can you stand before Christ in the day of judgment, if you desert him now? “He that is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” Yet a little while, and the Son of man will come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, to judge the world. He will sit upon the throne of judgment, while all the nations are brought before him. Imagine yourself now to be witnessing the transactions of that day. Behold the wicked; behold the apostates; and hear the consuming sentence which is pronounced upon them, and see them sinking in the gulf of infinite and everlasting wo! And will you desert Christ now, will you forsake his cause to save a little suffering, or to protract an unprofitable life on earth, and thus expose yourself to the doom of the apostate? Remember, that if you can silence the remonstrances of conscience now, you cannot hinder the sentence of the Judge then. By these means keep your heart, that it depart not from the living God.

XII. The last season which I shall mention, in which the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when we are warned by sickness that our dissolution is at hand. . . .

XII. The last season which I shall mention, in which the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when we are warned by sickness that our dissolution is at hand. When the child of God draws nigh to eternity, the adversary makes his last effort; and as he cannot win the soul from God, as he cannot dissolve the bond which unites the soul to Christ, his great design is to awaken fears of death, to fill the mind with aversion and horror at the thoughts of dissolution from the body. Hence, what shrinking from a separation, what fear to grasp death’s cold hand, and unwillingness to depart, may sometimes be observed in the people of God. But we ought to die, as well as live, like saints.

I shall offer several considerations calculated to help the people of God in time of sickness, to keep their hearts loose from all earthly objects, and cheerfully willing to die:

1. Death is harmless to the people of God; its shafts leave no sting in them. Why then are you afraid that your sickness may be unto death? If you were to die in your sins; if death were to reign over you as a tyrant, to feed upon you as a lion doth upon his prey; if death to you were to be the precursor of hell, then you might reasonably startle and shrink back from it with horror and dismay. But if your sins are blotted out; if Christ has vanquished death in your behalf, so that you have nothing to encounter but bodily pain, and possibly not even that; if death will be to you the harbinger of heaven, why should you be afraid? why not bid it welcome? It cannot hurt you; it is easy and harmless; it is like putting off your clothes, on taking rest.

2. It may keep your heart from shrinking back, to consider that death is necessary to fit you for the full enjoyment of God. Whether you are willing to die or not, there certainly is no other way to complete the happiness of your soul. Death must do you the kind office to remove this veil of flesh, this animal life which separates you from God, before you can see and enjoy him fully. “Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.” And who would not be willing to die for the perfect enjoyment of God? Methinks one should look and sigh, like a prisoner, through the grates of this mortality: “O that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest.” Indeed most men need patience to die; but a saint, who understands what death will introduce him to, rather needs patience to live. On his death-bed he should often look out and listen to his Lord’s coming; and when he perceives his dissolution to be near, he should say, “The voice of my beloved; behold he cometh, leaping over the mountains, skipping over the hills.”

3. Consider that the happiness of heaven commences immediately after death. That happiness will not be deferred till the resurrection; but as soon as death has passed upon you, your soul will be swallowed up in life. When you have once loosed from this shore, you shall be quickly wafted to the shore of a glorious eternity. And can you not say, I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ? Did the soul and body die together, or did they sleep till the resurrection, as some have fancied, it would have been folly for Paul to desire a dissolution for the enjoyment of Christ; because he would have enjoyed more in the body than he could have enjoyed out of it. The Scripture speaks of but two ways in which the soul can properly live: viz, by faith and vision. These two comprehend its present and future existence.

Now, if when faith fails, sight should not immediately succeed, what would become of the soul? But the truth on this subject is clearly revealed in Scripture. See Luke 23:3; John 14:3, &c. What a blessed change then will death make in your condition! Rouse up, dying saint, and rejoice; let death do his work, that the angels may conduct your soul to the world of light.

4. It may increase your willingness to die, to reflect that by death God often removes his people out of the way of great troubles and temptations. When some extraordinary calamity is coming upon the world, God sometimes removes his saints out of the way of the evil. Thus Methuselah died the year before the flood; Augustine a little before the sacking of Hippo; Pareus just before the taking of Heidelburg. Luther observes that all the apostles died before the destruction of Jerusalem; and Luther himself died before the wars broke out in Germany. Now it may be that by death you will escape some grievous trial, which you could not and need not endure. But if no extraordinary trouble would come upon you in case your life were prolonged, yet God designs by

death to relieve you from innumerable evils and burdens which are inseparable from the present state. Thus you will be delivered from indwelling sin, which is the greatest trouble; from all temptations from whatever source; from bodily tempers and embarrassments; and from all the afflictions and sorrows of this life. The days of your mourning will be ended, and God will wipe away all tears from your eyes. Why then should you not hasten to depart?

5. If you still linger, like Lot in Sodom, what are your pleas and pretences for a longer life? Why are you unwilling to die? Are you concerned for the welfare of your relations? If so, are you anxious for their temporal support? Then let the word of God satisfy you: “Leave thy fatherless children to me, I will keep them alive, and let thy widows trust in me.” Luther says, in his last will, “Lord, thou hast given inc a wife and children, I have nothing to leave them, but I commit them unto thee. O Father of the fatherless and Judge of widows, nourish, keep and teach them.” But are you concerned for the spiritual welfare of your relations? Remember that you cannot convert them, if you should live; and God can make your prayers and counsels effectual when you are dead.

Perhaps you desire to serve God longer in this world. But if he has nothing further for you to do here, why not say with David, “Here am I, let him do what seemeth him good.” He is calling you to higher service in heaven, and can accomplish by other hands what you desire to do further here.—Do you feel too imperfect to go to heaven? Consider that you must be imperfect until you die; your sanctification cannot be complete until you get to heaven.

‘But,’ you say, ‘I want assurance; if I had that I could die easily.’ Consider, then, that a hearty willingness to leave all the world to be freed from sin, and to be with God, is the direct way to that desired assurance; no carnal person was ever willing to die upon this ground.

Thus I have shown how the people of God, in the most difficult seasons, may keep their hearts with alt diligence.

I now proceed to improve and apply the subject: . . .

You have seen that the keeping of the heart is the great work of a Christian, in which the very soul and life of religion consists, and without which all other duties are of no value in the sight of God. Hence, to the consternation of hypocrites and formal professors, I infer:

1. That the pains and labors which many persons have undergone in religion are of no value, and will turn to no good account. Many splendid services have been performed by men, which God will utterly reject: they will not stand on record in order to an eternal acceptance, because the performers took no heed to keep their hearts with God. This is that fatal rock on which thousands of vain professors dash and ruin themselves eternally; they are exact about the externals of religion, but regardless of their hearts. O how many hours have some professors spent in hearing, praying, reading and conferring! and yet, as to the main end of religion, they might as well have sat still and done nothing, the great work, I mean heart-work, being all the while neglected. Tell me, vain professor, when did you shed a tear for the deadness, hardness, unbelief or earthliness of your heart? And do you think your easy religion can save you? If so, you must invert Christ’s words, and say, Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to life, and many there be that go in thereat! Hear me, ye self-deluding hypocrite; you who have put off God with heartless duties; you who have acted in religion as if you had been blessing an idol; you who could not search your heart, and regulate it, and exercise it in your performances; how will you abide the coming of the

Lord? how will you hold up your head before him, when he shall say. ‘O you dissembling, false-hearted man! how could you profess religion? with what face could you so often tell me that you loved me, when you knew in your conscience that your heart was not with me?’ O tremble to think what a fearful judgment it is to be given over to a heedless and careless heart, and then to have religious duties instead of a rattle to quiet and still the conscience!

2. I infer for their humiliation, that unless the people of God spend more time and pains about their hearts than they ordinarily do, they are never like to do God much service, or to possess much comfort in this world. I may say of that Christian who is remiss and careless in keeping his heart, as Jacob said of Reuben, Thou shalt not excel. It grieves me to see how many Christians there are who live at a poor, low rate, both of service and comfort, and who go up and down dejected and complaining. But how can they expect it should be otherwise, while they live so carelessly?

O how little of their time is spent in the closet, in searching, humbling, and quickening their hearts!

Christian, you say your heart is dead, and do you wonder that it is, so long as you keep it not with the fountain of life? If your body had been dieted as your soul has, that would have been dead too. And you may never expect that your heart will be in a better state until you take more pains with it.

O Christians! I fear your zeal and strength have run in the wrong channel; I fear that most of us may take up the Church’s complaint: “They have made me the keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vine-yard have I not kept.” Two things have eaten up the time and strength of the professors of this generation, and sadly diverted them from heart-work.

First:—Fruitless controversies, started by Satan, I doubt not for the very purpose of taking us off from practical godliness, to make us puzzle our heads when we should be inspecting our hearts. How little have we regarded the observation: “It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, and not with meats,” (that is, with disputes and controversies about meats,) “which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.” How much better it is to see men live exactly, than to hear them dispute with subtlety! These unfruitful questions, how have they rent the churches, wasted time and spirits, and taken Christians off from their main business! ‘What think you, would it not have been better if the questions agitated among the people of God of late had been such as these:—“How shall a man distinguish the special from the common operations of the Spirit? How may a soul discern its first backslidings from God? How may a backsliding Christian recover his first love? How may the heart be preserved from unseasonable thoughts in duty? How may a bosom-sin be discovered and mortified?“ &c. Would not this course have tended more to the honor of religion and the comfort of souls? I am ashamed that the professors of this generation are yet insensible of their folly. O that God would turn their disputes and contentions into practical godliness!

Second:—Worldly cares and incumbrances have greatly increased the neglect of our hearts. The heads and hearts of multitudes have been filled with such a crowd and noise of worldly business that they have lamentably declined in their zeal, their love, their delight in God, and their heavenly, serious, and profitable way of conversing with men. How miserably have we entangled ourselves in this wilderness of trifles! Our discourses, our conferences, nay, our very prayers are tinged with it. We have had so much to do without, that we have been able to do but little within. And how many precious opportunities have we thus lost? How many admonitions of the Spirit have passed

over unfruitfully? How often has the Lord called to us, when our worldly thoughts have prevented us from hearing? But there certainly is a way to enjoy God even in our worldly employments. If we lose our views of him when engaged in our temporal affairs, the fault is our own. Alas! that Christians should stand at the door of eternity, having more work upon their hands than their time is sufficient for, and yet be filling their heads and hearts with trifles!

3. I infer, lastly, for the awakening of all, that if the keeping of the heart be the great work of a Christian, then there are but few real Christians in the world. If every one who has learned the dialect of Christianity, and who can talk like a saint; if every one who has gifts and parts, and who can make shift to preach, pray, or discourse like a Christian: in a word, if all such as associate with the people of God and partake of ordinances may pass for Christians, then indeed the number is great. But alas! how few can he found, if you judge them by this rule,—how few are there who conscientiously keep their hearts, watch their thoughts and look scrupulously to their motives! Indeed there are few closet-men among professors. It is easier for men to be reconciled to any other duties in religion than to these. The profane part of the world will not so much as meddle with the outside of any religious duties, and least of all with these; and as to the hypocrite, though he may be very particular in externals, you can never persuade him to undertake this inward, this difficult work; this work, to which there is no inducement from human applause; this work, which would quickly discover what the hypocrite cares not to know: so that by general consent this heart-work is left to the hands of a few retired ones, and I tremble to think in how few hands it is.

II. If the keeping of the heart be so important a business; if such great advantages result from it; if so many valuable interests be wrapt up in it, then let me call upon the people of God every where to engage heartily in this work. O study your hearts, watch your hearts, keep your hearts! Away with fruitless controversies and all idle questions; away with empty names and vain shows; away with unprofitable discourse and bold censures of others, and turn in upon yourselves. O that this day, this hour, you would resolve upon doing so!

Reader, methinks I shall prevail with you. All that I beg for is this, that you would step aside oftener to talk with God and your own heart; that you would not suffer every trifle to divert you; that you would keep a more true and faithful account of your thoughts and affections; that you would seriously demand of your own heart at least every evening, ‘O my heart, where hast thou been today, and what has engaged thy thoughts?’

If all that has been said by way of inducement be not enough, I have yet some motives to offer you:

If all that has been said by way of inducement be not enough, I have yet some motives to offer you:

1. The studying, observing, and diligently keeping your own heart, will surprisingly help you to understand the deep mysteries of religion. An honest, well-experienced heart is an excellent help to the head. Such a heart will serve for a commentary on a great part of the Scriptures. By means of such a heart you will have a better understanding of divine things than the most learned (graceless) man ever had, or call have; you will not only have a clearer, but a more interesting and profitable apprehension of them. A man may discourse orthodoxy and profoundly of the nature and effects of faith, the troubles and comforts of conscience, and the sweetness of communion

with God, who never felt the efficacy and sweet impression of these things upon his own soul. But how dark and dry are his notions compared with those of an experienced Christian!

2. The study and observation of your own heart will powerfully secure you against the dangerous and infecting errors of the times in which you live. For what think you is the reason why so many professors have departed from the faith, giving heed to fables? why have so many been led away by the error of the wicked? why have those who have sown corrupt doctrines had such plentiful harvests among us, but because they have met with a race of professors who never knew what belongs to practical godliness and the study and keeping of their hearts?

3. Your care and diligence in keeping your heart will prove one of the best evidences of your sincerity. I know no external act of religion which truly distinguishes the sound from the unsound professor. It is marvellous how far hypocrites go in all external duties; how plausibly they can order the outward man, hiding all their indecencies from the observation of the world. But they take no heed to their hearts; they are not in secret what they appear to be in public; and before this test no hypocrite can stand. They may, indeed, in a fit of terror, or on a death-bed, cry out of the wickedness of their hearts; but such extort ed complaints are worthy of no regard. No credit, in law, is to be given to the testimony of one upon the rack, because it may be supposed that the extremity of his torture will make him say any thing to get relief. But if self-jealousy, care and watchfulness be the daily workings and frames of your heart, you have some evidence of your sincerity.

4. How comfortable and how profitable would all ordinances and duties be to you, if your heart was faithfully kept. What lively communion might you have with God every time you approach him, if your heart was in a right frame! You might then say with David, “My meditation of Him shall be sweet.” It is the indisposition of the heart which renders ordinances, and secret duties so comfortless to some. They strive to raise their hearts to God, now pressing this argument upon them, then that, to quicken and affect them; yet they often get nearly through the exercise before their hearts begin to be interested in it; and some times they go away no better than they came. But the Christian whose heart is prepared by being constantly kept, enters immediately and heartily into his duties; he outstrips his sluggish neighbor, gets the first sight of Christ in a sermon, the first seal from Christ in a sacrament, the first communication of grace and love in secret prayer. Now if there be any thing valuable and comfortable in ordinances and private duties, look to your heart and keep it, I beseech you.

5. An acquaintance with your own heart will furnish you a fountain of matter in prayer. The man who is diligent in heart-work, will be richly supplied with matter in his addresses to God. He will not be confused for want of thoughts; his tongue will not falter for want of expressions.

6. The most desirable thing in the world, viz, the revival of religion among a people, may be effected by means of what I am urging upon you.

O that I might see the time when professors shall not walk in a vain show; when they shall please themselves no more with a name to live, while they are spiritually dead; when they shall be no more a company of frothy, vain persons; but when holiness shall shine in their conversation, and awe the world, and command reverence from all that are around them; when they shall warm the heart of those who come near them, and cause it to be said, God is in these men of a truth. And

may such a time be expected? Until heart-work becomes the business of professors, I have no hope of seeing a time so blessed! Does it not grieve you to see how religion is contemned and trampled under foot, and the professors of it ridiculed and scorned in the world? Professors, would you recover your credit? would you obtain an honorable testimony in the consciences of your very enemies? Then keep your hearts.

7. By diligence in keeping our hearts we should prevent the occasions of fatal scandals and stumbling-blocks to the world. Wo to the world because of offences!

Keep your heart faithfully, and you will be prepared for any situation or service to which you may be called. This, and this only can properly fit you for usefulness in any station; but with this you can endure prosperity or adversity; you can deny yourself, and turn your hand to any work. Thus Paul turned every circumstance to good account, and made himself so eminently useful. When he preached to others, he provided against being cast away himself: he kept his heart; and every thing in which lie excelled seems to have had a close connection with his diligence in keeping his heart.

9. If the people of God would diligently keep their hearts, their communion with each other would be unspeakably more inviting and profitable. Then “how goodly would be thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!” It is the fellowship which the people of God have with the Father and with the Son that kindles the desires of others to have communion with them. I tell you, that if saints would be persuaded to spend more time and take more pains about their hearts, there would soon be such a divine excellence in their conversation that others would account it no small privilege to be with or near them. It is the pride, passion and earthliness of our hearts, that has spoiled Christian fellowship. Why is it that when Christians meet they are often jarring and contending, but because their passions arc unmortified? Whence come their uncharitable censures of their brethren, but from their ignorance of themselves? Why are they so rigid and unfeeling toward those who have fallen, but because they do not feel their own weakness and liability to temptation? Why is their discourse so light and unprofitable when they meet, but because their hearts are earthly and vain? But now, if Christians would study their hearts more and keep them better, the beauty and glory of communion would be restored. They would divide no more, contend no more, censure rashly no more. They will feel right one toward another, when each is daily humbled under a sense of the evil of his own heart.

10. Lastly:—Keep your heart, and then the comforts of the Spirit and the influence of all ordinances will be more fixed and lasting than they now are. And do the consolations of God seem small to you?” Ah, you have reason to be ashamed that the ordinances of God, as to their quickening and comforting effects, should make so light and transient an impression on your heart.

Now, reader, consider well these special benefits of keeping the heart which I have mentioned. Examine their importance. Are they small matters? Is it a small matter to have your understanding assisted? your endangered soul rendered safe? your sincerity proved? your communion with God sweetened? your heart filled with matter for prayer? Is it a small thing to have the power of godliness? all fatal scandals removed? an instrumental fitness to serve Christ obtained? the communion of saints restored to its primitive glory? and the influence of ordinances abiding in the souls of saints? If these are no common blessings, no ordinary benefits, then surely it is a great and in dispensable duty to keep the heart with all diligence. And now are you inclined to undertake

the business of keeping your heart? are you resolved upon it? I charge you, then, to engage in it earnestly. Away with every cowardly feeling, and make up your mind to encounter difficulties. Draw your armor from the word of God. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in its commands, its promises, its threatenings; let it be fixed in your understanding, your memory, your conscience, your affections. You must learn to wield the sword of the Spirit (which is the word of God) familiarly, if you would defend your heart and conquer your enemies. You must call yourself frequently to an account; examine yourself as in the presence of the all seeing God; bring your conscience, as it were, to the bar of judgment. Beware how you plunge yourself into a multiplicity of worldly business; how you practise upon the maxims of the world; and how you venture at all to indulge your depraved propensities. You must exercise the utmost vigilance to discover and check the first symptoms of departure from God, the least decline of spirituality, or the least indisposition to meditation by yourself and holy conversation and fellowship with others. These things you must undertake, in the strength of Christ, with invincible resolution in the outset. And if you thus engage in this great work, he assured you shall not spend your strength for naught; comforts which you never felt or thought of will flow in upon you from every side. The diligent prosecution of this work will constantly afford you the most powerful excitements to vigilance and ardor in the life of faith, while it increases your strength and wears out your enemies. And when you have kept your heart with all diligence a little while; when you have fought the battles of this spiritual warfare, gained the ascendancy over the corruptions within, and vanquished the enemies without, then God will open the gate of heaven to you, and give you the portion which is promised to them that overcome. Awake then, this moment; get the world under your feet pant not for the things which a man may have, and eternally lose his soul; but bless God that you may have his service here, and the glory hereafter which he appoints to his chosen.

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

04.08a. Keeping the Heart in the Time of Outward Wants

Keeping the Heart in the Time of Outward Wants V. The fifth season, requiring diligence in keeping the heart, is the time of outward wants. . . .

V. The fifth season, requiring diligence in keeping the heart, is the time of outward wants. Although at such times we should complain to God, not of God, (the throne of grace being erected for a “time of need,”) yet when the waters of relief run low, and want begins to press, how prone are the best hearts to distrust the fountain! When the meal in the barrel and the oil in the cruse are almost spent, our faith and patience too are almost spent. It is now difficult to keep the proud and unbelieving heart in a holy quietude and sweet submission at the foot of God. It is an easy thing to talk of trusting God for daily bread, while we have a full barn or purse; but to say as the prophet, “Though the fig-tree should not blossom, neither fruit be in the vine, &c. yet will I rejoice in the Lord:” surely this is not easy. Would you know then how a Christian may keep his heart from distrusting God, or repining against him, when outward wants are either felt or feared?—The case deserves to be seriously considered, especially now, since it seems to be the design of Providence to empty the people of God of their creature fullness, and acquaint them with those difficulties to which hitherto they have been altogether strangers. To secure the heart from the dangers attending this condition, these considerations may, through the blessing of the Spirit, prove effectual:

1. If God reduces you to necessities, he therein deals no otherwise with you than he has done with some of the holiest men that ever lived. Your condition is not singular; though you have hitherto been a stranger to want, other saints have been familiarly acquainted with it. Hear what Paul says, not of himself only, but in the name of other saints reduced to like exigencies: “Even to the present hour, we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place.” To see such a man as Paul going up and down the world naked, and hungry, and houseless; one that was so far above thee in grace and holiness; one that did more service for God in a day than perhaps thou hast done in all thy days may well put an end to your repining. Have you forgotten how much even a David has suffered? How great were his difficulties! “Give, I pray thee,” says he to Nabal, “whatsoever cometh to thy hand, to thy servants, and to thy son David.” But why speak I of these? Behold a greater than any of them, even the Son of God, who is the heir of all things, and by whom the worlds were made, sometimes would have been glad of any thing, having nothing to eat. “And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry; and seeing a fig-tree, afar off, having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon.”

Hereby then God has set no mark of hatred upon you, neither can you infer want of love from want of bread. When thy repining heart puts the question, ‘Was there ever sorrow like unto mine?’ ask these worthies, and they will tell thee that though they did not complain as thou dost, yet their condition was as necessitous as thine is.

2. If God leave you not in this condition without a promise, you have no reason to repine or despond under it. That is a sad condition indeed to which no promise belongs. Calvin in his comment on Isaiah 9:1, explains in what sense the darkness of the captivity was not so great as that of the lesser incursions made by Tiglath Pileser. In the captivity, the city was destroyed and the temple burnt with fire: there was no comparison in the affliction, yet the darkness was not so great, because, says he, “there was a certain promise made in this case, but none in the other.” It is better to be as low as hell with a promise, than to be in paradise without one. Even the darkness of hell itself would be no darkness comparatively at all, were there but a promise to enlighten it. Now, God has left many sweet promises for the faith of his poor people to live upon in this condition; such as these: “O fear the Lord, ye his saints, for there is no want to them that fear him; the lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that fear the Lord shall not want any good thing.” “The eye of the Lord is upon the righteous to keep them alive in famine.” “No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” “When the poor and the needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.” Here you see their extreme wants, water being put for their necessaries of life; and their certain relief, “I the Lord will hear them;” in which it is supposed that they cry unto him in their distress, and he hears their cry. Having therefore these promises, why should not your distrustful heart conclude like David’s, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want?”

‘But these promises imply conditions: if they were absolute, they would afford more satisfaction.’ What are those tacit conditions of which you speak but these, that he will either supply or sanctify your wants; that you shall have so much as God sees fit for you? And does this trouble you? Would you have the mercy, whether sanctified or not? whether God sees it fit for you or not? The appetites of saints after earthly things should not be so ravenous as to seize greedily upon any enjoyment without regarding circumstances.

‘But when wants press, and I see not whence supplies should come, my faith in the promise shakes, and I, like murmuring Israel, cry, “He gave bread, can he give water also?”’ O unbelieving heart! when did his promises fail? who ever trusted them and was ashamed? May not God upbraid thee with thine unreasonable infidelity, as in Jeremiah 2:31, “Have I been a wilderness unto you?” or as Christ said to his disciples, “Since I was with you, lacked ye any thing?” Yea, may you not upbraid yourself; may you not say with good old Polycarp, “These many years I have served Christ, and found him a good Master?”

Indeed he may deny what your wantonness, but not what your want calls for. He will not regard the cry of your lusts, nor yet despise the cry of your faith: though he will not indulge your wanton appetites, yet he will not violate his. own faithful promises. These promises are your best security for eternal life; and it is strange they should not satisfy you for daily bread. Remember the words of the Lord, and solace your heart with them amidst all your wants. It is said of Epicurus, that in dreadful paroxysms of the cholic he often refreshed himself by calling to mind his inventions in philosophy; and of Possodonius the philosopher, that in an acute disorder he solaced himself with discourses on moral virtue; and when distressed, he would say, “O pain, thou dost nothing; though thou art a little troublesome, I will never confess thee to be evil.” If upon such grounds as these they could support themselves under such racking pains, and even deluded their diseases by them; how much rather should the promises of God, and the sweet experiences which have gone

along step by step with them, make you forget all your wants, and comfort you in every difficulty?

3. If it be bad now, it might have been worse. Has God denied thee the comforts of this life? He might have denied thee Christ, peace, and pardon also; and then thy case had been woful indeed.

You know God has done so to millions. How many such wretched objects max your eyes behold every day, that have no comfort in hand, nor yet in hope; that are miserable here, and will be so to eternity; that have a bitter cup, and nothing to sweeten it—no, not so much as any hope that it will be better. But it is not so with you: though you be poor in this world, yet you are "rich in faith, and an heir of the kingdom which God has promised." Learn to set spiritual riches over against temporal poverty. Balance all your present troubles with your spiritual privileges. Indeed if God has denied your soul the robe of righteousness to clothe it, the hidden manna to feed it, the heavenly mansion to receive it, you might well be pensive; but the consideration that he has not may administer comfort under any outward distress. When Luther began to be pressed by want, he said, "Let us be contented with our hard fare; for do not we feast upon Christ, the bread of life?" "Blessed be God (said Paul) who hath abounded to us in all spiritual blessings."

4. Though this affliction be great, God has far greater, with which he chastises the dearly beloved of his soul in this world. Should he remove this and inflict those, you would account your present state a very comfortable one, and bless God to be as you now are. Should God remove your present troubles, supply all your outward wants, give you the desire of your heart in creature-comforts; but hide his face from you, shoot his arrows into your soul, and cause the venom of them to drink up your spirit: should he leave you but a few days to the buffetings of Satan: should he hold your eyes but a few nights waking with horrors of conscience, tossing to and fro till the dawning of the day:—should he lead you through the chambers of death, show you the visions of darkness, and make his terrors set themselves in array against you: then tell me if you would not think it a great mercy to be back again in your former necessitous condition, with peace of conscience; and account bread and water, with God's favor, a happy state? O then take heed of repining. Say not that God deals hardly with you, lest you provoke him to convince you by your own sense that he has worse rods than these for unsubmissive and froward children.

5. If it be had now, it will be better shortly. Keep thy heart by this consideration, 'the meal in the barrel is almost spent; well, be it so, why should that trouble me, if I am almost beyond the need and use of these things?' The traveler has spent almost all his money; 'well,' says he, 'though my money be almost spent, my journey is almost finished too: I am near home, and shall soon be fully supplied.' If there be no candles in the house, it is a comfort to think that it is almost day, and then there will be no need of them. I am afraid, Christian, you misreckon when you think your provision is almost spent, and you have a great way to travel, many years to live and nothing to live upon; it may be not half so many, as you suppose In this be confident, if your provision be spent, either fresh supplies are coining, though you see not whence, or you are nearer your journey's end than you reckon yourself to be. Desponding soul, does it become a man traveling upon the road to that heavenly city, and almost arrived there, within a few days' journey of his Father's house, where all his wants shall be supplied, to be so anxious about a little meat, or drink, or clothes, which he fears he shall want by the way? It was nobly said by the forty martyrs when turned out naked in a frosty night to be starved to death, " The winter indeed is sharp and cold, but heaven is warm and comfortable; here we shiver for cold, but Abraham's bosom will make amends for all."

‘But,’ says the desponding soul, ‘I may die for want.’ Who ever did so? When were the righteous forsaken? If indeed it be so, your journey is ended, and you fully supplied.

‘But I am not sure of that; were I sure of heaven, it would be another matter.’ Are you not sure of that? then you have other matters to trouble yourself about than these; methinks these should be the least of all your cares. I do not find that souls perplexed about the want of Christ, pardon of sin, &c. are usually very solicitous about these things. He that seriously puts such questions as these, ‘What shall I do to be saved? how shall I know my sin is pardoned?’ does not trouble himself with, “What shall I eat, what shall I drink, or wherewithal shall I be clothed?”

6. Does it become the children of such a Father to distrust his all-sufficiency, or repine at any of his dispensations? Do you well to question his care and love upon every new exigency? Say, have you not formerly been ashamed of this? Has not your Father’s seasonable provision for you in former difficulties put you to the blush, and made you resolve never more to question his love and care? And yet will you again renew your unworthy suspicions of him? Disingenuous child! reason thus with yourself: “If I perish for want of what is good and needful for me, it must be either because my Father knows not my wants, Or has not wherewith to supply them, or regards not what becomes of me. Which of these shall I charge upon him? Not the first: for my Father knows what I have need of Not the second: for the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof; his name is God All-sufficient. Not the last: for as a Father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him; the Lord is exceeding pitiful and of tender mercy; he hears the young ravens when they cry:—and will he not hear me? Consider, says Christ, the fowls of the air; not the fowls at the door, that are fed every day by hand, but the fowls of the air that have none to provide for them. Does he feed and clothe his enemies, and will he forget his children? he heard even the cry of Ishmael in distress. O my unbelieving heart, dost thou yet doubt?”

7. Your poverty is not your sin, but your affliction. If you have not by sinful means brought it upon yourself, and if it be but an affliction, it may the more easily be borne. It is hard indeed to bear an affliction coming upon us as the fruit and punishment of sin. When men are under trouble upon that account; they say, ‘O if it were but a single affliction, coming from the hand of God by way of trial, I could bear it; but I have brought it upon myself by sin, it comes as the punishment of sin; the marks of God’s displeasure are upon it: it is the guilt within that troubles and galls more than the want without.’ But it is not so here; therefore you have no reason to be cast down under it.

‘But though there be no sting of guilt, yet this condition wants not other stings; as, for instance, The discredit of religion. I cannot comply with my engagements in the world, and thereby religion is likely to suffer.’ It is well you have a heart to discharge every duty; yet if God disable you by providence, it is no discredit to your profession that you do not that which you cannot do, so long as it is your desire and endeavor to do what you can and ought to do; and in this case God’s will is, that lenity and forbearance be toward you.

‘But it grieves me to behold the necessities of others, whom I was wont to relieve and refresh, but now cannot.’ If you cannot, it ceases to be your duty, and God accepts the drawing out of your soul to the hungry in compassion and desire to help them, though you cannot draw forth a full purse to relieve and supply them.

‘But I find such a condition full of temptations, a great hinderance in the way to heaven.’ Every condition in the world has its hinderances and attending temptations; and were you in a prosperous condition, you might there meet with more temptations and fewer advantages than you now have; for though I confess poverty as well as prosperity has its temptations, yet I am confident prosperity has not those advantages that poverty has. Here you have an opportunity to discover the sincerity of your love to God, when you can live upon him, find enough in him, and constantly follow him, even when all external inducements and motives fail.

Thus I have shown you how to keep your heart from the temptations and dangers attending a low condition in the world. When want oppresses and the heart begins to sink, then improve, and bless God for these helps to keep it.

VI. The sixth season requiring this diligence in keeping the heart, is the season of duty. . . .

VI. The sixth season requiring this diligence in keeping the heart, is the season of duty. Our hearts must be closely watched and kept when we draw nigh to God in public, private, or secret duties; for the vanity of the heart seldom discovers itself more than at such times. How often does the poor soul cry out, ‘O Lord, how gladly would I serve thee, but vain thoughts will not let me: I come to open my heart to thee, to delight my soul in communion with thee, but my corruptions oppose me: Lord, call off these vain thoughts, and suffer them not to estrange the soul that is espoused to thee.’ The question then is this: How may the heart be kept from distractions by vain thoughts in time of duty? There is a two-fold distraction, or wandering of the heart in duty: First, voluntary and habitual, They set not their hearts aright, and their spirit was not steadfast with God.” This is the case of formalists, and it proceeds from the want of a holy inclination of the heart to God; their hearts are under the power of their lusts, and therefore it is no wonder that they go after their lusts, even when they are about holy things. Secondly, involuntary and lamented distractions: “I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me; O wretched man that I am,” &c. This proceeds not from the want of a holy inclination or aim, but from the weakness of grace and the want of vigilance in opposing indwelling sin. But it is not my business to show you how these distractions come into the heart but rather how to get them out, and prevent their future admission:

1. Sequester yourself from all earthly employments, and set apart some time for solemn preparation to meet God in duty. You cannot come directly from the world into God’s presence without finding a savor of the world in your duties. It is with the heart (a few minutes since plunged in the world, now in the presence of God) as it is with the sea after a storm, which still continues working, muddy and disquiet, though the wind be laid and the storm be over. Your heart must have some time to settle. Few musicians can take an instrument and play upon it without some time and labor to tune it; few Christians can say with David, “My heart is fixed, O God, it is fixed.” When you go to God in any duty, take your heart aside and say, ‘O my soul, I am now engaged in the greatest work that a creature was ever employed about; I am going into the awful presence of God upon business of everlasting moment. O my soul, leave trifling now; be composed, be watchful, be serious; this is no common work, it is soul-work; it is work for eternity; it is work which will bring forth fruit to life or death in the world to come.’ Pause awhile and consider your sins, your wants, your troubles; keep your thoughts awhile on these before you address yourself to duty. David first mused, and then spake with his tongue.

2. Having composed your heart by previous meditation, immediately set a guard upon your senses. How often are Christians in danger of losing the eyes of their mind by those of their body! Against this David prayed, “Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou me in thy way.” This may serve to expound the Arabian proverb: “Shut the windows that the house may be light.” It were well if you could say in the commencement, as a holy man once said when he came from the performance of duty: “Be shut, O my eyes, be shut; for it is impossible that you should ever discern such beauty and glory in any creature as I have now seen in God.” You must avoid all occasions of distraction from without, and imbibe that intenseness of spirit in the work of God which locks up the eye and ear against vanity.

3. Beg of God a mortified fancy. A working fancy, (saith one,) how much soever it be extolled among men, is a great snare to the soul, except it work in fellowship with right reason and a sanctified heart. The fancy is a power of the soul, placed between the senses and the understanding; it is that which first stirs itself in the soul, and by its motions the other powers of the soul are brought into exercise; it is that in which thoughts are first formed, and as that is, so are they. If imaginations be not first cast down, it is impossible that every thought of the heart should be brought into obedience to Christ. The fancy is naturally the wildest and most untameable power of the soul. Some Christians have much to do with it; and the more spiritual the heart is, the more does a wild and vain fancy disturb and perplex it. It is a sad thing that one’s imagination should call off the soul from attending on God, when it is engaged in communion with him. Pray earnestly and perseveringly that your fancy may be chastened and sanctified, and when this is accomplished your thoughts will be regular and fixed.

4. If you would keep your heart from vain excursions when engaged in duties, realize to yourself, by faith, the holy and awful presence of God. If the presence of a grave man would compose you to seriousness, how much more should the presence of a holy God? Do you think that you would dare to be gay and light if you realized the presence and inspection of the Divine Being? Remember where you are when engaged in religious duty, and act as if you believed in the omniscience of God. “All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” Realize his infinite holiness, his purity, his spirituality.

Strive to obtain such apprehensions of the greatness of God as shall suitably affect your heart; and remember his jealousy over his worship. “This is that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified.” “A man that is praying (says Bernard) should behave himself as if he were entering into the court of heaven, where he sees the Lord upon his throne, surrounded with ten thousand of his angels and saints ministering unto him.”—When you come from an exercise in which your heart has been wandering and listless, what can you say? Suppose all the vanities and impertinences which have passed through your mind during a devotional exercise were written down and interlined with your petitions, could you have the face to present them to God? Should your tongue utter all the thoughts of your heart when at tending the worship of God, would not men abhor you? Yet your thoughts are perfectly known to God. O think upon this scripture: “God is greatly to be feared in the assemblies of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are round about him.” Why did the Lord descend in thunderings and lightnings and dark clouds upon Sinai? why did the mountains smoke under him, the people quake and tremble round about him, Moses himself not excepted? but to teach the people this great truth: “Let us have grace, whereby we may serve Him

acceptably, with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire." Such apprehensions of the character and presence of God will quickly reduce a heart inclined to vanity to a more serious frame.

5. Maintain a prayerful frame of heart in the intervals of duty. What reason can be assigned why our hearts are so dull, so careless, so wandering, when we hear or pray, but that there have been long intermissions in our communion with God? If that divine unction, that spiritual fervor, and those holy impressions, which we obtain from God while engaged in the performance of one duty, were preserved to enliven and engage us in the performance of another, they would be of incalculable service to keep our hearts serious and devout. For this purpose, frequent ejaculations between stated and solemn duties are of most excellent use: they not only preserve the mind in a composed and pious frame, but they connect one stated duty, as it were, with another, and keep the attention of the soul alive to all its interests and obligations.

6. If you would have the distraction of your thoughts prevented, endeavor to raise your affections to God, and to engage them warmly in your duty. When the soul is intent upon any work, it gathers in its strength and bends all its thoughts to that work; and when it is deeply affected, it will pursue its object with intenseness, the affections will gain, an ascendancy over the thoughts and guide them. But deadness causes distraction, and distraction increases deadness. Could you but regard your duties as the medium in which you might walk in communion with God in which your soul might be filled with those ravishing and matchless delights which his presence affords, you might have no inclination to neglect them. But if you would prevent the recurrence of distracting thoughts, if you would find your happiness in the performance of duty, you must not only be careful that you engage in what is your duty, bat labor with patient and persevering exertion to interest your feelings in it. Why is your heart so inconstant, especially in secret duties; why are you ready to be gone, almost as soon as you are come into the presence of God, but because your affections are not engaged?

7. When you are disturbed by vain thoughts, humble yourself before God, and call in assistance from Heaven. When the messenger of Satan buffeted St. Paul by wicked suggestions, (as is supposed) he mourned before God on account of it. Never slight wandering thoughts in duty as small matters; follow every such thought with a deep regret. Turn to God with such words as these: 'Lord, I came hither to commune with thee, and here a busy adversary and a vain heart, conspiring together, have opposed me. O my God what a heart have I! shall I never wait upon thee without distraction? when shall I enjoy an hour of free communion with thee? Grant me thy assistance at this time; discover thy glory to me, and my heart will quickly be recovered. I came hither to enjoy thee, and shall I go away without thee? Behold my distress, and help me!' —Could you but sufficiently be wail your distractions, and repair to God for deliverance from them, you would gain relief.

8. Look upon the success and the comfort of your duties, as depending very much upon the keeping of your heart close with God in them. These two things, the success of duty and the inward comfort arising from the performance of it, are unspeakably dear to the Christian; but both of these will be lost if the heart be in a listless state. "Surely God heareth not vanity, nor doth the Almighty regard it." The promise is made to a heart engaged: "Then shall ye seek for me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your hearts." When you find your heart under the power of

deadness and distraction, say to yourself, ‘O what do I lose by a careless heart now! My praying seasons , are the most valuable portions of my life: could I but raise my heart to God, I might now obtain such mercies as would be matter of praise to all eternity.’

9. Regard your carefulness or carelessness in this matter as a great evidence of your sincerity, or hypocrisy. Nothing will alarm an upright heart more than this. ‘What shall I give way to a customary wandering of the heart from God? Shall the spot of the hypocrite appear upon my soul? Hypocrites, indeed, can drudge on in the round of duty, never regarding the frame of their hearts; but shall I do so? Never— never let me be satisfied with empty duties. Never let me take my leave of a duty until my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.’

10. It will be of special use to keep your heart with God in duty, to consider what influence all your duties will have upon your eternity. Your religious seasons are your seed times, and in another world you must reap the fruits of what you sow in your duties here, If you sow to the flesh, you will reap corruption; if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap life everlasting. Answer seriously these questions: Are you willing to reap the fruit of vanity in the world to come? Dare you say, when your thoughts are roving to the ends of the earth in duty, when you scarce mind what you say or hear, ‘Now, Lord, I am sowing to the Spirit; now I am providing and laying up for eternity; now I am seeking for glory, honor and immortality; now I am striving to enter in at the strait gate; now I am taking the kingdom of heaven by holy violence!’ Such reflections are well calculated to dissipate vain thoughts.

VII. The seventh season, which requires more than common diligence to keep the heart, is when we receive injuries and abuses from men. Such is the depravity and corruption of man, that one is become as a wolf or a tiger to another. And as men are naturally cruel and oppressive one to another, so the wicked conspire to abuse and wrong the people of God, “The wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he.” Now when we are thus abused and wronged, it is hard to keep the heart from revengeful motions; to make it meekly and quietly commit the cause to Him that judgeth righteously; to prevent the exercise of any sinful affection. The spirit that is in us lusteth to revenge; but it must not be so. We have choice helps in the Gospel to keep our hearts from sinful motions against our enemies, and to sweeten our embittered spirits. Do you ask how a Christian may keep his heart from revengeful motions under the greatest injuries and abuses from men? I reply: When you find your heart begin to be inflamed by revengeful feelings, immediately reflect on the following things

1. Urge upon your heart the severe prohibitions of revenge contained in the law of God. However gratifying to your corrupt propensities revenge may be, remember that it is forbidden. Hear the word of God: “Say not, I will recompense evil.” Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me. “Recompense to no man evil for evil. Avenge not yourselves, but give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.” On the contrary. “If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink.” It was an argument urged by the Christians to prove their religion to be supernatural and pure, that it forbids revenge, which is so agreeable to nature; and it is to be wished that such an argument might not be laid aside. Awe your heart, then, with the authority of God in the Scriptures; and when carnal reason says, ‘My enemy deserves to be hated,’ let conscience reply, ‘But doth God deserve to be disobeyed?’ ‘Thus and thus hath he done, and so hath he wronged me;’ ‘But what hath God done that 1 should wrong him? If my

enemy dares boldly to break the peace, shall I be so wicked as to break the precept? if he fears not to wrong me, shall not I fear to wrong God?' Thus let the fear of God restrain and calm your feelings.

2. Set before your eyes the most eminent patterns of meekness and forgiveness, that you may feel the force of their example. This is the way to cut off the common pleas of flesh and blood for revenge: as thus, 'No man would bear such an affront;' yes, others have borne as bad, and worse ones. 'But I shall be reckoned a coward, a fool, if I pass by this:' no matter, so long as you follow the examples of the wisest and holiest of men. Never did any one suffer more or greater abuses from men than Jesus did, nor did any one ever endure insult and reproach and every kind of abuse in a more peaceful and forgiving manner; when he Was reviled he reviled not again; when he suffered. he threatened not when his murderers. crucified him he prayed Father, forgive them; and herein he hath set us an example, that we should follow his steps. Thus his apostles imitated him: "Being reviled," say they, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat." I have often heard it reported of the holy Mr. Dod, that when a man, enraged at his close, convincing doctrine, assaulted him, smote him on the face and dashed out two of his teeth; that meek servant of Christ spit out the teeth and blood into his hand, and said, "See here, you have knocked out two of my teeth, and that without any just provocation; but on condition that I might do your soul good, I would give you leave to knock out all the rest." Here was exemplified the excellency of the Christian spirit. Strive then for this spirit, which constitutes the true excellence of Christians. Do what others cannot do, keep this spirit in exercise, and you will preserve peace in your own soul and gain the victory over your enemies.

2. Consider the character of the person who has wronged you. He is either a good or a wicked man. If he is a good man, there is light and tenderness in his conscience, which sooner or later will bring him to a sense of the evil of what he has done. If he is a good man, Christ has forgiven him greater injuries than he has done to you; and why should not you forgive him? Will Christ not upbraid him for any of his wrongs, but frankly forgive them all; and will you take him by the throat for some petty abuse which he has offered you?

3. But if a wicked man has injured or insulted you, truly you have more reason to exercise pity than revenge toward him. He is in a deluded and miserable state; a slave to sin and an enemy to righteousness. If he should ever repent, he will be ready to make you reparation; if he continues impenitent, there is a day coming when .he will be punished to the extent of his deserts. You need not study revenge, God will execute vengeance upon him.

4. Remember that by revenge you can only gratify a sinful passion, which by forgiveness you might conquer. Suppose that by revenge you might destroy one enemy; yet, by exercising the Christian's temper you might conquer three—your own lust, Satan's temptation, and your enemy's heart. If by revenge you should overcome your enemy, the victory would be unhappy and inglorious, for in gaining it you would be overcome by your own corruption; but by exercising a meek and forgiving temper, you will always come off with honor and success. It must be a very disingenuous nature indeed upon which meekness and forgiveness will not operate; that must be a flinty heart which this fire will not melt. Thus David gained such a victory over Saul his persecutor, that "Saul lifted up his voice and wept, and he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I."

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5. Seriously propose this question to your own heart: ‘Have I got any good by means of the wrongs and injuries which I have received?’ If they have done you no good, turn your revenge upon yourself. You have reason to be filled with shame and sorrow that you should have a heart which can deduce no good from such troubles; that your temper should be so unlike that of Christ. The patience and meekness of other Christians have turned all the injuries offered to them to a good account; their souls have been animated to praise God when they have been loaded with reproaches from the world. “I thank my God,” said Jerome, “that I am worthy to be hated of the world.” But if you have derived any benefit from the reproaches and wrongs which you have received, if they have put you upon examining your own heart, if they have made you more careful how you conduct, if they have convinced you of the value of a sanctified temper; will you not forgive them? will you not forgive one who has been instrumental of so much good to you? What though he meant it for evil? if through the Divine blessing your happiness has been promoted by what he has done, why should you even have a hard thought of him?

6. Consider by whom all your troubles are ordered. This will be of great use to keep your heart from revenge; this will quickly calm and sweeten your temper. When Shimei railed at David and cursed him, the spirit of that good man was not at all poisoned by revenge; for when Abishai offered him. if he pleased, the head of Shimei, the king said, “Let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David: who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?” It may be that God uses him as his rod to chastise me, because by my sin I gave the enemies of God occasion to blaspheme; and shall I be angry with the instrument? how irrational were that! Thus Job was quieted; he did not rail and meditate revenge upon the Chaldeans and Sabeans, but regarded God as the orderer of his troubles, and said, “The Lord hath taken away, blessed be his name.”

7. Consider how you are daily and hourly wronging God, and you will not be so easily inflawed with revenge against those who have wronged you. You are constantly affronting God, yet he does not take vengeance on you, but bears with you and forgives; and will you rise up and avenge yourself upon others? Reflect on this cutting rebuke: “O thou wicked and slothful servant! I forgave thee all that debt because thou desiredst me; shouldst thou not also have compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?” None should be so filled with forbearance and mercy to such as wrong them, as those who have experienced the riches of mercy themselves. The mercy of God to us should melt our hearts into mercy toward others. It is impossible that we should be cruel to others, except we forget how kind and compassionate God hath been to us. And if kindness cannot prevail in us, methinks fear should:—“If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

8. Let the consideration that the day of the Lord draweth nigh, restrain you from anticipating it by acts of revenge. Why are you so hasty? is not the Lord at hand to avenge all his abused servants? “Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth, &c.

Be ye also patient, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned. Behold, the Judge standeth at the door. Vengeance belongeth unto God, and will you wrong yourself so much as to assume his work?

VIII. The next season in which special exertion is necessary to keep the heart, is when we meet with great trials. . . .

VIII. The next season in which special exertion is necessary to keep the heart, is when we meet with great trials. In such cases the heart is apt to be suddenly transported with pride, impatience, or other sinful passions. Many good people are guilty of hasty and very sinful conduct in such instances; and all have need to use diligently the following means to keep their hearts submissive and patient under great trials:

1. Get humble and abasing thoughts of yourself. The humble is ever the patient man. Pride is the source of irregular and sinful passions. A lofty, will be an unyielding and peevish spirit. When we over-rate ourselves, we think that we are treated unworthily, that our trials are too severe: thus we cavil and repine. Christian, you should have such thoughts of yourself as would put a stop to these murmurings. You should have lower and more humiliating views of yourself than any other one can have of you. Get humility, and you will have peace whatever be your trial.

2. Cultivate a habit of communion with God. This will prepare you for whatever may take place. This will so sweeten your temper and calm your mind as to secure you against surprisals. This will produce that inward peace which will make you superior to your trials. Habitual communion with God will afford you enjoyment, which you can never be willing to interrupt by sinful feeling. When a Christian is calm and submissive under his afflictions, probably he derives support and comfort in this way; but he who is discomposed, impatient, or fretful, shows that `all is not right within—he cannot be supposed to practise communion with God.

3. Let your mind be deeply impressed with an apprehension of the evil nature and effects of an unsubmissive and restless temper. It grieves the Spirit of God, and induces his departure. His gracious presence and influence are enjoyed only where peace and quiet submission prevail. The indulgence of such a temper gives the adversary an advantage. Satan is an angry and discontented spirit. He finds no rest but in restless hearts. He bestirs himself when the spirits are in commotion; sometimes he fills the heart with ungrateful and rebellious thoughts; sometimes he inflames the tongue with indecent language. Again, such a temper brings great guilt upon the conscience, unfits the soul for any duty, and dishonors the Christian name. O keep your heart, and let the power and excellence of your religion be chiefly manifested when you are brought into the greatest straits.

4. Consider how desirable it is for a Christian to overcome his evil propensities. How much more present happiness it affords; how much better it is in every respect to mortify and subdue unholy feelings, than to give way to them. When upon your death-bed you come calmly to review your life, how comfortable will it be to reflect on the conquest which you have made over the depraved feelings of your heart. It was a memorable saying of Valentinian the emperor, when he was about to die: “Amongst all my conquests, there is but one that now comforts me” Being asked what that was, he answered, “I have overcome my worst enemy, my own sinful heart!”

5. Shame yourself, by contemplating the character of those who have been most eminent for meekness and submission. Above all, compare your temper with the Spirit of Christ. “Learn of me,” saith he, “for I am meek and lowly.” It is said of Calvin and Ursin, though both of choleric natures, that they had so imbibed and cultivated the meekness of Christ as not to utter an unbecoming word under the greatest provocations. And even many of the heathens have manifested great moderation and forbearance under their severest afflictions. Is it not a shame and a reproach that you should be outdone by them?

6. Avoid every thing which is calculated to irritate your feelings. It is true spiritual valor to keep as far as we can out of sins way. If you can but avoid the excitements to impetuous and rebellious feelings, or check them in their first beginnings, you will have but little to fear. The first workings of common sins are comparatively weak, they gain their strength by degrees; but in times of trial the motions of sin are strongest at first, the unsubdued temper breaks out suddenly and violently. But if you resolutely with. stand it at first, it will yield and give you the victory.

IX. The ninth season wherein the greatest diligence and skill are necessary to keep the heart, is the hour of temptation, when Satan besets the Christians heart, and takes the unwary by surprise. . . .

IX. The ninth season wherein the greatest diligence arid skill are necessary to keep the heart, is the hour of temptation, when Satan besets the Christians heart, and takes the unwary by surprise. To keep the heart at such times, is not less a mercy than a duty. Few Christians are so skillful in detecting the fallacies, and repelling the arguments by which the adversary incites them to sin, as to come off safe and whole in these encounters. Many eminent saints have smarted severely for their want of watchfulness and diligence at such times. How then may a Christian keep his heart from yielding to temptation? There are several principal ways in which the adversary insinuates temptation, and urges compliance:

1. Satan suggests that here is pleasure to be enjoyed; the temptation is presented with a smiling aspect and an enticing voice: `What, are you so dull and phlegmatic as not to feel the powerful charms of pleasure? Who can withhold himself from such delights? Reader, you may be rescued from the danger of such temptations by repelling the proposal of pleasure. It is urged that the commission of sin will afford you pleasure. Suppose this were true, will the accusing and condemning rebukes of conscience and the flames of hell be pleasant too? Is there pleasure in the scourges of conscience? If so why did Peter weep so bitterly? why did David cry out of broken bones? You hear what is said of the pleasure of sin, and have you not read what David said of the effects of it? “Thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore; there is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger, neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin,” &c. If you yield to temptation, you must feel such inward distress on account of it, or the miseries of hell. But why should the pretended pleasure of sin allure you, when you know that unspeakably more real pleasure will arise from the mortification than can arise from the commission of sin. Will you prefer the gratification of some unhallowed passion, with the deadly poison which it will leave behind, to that sacred pleasure which arises from fearing and obeying God, complying with the dictates of conscience, and maintaining inward peace? Can sin afford any such delight as he feels who, by resisting temptation, has manifested the sincerity of his heart, and obtained evidence that he fears God, loves holiness, and hates sin?

2. The secrecy with which you may commit sin is made use of to induce compliance with temptation. The tempter insinuates that this indulgence will never disgrace you among men, for no one will know it. But recollect yourself. Does not God behold you? Is not the divine presence every where? What if you might hide your sin from the eyes of the world, you cannot hide it from God. No darkness nor shadow of death can screen you from his inspection. Besides have you no reverence for yourself? Can you do that by yourself which you dare not have others observe? Is not your conscience as a thousand witnesses? Even a heathen could say, “When thou art tempted to commit sin, fear thyself without any other witness.”

3. The prospect of worldly advantage often enforces temptation. It is suggested, `Why should you be so nice and scrupulous? Give yourself a little liberty, and you may better your condition: now is your time. This is a dangerous temptation, and must be promptly resisted. Yielding to such a temptation will do your soul more injury than any temporal acquisition can possibly do you good. And what would it profit you, if you should gain the whole world and lose your own soul? What can be compared with the value of your spiritual interests? or what can at all compensate for the smallest injury of them?

4. Perhaps the smallness of the sin is urged as a reason why you may commit it; thus: `It is but a little one, a small matter, a trifle; who Would stand upon such niceties? But is the Majesty of heaven little too? If you commit this sin you will offend a great God. Is there any little hell to torment little sinners in? No; the least sinners in hell are full of misery. There is great wrath treasured up for those whom the world regard as little sinners. But the less the sin, the less the inducement to commit it. Will you provoke God for a trifle? will you destroy your peace, wound your conscience, and grieve the Spirit, all for nothing? What madness is this!

5. An argument to enforce temptation is sometimes drawn from the mercy of God and the hope of pardon —God is merciful, he will pass by this as an infirmity, he will not be severe to mark it. But stay: where do you find a promise of mercy to presumptuous sinners? Involuntary reprisals and lamented infirmities may be pardoned, “but the soul that doth aught presumptuously, the same reproacheth the Lord, and that soul shall be cut off from among his people.” If God is a being of so much mercy, how can you affront him? How can you make so glorious an attribute as the divine mercy an occasion of sin? Will you wrong him because he is good? Rather let his goodness lead you to repentance, and keep you from transgression.

6. Sometimes Satan encourages to the commission of sin, from the examples of holy men. Thus and thus they sinned, and were restored; therefore you may commit this sin, and yet. be a saint and be saved. Such suggestions must be instantly repelled. If good men have committed sins similar to that with which you are beset, did any good man ever sin upon such ground and from such encouragement as is here presented? Did God cause their examples to be recorded for your imitation, or for your warning? Are they not set up as beacons that you may avoid the rocks upon which they split? Are you willing to feel what they felt for sin? Dare you follow them in sin, and plunge yourself into such distress and danger as they incurred?—Reader, in these ways learn to keep your heart in the hour of temptation.

X. The time of doubting and of spiritual darkness constitutes another season when it is very difficult to keep the heart. . . .

X. The time of doubting and of spiritual darkness constitutes another season when it is very difficult to keep the heart. When the light and comfort of the divine presence is withdrawn; when the believer, from the prevalence of indwelling sin in one form or other, is ready to renounce his hopes, to infer desperate conclusions with respect to himself, to regard his former comforts as vain delusions, and his professions as hypocrisy; at such a time much diligence is necessary to keep the heart from despondency. The Christian's distress arises from his apprehension of his spiritual state, and in general he argues against his possessing true religion, either from his having relapsed into the same sins from which he had formerly been recovered with shame and sorrow; or from the sensible declining of his affections from God; or from the strength of his affections toward creature enjoyments; or from his enlargement in public, while he is often confined and barren in private duties; or from some horrible suggestions of Satan, with which his soul is greatly perplexed; or, lastly, from God's silence and seeming denial of his long depending prayers. Now in order to the establishment and support of the heart under these circumstances, it is necessary that you be acquainted with some general truths which have a tendency to calm the trembling and doubting soul; and that you be rightly instructed with regard to the above-mentioned causes of disquiet. Let me direct your attention to the following general truths:

1. Every appearance of hypocrisy does not prove the person who manifests it to be a hypocrite. You should carefully distinguish between the appearance and the predominance of hypocrisy. There are remains of deceitfulness in the best hearts; this was exemplified in David and Peter; but the prevailing frame of their hearts being upright, they were not denominated hypocrites for their conduct.

2. We ought to regard what can be said in our favor, as well as what may be said against us. It is the sin of upright persons sometimes, to exercise an unreasonable severity against themselves. They do not impartially consider the state of their souls. To make their state appear butter than it really is, indeed is the damning sin of self-flattering hypocrites; and to make their state appear worse than it really is, is the sin and folly of some good persons. But why should you be such an enemy to your own peace? Why read over the evidences of God's love to your soul, as a man does a book which he intends to confute? Why do you study evasions, and turn off those comforts which are due to you?

3. Every thing which may be an occasion of grief to the people of God, is not a sufficient ground for their questioning the reality of their religion. Many things may trouble, which ought not to stumble you. If upon every occasion you should call in question all that had ever been wrought upon you, your life would be made up of doubtings and fears, and you could never attain that settled inward peace, and live that life of praise and thankfulness which the Gospel requires.

4. The soul is not at all times in a suitable state to pass a right judgment upon itself. It is peculiarly unqualified for this in the hour of desertion or temptation. Such seasons must be improved rather for watching and resisting, than for judging and determining.

5. Whatever be the ground of one's distress, it should drive him to, not from God. Suppose you have sinned thus and so, or that you have been thus long and sadly deserted, yet you have no right to infer that you ought to be discouraged, as if there was no help for you in God. When you have well digested these truths, if your doubts and distress remain, consider what is now to be offered:

1. Are you ready to conclude that you have no part in the favor of God, because you are visited with some extraordinary affliction? If so, do you then rightly conclude that great trials are tokens of God's hatred? Does the Scripture teach this? And dare you infer the same with respect to all who have been as much or more afflicted than yourself? If the argument is good in your case, it is good in application to theirs, and more conclusive with respect to them, in proportion as their trials were greater than yours. Wo then to David, Job, Paul, and all who have been afflicted as they were! But had you passed along in quietness and prosperity; had God withheld those chastisements with which he ordinarily visits his people, would you not have had far more reason for doubts and distress than you now have?

2. Do you rashly infer that the Lord has no love to you, because he has withdrawn the light of his countenance? Do you imagine your state to be hopeless, because it is dark and uncomfortable? Be not hasty in forming this conclusion. If any of the dispensations of God to his people will bear a favorable as well as a harsh construction, why should they not be construed in the best sense? And may not God have a design of love rather than of hatred in the dispensation under which you mourn? May he not depart for a season, without departing for ever? You are not the first that have mistaken the design of God in withdrawing himself. "Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, my Lord hath forgotten me." But was it so? What saith the answer of God? "Can a woman forget her sucking child?" &c. But do you sink down under the apprehension that the evidences of a total and final desertion are discoverable in your experience? Have you then lost your conscientious tenderness with regard to sin? and are you inclined to forsake God? If so, you have reason indeed to be alarmed. But if your conscience is tenderly alive; if you are resolved to cleave to the Lord; if the language of your heart is, I cannot forsake God, I cannot live without his presence; though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: then you have reason to hope that he will visit you again. It is by these exercises that he still maintains his interest in you.

Once more. Are sense and feelings suitable to judge of the dispensations of God by? Can their testimony be safely relied on? Is it safe to argue thus: 'If God bad any love for my soul, I should feel it now as well as in former times; but I cannot feel it, therefore it is gone?' May you not as well conclude, when the sun is invisible to you, that he has ceased to exist? Read Isaiah 1:10.

Now if there is nothing in the divine dealings with you which is a reasonable ground of your despondency and distress, let us inquire what there is in your own conduct for which you should be so cast down:

1. Have you committed sins from which you were formerly recovered with shame and sorrow? And do you thence conclude that you sin allowedly and habitually, and that your oppositions to sin were hypocritical? But do not too hastily give up all for lost. Is not your repentance and care renewed as often as you commit sin? Is it not the sin itself which troubles you, and is it not true, that the oftener you sin the more you are distressed? It is not so in customary sinning; of which Bernard excellently discourses thus: "When a man accustomed to restrain, sins grievously, it seems insupportable to him, yea he seems to descend alive into hell. In process of time it seems not insupportable, but heavy, and between insupportable and heavy there is no small descent. Next, such sinning becomes light, his conscience smites but faintly, and he regards not her rebukes. Then he is not only insensible to his guilt, but that which was bitter and displeasing has become in some degree sweet and pleasant. Now it is made a custom, and not only pleases, but pleases habitually. At

length custom becomes nature; he cannot be dissuaded from it, but defends and pleads for it." This is allowed and customary sinning, this is the way of the wicked. But is not your way the contrary of this?

2. Do you apprehend a decline of your affections from God and from spiritual subjects? This may be your case, and yet there may be hope. But possibly you are mistaken with regard to this. There are many things to be learnt in Christian experience; it has relation to a great variety of subjects. You may now be learning what it is very necessary for you to know as a Christian. Now, what if you are not sensible of so lively affections, of such ravishing views as you had at first; may not your piety be growing more solid and consistent, and better adapted to practical purposes? Does it follow from your not always being in the same frame of mind, or from the fact that the same objects do not at all times excite the same feelings, that you have no true religion? Perhaps you deceive yourself by looking forward to what you would be, rather than contemplating what you are, compared with what you once were.

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3. If the strength of your love to creature-enjoyments is the ground of desperate conclusions respecting yourself, perhaps you argue thus: “I fear that I love the creature more than God, if so, I have not true love to God. I sometimes feel stronger affections toward earthly comforts than I do toward heavenly objects, therefore my soul is not upright within me.” If, indeed, you love the creature for itself, if you make it your end, and religion but a means, then you conclude rightly; for this is incompatible with supreme love to God. But may not a man love God more ardently and unchangeably than he does any thing, or all things else, and yet, when God is not the direct object of his thoughts, may he not be sensible of more violent affection for the creature than he has at that time for God? As rooted malice indicates a stronger hatred than sudden though inure violent passion; so we must judge of our love, not by a violent motion of it now and then, but by the depth of its root and the constancy of its exercise. Perhaps your difficulty results from bringing your love to some foreign and improper test. Many persons have feared that when brought to some eminent trial they should renounce Christ and cleave to the creature; but when the trial came, Christ was every thing, and the world as nothing in their esteem. Such were the fears of some martyrs whose victory was complete. But you may expect divine assistance only at the time of, and in proportion to your necessity. If you would try your love, see whether you are willing to forsake Christ now.

4. Is the want of that enlargement in private which you find in public exercises an occasion of doubts and fears? Consider then whether there are not some circumstances attending public duties which are peculiarly calculated to excite your feelings and elevate your mind, and which cannot affect you in private. If so, your exercises in secret, if performed faithfully and in a suitable manner, may he profitable, though they have not all the characteristics of those in public. If you imagine that you have spiritual enlargement and enjoyment in public exercises while you neglect private duties, doubtless you deceive yourself. Indeed if you live in the neglect of secret duties, or are careless about them, you have great reason to fear. But if you regularly and faithfully perform them, it does not follow that they are vain and worthless, or that they are not of great value, because they are not attended with so much enlargement as you sometimes find in public. And what if the Spirit is pleased more highly to favor you with his gracious influence in one place and at one time than another, should this be a reason for murmuring and unbelief, or for thankfulness?

5. The vile or blasphemous suggestions of Satan sometimes occasion great perplexity and distress.— They seem to lay open an abyss of corruption in the heart, and to say there can be no grace here. But there may be grace in the heart where such thoughts are injected, though not, in the heart which consents to and cherishes them. Do you then abhor and oppose them? do you utterly refuse to give up yourself to their influence, and strive to keep holy and reverend thoughts of God, and of all religious objects? If so, such suggestions are involuntary, and no evidence against your piety.

6. Is the seeming denial of your prayers an occasion of despondency? Are you disposed to say, “If God had any regard for my soul he would have heard my petitions before now; but I have no

answer from him, and therefore no interest in him?" But stay: though God's abhorring and finally rejecting prayer is an evidence that he rejects the person who prays, yet, dare you conclude that he has rejected you, because an answer to your prayers is delayed, or because you do not discover it if granted? "May not God bear long with his own elect, that cry unto him day and night?"

Others have stumbled upon the same ground with you: "I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardst the voice of my supplication." Now are there not some things in your experience which indicate that your prayers are not rejected, though answer to them is deferred? Are you not disposed to continue praying though you do not discover an answer? Are you not disposed still to ascribe righteousness to God, while you consider the cause of his silence as being in yourself? Thus did David: "O my God, I cry in the day time, and thou hearest not; and in the night, and am not silent: but thou art holy," &c. Does not the delay of an answer to your prayers excite you to examine your own heart and try your ways, that you may find and remove the difficulty? If so, you may have reason for humiliation, but not for despair.

Thus I have shown you how to keep your heart in dark and doubting seasons. God forbid that any false heart should encourage itself from these things. It is lamentable, that when we give saints and sinners their proper portions, each is so prone to take up the other's part.

XI. Another season, wherein the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when sufferings for religion are laid upon us. . . .

XI. Another season, wherein the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when sufferings for religion are laid upon us. Blessed is the man who in such a season is not offended in Christ. Now, whatever may be the kind or degree of your sufferings, if they are sufferings for Christ's sake and the Gospel's, spare no diligence to keep your heart. If you are tempted to shrink or waver under them, let what follows help you to repel and to surmount the instigation:

1. What reproach would you cast upon the Redeemer and his religion by deserting him at such a time as this! You would proclaim to the world, that how much soever you have boasted of the promises when you are put to the proof you dare hazard no thing upon your faith in them; and this will give the enemies of Christ an occasion to blaspheme. And will you thus furnish the triumphs of the uncircumcised? Ah, if you did but value the name of Christ as much as many wicked men value their names, you could never endure that his should be exposed to contempt. Will proud dust and ashes hazard death or hell rather than have their names disgraced, and will you endure nothing to maintain the honor of Christ?

2. Dare you violate your conscience out of complaisance to flesh and blood? Who will comfort you when your conscience accuses and condemns you? What happiness can there be in life, liberty or friends, when inward peace is taken away? Consider well what you do.

3. Is not the public interest of Christ and his cause infinitely more important than any interest of your own, and should you not prefer his glory and the welfare of his kingdom before every thing else? Should any temporary suffering, or any sacrifice which you can be called to make, be suffered to come into competition with the honor of his name?

4. Did the Redeemer neglect your interest and think lightly of you, when for your sake he endured sufferings between which and yours there can be no comparison? Did he hesitate and shrink

back? No: “He endured the cross, despising the shame.” And did he with unbroken patience and constancy endure so much for you; and will you flinch from momentary suffering in his cause?

5. Can you so easily cast off the society and the privileges of the saints and go over to the enemy’s side? Are you willing to withhold your support from those who are determined to persevere, and throw your influence in the scale against them? Rather let your body and soul be rent asunder. “If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”

6. How can you stand before Christ in the day of judgment, if you desert him now? “He that is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” Yet a little while, and the Son of man will come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, to judge the world. He will sit upon the throne of judgment, while all the nations are brought before him. Imagine yourself now to be witnessing the transactions of that day. Behold the wicked; behold the apostates; and hear the consuming sentence which is pronounced upon them, and see them sinking in the gulf of infinite and everlasting wo! And will you desert Christ now, will you forsake his cause to save a little suffering, or to protract an unprofitable life on earth, and thus expose yourself to the doom of the apostate? Remember, that if you can silence the remonstrances of conscience now, you cannot hinder the sentence of the Judge then. By these means keep your heart, that it depart not from the living God.

XII. The last season which I shall mention, in which the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when we are warned by sickness that our dissolution is at hand. . . .

XII. The last season which I shall mention, in which the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when we are warned by sickness that our dissolution is at hand. When the child of God draws nigh to eternity, the adversary makes his last effort; and as he cannot win the soul from God, as he cannot dissolve the bond which unites the soul to Christ, his great design is to awaken fears of death, to fill the mind with aversion and horror at the thoughts of dissolution from the body. Hence, what shrinking from a separation, what fear to grasp death’s cold hand, and unwillingness to depart, may sometimes be observed in the people of God. But we ought to die, as well as live, like saints.

I shall offer several considerations calculated to help the people of God in time of sickness, to keep their hearts loose from all earthly objects, and cheerfully willing to die:

1. Death is harmless to the people of God; its shafts leave no sting in them. Why then are you afraid that your sickness may be unto death? If you were to die in your sins; if death were to reign over you as a tyrant, to feed upon you as a lion doth upon his prey; if death to you were to be the precursor of hell, then you might reasonably startle and shrink back from it with horror and dismay. But if your sins are blotted out; if Christ has vanquished death in your behalf, so that you have nothing to encounter but bodily pain, and possibly not even that; if death will be to you the harbinger of heaven, why should you be afraid? why not bid it welcome? It cannot hurt you; it is easy and harmless; it is like putting off your clothes, on taking rest.

2. It may keep your heart from shrinking back, to consider that death is necessary to fit you for the full enjoyment of God. Whether you are willing to die or not, there certainly is no other way to complete the happiness of your soul. Death must do you the kind office to remove this veil of flesh,

this animal life which separates you from God, before you can see and enjoy him fully. “Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.” And who would not be willing to die for the perfect enjoyment of God? Methinks one should look and sigh, like a prisoner, through the grates of this mortality: “O that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest.” Indeed most men need patience to die; but a saint, who understands what death will introduce him to, rather needs patience to live. On his death-bed he should often look out and listen to his Lord’s coming; and when he perceives his dissolution to be near, he should say, “The voice of my beloved; behold he cometh, leaping over the mountains, skipping over the hills.”

3. Consider that the happiness of heaven commences immediately after death. That happiness will not be deferred till the resurrection; but as soon as death has passed upon you, your soul will be swallowed up in life. When you have once loosed from this shore, you shall be quickly wafted to the shore of a glorious eternity. And can you not say, I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ? Did the soul and body die together, or did they sleep till the resurrection, as some have fancied, it would have been folly for Paul to desire a dissolution for the enjoyment of Christ; because he would have enjoyed more in the body than he could have enjoyed out of it. The Scripture speaks of but two ways in which the soul can properly live: viz, by faith and vision. These two comprehend its present and future existence.

Now, if when faith fails, sight should not immediately succeed, what would become of the soul? But the truth on this subject is clearly revealed in Scripture. See Luke 23:3; John 14:3, &c. What a blessed change then will death make in your condition! Rouse up, dying saint, and rejoice; let death do his work, that the angels may conduct your soul to the world of light.

4. It may increase your willingness to die, to reflect that by death God often removes his people out of the way of great troubles and temptations. When some extraordinary calamity is coming upon the world, God sometimes removes his saints out of the way of the evil. Thus Methuselah died the year before the flood; Augustine a little before the sacking of Hippo; Pareus just before the taking of Heidelburg. Luther observes that all the apostles died before the destruction of Jerusalem; and Luther himself died before the wars broke out in Germany. Now it may be that by death you will escape some grievous trial, which you could not and need not endure. But if no extraordinary trouble would come upon you in case your life were prolonged, yet God designs by death to relieve you from innumerable evils and burdens which are inseparable from the present state. Thus you will be delivered from indwelling sin, which is the greatest trouble; from all temptations from whatever source; from bodily tempers and embarrassments; and from all the afflictions and sorrows of this life. The days of your mourning will be ended, and God will wipe away all tears from your eyes. Why then should you not hasten to depart?

5. If you still linger, like Lot in Sodom, what are your pleas and pretences for a longer life? Why are you unwilling to die? Are you concerned for the welfare of your relations? If so, are you anxious for their temporal support? Then let the word of God satisfy you: “Leave thy fatherless children to me, I will keep them alive, and let thy widows trust in me.” Luther says, in his last will, “Lord, thou hast given inc a wife and children, I have nothing to leave them, but I commit them unto thee. O Father of the fatherless and Judge of widows, nourish, keep and teach them.” But are you concerned for the spiritual welfare of your relations? Remember that you cannot convert them, if you should live; and God can make your prayers and counsels effectual when you are dead.

Perhaps you desire to serve God longer in this world. But if he has nothing further for you to do here, why not say with David, “Here am I, let him do what seemeth him good.” He is calling you to higher service in heaven, and can accomplish by other hands what you desire to do further here.—Do you feel too imperfect to go to heaven? Consider that you must be imperfect until you die; your sanctification cannot be complete until you get to heaven.

‘But,’ you say, ‘I want assurance; if I had that I could die easily.’ Consider, then, that a hearty willingness to leave all the world to be freed from sin, and to be with God, is the direct way to that desired assurance; no carnal person was ever willing to die upon this ground.

Thus I have shown how the people of God, in the most difficult seasons, may keep their hearts with alt diligence.

I now proceed to improve and apply the subject: . . .

You have seen that the keeping of the heart is the great work of a Christian, in which the very soul and life of religion consists, and without which all other duties are of no value in the sight of God. Hence, to the consternation of hypocrites and formal professors, I infer:

1. That the pains and labors which many persons have undergone in religion are of no value, and will turn to no good account. Many splendid services have been performed by men, which God will utterly reject: they will not stand on record in order to an eternal acceptance, because the performers took no heed to keep their hearts with God. This is that fatal rock on which thousands of vain professors dash and ruin themselves eternally; they are exact about the externals of religion, but regardless of their hearts. O how many hours have some professors spent in hearing, praying, reading and conferring! and yet, as to the main end of religion, they might as well have sat still and done nothing, the great work, I mean heart-work, being all the while neglected. Tell me, vain professor, when did you shed a tear for the deadness, hardness, unbelief or earthliness of your heart? And do you think your easy religion can save you? If so, you must invert Christ’s words, and say, Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to life, and many there be that go in thereat! Hear me, ye self-deluding hypocrite; you who have put off God with heartless duties; you who have acted in religion as if you had been blessing an idol; you who could not search your heart, and regulate it, and exercise it in your performances; how will you abide the coming of the Lord? how will you hold up your head before him, when he shall say. ‘O you dissembling, false-hearted man! how could you profess religion? with what face could you so often tell me that you loved me, when you knew in your conscience that your heart was not with me?’ O tremble to think what a fearful judgment it is to be given over to a heedless and careless heart, and then to have religious duties instead of a rattle to quiet and still the conscience!

2. I infer for their humiliation, that unless the people of God spend more time and pains about their hearts than they ordinarily do, they are never like to do God much service, or to possess much comfort in this world. I may say of that Christian who is remiss and careless in keeping his heart, as Jacob said of Reuben, Thou shalt not excel. It grieves me to see how many Christians there are who live at a poor, low rate, both of service and comfort, and who go up and down dejected and complaining. But how can they expect it should be otherwise, while they live so carelessly?

O how little of their time is spent in the closet, in searching, humbling, and quickening their hearts!

Christian, you say your heart is dead, and do you wonder that it is, so long as you keep it not with the fountain of life? If your body had been dieted as your soul has, that would have been dead too. And you may never expect that your heart will be in a better state until you take more pains with it.

O Christians! I fear your zeal and strength have run in the wrong channel; I fear that most of us may take up the Church's complaint: "They have made me the keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vine-yard have I not kept." Two things have eaten up the time and strength of the professors of this generation, and sadly diverted them from heart-work.

First:—Fruitless controversies, started by Satan, I doubt not for the very purpose of taking us off from practical godliness, to make us puzzle our heads when we should be inspecting our hearts. How little have we regarded the observation: "It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, and not with meats," (that is, with disputes and controversies about meats,) "which have not profited them that have been occupied therein." How much better it is to see men live exactly, than to hear them dispute with subtlety! These unfruitful questions, how have they rent the churches, wasted time and spirits, and taken Christians off from their main business! 'What think you, would it not have been better if the questions agitated among the people of God of late had been such as these:—"How shall a man distinguish the special from the common operations of the Spirit? How may a soul discern its first backslidings from God? How may a backsliding Christian recover his first love? How may the heart be preserved from unseasonable thoughts in duty? How may a bosom-sin be discovered and mortified?" &c. Would not this course have tended more to the honor of religion and the comfort of souls? I am ashamed that the professors of this generation are yet insensible of their folly. O that God would turn their disputes and contentions into practical godliness!

Second:—Worldly cares and incumbrances have greatly increased the neglect of our hearts. The heads and hearts of multitudes have been filled with such a crowd and noise of worldly business that they have lamentably declined in their zeal, their love, their delight in God, and their heavenly, serious, and profitable way of conversing with men. How miserably have we entangled ourselves in this wilderness of trifles! Our discourses, our conferences, nay, our very prayers are tinged with it. We have had so much to do without, that we have been able to do but little within. And how many precious opportunities have we thus lost? How many admonitions of the Spirit have passed over unfruitfully? How often has the Lord called to us, when our worldly thoughts have prevented us from hearing? But there certainly is a way to enjoy God even in our worldly employments. If we lose our views of him when engaged in our temporal affairs, the fault is our own. Alas! that Christians should stand at the door of eternity, having more work upon their hands than their time is sufficient for, and yet be filling their heads and hearts with trifles!

3. I infer, lastly, for the awakening of all, that if the keeping of the heart be the great work of a Christian, then there are but few real Christians in the world. If every one who has learned the dialect of Christianity, and who can talk like a saint; if every one who has gifts and parts, and who can make shift to preach, pray, or discourse like a Christian: in a word, if all such as associate with the people of God and partake of ordinances may pass for Christians, then indeed the number is great. But alas! how few can he found, if you judge them by this rule,—how few are there who conscientiously keep their hearts, watch their thoughts and look scrupulously to their motives! Indeed there are few closet-men among professors. It is easier for men to be reconciled to any

other duties in religion than to these. The profane part of the world will not so much as meddle with the outside of any religious duties, and least of all with these; and as to the hypocrite, though he may be very particular in externals, you can never persuade him to undertake this inward, this difficult work; this work, to which there is no inducement from human applause; this work, which would quickly discover what the hypocrite cares not to know: so that by general consent this heart-work is left to the hands of a few retired ones, and I tremble to think in how few hands it is.

II. If the keeping of the heart be so important a business; if such great advantages result from it; if so many valuable interests be wrapt up in it, then let me call upon the people of God every where to engage heartily in this work. O study your hearts, watch your hearts, keep your hearts! Away with fruitless controversies and all idle questions; away with empty names and vain shows; away with unprofitable discourse and bold censures of others, and turn in upon yourselves. O that this day, this hour, you would resolve upon doing so!

Reader, methinks I shall prevail with you. All that I beg for is this, that you would step aside oftener to talk with God and your own heart; that you would not suffer every trifle to divert you; that you would keep a more true and faithful account of your thoughts and affections; that you would seriously demand of your own heart at least every evening, ‘O my heart, where hast thou been today, and what has engaged thy thoughts?’

If all that has been said by way of inducement be not enough, I have yet some motives to offer you:

If all that has been said by way of inducement be not enough, I have yet some motives to offer you:

1. The studying, observing, and diligently keeping your own heart, will surprisingly help you to understand the deep mysteries of religion. An honest, well-experienced heart is an excellent help to the head. Such a heart will serve for a commentary on a great part of the Scriptures. By means of such a heart you will have a better understanding of divine things than the most learned (graceless) man ever had, or call have; you will not only have a clearer, but a more interesting and profitable apprehension of them. A man may discourse orthodoxy and profoundly of the nature and effects of faith, the troubles and comforts of conscience, and the sweetness of communion with God, who never felt the efficacy and sweet impression of these things upon his own soul. But how dark and dry are his notions compared with those of an experienced Christian!

2. The study and observation of your own heart will powerfully secure you against the dangerous and infecting errors of the times in which you live. For what think you is the reason why so many professors have departed from the faith, giving heed to fables? why have so many been led away by the error of the wicked? why have those who have sown corrupt doctrines had such plentiful harvests among us, but because they have met with a race of professors who never knew what belongs to practical godliness and the study and keeping of their hearts?

3. Your care and diligence in keeping your heart will prove one of the best evidences of your sincerity. I know no external act of religion which truly distinguishes the sound from the unsound professor. It is marvellous how far hypocrites go in all external duties; how plausibly they can order the outward man, hiding all their indecencies from the observation of the world. But they take no heed to their hearts; they are not in secret what they appear to be in public; and before this test no

hypocrite can stand. They may, indeed, in a fit of terror, or on a death-bed, cry out of the wickedness of their hearts; but such extort ed complaints are worthy of no regard. No credit, in law, is to be given to the testimony of one upon the rack, because it may be supposed that the extremity of his torture will make him say any thing to get relief. But if self-jealousy, care and watchfulness be the daily workings and frames of your heart, you have some evidence of your sincerity.

4. How comfortable and how profitable would all ordinances and duties be to you, if your heart was faithfully kept. What lively communion might you have with God every time you approach him, if your heart was in a right frame! You might then say with David, “My meditation of Him shall be sweet.” It is the indisposition of the heart which renders ordinances, and secret duties so comfortless to some. They strive to raise their hearts to God, now pressing this argument upon them, then that, to quicken and affect them; yet they often get nearly through the exercise before their hearts begin to be interested in it; and some times they go away no better than they came. But the Christian whose heart is prepared by being constantly kept, enters immediately and heartily into his duties; he outstrips his sluggish neighbor, gets the first sight of Christ in a sermon, the first seal from Christ in a sacrament, the first communication of grace and love in secret prayer. Now if there be any thing valuable and comfortable in ordinances and private duties, look to your heart and keep it, I beseech you.

5. An acquaintance with your own heart will furnish you a fountain of matter in prayer. The man who is diligent in heart-work, will be richly supplied with matter in his addresses to God. He will not be confused for want of thoughts; his tongue will not falter for want of expressions.

6. The most desirable thing in the world, viz, the revival of religion among a people, may be effected by means of what I am urging upon you.

O that I might see the time when professors shall not walk in a vain show; when they shall please themselves no more with a name to live, while they are spiritually dead; when they shall be no more a company of frothy, vain persons; but when holiness shall shine in their conversation, and awe the world, and command reverence from all that are around them; when they shall warm the heart of those who come near them, and cause it to be said, God is in these men of a truth. And may such a time be expected? Until heart-work becomes the business of professors, I have no hope of seeing a time so blessed! Does it not grieve you to see how religion is contemned and trampled under foot, and the professors of it ridiculed and scorned in the world? Professors, would you recover your credit? would you obtain an honorable testimony in the consciences of your very enemies? Then keep your hearts.

7. By diligence in keeping our hearts we should prevent the occasions of fatal scandals and stumbling-blocks to the world. Wo to the world because of offences!

Keep your heart faithfully, and you will be prepared for any situation or service to which you may be called. This, and this only can properly fit you for usefulness in any station; but with this you can endure prosperity or adversity; you can deny yourself, and turn your hand to any work. Thus Paul turned every circumstance to good account, and made himself so eminently useful. When he preached to others, he provided against being cast away himself: he kept his heart; and every thing in which lie excelled seems to have had a close connection with his diligence in keeping his

heart.

9. If the people of God would diligently keep their hearts, their communion with each other would be unspeakably more inviting and profitable. Then “how goodly would be thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!” It is the fellowship which the people of God have with the Father and with the Son that kindles the desires of others to have communion with them. I tell you, that if saints would be persuaded to spend more time and take more pains about their hearts, there would soon be such a divine excellence in their conversation that others would account it no small privilege to be with or near them. It is the pride, passion and earthliness of our hearts, that has spoiled Christian fellowship. Why is it that when Christians meet they are often jarring and contending, but because their passions arc unmortified? Whence come their uncharitable censures of their brethren, but from their ignorance of themselves? Why are they so rigid and unfeeling toward those who have fallen, but because they do not feel their own weakness and liability to temptation? Why is their discourse so light and unprofitable when they meet, but because their hearts are earthly and vain? But now, if Christians would study their hearts more and keep them better, the beauty and glory of communion would be restored. They would divide no more, contend no more, censure rashly no more. They will feel right one toward another, when each is daily humbled under a sense of the evil of his own heart.

10. Lastly:—Keep your heart, and then the comforts of the Spirit and the influence of all ordinances will be more fixed and lasting than they now are. And do the consolations of God seem small to you?” Ah, you have reason to be ashamed that the ordinances of God, as to their quickening and comforting effects, should make so light and transient an impression on your heart.

Now, reader, consider well these special benefits of keeping the heart which I have mentioned. Examine their importance. Are they small matters? Is it a small matter to have your understanding assisted? your endangered soul rendered safe? your sincerity proved? your communion with God sweetened? your heart filled with matter for prayer? Is it a small thing to have the power of godliness? all fatal scandals removed? an instrumental fitness to serve Christ obtained? the communion of saints restored to its primitive glory? and the influence of ordinances abiding in the souls of saints? If these are no common blessings, no ordinary benefits, then surely it is a great and in dispensable duty to keep the heart with all diligence. And now are you inclined to undertake the business of keeping your heart? are you resolved upon it? I charge you, then, to engage in it earnestly. Away with every cowardly feeling, and make up your mind to encounter difficulties. Draw your armor from the word of God. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in its commands, its promises, its threatenings; let it be fixed in your understanding, your memory, your conscience, your affections. You must learn to wield the sword of the Spirit (which is the word of God) familiarly, if you would defend your heart and conquer your enemies. You must call yourself frequently to an account; examine yourself as in the presence of the all seeing God; bring your conscience, as it were, to the bar of judgment. Beware how you plunge yourself into a multiplicity of worldly business; how you practise upon the maxims of the world; and how you venture at all to indulge your depraved propensities. You must exercise the utmost vigilance to discover and check the first symptoms of departure from God, the least decline of spirituality, or the least indisposition to meditation by yourself and holy conversation and fellowship with others. These things you must undertake, in the strength of Christ, with invincible resolution in the outset. And if you thus engage in this great work, he assured you shall not spend your strength for naught; comforts which you

never felt or thought of will flow in upon you from every side. The diligent prosecution of this work will constantly afford you the most powerful excitements to vigilance and ardor in the life of faith, while it increases your strength and wears out your enemies. And when you have kept your heart with all diligence a little while; when you have fought the battles of this spiritual warfare, gained the ascendancy over the corruptions within, and vanquished the enemies without, then God will open the gate of heaven to you, and give you the portion which is promised to them that overcome. Awake then, this moment; get the world under your feet pant not for the things which a man may have, and eternally lose his soul; but bless God that you may have his service here, and the glory hereafter which he appoints to his chosen.

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

04.09a. Keeping the Heart in the Time of Duty

Keeping the Heart in the Time of Duty VI. The sixth season requiring this diligence in keeping the heart, is the season of duty. . . .

VI. The sixth season requiring this diligence in keeping the heart, is the season of duty. Our hearts must be closely watched and kept when we draw nigh to God in public, private, or secret duties; for the vanity of the heart seldom discovers itself more than at such times. How often does the poor soul cry out, ‘O Lord, how gladly would I serve thee, but vain thoughts will not let me: I come to open my heart to thee, to delight my soul in communion with thee, but my corruptions oppose me: Lord, call off these vain thoughts, and suffer them not to estrange the soul that is espoused to thee.’ The question then is this: How may the heart be kept from distractions by vain thoughts in time of duty? There is a two-fold distraction, or wandering of the heart in duty: First, voluntary and habitual, They set not their hearts aright, and their spirit was not steadfast with God.” This is the case of formalists, and it proceeds from the want of a holy inclination of the heart to God; their hearts are under the power of their lusts, and therefore it is no wonder that they go after their lusts, even when they are about holy things. Secondly, involuntary and lamented distractions: “I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me; O wretched man that I am,” &c. This proceeds not from the want of a holy inclination or aim, but from the weakness of grace and the want of vigilance in opposing indwelling sin. But it is not my business to show you how these distractions come into the heart but rather how to get them out, and prevent their future admission:

1. Sequester yourself from all earthly employments, and set apart some time for solemn preparation to meet God in duty. You cannot come directly from the world into God’s presence without finding a savor of the world in your duties. It is with the heart (a few minutes since plunged in the world, now in the presence of God) as it is with the sea after a storm, which still continues working, muddy and disquiet, though the wind be laid and the storm be over. Your heart must have some time to settle. Few musicians can take an instrument and play upon it without some time and labor to tune it; few Christians can say with David, “My heart is fixed, O God, it is fixed.” When you go to God in any duty, take your heart aside and say, ‘O my soul, I am now engaged in the greatest work that a creature was ever employed about; I am going into the awful presence of God upon business of everlasting moment. O my soul, leave trifling now; be composed, be watchful, be serious; this is no common work, it is soul-work; it is work for eternity; it is work which will bring forth fruit to life or death in the world to come.’ Pause awhile and consider your sins, your wants, your troubles; keep your thoughts awhile on these before you address yourself to duty. David first mused, and then spake with his tongue.

2. Having composed your heart by previous meditation, immediately set a guard upon your senses. How often are Christians in danger of losing the eyes of their mind by those of their body! Against this David prayed, “Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou me in thy way.” This may serve to expound the Arabian proverb: “Shut the windows that the house may be light.” It were well if you could say in the commencement, as a holy man once said when he

came from the performance of duty: “Be shut, O my eyes, be shut; for it is impossible that you should ever discern such beauty and glory in any creature as I have now seen in God.” You must avoid all occasions of distraction from without, and imbibe that intenseness of spirit in the work of God which locks up the eye and ear against vanity.

3. Beg of God a mortified fancy. A working fancy, (saith one,) how much soever it be extolled among men, is a great snare to the soul, except it work in fellowship with right reason and a sanctified heart. The fancy is a power of the soul, placed between the senses and the understanding; it is that which first stirs itself in the soul, and by its motions the other powers of the soul are brought into exercise; it is that in which thoughts are first formed, and as that is, so are they. If imaginations be not first cast down, it is impossible that every thought of the heart should be brought into obedience to Christ. The fancy is naturally the wildest and most untameable power of the soul. Some Christians have much to do with it; and the more spiritual the heart is, the more does a wild and vain fancy disturb and perplex it. It is a sad thing that one’s imagination should call off the soul from attending on God, when it is engaged in communion with him. Pray earnestly and perseveringly that your fancy may be chastened and sanctified, and when this is accomplished your thoughts will be regular and fixed.

4. If you would keep your heart from vain excursions when engaged in duties, realize to yourself, by faith, the holy and awful presence of God. If the presence of a grave man would compose you to seriousness, how much more should the presence of a holy God? Do you think that you would dare to be gay and light if you realized the presence and inspection of the Divine Being? Remember where you are when engaged in religious duty, and act as if you believed in the omniscience of God. “All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” Realize his infinite holiness, his purity, his spirituality.

Strive to obtain such apprehensions of the greatness of God as shall suitably affect your heart; and remember his jealousy over his worship. “This is that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified.” “A man that is praying (says Bernard) should behave himself as if he were entering into the court of heaven, where he sees the Lord upon his throne, surrounded with ten thousand of his angels and saints ministering unto him.”—When you come from an exercise in which your heart has been wandering and listless, what can you say? Suppose all the vanities and impertinences which have passed through your mind during a devotional exercise were written down and interlined with your petitions, could you have the face to present them to God? Should your tongue utter all the thoughts of your heart when at tending the worship of God, would not men abhor you? Yet your thoughts are perfectly known to God. O think upon this scripture: “God is greatly to be feared in the assemblies of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are round about him.” Why did the Lord descend in thunderings and lightnings and dark clouds upon Sinai? why did the mountains smoke under him, the people quake and tremble round about him, Moses himself not excepted? but to teach the people this great truth: “Let us have grace, whereby we may serve Him acceptably, with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire.” Such apprehensions of the character and presence of God will quickly reduce a heart inclined to vanity to a more serious frame.

5. Maintain a prayerful frame of heart in the intervals of duty. What reason can be assigned why our hearts are so dull, so careless, so wandering, when we hear or pray, but that there have been long intermissions in our communion with God? If that divine unction, that spiritual fervor, and those holy impressions, which we obtain from God while engaged in the performance of one duty, were preserved to enliven and engage us in the performance of another, they would be of incalculable service to keep our hearts serious and devout. For this purpose, frequent ejaculations between stated and solemn duties are of most excellent use: they not only preserve the mind in a composed and pious frame, but they connect one stated duty, as it were, with another, and keep the attention of the soul alive to all its interests and obligations.

6. If you would have the distraction of your thoughts prevented, endeavor to raise your affections to God, and to engage them warmly in your duty. When the soul is intent upon any work, it gathers in its strength and bends all its thoughts to that work; and when it is deeply affected, it will pursue its object with intenseness, the affections will gain, an ascendancy over the thoughts and guide them. But deadness causes distraction, and distraction increases deadness. Could you but regard your duties as the medium in which you might walk in communion with God in which your soul might be filled with those ravishing and matchless delights which his presence affords, you might have no inclination to neglect them. But if you would prevent the recurrence of distracting thoughts, if you would find your happiness in the performance of duty, you must not only be careful that you engage in what is your duty, bat labor with patient and persevering exertion to interest your feelings in it. Why is your heart so inconstant, especially in secret duties; why are you ready to be gone, almost as soon as you are come into the presence of God, but because your affections are not engaged?

7. When you are disturbed by vain thoughts, humble yourself before God, and call in assistance from Heaven. When the messenger of Satan buffeted St. Paul by wicked suggestions, (as is supposed) he mourned before God on account of it. Never slight wandering thoughts in duty as small matters; follow every such thought with a deep regret. Turn to God with such words as these: ‘Lord, I came hither to commune with thee, and here a busy adversary and a vain heart, conspiring together, have opposed me. O my God what a heart have I! shall I never wait upon thee without distraction? when shall I enjoy an hour of free communion with thee? Grant me thy assistance at this time; discover thy glory to me, and my heart will quickly be recovered. I came hither to enjoy thee, and shall I go away without thee? Behold my distress, and help me!’ —Could you but sufficiently be wail your distractions, and repair to God for deliverance from them, you would gain relief.

8. Look upon the success and the comfort of your duties, as depending very much upon the keeping of your heart close with God in them. These two things, the success of duty and the inward comfort arising from the performance of it, are unspeakably dear to the Christian; but both of these will be lost if the heart be in a listless state. “Surely God heareth not vanity, nor doth the Almighty regard it.” The promise is made to a heart engaged: “Then shall ye seek for me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your hearts.” When you find your heart under the power of deadness and distraction, say to yourself, ‘O what do I lose by a careless heart now! My praying seasons , are the most valuable portions of my life: could I but raise my heart to God, I might now obtain such mercies as would be matter of praise to all eternity.’

9. Regard your carefulness or carelessness in this matter as a great evidence of your sincerity, or hypocrisy. Nothing will alarm an upright heart more than this. ‘What shall I give way to a customary wandering of the heart from God? Shall the spot of the hypocrite appear upon my soul? Hypocrites, indeed, can drudge on in the round of duty, never regarding the frame of their hearts; but shall I do so? Never— never let me be satisfied with empty duties. Never let me take my leave of a duty until my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.’

10. It will be of special use to keep your heart with God in duty, to consider what influence all your duties will have upon your eternity. Your religious seasons are your seed times, and in another world you must reap the fruits of what you sow in your duties here, If you sow to the flesh, you will reap corruption; if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap life everlasting. Answer seriously these questions: Are you willing to reap the fruit of vanity in the world to come? Dare you say, when your thoughts are roving to the ends of the earth in duty, when you scarce mind what you say or hear, ‘Now, Lord, I am sowing to the Spirit; now I am providing and laying up for eternity; now I am seeking for glory, honor and immortality; now I am striving to enter in at the strait gate; now I am taking the kingdom of heaven by holy violence!’ Such reflections are well calculated to dissipate vain thoughts.

VII. The seventh season, which requires more than common diligence to keep the heart, is when we receive injuries and abuses from men. Such is the depravity and corruption of man, that one is become as a wolf or a tiger to another. And as men are naturally cruel and oppressive one to another, so the wicked conspire to abuse and wrong the people of God, “The wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he.” Now when we are thus abused and wronged, it is hard to keep the heart from revengeful motions; to make it meekly and quietly commit the cause to Him that judgeth righteously; to prevent the exercise of any sinful affection. The spirit that is in us lusteth to revenge; but it must not be so. We have choice helps in the Gospel to keep our hearts from sinful motions against our enemies, and to sweeten our embittered spirits. Do you ask how a Christian may keep his heart from revengeful motions under the greatest injuries and abuses from men? I reply: When you find your heart begin to be inflamed by revengeful feelings, immediately reflect on the following things

1. Urge upon your heart the severe prohibitions of revenge contained in the law of God. However gratifying to your corrupt propensities revenge may be, remember that it is forbidden. Hear the word of God: “Say not, I will recompense evil.” Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me. “Recompense to no man evil for evil. Avenge not yourselves, but give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.” On the contrary. “If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink.” It was an argument urged by the Christians to prove their religion to be supernatural and pure, that it forbids revenge, which is so agreeable to nature; and it is to be wished that such an argument might not be laid aside. Awe your heart, then, with the authority of God in the Scriptures; and when carnal reason says, ‘My enemy deserves to be hated,’ let conscience reply, ‘But doth God deserve to be disobeyed?’ ‘Thus and thus hath he done, and so hath he wronged me;’ ‘But what hath God done that 1 should wrong him? If my enemy dares boldly to break the peace, shall I be so wicked as to break the precept? if he fears not to wrong me, shall not I fear to wrong God?’ Thus let the fear of God restrain and calm your feelings.

2. Set before your eyes the most eminent patterns of meekness and forgiveness, that you may feel the force of their example. This is the way to cut off the common pleas of flesh and blood for revenge: as thus, ‘No man would bear such an affront;’ yes, others have borne as bad, and worse ones. ‘But I shall be reckoned a coward, a fool, if I pass by this:’ no matter, so long as you follow the examples of the wisest and holiest of men. Never did any one suffer more or greater abuses from men than Jesus did, nor did any one ever endure insult and reproach and every kind of abuse in a more peaceful and forgiving manner; when he Was reviled he reviled not again; when he suffered. he threatened not when his murderers. crucified him he prayed Father, forgive them; and herein he hath set us an example, that we should follow his steps. Thus his apostles imitated him: “Being reviled,” say they, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat.” I have often heard it reported of the holy Mr. Dod, that when a man, enraged at his close, convincing doctrine, assaulted him, smote him on the face and dashed out two of his teeth; that meek servant of Christ spit out the teeth and blood into his hand, and said, “See here, you have knocked out two of my teeth, and that without any just provocation; but on condition that I might do your soul good, I would give you leave to knock out all the rest.” Here was exemplified the excellency of the Christian spirit. Strive then for this spirit, which constitutes the true excellence of Christians. Do what others cannot do, keep this spirit in exercise, and you will preserve peace in your own soul and gain the victory over your enemies.

2. Consider the character of the person who has wronged you. He is either a good or a wicked man. If he is a good man, there is light and tenderness in his conscience, which sooner or later will bring him to a sense of the evil of what he has done. If he is a good man, Christ has forgiven him greater injuries than he has done to you; and why should not you forgive him? Will Christ not upbraid him for any of his wrongs, but frankly forgive them all; and will you take him by the throat for some petty abuse which he has offered you?

3. But if a wicked man has injured or insulted you, truly you have more reason to exercise pity than revenge toward him. He is in a deluded and miserable state; a slave to sin and an enemy to righteousness. If he should ever repent, he will be ready to make you reparation; if he continues impenitent, there is a day coming when .he will be punished to the extent of his deserts. You need not study revenge, God will execute vengeance upon him.

4. Remember that by revenge you can only gratify a sinful passion, which by forgiveness you might conquer. Suppose that by revenge you might destroy one enemy; yet, by exercising the Christian’s temper you might conquer three—your own lust, Satan’s temptation, and your enemy’s heart. If by revenge you should overcome your enemy, the victory would be unhappy and inglorious, for in gaining it you would be overcome by your own corruption; but by exercising a meek and forgiving temper, you will always come off with honor and success. It must be a very disingenuous nature indeed upon which meekness and forgiveness will not operate; that must be a flinty heart which this fire will not melt. Thus David gained such a victory over Saul his persecutor, that “Saul lifted up his voice and wept, and he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I.”

5. Seriously propose this question to your own heart: ‘Have I got any good by means of the wrongs and injuries which I have received?’ If they have done you no good, turn your revenge upon yourself. You have reason to be filled with shame and sorrow that you should have a heart which

can deduce no good from such troubles; that your temper should be so unlike that of Christ. The patience and meekness of other Christians have turned all the injuries offered to them to a good account; their souls have been animated to praise God when they have been loaded with reproaches from the world. “I thank my God,” said Jerome, “that I am worthy to be hated of the world.” But if you have derived any benefit from the reproaches and wrongs which you have received, if they have put you upon examining your own heart, if they have made you more careful how you conduct, if they have convinced you of the value of a sanctified temper; will you not forgive them? will you not forgive one who has been instrumental of so much good to you? What though he meant it for evil? if through the Divine blessing your happiness has been promoted by what he has done, why should you even have a hard thought of him?

6. Consider by whom all your troubles are ordered. This will be of great use to keep your heart from revenge; this will quickly calm and sweeten your temper. When Shimei railed at David and cursed him, the spirit of that good man was not at all poisoned by revenge; for when Abishai offered him. if he pleased, the head of Shimei, the king said, “Let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David: who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?” It may be that God uses him as his rod to chastise me, because by my sin I gave the enemies of God occasion to blaspheme; and shall I be angry with the instrument? how irrational were that! Thus Job was quieted; he did not rail and meditate revenge upon the Chaldeans and Sabeans, but regarded God as the orderer of his troubles, and said, “The Lord hath taken away, blessed be his name.”

7. Consider how you are daily and hourly wronging God, and you will not be so easily inflawed with revenge against those who have wronged you. You are constantly affronting God, yet he does not take vengeance on you, but bears with you and forgives; and will you rise up and avenge yourself upon others? Reflect on this cutting rebuke: “O thou wicked and slothful servant! I forgave thee all that debt because thou desiredst me; shouldst thou not also have compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?” None should be so filled with forbearance and mercy to such as wrong them, as those who have experienced the riches of mercy themselves. The mercy of God to us should melt our hearts into mercy toward others. It is impossible that we should be cruel to others, except we forget how kind and compassionate God hath been to us. And if kindness cannot prevail in us, methinks fear should:—“If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

8. Let the consideration that the day of the Lord draweth nigh, restrain you from anticipating it by acts of revenge. Why are you so hasty? is not the Lord at hand to avenge all his abused servants? “Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth, &c. Be ye also patient, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned. Behold, the Judge standeth at the door. Vengeance belongeth unto God, and will you wrong yourself so much as to assume his work?

VIII. The next season in which special exertion is necessary to keep the heart, is when we meet with great trials. . . .

VIII. The next season in which special exertion is necessary to keep the heart, is when we meet with great trials. In such cases the heart is apt to be suddenly transported with pride, impatience, or other sinful passions. Many good people are guilty of hasty and very sinful conduct in such

instances; and all have need to use diligently the following means to keep their hearts submissive and patient under great trials:

1. Get humble and abasing thoughts of yourself. The humble is ever the patient man. Pride is the source of irregular and sinful passions. A lofty, will be an unyielding and peevish spirit. When we over-rate ourselves, we think that we are treated unworthily, that our trials are too severe: thus we cavil and repine. Christian, you should have such thoughts of yourself as would put a stop to these murmurings. You should have lower and more humiliating views of yourself than any other one can have of you. Get humility, and you will have peace whatever be your trial.

2. Cultivate a habit of communion with God. This will prepare you for whatever may take place. This will so sweeten your temper and calm your mind as to secure you against surprisals. This will produce that inward peace which will make you superior to your trials. Habitual communion with God will afford you enjoyment, which you can never be willing to interrupt by sinful feeling. When a Christian is calm and submissive under his afflictions, probably he derives support and comfort in this way; but he who is discomposed, impatient, or fretful, shows that `all is not right within—he cannot be supposed to practise communion with God.

3. Let your mind be deeply impressed with an apprehension of the evil nature and effects of an unsubmissive and restless temper. It grieves the Spirit of God, and induces his departure. His gracious presence and influence are enjoyed only where peace and quiet submission prevail. The indulgence of such a temper gives the adversary an advantage. Satan is an angry and discontented spirit. He finds no rest but in restless hearts. He bestirs himself when the spirits are in commotion; sometimes he fills the heart with ungrateful and rebellious thoughts; sometimes he inflames the tongue with indecent language. Again, such a temper brings great guilt upon the conscience, unfits the soul for any duty, and dishonors the Christian name. O keep your heart, and let the power and excellence of your religion be chiefly manifested when you are brought into the greatest straits.

4. Consider how desirable it is for a Christian to overcome his evil propensities. How much more present happiness it affords; how much better it is in every respect to mortify and subdue unholy feelings, than to give way to them. When upon your death-bed you come calmly to review your life, how comfortable will it be to reflect on the conquest which you have made over the depraved feelings of your heart. It was a memorable saying of Valentinian the emperor, when he was about to die: “Amongst all my conquests, there is but one that now comforts me” Being asked what that was, he answered, “I have overcome my worst enemy, my own sinful heart!”

5. Shame yourself, by contemplating the character of those who have been most eminent for meekness and submission. Above all, compare your temper with the Spirit of Christ. “Learn of me,” saith he, “for I am meek and lowly.” It is said of Calvin and Ursin, though both of choleric natures, that they had so imbibed and cultivated the meekness of Christ as not to utter an unbecoming word under the greatest provocations. And even many of the heathens have manifested great moderation and forbearance under their severest afflictions. Is it not a shame and a reproach that you should be outdone by them?

6. Avoid every thing which is calculated to irritate your feelings. It is true spiritual valor to keep as far as we can out of sins way. If you can but avoid the excitements to impetuous and rebellious

feelings, or check them in their first beginnings, you will have but little to fear. The first workings of common sins are comparatively weak, they gain their strength by degrees; but in times of trial the motions of sin are strongest at first, the unsubdued temper breaks out suddenly and violently. But if you resolutely with. stand it at first, it will yield and give you the victory.

IX. The ninth season wherein the greatest diligence and skill are necessary to keep the heart, is the hour of temptation, when Satan besets the Christians heart, and takes the unwary by surprise. . . .

IX. The ninth season wherein the greatest diligence arid skill are necessary to keep the heart, is the hour of temptation, when Satan besets the Christians heart, and takes the unwary by surprise. To keep the heart at such times, is not less a mercy than a duty. Few Christians are so skillful in detecting the fallacies, and repelling the arguments by which the adversary incites them to sin, as to come off safe and whole in these encounters. Many eminent saints have smarted severely for their want of watchfulness and diligence at such times. How then may a Christian keep his heart from yielding to temptation? There are several principal ways in which the adversary insinuates temptation, and urges compliance:

1. Satan suggests that here is pleasure to be enjoyed; the temptation is presented with a smiling aspect and an enticing voice: `What, are you so dull and phlegmatic as not to feel the powerful charms of pleasure? Who can withhold himself from such delights? Reader, you may be rescued from the danger of such temptations by repelling the proposal of pleasure. It is urged that the commission of sin will afford you pleasure. Suppose this were true, will the accusing and condemning rebukes of conscience and the flames of hell be pleasant too? Is there pleasure in the scourges of conscience? If so why did Peter weep so bitterly? why did David cry out of broken bones? You hear what is said of the pleasure of sin, and have you not read what David said of the effects of it? “Thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore; there is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger, neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin,” &c. If you yield to temptation, you must feel such inward distress on account of it, or the miseries of hell. But why should the pretended pleasure of sin allure you, when you know that unspeakably more real pleasure will arise from the mortification than can arise from the commission of sin. Will you prefer the gratification of some unhallowed passion, with the deadly poison which it will leave behind, to that sacred pleasure which arises from fearing and obeying God, complying with the dictates of conscience, and maintaining inward peace? Can sin afford any such delight as he feels who, by resisting temptation, has manifested the sincerity of his heart, and obtained evidence that he fears God, loves holiness, and hates sin?

2. The secrecy with which you may commit sin is made use of to induce compliance with temptation. The tempter insinuates that this indulgence will never disgrace you among men, for no one will know it. But recollect yourself. Does not God behold you? Is not the divine presence every where? What if you might hide your sin from the eyes of the world, you cannot hide it from God. No darkness nor shadow of death can screen you from his inspection. Besides have you no reverence for yourself? Can you do that by yourself which you dare not have others observe? Is not your conscience as a thousand witnesses? Even a heathen could say, “When thou art tempted to commit sin, fear thyself without any other witness.”

3. The prospect of worldly advantage often enforces temptation. It is suggested, `Why should you be so nice and scrupulous? Give yourself a little liberty, and you may better your condition: now is your time. This is a dangerous temptation, and must be promptly resisted. Yielding to such a temptation will do your soul more injury than any temporal acquisition can possibly do you good. And what would it profit you, if you should gain the whole world and lose your own soul? What can be compared with the value of your spiritual interests? or what can at all compensate for the smallest injury of them?

4. Perhaps the smallness of the sin is urged as a reason why you may commit it; thus: `It is but a little one, a small matter, a trifle; who Would stand upon such niceties? But is the Majesty of heaven little too? If you commit this sin you will offend a great God. Is there any little hell to torment little sinners in? No; the least sinners in hell are full of misery. There is great wrath treasured up for those whom the world regard as little sinners. But the less the sin, the less the inducement to commit it. Will you provoke God for a trifle? will you destroy your peace, wound your conscience, and grieve the Spirit, all for nothing? What madness is this!

5. An argument to enforce temptation is sometimes drawn from the mercy of God and the hope of pardon —God is merciful, he will pass by this as an infirmity, he will not be severe to mark it. But stay: where do you find a promise of mercy to presumptuous sinners? Involuntary reprisals and lamented infirmities may be pardoned, “but the soul that doth aught presumptuously, the same reproacheth the Lord, and that soul shall be cut off from among his people.” If God is a being of so much mercy, how can you affront him? How can you make so glorious an attribute as the divine mercy an occasion of sin? Will you wrong him because he is good? Rather let his goodness lead you to repentance, and keep you from transgression.

6. Sometimes Satan encourages to the commission of sin, from the examples of holy men. Thus and thus they sinned, and were restored; therefore you may commit this sin, and yet. be a saint and be saved. Such suggestions must be instantly repelled. If good men have committed sins similar to that with which you are beset, did any good man ever sin upon such ground and from such encouragement as is here presented? Did God cause their examples to be recorded for your imitation, or for your warning? Are they not set up as beacons that you may avoid the rocks upon which they split? Are you willing to feel what they felt for sin? Dare you follow them in sin, and plunge yourself into such distress and danger as they incurred?—Reader, in these ways learn to keep your heart in the hour of temptation.

X. The time of doubting and of spiritual darkness constitutes another season when it is very difficult to keep the heart. . . .

X. The time of doubting and of spiritual darkness constitutes another season when it is very difficult to keep the heart. When the light and comfort of the divine presence is withdrawn; when the believer, from the prevalence of indwelling sin in one form or other, is ready to renounce his hopes, to infer desperate conclusions with respect to himself, to regard his former comforts as vain delusions, and his professions as hypocrisy; at such a time much diligence is necessary to keep the heart from despondency. The Christian’s distress arises from his apprehension of his spiritual state, and in general he argues against his possessing true religion, either from his having relapsed into the same sins from which he had formerly been recovered with shame and sorrow; or from the sensible declining of his affections from God; or from the strength of his affections

toward creature enjoyments; or from his enlargement in public, while he is often confined and barren in private duties; or from some horrible suggestions of Satan, with which his soul is greatly perplexed; or, lastly, from God's silence and seeming denial of his long depending prayers. Now in order to the establishment and support of the heart under these circumstances, it is necessary that you be acquainted with some general truths which have a tendency to calm the trembling and doubting soul; and that you be rightly instructed with regard to the above-mentioned causes of disquiet. Let me direct your attention to the following general truths:

1. Every appearance of hypocrisy does not prove the person who manifests it to be a hypocrite. You should carefully distinguish between the appearance and the predominance of hypocrisy. There are remains of deceitfulness in the best hearts; this was exemplified in David and Peter; but the prevailing frame of their hearts being upright, they were not denominated hypocrites for their conduct.

2. We ought to regard what can be said in our favor, as well as what may be said against us. It is the sin of upright persons sometimes, to exercise an unreasonable severity against themselves. They do not impartially consider the state of their souls. To make their state appear butter than it really is, indeed is the damning sin of self-flattering hypocrites; and to make their state appear worse than it really is, is the sin and folly of some good persons. But why should you be such an enemy to your own peace? Why read over the evidences of God's love to your soul, as a man does a book which he intends to confute? Why do you study evasions, and turn off those comforts which are due to you?

3. Every thing which may be an occasion of grief to the people of God, is not a sufficient ground for their questioning the reality of their religion. Many things may trouble, which ought not to stumble you. If upon every occasion you should call in question all that had ever been wrought upon you, your life would be made up of doubtings and fears, and you could never attain that settled inward peace, and live that life of praise and thankfulness which the Gospel requires.

4. The soul is not at all times in a suitable state to pass a right judgment upon itself. It is peculiarly unqualified for this in the hour of desertion or temptation. Such seasons must be improved rather for watching and resisting, than for judging and determining.

5. Whatever be the ground of one's distress, it should drive him to, not from God. Suppose you have sinned thus and so, or that you have been thus long and sadly deserted, yet you have no right to infer that you ought to be discouraged, as if there was no help for you in God. When you have well digested these truths, if your doubts and distress remain, consider what is now to be offered:

1. Are you ready to conclude that you have no part in the favor of God, because you are visited with some extraordinary affliction? If so, do you then rightly conclude that great trials are tokens of God's hatred? Does the Scripture teach this? And dare you infer the same with respect to all who have been as much or more afflicted than yourself? If the argument is good in your case, it is good in application to theirs, and more conclusive with respect to them, in proportion as their trials were greater than yours. Wo then to David, Job, Paul, and all who have been afflicted as they were! But had you passed along in quietness and prosperity; had God withheld those chastisements with which he ordinarily visits his people, would you not have had far more reason for doubts and

distress than you now have?

2. Do you rashly infer that the Lord has no love to you, because he has withdrawn the light of his countenance? Do you imagine your state to be hopeless, because it is dark and uncomfortable? Be not hasty in forming this conclusion. If any of the dispensations of God to his people will bear a favorable as well as a harsh construction, why should they not be construed in the best sense? And may not God have a design of love rather than of hatred in the dispensation under which you mourn? May he not depart for a season, without departing for ever? You are not the first that have mistaken the design of God in withdrawing himself. “Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, my Lord hath forgotten me.” But was it so? What saith the answer of God? “Can a woman forget her sucking child?” &c. But do you sink down under the apprehension that the evidences of a total and final desertion are discoverable in your experience? Have you then lost your conscientious tenderness with regard to sin? and are you inclined to forsake God? If so, you have reason indeed to be alarmed. But if your conscience is tenderly alive; if you are resolved to cleave to the Lord; if the language of your heart is, I cannot forsake God, I cannot live without his presence; though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: then you have reason to hope that he will visit you again. It is by these exercises that he still maintains his interest in you.

04.09b. Keeping the Heart in the Time of Duty

Once more. Are sense and feelings suitable to judge of the dispensations of God by? Can their testimony be safely relied on? Is it safe to argue thus: 'If God bad any love for my soul, I should feel it now as well as in former times; but I cannot feel it, therefore it is gone?' May you not as well conclude, when the sun is invisible to you, that he has ceased to exist? Read Isaiah 1:10.

Now if there is nothing in the divine dealings with you which is a reasonable ground of your despondency and distress, let us inquire what there is in your own conduct for which you should be so cast down:

1. Have you committed sins from which you were formerly recovered with shame and sorrow? And do you thence conclude that you sin allowedly and habitually, and that your oppositions to sin were hypocritical? But do not too hastily give up all for lost. Is not your repentance and care renewed as often as you commit sin? Is it not the sin itself which troubles you, and is it not true, that the oftener you sin the more you are distressed? It is not so in customary sinning; of which Bernard excellently discourses thus: "When a man accustomed to restrain, sins grievously, it seems insupportable to him, yea he seems to descend alive into hell. In process of time it seems not insupportable, but heavy, and between insupportable and heavy there is no small descent. Next, such sinning becomes light, his conscience smites but faintly, and he regards not her rebukes. Then he is not only insensible to his guilt, but that which was bitter and displeasing has become in some degree sweet and pleasant. Now it is made a custom, and not only pleases, but pleases habitually. At length custom becomes nature; he cannot be dissuaded from it, but defends and pleads for it." This is allowed and customary sinning, this is the way of the wicked. But is not your way the contrary of this?

2. Do you apprehend a decline of your affections from God and from spiritual subjects? This may be your case, and yet there may be hope. But possibly you are mistaken with regard to this. There are many things to be learnt in Christian experience; it has relation to a great variety of subjects. You may now be learning what it is very necessary for you to know as a Christian. Now, what if you are not sensible of so lively affections, of such ravishing views as you had at first; may not your piety be growing more solid and consistent, and better adapted to practical purposes? Does it follow from your not always being in the same frame of mind, or from the fact that the same objects do not at all times excite the same feelings, that you have no true religion? Perhaps you deceive yourself by looking forward to what you would be, rather than contemplating what you are, compared with what you once were.

3. If the strength of your love to creature-enjoyments is the ground of desperate conclusions respecting yourself, perhaps you argue thus: "I fear that I love the creature more than God, if so, I have not true love to God. I sometimes feel stronger affections toward earthly comforts than I do toward heavenly objects, therefore my soul is not upright within me." If, indeed, you love the creature for itself, if you make it your end, and religion but a means, then you conclude rightly; for this is incompatible with supreme love to God. But may not a man love God more ardently and

unchangeably than he does any thing, or all things else, and yet, when God is not the direct object of his thoughts, may he not be sensible of more violent affection for the creature than he has at that time for God? As rooted malice indicates a stronger hatred than sudden though inure violent passion; so we must judge of our love, not by a violent motion of it now and then, but by the depth of its root and the constancy of its exercise. Perhaps your difficulty results from bringing your love to some foreign and improper test. Many persons have feared that when brought to some eminent trial they should renounce Christ and cleave to the creature; but when the trial came, Christ was every thing, and the world as nothing in their esteem. Such were the fears of some martyrs whose victory was complete. But you may expect divine assistance only at the time of, and in proportion to your necessity. If you would try your love, see whether you are willing to forsake Christ now.

4. Is the want of that enlargement in private which you find in public exercises an occasion of doubts and fears? Consider then whether there are not some circumstances attending public duties which are peculiarly calculated to excite your feelings and elevate your mind, and which cannot affect you in private. If so, your exercises in secret, if performed faithfully and in a suitable manner, may he profitable, though they have not all the characteristics of those in public. If you imagine that you have spiritual enlargement and enjoyment in public exercises while you neglect private duties, doubtless you deceive yourself. Indeed if you live in the neglect of secret duties, or are careless about them, you have great reason to fear. But if you regularly and faithfully perform them, it does not follow that they are vain and worthless, or that they are not of great value, because they are not attended with so much enlargement as you sometimes find in public. And what if the Spirit is pleased more highly to favor you with his gracious influence in one place and at one time than another, should this be a reason for murmuring and unbelief, or for thankfulness?

5. The vile or blasphemous suggestions of Satan sometimes occasion great perplexity and distress.— They seem to lay open an abyss of corruption in the heart, and to say there can be no grace here. But there may be grace in the heart where such thoughts are injected, though not, in the heart which consents to and cherishes them. Do you then abhor and oppose them? do you utterly refuse to give up yourself to their influence, and strive to keep holy and reverend thoughts of God, and of all religious objects? If so, such suggestions are involuntary, and no evidence against your piety.

6. Is the seeming denial of your prayers an occasion of despondency? Are you disposed to say, “If God had any regard for my soul he would have heard my petitions before now; but I have no answer from him, and therefore no interest in him?” But stay: though God’s abhorring and finally rejecting prayer is an evidence that he rejects the person who prays, yet, dare you conclude that he has rejected you, because an answer to your prayers is delayed, or because you do not discover it if granted? “May not God bear long with his own elect, that cry unto him day and night?”

Others have stumbled upon the same ground with you: “I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardst the voice of my supplication.” Now are there not some things in your experience which indicate that your prayers are not rejected, though answer to them is deferred? Are you not disposed to continue praying though you do not discover an answer? Are you not disposed still to ascribe righteousness to God, while you consider the cause of his silence as being in yourself? Thus did David: “O my God, I cry in the day time, and thou hearest not; and in the night, and am not silent: but thou art holy,” &c. Does not the delay of an answer to your

prayers excite you to examine your own heart and try your ways, that you may find and remove the difficulty? If so, you may have reason for humiliation, but not for despair.

Thus I have shown you how to keep your heart in dark and doubting seasons. God forbid that any false heart should encourage itself from these things. It is lamentable, that when we give saints and sinners their proper portions, each is so prone to take up the other's part.

XI. Another season, wherein the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when sufferings for religion are laid upon us. . . .

XI. Another season, wherein the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when sufferings for religion are laid upon us. Blessed is the man who in such a season is not offended in Christ. Now, whatever may be the kind or degree of your sufferings, if they are sufferings for Christ's sake and the Gospel's, spare no diligence to keep your heart. If you are tempted to shrink or waver under them, let what follows help you to repel and to surmount the instigation:

1. What reproach would you cast upon the Redeemer and his religion by deserting him at such a time as this! You would proclaim to the world, that how much soever you have boasted of the promises when you are put to the proof you dare hazard no thing upon your faith in them; and this will give the enemies of Christ an occasion to blaspheme. And will you thus furnish the triumphs of the uncircumcised? Ah, if you did but value the name of Christ as much as many wicked men value their names, you could never endure that his should be exposed to contempt. Will proud dust and ashes hazard death or hell rather than have their names disgraced, and will you endure nothing to maintain the honor of Christ?

2. Dare you violate your conscience out of complaisance to flesh and blood? Who will comfort you when your conscience accuses and condemns you? What happiness can there be in life, liberty or friends, when inward peace is taken away? Consider well what you do.

3. Is not the public interest of Christ and his cause infinitely more important than any interest of your own, and should you not prefer his glory and the welfare of his kingdom before every thing else? Should any temporary suffering, or any sacrifice which you can be called to make, be suffered to come into competition with the honor of his name?

4. Did the Redeemer neglect your interest and think lightly of you, when for your sake he endured sufferings between which and yours there can be no comparison? Did he hesitate and shrink back? No: "He endured the cross, despising the shame." And did he with unbroken patience and constancy endure so much for you; and will you flinch from momentary suffering in his cause?

5. Can you so easily cast off the society and the privileges of the saints and go over to the enemy's side? Are you willing to withhold your support from those who are determined to persevere, and throw your influence in the scale against them? Rather let your body and soul be rent asunder. "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."

6. How can you stand before Christ in the day of judgment, if you desert him now? "He that is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." Yet a little while, and the Son of man will come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, to judge the world. He will sit upon the throne of judgment, while all the nations are brought before him.

Imagine yourself now to be witnessing the transactions of that day. Behold the wicked; behold the apostates; and hear the consuming sentence which is pronounced upon them, and see them sinking in the gulf of infinite and everlasting wo! And will you desert Christ now, will you forsake his cause to save a little suffering, or to protract an unprofitable life on earth, and thus expose yourself to the doom of the apostate? Remember, that if you can silence the remonstrances of conscience now, you cannot hinder the sentence of the Judge then. By these means keep your heart, that it depart not from the living God.

XII. The last season which I shall mention, in which the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when we are warned by sickness that our dissolution is at hand. . . .

XII. The last season which I shall mention, in which the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when we are warned by sickness that our dissolution is at hand. When the child of God draws nigh to eternity, the adversary makes his last effort; and as he cannot win the soul from God, as he cannot dissolve the bond which unites the soul to Christ, his great design is to awaken fears of death, to fill the mind with aversion and horror at the thoughts of dissolution from the body. Hence, what shrinking from a separation, what fear to grasp death's cold hand, and unwillingness to depart, may sometimes be observed in the people of God. But we ought to die, as well as live, like saints.

I shall offer several considerations calculated to help the people of God in time of sickness, to keep their hearts loose from all earthly objects, and cheerfully willing to die:

1. Death is harmless to the people of God; its shafts leave no sting in them. Why then are you afraid that your sickness may be unto death? If you were to die in your sins; if death were to reign over you as a tyrant, to feed upon you as a lion doth upon his prey; if death to you were to be the precursor of hell, then you might reasonably startle and shrink back from it with horror and dismay. But if your sins are blotted out; if Christ has vanquished death in your behalf, so that you have nothing to encounter but bodily pain, and possibly not even that; if death will be to you the harbinger of heaven, why should you be afraid? why not bid it welcome? It cannot hurt you; it is easy and harmless; it is like putting off your clothes, on taking rest.

2. It may keep your heart from shrinking back, to consider that death is necessary to fit you for the full enjoyment of God. Whether you are willing to die or not, there certainly is no other way to complete the happiness of your soul. Death must do you the kind office to remove this veil of flesh, this animal life which separates you from God, before you can see and enjoy him fully. "Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord." And who would not be willing to die for the perfect enjoyment of God? Methinks one should look and sigh, like a prisoner, through the grates of this mortality: "O that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest." Indeed most men need patience to die; but a saint, who understands what death will introduce him to, rather needs patience to live. On his death-bed he should often look out and listen to his Lord's coming; and when he perceives his dissolution to be near, he should say, "The voice of my beloved; behold he cometh, leaping over the mountains, skipping over the hills."

3. Consider that the happiness of heaven commences immediately after death. That happiness will not be deferred till the resurrection; but as soon as death has passed upon you, your soul will be swallowed up in life. When you have once loosed from this shore, you shall be quickly wafted to

the shore of a glorious eternity. And can you not say, I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ? Did the soul and body die together, or did they sleep till the resurrection, as some have fancied, it would have been folly for Paul to desire a dissolution for the enjoyment of Christ; because he would have enjoyed more in the body than he could have enjoyed out of it. The Scripture speaks of but two ways in which the soul can properly live: viz, by faith and vision. These two comprehend its present and future existence.

Now, if when faith fails, sight should not immediately succeed, what would become of the soul? But the truth on this subject is clearly revealed in Scripture. See Luke 23:3; John 14:3, &c. What a blessed change then will death make in your condition! Rouse up, dying saint, and rejoice; let death do his work, that the angels may conduct your soul to the world of light.

4. It may increase your willingness to die, to reflect that by death God often removes his people out of the way of great troubles and temptations. When some extraordinary calamity is coming upon the world, God sometimes removes his saints out of the way of the evil. Thus Methuselah died the year before the flood; Augustine a little before the sacking of Hippo; Pareus just before the taking of Heidelburg. Luther observes that all the apostles died before the destruction of Jerusalem; and Luther himself died before the wars broke out in Germany. Now it may be that by death you will escape some grievous trial, which you could not and need not endure. But if no extraordinary trouble would come upon you in case your life were prolonged, yet God designs by death to relieve you from innumerable evils and burdens which are inseparable from the present state. Thus you will be delivered from indwelling sin, which is the greatest trouble; from all temptations from whatever source; from bodily tempers and embarrassments; and from all the afflictions and sorrows of this life. The days of your mourning will be ended, and God will wipe away all tears from your eyes. Why then should you not hasten to depart?

5. If you still linger, like Lot in Sodom, what are your pleas and pretences for a longer life? Why are you unwilling to die? Are you concerned for the welfare of your relations? If so, are you anxious for their temporal support? Then let the word of God satisfy you: “Leave thy fatherless children to me, I will keep them alive, and let thy widows trust in me.” Luther says, in his last will, “Lord, thou hast given inc a wife and children, I have nothing to leave them, but I commit them unto thee. O Father of the fatherless and Judge of widows, nourish, keep and teach them.” But are you concerned for the spiritual welfare of your relations? Remember that you cannot convert them, if you should live; and God can make your prayers and counsels effectual when you are dead.

Perhaps you desire to serve God longer in this world. But if he has nothing further for you to do here, why not say with David, “Here am I, let him do what seemeth him good.” He is calling you to higher service in heaven, and can accomplish by other hands what you desire to do further here.—Do you feel too imperfect to go to heaven? Consider that you must be imperfect until you die; your sanctification cannot be complete until you get to heaven.

‘But,’ you say, ‘I want assurance; if I had that I could die easily.’ Consider, then, that a hearty willingness to leave all the world to be freed from sin, and to be with God, is the direct way to that desired assurance; no carnal person was ever willing to die upon this ground.

Thus I have shown how the people of God, in the most difficult seasons, may keep their hearts with alt diligence.

I now proceed to improve and apply the subject: . . .

You have seen that the keeping of the heart is the great work of a Christian, in which the very soul and life of religion consists, and without which all other duties are of no value in the sight of God. Hence, to the consternation of hypocrites and formal professors, I infer:

1. That the pains and labors which many persons have undergone in religion are of no value, and will turn to no good account. Many splendid services have been performed by men, which God will utterly reject: they will not stand on record in order to an eternal acceptance, because the performers took no heed to keep their hearts with God. This is that fatal rock on which thousands of vain professors dash and ruin themselves eternally; they are exact about the externals of religion, but regardless of their hearts. O how many hours have some professors spent in hearing, praying, reading and conferring! and yet, as to the main end of religion, they might as well have sat still and done nothing, the great work, I mean heart-work, being all the while neglected. Tell me, vain professor, when did you shed a tear for the deadness, hardness, unbelief or earthliness of your heart? And do you think your easy religion can save you? If so, you must invert Christ's words, and say, Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to life, and many there be that go in thereat! Hear me, ye self-deluding hypocrite; you who have put off God with heartless duties; you who have acted in religion as if you had been blessing an idol; you who could not search your heart, and regulate it, and exercise it in your performances; how will you abide the coming of the Lord? how will you hold up your head before him, when he shall say. 'O you dissembling, false-hearted man! how could you profess religion? with what face could you so often tell me that you loved me, when you knew in your conscience that your heart was not with me?' O tremble to think what a fearful judgment it is to be given over to a heedless and careless heart, and then to have religious duties instead of a rattle to quiet and still the conscience!

2. I infer for their humiliation, that unless the people of God spend more time and pains about their hearts than they ordinarily do, they are never like to do God much service, or to possess much comfort in this world. I may say of that Christian who is remiss and careless in keeping his heart, as Jacob said of Reuben, Thou shalt not excel. It grieves me to see how many Christians there are who live at a poor, low rate, both of service and comfort, and who go up and down dejected and complaining. But how can they expect it should be otherwise, while they live so carelessly?

O how little of their time is spent in the closet, in searching, humbling, and quickening their hearts!

Christian, you say your heart is dead, and do you wonder that it is, so long as you keep it not with the fountain of life? If your body had been dieted as your soul has, that would have been dead too. And you may never expect that your heart will be in a better state until you take more pains with it.

O Christians! I fear your zeal and strength have run in the wrong channel; I fear that most of us may take up the Church's complaint: "They have made me the keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vine-yard have I not kept." Two things have eaten up the time and strength of the professors of this generation, and sadly diverted them from heart-work.

First:—Fruitless controversies, started by Satan, I doubt not for the very purpose of taking us off from practical godliness, to make us puzzle our heads when we should be inspecting our hearts. How little have we regarded the observation: "It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, and not with meats," (that is, with disputes and controversies about meats,) "which have not

profited them that have been occupied therein." How much better it is to see men live exactly, than to hear them dispute with subtlety! These unfruitful questions, how have they rent the churches, wasted time and spirits, and taken Christians off from their main business! 'What think you, would it not have been better if the questions agitated among the people of God of late had been such as these:—"How shall a man distinguish the special from the common operations of the Spirit? How may a soul discern its first backslidings from God? How may a backsliding Christian recover his first love? How may the heart be preserved from unseasonable thoughts in duty? How may a bosom-sin be discovered and mortified?" &c. Would not this course have tended more to the honor of religion and the comfort of souls? I am ashamed that the professors of this generation are yet insensible of their folly. O that God would turn their disputes and contentions into practical godliness!

Second:—Worldly cares and incumbrances have greatly increased the neglect of our hearts. The heads and hearts of multitudes have been filled with such a crowd and noise of worldly business that they have lamentably declined in their zeal, their love, their delight in God, and their heavenly, serious, and profitable way of conversing with men. How miserably have we entangled ourselves in this wilderness of trifles! Our discourses, our conferences, nay, our very prayers are tinged with it. We have had so much to do without, that we have been able to do but little within. And how many precious opportunities have we thus lost? How many admonitions of the Spirit have passed over unfruitfully? How often has the Lord called to us, when our worldly thoughts have prevented us from hearing? But there certainly is a way to enjoy God even in our worldly employments. If we lose our views of him when engaged in our temporal affairs, the fault is our own. Alas! that Christians should stand at the door of eternity, having more work upon their hands than their time is sufficient for, and yet be filling their heads and hearts with trifles!

3. I infer, lastly, for the awakening of all, that if the keeping of the heart be the great work of a Christian, then there are but few real Christians in the world. If every one who has learned the dialect of Christianity, and who can talk like a saint; if every one who has gifts and parts, and who can make shift to preach, pray, or discourse like a Christian: in a word, if all such as associate with the people of God and partake of ordinances may pass for Christians, then indeed the number is great. But alas! how few can he found, if you judge them by this rule,—how few are there who conscientiously keep their hearts, watch their thoughts and look scrupulously to their motives! Indeed there are few closet-men among professors. It is easier for men to be reconciled to any other duties in religion than to these. The profane part of the world will not so much as meddle with the outside of any religious duties, and least of all with these; and as to the hypocrite, though he may be very particular in externals, you can never persuade him to undertake this inward, this difficult work; this work, to which there is no inducement from human applause; this work, which would quickly discover what the hypocrite cares not to know: so that by general consent this heart-work is left to the hands of a few retired ones, and I tremble to think in how few hands it is.

II. If the keeping of the heart be so important a business; if such great advantages result from it; if so many valuable interests be wrapt up in it, then let me call upon the people of God every where to engage heartily in this work. O study your hearts, watch your hearts, keep your hearts! Away with fruitless controversies and all idle questions; away with empty names and vain shows; away with unprofitable discourse and bold censures of others, and turn in upon yourselves. O that this day, this hour, you would resolve upon doing so!

Reader, methinks I shall prevail with you. All that I beg for is this, that you would step aside oftener to talk with God and your own heart; that you would not suffer every trifle to divert you; that you would keep a more true and faithful account of your thoughts and affections; that you would seriously demand of your own heart at least every evening, ‘O my heart, where hast thou been today, and what has engaged thy thoughts?’

If all that has been said by way of inducement be not enough, I have yet some motives to offer you:

If all that has been said by way of inducement be not enough, I have yet some motives to offer you:

1. The studying, observing, and diligently keeping your own heart, will surprisingly help you to understand the deep mysteries of religion. An honest, well-experienced heart is an excellent help to the head. Such a heart will serve for a commentary on a great part of the Scriptures. By means of such a heart you will have a better understanding of divine things than the most learned (graceless) man ever had, or call have; you will not only have a clearer, but a more interesting and profitable apprehension of them. A man may discourse orthodoxy and profoundly of the nature and effects of faith, the troubles and comforts of conscience, and the sweetness of communion with God, who never felt the efficacy and sweet impression of these things upon his own soul. But how dark and dry are his notions compared with those of an experienced Christian!

2. The study and observation of your own heart will powerfully secure you against the dangerous and infecting errors of the times in which you live. For what think you is the reason why so many professors have departed from the faith, giving heed to fables? why have so many been led away by the error of the wicked? why have those who have sown corrupt doctrines had such plentiful harvests among us, but because they have met with a race of professors who never knew what belongs to practical godliness and the study and keeping of their hearts?

3. Your care and diligence in keeping your heart will prove one of the best evidences of your sincerity. I know no external act of religion which truly distinguishes the sound from the unsound professor. It is marvellous how far hypocrites go in all external duties; how plausibly they can order the outward man, hiding all their indecencies from the observation of the world. But they take no heed to their hearts; they are not in secret what they appear to be in public; and before this test no hypocrite can stand. They may, indeed, in a fit of terror, or on a death-bed, cry out of the wickedness of their hearts; but such extort ed complaints are worthy of no regard. No credit, in law, is to be given to the testimony of one upon the rack, because it may be supposed that the extremity of his torture will make him say any thing to get relief. But if self-jealousy, care and watchfulness be the daily workings and frames of your heart, you have some evidence of your sincerity.

4. How comfortable and how profitable would all ordinances and duties be to you, if your heart was faithfully kept. What lively communion might you have with God every time you approach him, if your heart was in a right frame! You might then say with David, “My meditation of Him shall be sweet.” It is the indisposition of the heart which renders ordinances, and secret duties so comfortless to some. They strive to raise their hearts to God, now pressing this argument upon them, then that, to quicken and affect them; yet they often get nearly through the exercise before

their hearts begin to be interested in it; and some times they go away no better than they came. But the Christian whose heart is prepared by being constantly kept, enters immediately and heartily into his duties; he outstrips his sluggish neighbor, gets the first sight of Christ in a sermon, the first seal from Christ in a sacrament, the first communication of grace and love in secret prayer. Now if there be any thing valuable and comfortable in ordinances and private duties, look to your heart and keep it, I beseech you.

5. An acquaintance with your own heart will furnish you a fountain of matter in prayer. The man who is diligent in heart-work, will be richly supplied with matter in his addresses to God. He will not be confused for want of thoughts; his tongue will not falter for want of expressions.

6. The most desirable thing in the world, viz, the revival of religion among a people, may be effected by means of what I am urging upon you.

O that I might see the time when professors shall not walk in a vain show; when they shall please themselves no more with a name to live, while they are spiritually dead; when they shall be no more a company of frothy, vain persons; but when holiness shall shine in their conversation, and awe the world, and command reverence from all that are around them; when they shall warm the heart of those who come near them, and cause it to be said, God is in these men of a truth. And may such a time be expected? Until heart-work becomes the business of professors, I have no hope of seeing a time so blessed! Does it not grieve you to see how religion is contemned and trampled under foot, and the professors of it ridiculed and scorned in the world? Professors, would you recover your credit? would you obtain an honorable testimony in the consciences of your very enemies? Then keep your hearts.

7. By diligence in keeping our hearts we should prevent the occasions of fatal scandals and stumbling-blocks to the world. Wo to the world because of offences!

Keep your heart faithfully, and you will be prepared for any situation or service to which you may be called. This, and this only can properly fit you for usefulness in any station; but with this you can endure prosperity or adversity; you can deny yourself, and turn your hand to any work. Thus Paul turned every circumstance to good account, and made himself so eminently useful. When he preached to others, he provided against being cast away himself: he kept his heart; and every thing in which lie excelled seems to have had a close connection with his diligence in keeping his heart.

9. If the people of God would diligently keep their hearts, their communion with each other would be unspeakably more inviting and profitable. Then “how goodly would be thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!” It is the fellowship which the people of God have with the Father and with the Son that kindles the desires of others to have communion with them. I tell you, that if saints would be persuaded to spend more time and take more pains about their hearts, there would soon be such a divine excellence in their conversation that others would account it no small privilege to be with or near them. It is the pride, passion and earthliness of our hearts, that has spoiled Christian fellowship. Why is it that when Christians meet they are often jarring and contending, but because their passions arc unmortified? Whence come their uncharitable censures of their brethren, but from their ignorance of themselves? Why are they so rigid and unfeeling toward those who have fallen, but because they do not feel their own weakness and

liability to temptation? Why is their discourse so light and unprofitable when they meet, but because their hearts are earthly and vain? But now, if Christians would study their hearts more and keep them better, the beauty and glory of communion would be restored. They would divide no more, contend no more, censure rashly no more. They will feel right one toward another, when each is daily humbled under a sense of the evil of his own heart.

10. Lastly:—Keep your heart, and then the comforts of the Spirit and the influence of all ordinances will be more fixed and lasting than they now are. And do the consolations of God seem small to you?" Ah, you have reason to be ashamed that the ordinances of God, as to their quickening and comforting effects, should make so light and transient an impression on your heart.

Now, reader, consider well these special benefits of keeping the heart which I have mentioned. Examine their importance. Are they small matters? Is it a small matter to have your understanding assisted? your endangered soul rendered safe? your sincerity proved? your communion with God sweetened? your heart filled with matter for prayer? Is it a small thing to have the power of godliness? all fatal scandals removed? an instrumental fitness to serve Christ obtained? the communion of saints restored to its primitive glory? and the influence of ordinances abiding in the souls of saints? If these are no common blessings, no ordinary benefits, then surely it is a great and in dispensable duty to keep the heart with all diligence. And now are you inclined to undertake the business of keeping your heart? are you resolved upon it? I charge you, then, to engage in it earnestly. Away with every cowardly feeling, and make up your mind to encounter difficulties. Draw your armor from the word of God. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in its commands, its promises, its threatenings; let it be fixed in your understanding, your memory, your conscience, your affections. You must learn to wield the sword of the Spirit (which is the word of God) familiarly, if you would defend your heart and conquer your enemies. You must call yourself frequently to an account; examine yourself as in the presence of the all seeing God; bring your conscience, as it were, to the bar of judgment. Beware how you plunge yourself into a multiplicity of worldly business; how you practise upon the maxims of the world; and how you venture at all to indulge your depraved propensities. You must exercise the utmost vigilance to discover and check the first symptoms of departure from God, the least decline of spirituality, or the least indisposition to meditation by yourself and holy conversation and fellowship with others. These things you must undertake, in the strength of Christ, with invincible resolution in the outset. And if you thus engage in this great work, he assured you shall not spend your strength for naught; comforts which you never felt or thought of will flow in upon you from every side. The diligent prosecution of this work will constantly afford you the most powerful excitements to vigilance and ardor in the life of faith, while it increases your strength and wears out your enemies. And when you have kept your heart with all diligence a little while; when you have fought the battles of this spiritual warfare, gained the ascendancy over the corruptions within, and vanquished the enemies without, then God will open the gate of heaven to you, and give you the portion which is promised to them that overcome. Awake then, this moment; get the world under your feet pant not for the things which a man may have, and eternally lose his soul; but bless God that you may have his service here, and the glory hereafter which he appoints to his chosen.

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be

glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

04.10. Keeping the Heart When We Meet With Great Trial

Keeping the Heart When We Meet With Great Trials

VIII. The next season in which special exertion is necessary to keep the heart, is when we meet with great trials. . . .

VIII. The next season in which special exertion is necessary to keep the heart, is when we meet with great trials. In such cases the heart is apt to be suddenly transported with pride, impatience, or other sinful passions. Many good people are guilty of hasty and very sinful conduct in such instances; and all have need to use diligently the following means to keep their hearts submissive and patient under great trials:

1. Get humble and abasing thoughts of yourself. The humble is ever the patient man. Pride is the source of irregular and sinful passions. A lofty, will be an unyielding and peevish spirit. When we over-rate ourselves, we think that we are treated unworthily, that our trials are too severe: thus we cavil and repine. Christian, you should have such thoughts of yourself as would put a stop to these murmurings. You should have lower and more humiliating views of yourself than any other one can have of you. Get humility, and you will have peace whatever be your trial.

2. Cultivate a habit of communion with God. This will prepare you for whatever may take place. This will so sweeten your temper and calm your mind as to secure you against surprisals. This will produce that inward peace which will make you superior to your trials. Habitual communion with God will afford you enjoyment, which you can never be willing to interrupt by sinful feeling. When a Christian is calm and submissive under his afflictions, probably he derives support and comfort in this way; but he who is discomposed, impatient, or fretful, shows that `all is not right within—he cannot be supposed to practise communion with God.

3. Let your mind be deeply impressed with an apprehension of the evil nature and effects of an unsubmissive and restless temper. It grieves the Spirit of God, and induces his departure. His gracious presence and influence are enjoyed only where peace and quiet submission prevail. The indulgence of such a temper gives the adversary an advantage. Satan is an angry and discontented spirit. He finds no rest but in restless hearts. He bestirs himself when the spirits are in commotion; sometimes he fills the heart with ungrateful and rebellious thoughts; sometimes he inflames the tongue with indecent language. Again, such a temper brings great guilt upon the conscience, unfits the soul for any duty, and dishonors the Christian name. O keep your heart, and let the power and excellence of your religion be chiefly manifested when you are brought into the greatest straits.

4. Consider how desirable it is for a Christian to overcome his evil propensities. How much more present happiness it affords; how much better it is in every respect to mortify and subdue unholy feelings, than to give way to them. When upon your death-bed you come calmly to review your life, how comfortable will it be to reflect on the conquest which you have made over the depraved feelings of your heart. It was a memorable saying of Valentinian the emperor, when he was about

to die: “Amongst all my conquests, there is but one that now comforts me” Being asked what that was, he answered, “I have overcome my worst enemy, my own sinful heart!”

5. Shame yourself, by contemplating the character of those who have been most eminent for meekness and submission. Above all, compare your temper with the Spirit of Christ. “Learn of me,” saith he, “for I am meek and lowly.” It is said of Calvin and Ursin, though both of choleric natures, that they had so imbibed and cultivated the meekness of Christ as not to utter an unbecoming word under the greatest provocations. And even many of the heathens have manifested great moderation and forbearance under their severest afflictions. Is it not a shame and a reproach that you should be outdone by them?

6. Avoid every thing which is calculated to irritate your feelings. It is true spiritual valor to keep as far as we can out of sins way. If you can but avoid the excitements to impetuous and rebellious feelings, or check them in their first beginnings, you will have but little to fear. The first workings of common sins are comparatively weak, they gain their strength by degrees; but in times of trial the motions of sin are strongest at first, the unsubdued temper breaks out suddenly and violently. But if you resolutely with. stand it at first, it will yield and give you the victory.

IX. The ninth season wherein the greatest diligence and skill are necessary to keep the heart, is the hour of temptation, when Satan besets the Christians heart, and takes the unwary by surprise. . . .

IX. The ninth season wherein the greatest diligence arid skill are necessary to keep the heart, is the hour of temptation, when Satan besets the Christians heart, and takes the unwary by surprise. To keep the heart at such times, is not less a mercy than a duty. Few Christians are so skillful in detecting the fallacies, and repelling the arguments by which the adversary incites them to sin, as to come off safe and whole in these encounters. Many eminent saints have smarted severely for their want of watchfulness and diligence at such times. How then may a Christian keep his heart from yielding to temptation? There are several principal ways in which the adversary insinuates temptation, and urges compliance:

1. Satan suggests that here is pleasure to be enjoyed; the temptation is presented with a smiling aspect and an enticing voice: `What, are you so dull and phlegmatic as not to feel the powerful charms of pleasure? Who can withhold himself from such delights? Reader, you may be rescued from the danger of such temptations by repelling the proposal of pleasure. It is urged that the commission of sin will afford you pleasure. Suppose this were true, will the accusing and condemning rebukes of conscience and the flames of hell be pleasant too? Is there pleasure in the scourges of conscience? If so why did Peter weep so bitterly? why did David cry out of broken bones? You hear what is said of the pleasure of sin, and have you not read what David said of the effects of it? “Thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore; there is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger, neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin,” &c. If you yield to temptation, you must feel such inward distress on account of it, or the miseries of hell. But why should the pretended pleasure of sin allure you, when you know that unspeakably more real pleasure will arise from the mortification than can arise from the commission of sin. Will you prefer the gratification of some unhallowed passion, with the deadly poison which it will leave behind, to that sacred pleasure which arises from fearing and obeying God, complying with the dictates of conscience, and maintaining inward peace? Can sin afford any such delight as he feels

who, by resisting temptation, has manifested the sincerity of his heart, and obtained evidence that he fears God, loves holiness, and hates sin?

2. The secrecy with which you may commit sin is made use of to induce compliance with temptation. The tempter insinuates that this indulgence will never disgrace you among men, for no one will know it. But recollect yourself. Does not God behold you? Is not the divine presence every where? What if you might hide your sin from the eyes of the world, you cannot hide it from God. No darkness nor shadow of death can screen you from his inspection. Besides have you no reverence for yourself? Can you do that by yourself which you dare not have others observe? Is not your conscience as a thousand witnesses? Even a heathen could say, “When thou art tempted to commit sin, fear thyself without any other witness.”

3. The prospect of worldly advantage often enforces temptation. It is suggested, `Why should you be so nice and scrupulous? Give yourself a little liberty, and you may better your condition: now is your time. This is a dangerous temptation, and must be promptly resisted. Yielding to such a temptation will do your soul more injury than any temporal acquisition can possibly do you good. And what would it profit you, if you should gain the whole world and lose your own soul? What can be compared with the value of your spiritual interests? or what can at all compensate for the smallest injury of them?

4. Perhaps the smallness of the sin is urged as a reason why you may commit it; thus: `It is but a little one, a small matter, a trifle; who Would stand upon such niceties? But is the Majesty of heaven little too? If you commit this sin you will offend a great God. Is there any little hell to torment little sinners in? No; the least sinners in hell are full of misery. There is great wrath treasured up for those whom the world regard as little sinners. But the less the sin, the less the inducement to commit it. Will you provoke God for a trifle? will you destroy your peace, wound your conscience, and grieve the Spirit, all for nothing? What madness is this!

5. An argument to enforce temptation is sometimes drawn from the mercy of God and the hope of pardon —God is merciful, he will pass by this as an infirmity, he will not be severe to mark it. But stay: where do you find a promise of mercy to presumptuous sinners? Involuntary reprisals and lamented infirmities may be pardoned, “but the soul that doth aught presumptuously, the same reproacheth the Lord, and that soul shall be cut off from among his people.” If God is a being of so much mercy, how can you affront him? How can you make so glorious an attribute as the divine mercy an occasion of sin? Will you wrong him because he is good? Rather let his goodness lead you to repentance, and keep you from transgression.

6. Sometimes Satan encourages to the commission of sin, from the examples of holy men. Thus and thus they sinned, and were restored; therefore you may commit this sin, and yet. be a saint and be saved. Such suggestions must be instantly repelled. If good men have committed sins similar to that with which you are beset, did any good man ever sin upon such ground and from such encouragement as is here presented? Did God cause their examples to be recorded for your imitation, or for your warning? Are they not set up as beacons that you may avoid the rocks upon which they split? Are you willing to feel what they felt for sin? Dare you follow them in sin, and plunge yourself into such distress and danger as they incurred?—Reader, in these ways learn to keep your heart in the hour of temptation.

X. The time of doubting and of spiritual darkness constitutes another season when it is very difficult to keep the heart. . . .

X. The time of doubting and of spiritual darkness constitutes another season when it is very difficult to keep the heart. When the light and comfort of the divine presence is withdrawn; when the believer, from the prevalence of indwelling sin in one form or other, is ready to renounce his hopes, to infer desperate conclusions with respect to himself, to regard his former comforts as vain delusions, and his professions as hypocrisy; at such a time much diligence is necessary to keep the heart from despondency. The Christian's distress arises from his apprehension of his spiritual state, and in general he argues against his possessing true religion, either from his having relapsed into the same sins from which he had formerly been recovered with shame and sorrow; or from the sensible declining of his affections from God; or from the strength of his affections toward creature enjoyments; or from his enlargement in public, while he is often confined and barren in private duties; or from some horrible suggestions of Satan, with which his soul is greatly perplexed; or, lastly, from God's silence and seeming denial of his long depending prayers. Now in order to the establishment and support of the heart under these circumstances, it is necessary that you be acquainted with some general truths which have a tendency to calm the trembling and doubting soul; and that you be rightly instructed with regard to the above-mentioned causes of disquiet. Let me direct your attention to the following general truths:

1. Every appearance of hypocrisy does not prove the person who manifests it to be a hypocrite. You should carefully distinguish between the appearance and the predominance of hypocrisy. There are remains of deceitfulness in the best hearts; this was exemplified in David and Peter; but the prevailing frame of their hearts being upright, they were not denominated hypocrites for their conduct.

2. We ought to regard what can be said in our favor, as well as what may be said against us. It is the sin of upright persons sometimes, to exercise an unreasonable severity against themselves. They do not impartially consider the state of their souls. To make their state appear butter than it really is, indeed is the damning sin of self-flattering hypocrites; and to make their state appear worse than it really is, is the sin and folly of some good persons. But why should you be such an enemy to your own peace? Why read over the evidences of God's love to your soul, as a man does a book which he intends to confute? Why do you study evasions, and turn off those comforts which are due to you?

3. Every thing which may be an occasion of grief to the people of God, is not a sufficient ground for their questioning the reality of their religion. Many things may trouble, which ought not to stumble you. If upon every occasion you should call in question all that had ever been wrought upon you, your life would be made up of doubtings and fears, and you could never attain that settled inward peace, and live that life of praise and thankfulness which the Gospel requires.

4. The soul is not at all times in a suitable state to pass a right judgment upon itself. It is peculiarly unqualified for this in the hour of desertion or temptation. Such seasons must be improved rather for watching and resisting, than for judging and determining.

5. Whatever be the ground of one's distress, it should drive him to, not from God. Suppose you have sinned thus and so, or that you have been thus long and sadly deserted, yet you have no

right to infer that you ought to be discouraged, as if there was no help for you in God. When you have well digested these truths, if your doubts and distress remain, consider what is now to be offered:

1. Are you ready to conclude that you have no part in the favor of God, because you are visited with some extraordinary affliction? If so, do you then rightly conclude that great trials are tokens of God's hatred? Does the Scripture teach this? And dare you infer the same with respect to all who have been as much or more afflicted than yourself? If the argument is good in your case, it is good in application to theirs, and more conclusive with respect to them, in proportion as their trials were greater than yours. Wo then to David, Job, Paul, and all who have been afflicted as they were! But had you passed along in quietness and prosperity; had God withheld those chastisements with which he ordinarily visits his people, would you not have had far more reason for doubts and distress than you now have?

2. Do you rashly infer that the Lord has no love to you, because he has withdrawn the light of his countenance? Do you imagine your state to be hopeless, because it is dark and uncomfortable? Be not hasty in forming this conclusion. If any of the dispensations of God to his people will bear a favorable as well as a harsh construction, why should they not be construed in the best sense? And may not God have a design of love rather than of hatred in the dispensation under which you mourn? May he not depart for a season, without departing for ever? You are not the first that have mistaken the design of God in withdrawing himself. "Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, my Lord hath forgotten me." But was it so? What saith the answer of God? "Can a woman forget her sucking child?" &c. But do you sink down under the apprehension that the evidences of a total and final desertion are discoverable in your experience? Have you then lost your conscientious tenderness with regard to sin? and are you inclined to forsake God? If so, you have reason indeed to be alarmed. But if your conscience is tenderly alive; if you are resolved to cleave to the Lord; if the language of your heart is, I cannot forsake God, I cannot live without his presence; though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: then you have reason to hope that he will visit you again. It is by these exercises that he still maintains his interest in you.

Once more. Are sense and feelings suitable to judge of the dispensations of God by? Can their testimony be safely relied on? Is it safe to argue thus: 'If God bad any love for my soul, I should feel it now as well as in former times; but I cannot feel it, therefore it is gone?' May you not as well conclude, when the sun is invisible to you, that he has ceased to exist? Read Isaiah 1:10.

Now if there is nothing in the divine dealings with you which is a reasonable ground of your despondency and distress, let us inquire what there is in your own conduct for which you should be so cast down:

1. Have you committed sins from which you were formerly recovered with shame and sorrow? And do you thence conclude that you sin allowedly and habitually, and that your oppositions to sin were hypocritical? But do not too hastily give up all for lost. Is not your repentance and care renewed as often as you commit sin? Is it not the sin itself which troubles you, and is it not true, that the oftener you sin the more you are distressed? It is not so in customary sinning; of which Bernard excellently discourses thus: "When a man accustomed to restrain, sins grievously, it seems insupportable to him, yea he seems to descend alive into hell. In process of time it seems not insupportable, but heavy, and between insupportable and heavy there is no small descent. Next, such sinning

becomes light, his conscience smites but faintly, and he regards not her rebukes. Then he is not only insensible to his guilt, but that which was bitter and displeasing has become in some degree sweet and pleasant. Now it is made a custom, and not only pleases, but pleases habitually. At length custom becomes nature; he cannot be dissuaded from it, but defends and pleads for it." This is allowed and customary sinning, this is the way of the wicked. But is not your way the contrary of this?

2. Do you apprehend a decline of your affections from God and from spiritual subjects? This may be your case, and yet there may be hope. But possibly you are mistaken with regard to this. There are many things to be learnt in Christian experience; it has relation to a great variety of subjects. You may now be learning what it is very necessary for you to know as a Christian. Now, what if you are not sensible of so lively affections, of such ravishing views as you had at first; may not your piety be growing more solid and consistent, and better adapted to practical purposes? Does it follow from your not always being in the same frame of mind, or from the fact that the same objects do not at all times excite the same feelings, that you have no true religion? Perhaps you deceive yourself by looking forward to what you would be, rather than contemplating what you are, compared with what you once were.

3. If the strength of your love to creature-enjoyments is the ground of desperate conclusions respecting yourself, perhaps you argue thus: "I fear that I love the creature more than God, if so, I have not true love to God. I sometimes feel stronger affections toward earthly comforts than I do toward heavenly objects, therefore my soul is not upright within me." If, indeed, you love the creature for itself, if you make it your end, and religion but a means, then you conclude rightly; for this is incompatible with supreme love to God. But may not a man love God more ardently and unchangeably than he does any thing, or all things else, and yet, when God is not the direct object of his thoughts, may he not be sensible of more violent affection for the creature than he has at that time for God? As rooted malice indicates a stronger hatred than sudden though inure violent passion; so we must judge of our love, not by a violent motion of it now and then, but by the depth of its root and the constancy of its exercise. Perhaps your difficulty results from bringing your love to some foreign and improper test. Many persons have feared that when brought to some eminent trial they should renounce Christ and cleave to the creature; but when the trial came, Christ was every thing, and the world as nothing in their esteem. Such were the fears of some martyrs whose victory was complete. But you may expect divine assistance only at the time of, and in proportion to your necessity. If you would try your love, see whether you are willing to forsake Christ now.

4. Is the want of that enlargement in private which you find in public exercises an occasion of doubts and fears? Consider then whether there are not some circumstances attending public duties which are peculiarly calculated to excite your feelings and elevate your mind, and which cannot affect you in private. If so, your exercises in secret, if performed faithfully and in a suitable manner, may he profitable, though they have not all the characteristics of those in public. If you imagine that you have spiritual enlargement and enjoyment in public exercises while you neglect private duties, doubtless you deceive yourself. Indeed if you live in the neglect of secret duties, or are careless about them, you have great reason to fear. But if you regularly and faithfully perform them, it does not follow that they are vain and worthless, or that they are not of great value, because they are not attended with so much enlargement as you sometimes find in public. And what if the Spirit is pleased more highly to favor you with his gracious influence in one place and at

one time than another, should this be a reason for murmuring and unbelief, or for thankfulness?

5. The vile or blasphemous suggestions of Satan sometimes occasion great perplexity and distress.— They seem to lay open an abyss of corruption in the heart, and to say there can be no grace here. But there may be grace in the heart where such thoughts are injected, though not, in the heart which consents to and cherishes them. Do you then abhor and oppose them? do you utterly refuse to give up yourself to their influence, and strive to keep holy and reverend thoughts of God, and of all religious objects? If so, such suggestions are involuntary, and no evidence against your piety.

6. Is the seeming denial of your prayers an occasion of despondency? Are you disposed to say, “If God had any regard for my soul he would have heard my petitions before now; but I have no answer from him, and therefore no interest in him?” But stay: though God’s abhorring and finally rejecting prayer is an evidence that he rejects the person who prays, yet, dare you conclude that he has rejected you, because an answer to your prayers is delayed, or because you do not discover it if granted? “May not God bear long with his own elect, that cry unto him day and night?”

Others have stumbled upon the same ground with you: “I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardst the voice of my supplication.” Now are there not some things in your experience which indicate that your prayers are not rejected, though answer to them is deferred? Are you not disposed to continue praying though you do not discover an answer? Are you not disposed still to ascribe righteousness to God, while you consider the cause of his silence as being in yourself? Thus did David: “O my God, I cry in the day time, and thou hearest not; and in the night, and am not silent: but thou art holy,” &c. Does not the delay of an answer to your prayers excite you to examine your own heart and try your ways, that you may find and remove the difficulty? If so, you may have reason for humiliation, but not for despair.

Thus I have shown you how to keep your heart in dark and doubting seasons. God forbid that any false heart should encourage itself from these things. It is lamentable, that when we give saints and sinners their proper portions, each is so prone to take up the other’s part.

XI. Another season, wherein the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when sufferings for religion are laid upon us. . . .

XI. Another season, wherein the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when sufferings for religion are laid upon us. Blessed is the man who in such a season is not offended in Christ. Now, whatever may be the kind or degree of your sufferings, if they are sufferings for Christ’s sake and the Gospel’s, spare no diligence to keep your heart. If you are tempted to shrink or waver under them, let what follows help you to repel and to surmount the instigation:

1. What reproach would you cast upon the Redeemer and his religion by deserting him at such a time as this! You would proclaim to the world, that how much soever you have boasted of the promises when you are put to the proof you dare hazard no thing upon your faith in them; and this will give the enemies of Christ an occasion to blaspheme. And will you thus furnish the triumphs of the uncircumcised? Ah, if you did but value the name of Christ as much as many wicked men value their names, you could never endure that his should be exposed to contempt. Will proud dust and ashes hazard death or hell rather than have their names disgraced, and will you endure nothing to maintain the honor of Christ?

2. Dare you violate your conscience out of complaisance to flesh and blood? Who will comfort you when your conscience accuses and condemns you? What happiness can there be in life, liberty or friends, when inward peace is taken away? Consider well what you do.

3. Is not the public interest of Christ and his cause infinitely more important than any interest of your own, and should you not prefer his glory and the welfare of his kingdom before every thing else? Should any temporary suffering, or any sacrifice which you can be called to make, be suffered to come into competition with the honor of his name?

4. Did the Redeemer neglect your interest and think lightly of you, when for your sake he endured sufferings between which and yours there can be no comparison? Did he hesitate and shrink back? No: “He endured the cross, despising the shame.” And did he with unbroken patience and constancy endure so much for you; and will you flinch from momentary suffering in his cause?

5. Can you so easily cast off the society and the privileges of the saints and go over to the enemy’s side? Are you willing to withhold your support from those who are determined to persevere, and throw your influence in the scale against them? Rather let your body and soul be rent asunder. “If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”

6. How can you stand before Christ in the day of judgment, if you desert him now? “He that is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” Yet a little while, and the Son of man will come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, to judge the world. He will sit upon the throne of judgment, while all the nations are brought before him. Imagine yourself now to be witnessing the transactions of that day. Behold the wicked; behold the apostates; and hear the consuming sentence which is pronounced upon them, and see them sinking in the gulf of infinite and everlasting wo! And will you desert Christ now, will you forsake his cause to save a little suffering, or to protract an unprofitable life on earth, and thus expose yourself to the doom of the apostate? Remember, that if you can silence the remonstrances of conscience now, you cannot hinder the sentence of the Judge then. By these means keep your heart, that it depart not from the living God.

XII. The last season which I shall mention, in which the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when we are warned by sickness that our dissolution is at hand. . . .

XII. The last season which I shall mention, in which the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when we are warned by sickness that our dissolution is at hand. When the child of God draws nigh to eternity, the adversary makes his last effort; and as he cannot win the soul from God, as he cannot dissolve the bond which unites the soul to Christ, his great design is to awaken fears of death, to fill the mind with aversion and horror at the thoughts of dissolution from the body. Hence, what shrinking from a separation, what fear to grasp death’s cold hand, and unwillingness to depart, may sometimes be observed in the people of God. But we ought to die, as well as live, like saints.

I shall offer several considerations calculated to help the people of God in time of sickness, to keep their hearts loose from all earthly objects, and cheerfully willing to die:

1. Death is harmless to the people of God; its shafts leave no sting in them. Why then are you afraid that your sickness may be unto death? If you were to die in your sins; if death were to reign over you as a tyrant, to feed upon you as a lion doth upon his prey; if death to you were to be the precursor of hell, then you might reasonably startle and shrink back from it with horror and dismay. But if your sins are blotted out; if Christ has vanquished death in your behalf, so that you have nothing to encounter but bodily pain, and possibly not even that; if death will be to you the harbinger of heaven, why should you be afraid? why not bid it welcome? It cannot hurt you; it is easy and harmless; it is like putting off your clothes, on taking rest.

2. It may keep your heart from shrinking back, to consider that death is necessary to fit you for the full enjoyment of God. Whether you are willing to die or not, there certainly is no other way to complete the happiness of your soul. Death must do you the kind office to remove this veil of flesh, this animal life which separates you from God, before you can see and enjoy him fully. “Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.” And who would not be willing to die for the perfect enjoyment of God? Methinks one should look and sigh, like a prisoner, through the grates of this mortality: “O that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest.” Indeed most men need patience to die; but a saint, who understands what death will introduce him to, rather needs patience to live. On his death-bed he should often look out and listen to his Lord’s coming; and when he perceives his dissolution to be near, he should say, “The voice of my beloved; behold he cometh, leaping over the mountains, skipping over the hills.”

3. Consider that the happiness of heaven commences immediately after death. That happiness will not be deferred till the resurrection; but as soon as death has passed upon you, your soul will be swallowed up in life. When you have once loosed from this shore, you shall be quickly wafted to the shore of a glorious eternity. And can you not say, I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ? Did the soul and body die together, or did they sleep till the resurrection, as some have fancied, it would have been folly for Paul to desire a dissolution for the enjoyment of Christ; because he would have enjoyed more in the body than he could have enjoyed out of it. The Scripture speaks of but two ways in which the soul can properly live: viz, by faith and vision. These two comprehend its present and future existence.

Now, if when faith fails, sight should not immediately succeed, what would become of the soul? But the truth on this subject is clearly revealed in Scripture. See Luke 23:3; John 14:3, &c. What a blessed change then will death make in your condition! Rouse up, dying saint, and rejoice; let death do his work, that the angels may conduct your soul to the world of light.

4. It may increase your willingness to die, to reflect that by death God often removes his people out of the way of great troubles and temptations. When some extraordinary calamity is coming upon the world, God sometimes removes his saints out of the way of the evil. Thus Methuselah died the year before the flood; Augustine a little before the sacking of Hippo; Pareus just before the taking of Heidelburg. Luther observes that all the apostles died before the destruction of Jerusalem; and Luther himself died before the wars broke out in Germany. Now it may be that by death you will escape some grievous trial, which you could not and need not endure. But if no extraordinary trouble would come upon you in case your life were prolonged, yet God designs by death to relieve you from innumerable evils and burdens which are inseparable from the present state. Thus you will be delivered from indwelling sin, which is the greatest trouble; from all

temptations from whatever source; from bodily tempers and embarrassments; and from all the afflictions and sorrows of this life. The days of your mourning will be ended, and God will wipe away all tears from your eyes. Why then should you not hasten to depart?

5. If you still linger, like Lot in Sodom, what are your pleas and pretences for a longer life? Why are you unwilling to die? Are you concerned for the welfare of your relations? If so, are you anxious for their temporal support? Then let the word of God satisfy you: “Leave thy fatherless children to me, I will keep them alive, and let thy widows trust in me.” Luther says, in his last will, “Lord, thou hast given inc a wife and children, I have nothing to leave them, but I commit them unto thee. O Father of the fatherless and Judge of widows, nourish, keep and teach them.” But are you concerned for the spiritual welfare of your relations? Remember that you cannot convert them, if you should live; and God can make your prayers and counsels effectual when you are dead.

Perhaps you desire to serve God longer in this world. But if he has nothing further for you to do here, why not say with David, “Here am I, let him do what seemeth him good.” He is calling you to higher service in heaven, and can accomplish by other hands what you desire to do further here.—Do you feel too imperfect to go to heaven? Consider that you must be imperfect until you die; your sanctification cannot be complete until you get to heaven.

‘But,’ you say, ‘I want assurance; if I had that I could die easily.’ Consider, then, that a hearty willingness to leave all the world to be freed from sin, and to be with God, is the direct way to that desired assurance; no carnal person was ever willing to die upon this ground.

Thus I have shown how the people of God, in the most difficult seasons, may keep their hearts with alt diligence.

I now proceed to improve and apply the subject: . . .

You have seen that the keeping of the heart is the great work of a Christian, in which the very soul and life of religion consists, and without which all other duties are of no value in the sight of God. Hence, to the consternation of hypocrites and formal professors, I infer:

1. That the pains and labors which many persons have undergone in religion are of no value, and will turn to no good account. Many splendid services have been performed by men, which God will utterly reject: they will not stand on record in order to an eternal acceptance, because the performers took no heed to keep their hearts with God. This is that fatal rock on which thousands of vain professors dash and ruin themselves eternally; they are exact about the externals of religion, but regardless of their hearts. O how many hours have some professors spent in hearing, praying, reading and conferring! and yet, as to the main end of religion, they might as well have sat still and done nothing, the great work, I mean heart-work, being all the while neglected. Tell me, vain professor, when did you shed a tear for the deadness, hardness, unbelief or earthliness of your heart? And do you think your easy religion can save you? If so, you must invert Christ’s words, and say, Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to life, and many there be that go in thereat! Hear me, ye self-deluding hypocrite; you who have put off God with heartless duties; you who have acted in religion as if you had been blessing an idol; you who could not search your heart, and regulate it, and exercise it in your performances; how will you abide the coming of the Lord? how will you hold up your head before him, when he shall say. ‘O you dissembling, false-hearted man! how could you profess religion? with what face could you so often tell me that

you loved me, when you knew in your conscience that your heart was not with me?' O tremble to think what a fearful judgment it is to be given over to a heedless and careless heart, and then to have religious duties instead of a rattle to quiet and still the conscience!

2. I infer for their humiliation, that unless the people of God spend more time and pains about their hearts than they ordinarily do, they are never like to do God much service, or to possess much comfort in this world. I may say of that Christian who is remiss and careless in keeping his heart, as Jacob said of Reuben, Thou shalt not excel. It grieves me to see how many Christians there are who live at a poor, low rate, both of service and comfort, and who go up and down dejected and complaining. But how can they expect it should be otherwise, while they live so carelessly?

O how little of their time is spent in the closet, in searching, humbling, and quickening their hearts!

Christian, you say your heart is dead, and do you wonder that it is, so long as you keep it not with the fountain of life? If your body had been dieted as your soul has, that would have been dead too. And you may never expect that your heart will be in a better state until you take more pains with it.

O Christians! I fear your zeal and strength have run in the wrong channel; I fear that most of us may take up the Church's complaint: "They have made me the keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vine-yard have I not kept." Two things have eaten up the time and strength of the professors of this generation, and sadly diverted them from heart-work.

First:—Fruitless controversies, started by Satan, I doubt not for the very purpose of taking us off from practical godliness, to make us puzzle our heads when we should be inspecting our hearts. How little have we regarded the observation: "It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, and not with meats," (that is, with disputes and controversies about meats,) "which have not profited them that have been occupied therein." How much better it is to see men live exactly, than to hear them dispute with subtlety! These unfruitful questions, how have they rent the churches, wasted time and spirits, and taken Christians off from their main business! 'What think you, would it not have been better if the questions agitated among the people of God of late had been such as these:—"How shall a man distinguish the special from the common operations of the Spirit? How may a soul discern its first backslidings from God? How may a backsliding Christian recover his first love? How may the heart be preserved from unseasonable thoughts in duty? How may a bosom-sin be discovered and mortified?" &c. Would not this course have tended more to the honor of religion and the comfort of souls? I am ashamed that the professors of this generation are yet insensible of their folly. O that God would turn their disputes and contentions into practical godliness!

Second:—Worldly cares and incumbrances have greatly increased the neglect of our hearts. The heads and hearts of multitudes have been filled with such a crowd and noise of worldly business that they have lamentably declined in their zeal, their love, their delight in God, and their heavenly, serious, and profitable way of conversing with men. How miserably have we entangled ourselves in this wilderness of trifles! Our discourses, our conferences, nay, our very prayers are tinged with it. We have had so much to do without, that we have been able to do but little within. And how many precious opportunities have we thus lost? How many admonitions of the Spirit have passed over unfruitfully? How often has the Lord called to us, when our worldly thoughts have prevented us from hearing? But there certainly is a way to enjoy God even in our worldly employments. If we

lose our views of him when engaged in our temporal affairs, the fault is our own. Alas! that Christians should stand at the door of eternity, having more work upon their hands than their time is sufficient for, and yet be filling their heads and hearts with trifles!

3. I infer, lastly, for the awakening of all, that if the keeping of the heart be the great work of a Christian, then there are but few real Christians in the world. If every one who has learned the dialect of Christianity, and who can talk like a saint; if every one who has gifts and parts, and who can make shift to preach, pray, or discourse like a Christian: in a word, if all such as associate with the people of God and partake of ordinances may pass for Christians, then indeed the number is great. But alas! how few can he found, if you judge them by this rule,—how few are there who conscientiously keep their hearts, watch their thoughts and look scrupulously to their motives! Indeed there are few closet-men among professors. It is easier for men to be reconciled to any other duties in religion than to these. The profane part of the world will not so much as meddle with the outside of any religious duties, and least of all with these; and as to the hypocrite, though he may be very particular in externals, you can never persuade him to undertake this inward, this difficult work; this work, to which there is no inducement from human applause; this work, which would quickly discover what the hypocrite cares not to know: so that by general consent this heart-work is left to the hands of a few retired ones, and I tremble to think in how few hands it is.

II. If the keeping of the heart be so important a business; if such great advantages result from it; if so many valuable interests be wrapt up in it, then let me call upon the people of God every where to engage heartily in this work. O study your hearts, watch your hearts, keep your hearts! Away with fruitless controversies and all idle questions; away with empty names and vain shows; away with unprofitable discourse and bold censures of others, and turn in upon yourselves. O that this day, this hour, you would resolve upon doing so!

Reader, methinks I shall prevail with you. All that I beg for is this, that you would step aside oftener to talk with God and your own heart; that you would not suffer every trifle to divert you; that you would keep a more true and faithful account of your thoughts and affections; that you would seriously demand of your own heart at least every evening, ‘O my heart, where hast thou been today, and what has engaged thy thoughts?’

If all that has been said by way of inducement be not enough, I have yet some motives to offer you:

If all that has been said by way of inducement be not enough, I have yet some motives to offer you:

1. The studying, observing, and diligently keeping your own heart, will surprisingly help you to understand the deep mysteries of religion. An honest, well-experienced heart is an excellent help to the head. Such a heart will serve for a commentary on a great part of the Scriptures. By means of such a heart you will have a better understanding of divine things than the most learned (graceless) man ever had, or call have; you will not only have a clearer, but a more interesting and profitable apprehension of them. A man may discourse orthodoxy and profoundly of the nature and effects of faith, the troubles and comforts of conscience, and the sweetness of communion with God, who never felt the efficacy and sweet impression of these things upon his own soul. But how dark and dry are his notions compared with those of an experienced Christian!

2. The study and observation of your own heart will powerfully secure you against the dangerous and infecting errors of the times in which you live. For what think you is the reason why so many professors have departed from the faith, giving heed to fables? why have so many been led away by the error of the wicked? why have those who have sown corrupt doctrines had such plentiful harvests among us, but because they have met with a race of professors who never knew what belongs to practical godliness and the study and keeping of their hearts?

3. Your care and diligence in keeping your heart will prove one of the best evidences of your sincerity. I know no external act of religion which truly distinguishes the sound from the unsound professor. It is marvellous how far hypocrites go in all external duties; how plausibly they can order the outward man, hiding all their indecencies from the observation of the world. But they take no heed to their hearts; they are not in secret what they appear to be in public; and before this test no hypocrite can stand. They may, indeed, in a fit of terror, or on a death-bed, cry out of the wickedness of their hearts; but such extort ed complaints are worthy of no regard. No credit, in law, is to be given to the testimony of one upon the rack, because it may be supposed that the extremity of his torture will make him say any thing to get relief. But if self-jealousy, care and watchfulness be the daily workings and frames of your heart, you have some evidence of your sincerity.

4. How comfortable and how profitable would all ordinances and duties be to you, if your heart was faithfully kept. What lively communion might you have with God every time you approach him, if your heart was in a right frame! You might then say with David, “My meditation of Him shall be sweet.” It is the indisposition of the heart which renders ordinances, and secret duties so comfortless to some. They strive to raise their hearts to God, now pressing this argument upon them, then that, to quicken and affect them; yet they often get nearly through the exercise before their hearts begin to be interested in it; and some times they go away no better than they came. But the Christian whose heart is prepared by being constantly kept, enters immediately and heartily into his duties; he outstrips his sluggish neighbor, gets the first sight of Christ in a sermon, the first seal from Christ in a sacrament, the first communication of grace and love in secret prayer. Now if there be any thing valuable and comfortable in ordinances and private duties, look to your heart and keep it, I beseech you.

5. An acquaintance with your own heart will furnish you a fountain of matter in prayer. The man who is diligent in heart-work, will be richly supplied with matter in his addresses to God. He will not be confused for want of thoughts; his tongue will not falter for want of expressions.

6. The most desirable thing in the world, viz, the revival of religion among a people, may be effected by means of what I am urging upon you.

O that I might see the time when professors shall not walk in a vain show; when they shall please themselves no more with a name to live, while they are spiritually dead; when they shall be no more a company of frothy, vain persons; but when holiness shall shine in their conversation, and awe the world, and command reverence from all that are around them; when they shall warm the heart of those who come near them, and cause it to be said, God is in these men of a truth. And may such a time be expected? Until heart-work becomes the business of professors, I have no hope of seeing a time so blessed! Does it not grieve you to see how religion is contemned and trampled under foot, and the professors of it ridiculed and scorned in the world? Professors, would

you recover your credit? would you obtain an honorable testimony in the consciences of your very enemies? Then keep your hearts.

7. By diligence in keeping our hearts we should prevent the occasions of fatal scandals and stumbling-blocks to the world. Wo to the world because of offences!

Keep your heart faithfully, and you will be prepared for any situation or service to which you may be called. This, and this only can properly fit you for usefulness in any station; but with this you can endure prosperity or adversity; you can deny yourself, and turn your hand to any work. Thus Paul turned every circumstance to good account, and made himself so eminently useful. When he preached to others, he provided against being cast away himself: he kept his heart; and every thing in which lie excelled seems to have had a close connection with his diligence in keeping his heart.

9. If the people of God would diligently keep their hearts, their communion with each other would be unspeakably more inviting and profitable. Then “how goodly would be thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!” It is the fellowship which the people of God have with the Father and with the Son that kindles the desires of others to have communion with them. I tell you, that if saints would be persuaded to spend more time and take more pains about their hearts, there would soon be such a divine excellence in their conversation that others would account it no small privilege to be with or near them. It is the pride, passion and earthliness of our hearts, that has spoiled Christian fellowship. Why is it that when Christians meet they are often jarring and contending, but because their passions arc unmortified? Whence come their uncharitable censures of their brethren, but from their ignorance of themselves? Why are they so rigid and unfeeling toward those who have fallen, but because they do not feel their own weakness and liability to temptation? Why is their discourse so light and unprofitable when they meet, but because their hearts are earthly and vain? But now, if Christians would study their hearts more and keep them better, the beauty and glory of communion would be restored. They would divide no more, contend no more, censure rashly no more. They will feel right one toward another, when each is daily humbled under a sense of the evil of his own heart.

10. Lastly:—Keep your heart, and then the comforts of the Spirit and the influence of all ordinances will be more fixed and lasting than they now are. And do the consolations of God seem small to you?” Ah, you have reason to be ashamed that the ordinances of God, as to their quickening and comforting effects, should make so light and transient an impression on your heart.

Now, reader, consider well these special benefits of keeping the heart which I have mentioned. Examine their importance. Are they small matters? Is it a small matter to have your understanding assisted? your endangered soul rendered safe? your sincerity proved? your communion with God sweetened? your heart filled with matter for prayer? Is it a small thing to have the power of godliness? all fatal scandals removed? an instrumental fitness to serve Christ obtained? the communion of saints restored to its primitive glory? and the influence of ordinances abiding in the souls of saints? If these are no common blessings, no ordinary benefits, then surely it is a great and in dispensable duty to keep the heart with all diligence. And now are you inclined to undertake the business of keeping your heart? are you resolved upon it? I charge you, then, to engage in it earnestly. Away with every cowardly feeling, and make up your mind to encounter difficulties. Draw your armor from the word of God. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in its commands,

its promises, its threatenings; let it be fixed in your understanding, your memory, your conscience, your affections. You must learn to wield the sword of the Spirit (which is the word of God) familiarly, if you would defend your heart and conquer your enemies. You must call yourself frequently to an account; examine yourself as in the presence of the all seeing God; bring your conscience, as it were, to the bar of judgment. Beware how you plunge yourself into a multiplicity of worldly business; how you practise upon the maxims of the world; and how you venture at all to indulge your depraved propensities. You must exercise the utmost vigilance to discover and check the first symptoms of departure from God, the least decline of spirituality, or the least indisposition to meditation by yourself and holy conversation and fellowship with others. These things you must undertake, in the strength of Christ, with invincible resolution in the outset. And if you thus engage in this great work, he assured you shall not spend your strength for naught; comforts which you never felt or thought of will flow in upon you from every side. The diligent prosecution of this work will constantly afford you the most powerful excitements to vigilance and ardor in the life of faith, while it increases your strength and wears out your enemies. And when you have kept your heart with all diligence a little while; when you have fought the battles of this spiritual warfare, gained the ascendancy over the corruptions within, and vanquished the enemies without, then God will open the gate of heaven to you, and give you the portion which is promised to them that overcome. Awake then, this moment; get the world under your feet pant not for the things which a man may have, and eternally lose his soul; but bless God that you may have his service here, and the glory hereafter which he appoints to his chosen.

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

04.11. Keeping Heart When Hour of Temptation Comes

Keeping the Heart When the Hour of Temptation Comes

IX. The ninth season wherein the greatest diligence and skill are necessary to keep the heart, is the hour of temptation, when Satan besets the Christians heart, and takes the unwary by surprise. . . .

IX. The ninth season wherein the greatest diligence arid skill are necessary to keep the heart, is the hour of temptation, when Satan besets the Christians heart, and takes the unwary by surprise. To keep the heart at such times, is not less a mercy than a duty. Few Christians are so skillful in detecting the fallacies, and repelling the arguments by which the adversary incites them to sin, as to come off safe and whole in these encounters. Many eminent saints have smarted severely for their want of watchfulness and diligence at such times. How then may a Christian keep his heart from yielding to temptation? There are several principal ways in which the adversary insinuates temptation, and urges compliance:

1. Satan suggests that here is pleasure to be enjoyed; the temptation is presented with a smiling aspect and an enticing voice: `What, are you so dull and phlegmatic as not to feel the powerful charms of pleasure? Who can withhold himself from such delights? Reader, you may be rescued from the danger of such temptations by repelling the proposal of pleasure. It is urged that the commission of sin will afford you pleasure. Suppose this were true, will the accusing and condemning rebukes of conscience and the flames of hell be pleasant too? Is there pleasure in the scourges of conscience? If so why did Peter weep so bitterly? why did David cry out of broken bones? You hear what is said of the pleasure of sin, and have you not read what David said of the effects of it? “Thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore; there is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger, neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin,” &c. If you yield to temptation, you must feel such inward distress on account of it, or the miseries of hell. But why should the pretended pleasure of sin allure you, when you know that unspeakably more real pleasure will arise from the mortification than can arise from the commission of sin. Will you prefer the gratification of some unhallowed passion, with the deadly poison which it will leave behind, to that sacred pleasure which arises from fearing and obeying God, complying with the dictates of conscience, and maintaining inward peace? Can sin afford any such delight as he feels who, by resisting temptation, has manifested the sincerity of his heart, and obtained evidence that he fears God, loves holiness, and hates sin?

2. The secrecy with which you may commit sin is made use of to induce compliance with temptation. The tempter insinuates that this indulgence will never disgrace you among men, for no one will know it. But recollect yourself. Does not God behold you? Is not the divine presence every where? What if you might hide your sin from the eyes of the world, you cannot hide it from God. No darkness nor shadow of death can screen you from his inspection. Besides have you no reverence for yourself? Can you do that by yourself which you dare not have others observe? Is not your conscience as a thousand witnesses? Even a heathen could say, “When thou art tempted to

commit sin, fear thyself without any other witness."

3. The prospect of worldly advantage often enforces temptation. It is suggested, `Why should you be so nice and scrupulous? Give yourself a little liberty, and you may better your condition: now is your time. This is a dangerous temptation, and must be promptly resisted. Yielding to such a temptation will do your soul more injury than any temporal acquisition can possibly do you good. And what would it profit you, if you should gain the whole world and lose your own soul? What can be compared with the value of your spiritual interests? or what can at all compensate for the smallest injury of them?

4. Perhaps the smallness of the sin is urged as a reason why you may commit it; thus: `It is but a little one, a small matter, a trifle; who Would stand upon such niceties? But is the Majesty of heaven little too? If you commit this sin you will offend a great God. Is there any little hell to torment little sinners in? No; the least sinners in hell are full of misery. There is great wrath treasured up for those whom the world regard as little sinners. But the less the sin, the less the inducement to commit it. Will you provoke God for a trifle? will you destroy your peace, wound your conscience, and grieve the Spirit, all for nothing? What madness is this!

5. An argument to enforce temptation is sometimes drawn from the mercy of God and the hope of pardon —God is merciful, he will pass by this as an infirmity, he will not be severe to mark it. But stay: where do you find a promise of mercy to presumptuous sinners? Involuntary reprisals and lamented infirmities may be pardoned, "but the soul that doth aught presumptuously, the same reproacheth the Lord, and that soul shall be cut off from among his people." If God is a being of so much mercy, how can you affront him? How can you make so glorious an attribute as the divine mercy an occasion of sin? Will you wrong him because he is good? Rather let his goodness lead you to repentance, and keep you from transgression.

6. Sometimes Satan encourages to the commission of sin, from the examples of holy men. Thus and thus they sinned, and were restored; therefore you may commit this sin, and yet. be a saint and be saved. Such suggestions must be instantly repelled. If good men have committed sins similar to that with which you are beset, did any good man ever sin upon such ground and from such encouragement as is here presented? Did God cause their examples to be recorded for your imitation, or for your warning? Are they not set up as beacons that you may avoid the rocks upon which they split? Are you willing to feel what they felt for sin? Dare you follow them in sin, and plunge yourself into such distress and danger as they incurred?—Reader, in these ways learn to keep your heart in the hour of temptation.

X. The time of doubting and of spiritual darkness constitutes another season when it is very difficult to keep the heart. . . .

X. The time of doubting and of spiritual darkness constitutes another season when it is very difficult to keep the heart. When the light and comfort of the divine presence is withdrawn; when the believer, from the prevalence of indwelling sin in one form or other, is ready to renounce his hopes, to infer desperate conclusions with respect to himself, to regard his former comforts as vain delusions, and his professions as hypocrisy; at such a time much diligence is necessary to keep the heart from despondency. The Christian's distress arises from his apprehension of his spiritual state, and in general he argues against his possessing true religion, either from his having

relapsed into the same sins from which he had formerly been recovered with shame and sorrow; or from the sensible declining of his affections from God; or from the strength of his affections toward creature enjoyments; or from his enlargement in public, while he is often confined and barren in private duties; or from some horrible suggestions of Satan, with which his soul is greatly perplexed; or, lastly, from God's silence and seeming denial of his long depending prayers. Now in order to the establishment and support of the heart under these circumstances, it is necessary that you be acquainted with some general truths which have a tendency to calm the trembling and doubting soul; and that you be rightly instructed with regard to the above-mentioned causes of disquiet. Let me direct your attention to the following general truths:

1. Every appearance of hypocrisy does not prove the person who manifests it to be a hypocrite. You should carefully distinguish between the appearance and the predominance of hypocrisy. There are remains of deceitfulness in the best hearts; this was exemplified in David and Peter; but the prevailing frame of their hearts being upright, they were not denominated hypocrites for their conduct.

2. We ought to regard what can be said in our favor, as well as what may be said against us. It is the sin of upright persons sometimes, to exercise an unreasonable severity against themselves. They do not impartially consider the state of their souls. To make their state appear butter than it really is, indeed is the damning sin of self-flattering hypocrites; and to make their state appear worse than it really is, is the sin and folly of some good persons. But why should you be such an enemy to your own peace? Why read over the evidences of God's love to your soul, as a man does a book which he intends to confute? Why do you study evasions, and turn off those comforts which are due to you?

3. Every thing which may be an occasion of grief to the people of God, is not a sufficient ground for their questioning the reality of their religion. Many things may trouble, which ought not to stumble you. If upon every occasion you should call in question all that had ever been wrought upon you, your life would be made up of doubtings and fears, and you could never attain that settled inward peace, and live that life of praise and thankfulness which the Gospel requires.

4. The soul is not at all times in a suitable state to pass a right judgment upon itself. It is peculiarly unqualified for this in the hour of desertion or temptation. Such seasons must be improved rather for watching and resisting, than for judging and determining.

5. Whatever be the ground of one's distress, it should drive him to, not from God. Suppose you have sinned thus and so, or that you have been thus long and sadly deserted, yet you have no right to infer that you ought to be discouraged, as if there was no help for you in God. When you have well digested these truths, if your doubts and distress remain, consider what is now to be offered:

1. Are you ready to conclude that you have no part in the favor of God, because you are visited with some extraordinary affliction? If so, do you then rightly conclude that great trials are tokens of God's hatred? Does the Scripture teach this? And dare you infer the same with respect to all who have been as much or more afflicted than yourself? If the argument is good in your case, it is good in application to theirs, and more conclusive with respect to them, in proportion as their trials were greater than yours. Wo then to David, Job, Paul, and all who have been afflicted as they were! But

had you passed along in quietness and prosperity; had God withheld those chastisements with which he ordinarily visits his people, would you not have had far more reason for doubts and distress than you now have?

2. Do you rashly infer that the Lord has no love to you, because he has withdrawn the light of his countenance? Do you imagine your state to be hopeless, because it is dark and uncomfortable? Be not hasty in forming this conclusion. If any of the dispensations of God to his people will bear a favorable as well as a harsh construction, why should they not be construed in the best sense? And may not God have a design of love rather than of hatred in the dispensation under which you mourn? May he not depart for a season, without departing for ever? You are not the first that have mistaken the design of God in withdrawing himself. “Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, my Lord hath forgotten me.” But was it so? What saith the answer of God? “Can a woman forget her sucking child?” &c. But do you sink down under the apprehension that the evidences of a total and final desertion are discoverable in your experience? Have you then lost your conscientious tenderness with regard to sin? and are you inclined to forsake God? If so, you have reason indeed to be alarmed. But if your conscience is tenderly alive; if you are resolved to cleave to the Lord; if the language of your heart is, I cannot forsake God, I cannot live without his presence; though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: then you have reason to hope that he will visit you again. It is by these exercises that he still maintains his interest in you.

Once more. Are sense and feelings suitable to judge of the dispensations of God by? Can their testimony be safely relied on? Is it safe to argue thus: ‘If God bad any love for my soul, I should feel it now as well as in former times; but I cannot feel it, therefore it is gone?’ May you not as well conclude, when the sun is invisible to you, that he has ceased to exist? Read Isaiah 1:10.

Now if there is nothing in the divine dealings with you which is a reasonable ground of your despondency and distress, let us inquire what there is in your own conduct for which you should be so cast down:

1. Have you committed sins from which you were formerly recovered with shame and sorrow? And do you thence conclude that you sin allowedly and habitually, and that your oppositions to sin were hypocritical? But do not too hastily give up all for lost. Is not your repentance and care renewed as often as you commit sin? Is it not the sin itself which troubles you, and is it not true, that the oftener you sin the more you are distressed? It is not so in customary sinning; of which Bernard excellently discourses thus: “When a man accustomed to restrain, sins grievously, it seems insupportable to him, yea he seems to descend alive into hell. In process of time it seems not insupportable, but heavy, and between insupportable and heavy there is no small descent. Next, such sinning becomes light, his conscience smites but faintly, and he regards not her rebukes. Then he is not only insensible to his guilt, but that which was bitter and displeasing has become in some degree sweet and pleasant. Now it is made a custom, and not only pleases, but pleases habitually. At length custom becomes nature; he cannot be dissuaded from it, but defends and pleads for it.” This is allowed and customary sinning, this is the way of the wicked. But is not your way the contrary of this?

2. Do you apprehend a decline of your affections from God and from spiritual subjects? This may be your case, and yet there may be hope. But possibly you are mistaken with regard to this. There are many things to be learnt in Christian experience; it has relation to a great variety of subjects.

You may now be learning what it is very necessary for you to know as a Christian. Now, what if you are not sensible of so lively affections, of such ravishing views as you had at first; may not your piety be growing more solid and consistent, and better adapted to practical purposes? Does it follow from your not always being in the same frame of mind, or from the fact that the same objects do not at all times excite the same feelings, that you have no true religion? Perhaps you deceive yourself by looking forward to what you would be, rather than contemplating what you are, compared with what you once were.

3. If the strength of your love to creature-enjoyments is the ground of desperate conclusions respecting yourself, perhaps you argue thus: “I fear that I love the creature more than God, if so, I have not true love to God. I sometimes feel stronger affections toward earthly comforts than I do toward heavenly objects, therefore my soul is not upright within me.” If, indeed, you love the creature for itself, if you make it your end, and religion but a means, then you conclude rightly; for this is incompatible with supreme love to God. But may not a man love God more ardently and unchangeably than he does any thing, or all things else, and yet, when God is not the direct object of his thoughts, may he not be sensible of more violent affection for the creature than he has at that time for God? As rooted malice indicates a stronger hatred than sudden though inure violent passion; so we must judge of our love, not by a violent motion of it now and then, but by the depth of its root and the constancy of its exercise. Perhaps your difficulty results from bringing your love to some foreign and improper test. Many persons have feared that when brought to some eminent trial they should renounce Christ and cleave to the creature; but when the trial came, Christ was every thing, and the world as nothing in their esteem. Such were the fears of some martyrs whose victory was complete. But you may expect divine assistance only at the time of, and in proportion to your necessity. If you would try your love, see whether you are willing to forsake Christ now.

4. Is the want of that enlargement in private which you find in public exercises an occasion of doubts and fears? Consider then whether there are not some circumstances attending public duties which are peculiarly calculated to excite your feelings and elevate your mind, and which cannot affect you in private. If so, your exercises in secret, if performed faithfully and in a suitable manner, may he profitable, though they have not all the characteristics of those in public. If you imagine that you have spiritual enlargement and enjoyment in public exercises while you neglect private duties, doubtless you deceive yourself. Indeed if you live in the neglect of secret duties, or are careless about them, you have great reason to fear. But if you regularly and faithfully perform them, it does not follow that they are vain and worthless, or that they are not of great value, because they are not attended with so much enlargement as you sometimes find in public. And what if the Spirit is pleased more highly to favor you with his gracious influence in one place and at one time than another, should this be a reason for murmuring and unbelief, or for thankfulness?

5. The vile or blasphemous suggestions of Satan sometimes occasion great perplexity and distress.— They seem to lay open an abyss of corruption in the heart, and to say there can be no grace here. But there may be grace in the heart where such thoughts are injected, though not, in the heart which consents to and cherishes them. Do you then abhor and oppose them? do you utterly refuse to give up yourself to their influence, and strive to keep holy and reverend thoughts of God, and of all religious objects? If so, such suggestions are involuntary, and no evidence against your piety.

6. Is the seeming denial of your prayers an occasion of despondency? Are you disposed to say, “If God had any regard for my soul he would have heard my petitions before now; but I have no answer from him, and therefore no interest in him?” But stay: though God’s abhorring and finally rejecting prayer is an evidence that he rejects the person who prays, yet, dare you conclude that he has rejected you, because an answer to your prayers is delayed, or because you do not discover it if granted? “May not God bear long with his own elect, that cry unto him day and night?”

Others have stumbled upon the same ground with you: “I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardst the voice of my supplication.” Now are there not some things in your experience which indicate that your prayers are not rejected, though answer to them is deferred? Are you not disposed to continue praying though you do not discover an answer? Are you not disposed still to ascribe righteousness to God, while you consider the cause of his silence as being in yourself? Thus did David: “O my God, I cry in the day time, and thou hearest not; and in the night, and am not silent: but thou art holy,” &c. Does not the delay of an answer to your prayers excite you to examine your own heart and try your ways, that you may find and remove the difficulty? If so, you may have reason for humiliation, but not for despair.

Thus I have shown you how to keep your heart in dark and doubting seasons. God forbid that any false heart should encourage itself from these things. It is lamentable, that when we give saints and sinners their proper portions, each is so prone to take up the other’s part.

XI. Another season, wherein the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when sufferings for religion are laid upon us. . . .

XI. Another season, wherein the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when sufferings for religion are laid upon us. Blessed is the man who in such a season is not offended in Christ. Now, whatever may be the kind or degree of your sufferings, if they are sufferings for Christ’s sake and the Gospel’s, spare no diligence to keep your heart. If you are tempted to shrink or waver under them, let what follows help you to repel and to surmount the instigation:

1. What reproach would you cast upon the Redeemer and his religion by deserting him at such a time as this! You would proclaim to the world, that how much soever you have boasted of the promises when you are put to the proof you dare hazard no thing upon your faith in them; and this will give the enemies of Christ an occasion to blaspheme. And will you thus furnish the triumphs of the uncircumcised? Ah, if you did but value the name of Christ as much as many wicked men value their names, you could never endure that his should be exposed to contempt. Will proud dust and ashes hazard death or hell rather than have their names disgraced, and will you endure nothing to maintain the honor of Christ?

2. Dare you violate your conscience out of complaisance to flesh and blood? Who will comfort you when your conscience accuses and condemns you? What happiness can there be in life, liberty or friends, when inward peace is taken away? Consider well what you do.

3. Is not the public interest of Christ and his cause infinitely more important than any interest of your own, and should you not prefer his glory and the welfare of his kingdom before every thing else? Should any temporary suffering, or any sacrifice which you can be called to make, be suffered to come into competition with the honor of his name?

4. Did the Redeemer neglect your interest and think lightly of you, when for your sake he endured sufferings between which and yours there can be no comparison? Did he hesitate and shrink back? No: “He endured the cross, despising the shame.” And did he with unbroken patience and constancy endure so much for you; and will you flinch from momentary suffering in his cause?

5. Can you so easily cast off the society and the privileges of the saints and go over to the enemy’s side? Are you willing to withhold your support from those who are determined to persevere, and throw your influence in the scale against them? Rather let your body and soul be rent asunder. “If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”

6. How can you stand before Christ in the day of judgment, if you desert him now? “He that is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” Yet a little while, and the Son of man will come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, to judge the world. He will sit upon the throne of judgment, while all the nations are brought before him. Imagine yourself now to be witnessing the transactions of that day. Behold the wicked; behold the apostates; and hear the consuming sentence which is pronounced upon them, and see them sinking in the gulf of infinite and everlasting wo! And will you desert Christ now, will you forsake his cause to save a little suffering, or to protract an unprofitable life on earth, and thus expose yourself to the doom of the apostate? Remember, that if you can silence the remonstrances of conscience now, you cannot hinder the sentence of the Judge then. By these means keep your heart, that it depart not from the living God.

XII. The last season which I shall mention, in which the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when we are warned by sickness that our dissolution is at hand. . . .

XII. The last season which I shall mention, in which the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when we are warned by sickness that our dissolution is at hand. When the child of God draws nigh to eternity, the adversary makes his last effort; and as he cannot win the soul from God, as he cannot dissolve the bond which unites the soul to Christ, his great design is to awaken fears of death, to fill the mind with aversion and horror at the thoughts of dissolution from the body. Hence, what shrinking from a separation, what fear to grasp death’s cold hand, and unwillingness to depart, may sometimes be observed in the people of God. But we ought to die, as well as live, like saints.

I shall offer several considerations calculated to help the people of God in time of sickness, to keep their hearts loose from all earthly objects, and cheerfully willing to die:

1. Death is harmless to the people of God; its shafts leave no sting in them. Why then are you afraid that your sickness may be unto death? If you were to die in your sins; if death were to reign over you as a tyrant, to feed upon you as a lion doth upon his prey; if death to you were to be the precursor of hell, then you might reasonably startle and shrink back from it with horror and dismay. But if your sins are blotted out; if Christ has vanquished death in your behalf, so that you have nothing to encounter but bodily pain, and possibly not even that; if death will be to you the harbinger of heaven, why should you be afraid? why not bid it welcome? It cannot hurt you; it is easy and harmless; it is like putting off your clothes, on taking rest.

2. It may keep your heart from shrinking back, to consider that death is necessary to fit you for the full enjoyment of God. Whether you are willing to die or not, there certainly is no other way to complete the happiness of your soul. Death must do you the kind office to remove this veil of flesh, this animal life which separates you from God, before you can see and enjoy him fully. “Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.” And who would not be willing to die for the perfect enjoyment of God? Methinks one should look and sigh, like a prisoner, through the grates of this mortality: “O that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest.” Indeed most men need patience to die; but a saint, who understands what death will introduce him to, rather needs patience to live. On his death-bed he should often look out and listen to his Lord’s coming; and when he perceives his dissolution to be near, he should say, “The voice of my beloved; behold he cometh, leaping over the mountains, skipping over the hills.”

3. Consider that the happiness of heaven commences immediately after death. That happiness will not be deferred till the resurrection; but as soon as death has passed upon you, your soul will be swallowed up in life. When you have once loosed from this shore, you shall be quickly wafted to the shore of a glorious eternity. And can you not say, I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ? Did the soul and body die together, or did they sleep till the resurrection, as some have fancied, it would have been folly for Paul to desire a dissolution for the enjoyment of Christ; because he would have enjoyed more in the body than he could have enjoyed out of it. The Scripture speaks of but two ways in which the soul can properly live: viz, by faith and vision. These two comprehend its present and future existence.

Now, if when faith fails, sight should not immediately succeed, what would become of the soul? But the truth on this subject is clearly revealed in Scripture. See Luke 23:3; John 14:3, &c. What a blessed change then will death make in your condition! Rouse up, dying saint, and rejoice; let death do his work, that the angels may conduct your soul to the world of light.

4. It may increase your willingness to die, to reflect that by death God often removes his people out of the way of great troubles and temptations. When some extraordinary calamity is coming upon the world, God sometimes removes his saints out of the way of the evil. Thus Methuselah died the year before the flood; Augustine a little before the sacking of Hippo; Pareus just before the taking of Heidelburg. Luther observes that all the apostles died before the destruction of Jerusalem; and Luther himself died before the wars broke out in Germany. Now it may be that by death you will escape some grievous trial, which you could not and need not endure. But if no extraordinary trouble would come upon you in case your life were prolonged, yet God designs by death to relieve you from innumerable evils and burdens which are inseparable from the present state. Thus you will be delivered from indwelling sin, which is the greatest trouble; from all temptations from whatever source; from bodily tempers and embarrassments; and from all the afflictions and sorrows of this life. The days of your mourning will be ended, and God will wipe away all tears from your eyes. Why then should you not hasten to depart?

5. If you still linger, like Lot in Sodom, what are your pleas and pretences for a longer life? Why are you unwilling to die? Are you concerned for the welfare of your relations? If so, are you anxious for their temporal support? Then let the word of God satisfy you: “Leave thy fatherless children to me, I will keep them alive, and let thy widows trust in me.” Luther says, in his last will, “Lord, thou hast given inc a wife and children, I have nothing to leave them, but I commit them unto thee. O Father

of the fatherless and Judge of widows, nourish, keep and teach them." But are you concerned for the spiritual welfare of your relations? Remember that you cannot convert them, if you should live; and God can make your prayers and counsels effectual when you are dead.

Perhaps you desire to serve God longer in this world. But if he has nothing further for you to do here, why not say with David, "Here am I, let him do what seemeth him good." He is calling you to higher service in heaven, and can accomplish by other hands what you desire to do further here.—Do you feel too imperfect to go to heaven? Consider that you must be imperfect until you die; your sanctification cannot be complete until you get to heaven.

'But,' you say, 'I want assurance; if I had that I could die easily.' Consider, then, that a hearty willingness to leave all the world to be freed from sin, and to be with God, is the direct way to that desired assurance; no carnal person was ever willing to die upon this ground.

Thus I have shown how the people of God, in the most difficult seasons, may keep their hearts with alt diligence.

I now proceed to improve and apply the subject: . . .

You have seen that the keeping of the heart is the great work of a Christian, in which the very soul and life of religion consists, and without which all other duties are of no value in the sight of God. Hence, to the consternation of hypocrites and formal professors, I infer:

1. That the pains and labors which many persons have undergone in religion are of no value, and will turn to no good account. Many splendid services have been performed by men, which God will utterly reject: they will not stand on record in order to an eternal acceptance, because the performers took no heed to keep their hearts with God. This is that fatal rock on which thousands of vain professors dash and ruin themselves eternally; they are exact about the externals of religion, but regardless of their hearts. O how many hours have some professors spent in hearing, praying, reading and conferring! and yet, as to the main end of religion, they might as well have sat still and done nothing, the great work, I mean heart-work, being all the while neglected. Tell me, vain professor, when did you shed a tear for the deadness, hardness, unbelief or earthliness of your heart? And do you think your easy religion can save you? If so, you must invert Christ's words, and say, Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to life, and many there be that go in thereat! Hear me, ye self-deluding hypocrite; you who have put off God with heartless duties; you who have acted in religion as if you had been blessing an idol; you who could not search your heart, and regulate it, and exercise it in your performances; how will you abide the coming of the Lord? how will you hold up your head before him, when he shall say. 'O you dissembling, false-hearted man! how could you profess religion? with what face could you so often tell me that you loved me, when you knew in your conscience that your heart was not with me?' O tremble to think what a fearful judgment it is to be given over to a heedless and careless heart, and then to have religious duties instead of a rattle to quiet and still the conscience!

2. I infer for their humiliation, that unless the people of God spend more time and pains about their hearts than they ordinarily do, they are never like to do God much service, or to possess much comfort in this world. I may say of that Christian who is remiss and careless in keeping his heart, as Jacob said of Reuben, Thou shalt not excel. It grieves me to see how many Christians there are who live at a poor, low rate, both of service and comfort, and who go up and down dejected and

complaining. But how can they expect it should be otherwise, while they live so carelessly?

O how little of their time is spent in the closet, in searching, humbling, and quickening their hearts!

Christian, you say your heart is dead, and do you wonder that it is, so long as you keep it not with the fountain of life? If your body had been dieted as your soul has, that would have been dead too. And you may never expect that your heart will be in a better state until you take more pains with it.

O Christians! I fear your zeal and strength have run in the wrong channel; I fear that most of us may take up the Church's complaint: "They have made me the keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vine-yard have I not kept." Two things have eaten up the time and strength of the professors of this generation, and sadly diverted them from heart-work.

First:—Fruitless controversies, started by Satan, I doubt not for the very purpose of taking us off from practical godliness, to make us puzzle our heads when we should be inspecting our hearts. How little have we regarded the observation: "It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, and not with meats," (that is, with disputes and controversies about meats,) "which have not profited them that have been occupied therein." How much better it is to see men live exactly, than to hear them dispute with subtlety! These unfruitful questions, how have they rent the churches, wasted time and spirits, and taken Christians off from their main business! 'What think you, would it not have been better if the questions agitated among the people of God of late had been such as these:—"How shall a man distinguish the special from the common operations of the Spirit? How may a soul discern its first backslidings from God? How may a backsliding Christian recover his first love? How may the heart be preserved from unseasonable thoughts in duty? How may a bosom-sin be discovered and mortified?" &c. Would not this course have tended more to the honor of religion and the comfort of souls? I am ashamed that the professors of this generation are yet insensible of their folly. O that God would turn their disputes and contentions into practical godliness!

Second:—Worldly cares and incumbrances have greatly increased the neglect of our hearts. The heads and hearts of multitudes have been filled with such a crowd and noise of worldly business that they have lamentably declined in their zeal, their love, their delight in God, and their heavenly, serious, and profitable way of conversing with men. How miserably have we entangled ourselves in this wilderness of trifles! Our discourses, our conferences, nay, our very prayers are tinged with it. We have had so much to do without, that we have been able to do but little within. And how many precious opportunities have we thus lost? How many admonitions of the Spirit have passed over unfruitfully? How often has the Lord called to us, when our worldly thoughts have prevented us from hearing? But there certainly is a way to enjoy God even in our worldly employments. If we lose our views of him when engaged in our temporal affairs, the fault is our own. Alas! that Christians should stand at the door of eternity, having more work upon their hands than their time is sufficient for, and yet be filling their heads and hearts with trifles!

3. I infer, lastly, for the awakening of all, that if the keeping of the heart be the great work of a Christian, then there are but few real Christians in the world. If every one who has learned the dialect of Christianity, and who can talk like a saint; if every one who has gifts and parts, and who can make shift to preach, pray, or discourse like a Christian: in a word, if all such as associate with the people of God and partake of ordinances may pass for Christians, then indeed the number is

great. But alas! how few can he found, if you judge them by this rule,—how few are there who conscientiously keep their hearts, watch their thoughts and look scrupulously to their motives! Indeed there are few closet-men among professors. It is easier for men to be reconciled to any other duties in religion than to these. The profane part of the world will not so much as meddle with the outside of any religious duties, and least of all with these; and as to the hypocrite, though he may be very particular in externals, you can never persuade him to undertake this inward, this difficult work; this work, to which there is no inducement from human applause; this work, which would quickly discover what the hypocrite cares not to know: so that by general consent this heart-work is left to the hands of a few retired ones, and I tremble to think in how few hands it is.

II. If the keeping of the heart be so important a business; if such great advantages result from it; if so many valuable interests be wrapt up in it, then let me call upon the people of God every where to engage heartily in this work. O study your hearts, watch your hearts, keep your hearts! Away with fruitless controversies and all idle questions; away with empty names and vain shows; away with unprofitable discourse and bold censures of others, and turn in upon yourselves. O that this day, this hour, you would resolve upon doing so!

Reader, methinks I shall prevail with you. All that I beg for is this, that you would step aside oftener to talk with God and your own heart; that you would not suffer every trifle to divert you; that you would keep a more true and faithful account of your thoughts and affections; that you would seriously demand of your own heart at least every evening, ‘O my heart, where hast thou been today, and what has engaged thy thoughts?’

If all that has been said by way of inducement be not enough, I have yet some motives to offer you:

If all that has been said by way of inducement be not enough, I have yet some motives to offer you:

1. The studying, observing, and diligently keeping your own heart, will surprisingly help you to understand the deep mysteries of religion. An honest, well-experienced heart is an excellent help to the head. Such a heart will serve for a commentary on a great part of the Scriptures. By means of such a heart you will have a better understanding of divine things than the most learned (graceless) man ever had, or call have; you will not only have a clearer, but a more interesting and profitable apprehension of them. A man may discourse orthodoxy and profoundly of the nature and effects of faith, the troubles and comforts of conscience, and the sweetness of communion with God, who never felt the efficacy and sweet impression of these things upon his own soul. But how dark and dry are his notions compared with those of an experienced Christian!

2. The study and observation of your own heart will powerfully secure you against the dangerous and infecting errors of the times in which you live. For what think you is the reason why so many professors have departed from the faith, giving heed to fables? why have so many been led away by the error of the wicked? why have those who have sown corrupt doctrines had such plentiful harvests among us, but because they have met with a race of professors who never knew what belongs to practical godliness and the study and keeping of their hearts?

3. Your care and diligence in keeping your heart will prove one of the best evidences of your sincerity. I know no external act of religion which truly distinguishes the sound from the unsound

professor. It is marvellous how far hypocrites go in all external duties; how plausibly they can order the outward man, hiding all their indecencies from the observation of the world. But they take no heed to their hearts; they are not in secret what they appear to be in public; and before this test no hypocrite can stand. They may, indeed, in a fit of terror, or on a death-bed, cry out of the wickedness of their hearts; but such extort ed complaints are worthy of no regard. No credit, in law, is to be given to the testimony of one upon the rack, because it may be supposed that the extremity of his torture will make him say any thing to get relief. But if self-jealousy, care and watchfulness be the daily workings and frames of your heart, you have some evidence of your sincerity.

4. How comfortable and how profitable would all ordinances and duties be to you, if your heart was faithfully kept. What lively communion might you have with God every time you approach him, if your heart was in a right frame! You might then say with David, “My meditation of Him shall be sweet.” It is the indisposition of the heart which renders ordinances, and secret duties so comfortless to some. They strive to raise their hearts to God, now pressing this argument upon them, then that, to quicken and affect them; yet they often get nearly through the exercise before their hearts begin to be interested in it; and some times they go away no better than they came. But the Christian whose heart is prepared by being constantly kept, enters immediately and heartily into his duties; he outstrips his sluggish neighbor, gets the first sight of Christ in a sermon, the first seal from Christ in a sacrament, the first communication of grace and love in secret prayer. Now if there be any thing valuable and comfortable in ordinances and private duties, look to your heart and keep it, I beseech you.

5. An acquaintance with your own heart will furnish you a fountain of matter in prayer. The man who is diligent in heart-work, will be richly supplied with matter in his addresses to God. He will not be confused for want of thoughts; his tongue will not falter for want of expressions.

6. The most desirable thing in the world, viz, the revival of religion among a people, may be effected by means of what I am urging upon you.

O that I might see the time when professors shall not walk in a vain show; when they shall please themselves no more with a name to live, while they are spiritually dead; when they shall be no more a company of frothy, vain persons; but when holiness shall shine in their conversation, and awe the world, and command reverence from all that are around them; when they shall warm the heart of those who come near them, and cause it to be said, God is in these men of a truth. And may such a time be expected? Until heart-work becomes the business of professors, I have no hope of seeing a time so blessed! Does it not grieve you to see how religion is contemned and trampled under foot, and the professors of it ridiculed and scorned in the world? Professors, would you recover your credit? would you obtain an honorable testimony in the consciences of your very enemies? Then keep your hearts.

7. By diligence in keeping our hearts we should prevent the occasions of fatal scandals and stumbling-blocks to the world. Wo to the world because of offences!

Keep your heart faithfully, and you will be prepared for any situation or service to which you may be called. This, and this only can properly fit you for usefulness in any station; but with this you can endure prosperity or adversity; you can deny yourself, and turn your hand to any work. Thus Paul

turned every circumstance to good account, and made himself so eminently useful. When he preached to others, he provided against being cast away himself: he kept his heart; and every thing in which lie excelled seems to have had a close connection with his diligence in keeping his heart.

9. If the people of God would diligently keep their hearts, their communion with each other would be unspeakably more inviting and profitable. Then “how goodly would be thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!” It is the fellowship which the people of God have with the Father and with the Son that kindles the desires of others to have communion with them. I tell you, that if saints would be persuaded to spend more time and take more pains about their hearts, there would soon be such a divine excellence in their conversation that others would account it no small privilege to be with or near them. It is the pride, passion and earthliness of our hearts, that has spoiled Christian fellowship. Why is it that when Christians meet they are often jarring and contending, but because their passions arc unmortified? Whence come their uncharitable censures of their brethren, but from their ignorance of themselves? Why are they so rigid and unfeeling toward those who have fallen, but because they do not feel their own weakness and liability to temptation? Why is their discourse so light and unprofitable when they meet, but because their hearts are earthly and vain? But now, if Christians would study their hearts more and keep them better, the beauty and glory of communion would be restored. They would divide no more, contend no more, censure rashly no more. They will feel right one toward another, when each is daily humbled under a sense of the evil of his own heart.

10. Lastly:—Keep your heart, and then the comforts of the Spirit and the influence of all ordinances will be more fixed and lasting than they now are. And do the consolations of God seem small to you?” Ah, you have reason to be ashamed that the ordinances of God, as to their quickening and comforting effects, should make so light and transient an impression on your heart.

Now, reader, consider well these special benefits of keeping the heart which I have mentioned. Examine their importance. Are they small matters? Is it a small matter to have your understanding assisted? your endangered soul rendered safe? your sincerity proved? your communion with God sweetened? your heart filled with matter for prayer? Is it a small thing to have the power of godliness? all fatal scandals removed? an instrumental fitness to serve Christ obtained? the communion of saints restored to its primitive glory? and the influence of ordinances abiding in the souls of saints? If these are no common blessings, no ordinary benefits, then surely it is a great and in dispensable duty to keep the heart with all diligence. And now are you inclined to undertake the business of keeping your heart? are you resolved upon it? I charge you, then, to engage in it earnestly. Away with every cowardly feeling, and make up your mind to encounter difficulties. Draw your armor from the word of God. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in its commands, its promises, its threatenings; let it be fixed in your understanding, your memory, your conscience, your affections. You must learn to wield the sword of the Spirit (which is the word of God) familiarly, if you would defend your heart and conquer your enemies. You must call yourself frequently to an account; examine yourself as in the presence of the all seeing God; bring your conscience, as it were, to the bar of judgment. Beware how you plunge yourself into a multiplicity of worldly business; how you practise upon the maxims of the world; and how you venture at all to indulge your depraved propensities. You must exercise the utmost vigilance to discover and check the first symptoms of departure from God, the least decline of spirituality, or the least indisposition

to meditation by yourself and holy conversation and fellowship with others. These things you must undertake, in the strength of Christ, with invincible resolution in the outset. And if you thus engage in this great work, he assured you shall not spend your strength for naught; comforts which you never felt or thought of will flow in upon you from every side. The diligent prosecution of this work will constantly afford you the most powerful excitements to vigilance and ardor in the life of faith, while it increases your strength and wears out your enemies. And when you have kept your heart with all diligence a little while; when you have fought the battles of this spiritual warfare, gained the ascendancy over the corruptions within, and vanquished the enemies without, then God will open the gate of heaven to you, and give you the portion which is promised to them that overcome. Awake then, this moment; get the world under your feet pant not for the things which a man may have, and eternally lose his soul; but bless God that you may have his service here, and the glory hereafter which he appoints to his chosen.

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

Chapter 56

04.12. Keep Heart in Time Doubting&Spiritual Darkness

Keeping the Heart in the Time of Doubting and Spiritual Darkness

X. The time of doubting and of spiritual darkness constitutes another season when it is very difficult to keep the heart. . . .

X. The time of doubting and of spiritual darkness constitutes another season when it is very difficult to keep the heart. When the light and comfort of the divine presence is withdrawn; when the believer, from the prevalence of indwelling sin in one form or other, is ready to renounce his hopes, to infer desperate conclusions with respect to himself, to regard his former comforts as vain delusions, and his professions as hypocrisy; at such a time much diligence is necessary to keep the heart from despondency. The Christian's distress arises from his apprehension of his spiritual state, and in general he argues against his possessing true religion, either from his having relapsed into the same sins from which he had formerly been recovered with shame and sorrow; or from the sensible declining of his affections from God; or from the strength of his affections toward creature enjoyments; or from his enlargement in public, while he is often confined and barren in private duties; or from some horrible suggestions of Satan, with which his soul is greatly perplexed; or, lastly, from God's silence and seeming denial of his long depending prayers. Now in order to the establishment and support of the heart under these circumstances, it is necessary that you be acquainted with some general truths which have a tendency to calm the trembling and doubting soul; and that you be rightly instructed with regard to the above-mentioned causes of disquiet. Let me direct your attention to the following general truths:

1. Every appearance of hypocrisy does not prove the person who manifests it to be a hypocrite. You should carefully distinguish between the appearance and the predominance of hypocrisy. There are remains of deceitfulness in the best hearts; this was exemplified in David and Peter; but the prevailing frame of their hearts being upright, they were not denominated hypocrites for their conduct.

2. We ought to regard what can be said in our favor, as well as what may be said against us. It is the sin of upright persons sometimes, to exercise an unreasonable severity against themselves. They do not impartially consider the state of their souls. To make their state appear butter than it really is, indeed is the damning sin of self-flattering hypocrites; and to make their state appear worse than it really is, is the sin and folly of some good persons. But why should you be such an enemy to your own peace? Why read over the evidences of God's love to your soul, as a man does a book which he intends to confute? Why do you study evasions, and turn off those comforts which are due to you?

3. Every thing which may be an occasion of grief to the people of God, is not a sufficient ground for their questioning the reality of their religion. Many things may trouble, which ought not to stumble you. If upon every occasion you should call in question all that had ever been wrought upon you, your life would be made up of doubtings and fears, and you could never attain that settled inward

peace, and live that life of praise and thankfulness which the Gospel requires.

4. The soul is not at all times in a suitable state to pass a right judgment upon itself. It is peculiarly unqualified for this in the hour of desertion or temptation. Such seasons must be improved rather for watching and resisting, than for judging and determining.

5. Whatever be the ground of one's distress, it should drive him to, not from God. Suppose you have sinned thus and so, or that you have been thus long and sadly deserted, yet you have no right to infer that you ought to be discouraged, as if there was no help for you in God. When you have well digested these truths, if your doubts and distress remain, consider what is now to be offered:

1. Are you ready to conclude that you have no part in the favor of God, because you are visited with some extraordinary affliction? If so, do you then rightly conclude that great trials are tokens of God's hatred? Does the Scripture teach this? And dare you infer the same with respect to all who have been as much or more afflicted than yourself? If the argument is good in your case, it is good in application to theirs, and more conclusive with respect to them, in proportion as their trials were greater than yours. Wo then to David, Job, Paul, and all who have been afflicted as they were! But had you passed along in quietness and prosperity; had God withheld those chastisements with which he ordinarily visits his people, would you not have had far more reason for doubts and distress than you now have?

2. Do you rashly infer that the Lord has no love to you, because he has withdrawn the light of his countenance? Do you imagine your state to be hopeless, because it is dark and uncomfortable? Be not hasty in forming this conclusion. If any of the dispensations of God to his people will bear a favorable as well as a harsh construction, why should they not be construed in the best sense? And may not God have a design of love rather than of hatred in the dispensation under which you mourn? May he not depart for a season, without departing for ever? You are not the first that have mistaken the design of God in withdrawing himself. "Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, my Lord hath forgotten me." But was it so? What saith the answer of God? "Can a woman forget her sucking child?" &c. But do you sink down under the apprehension that the evidences of a total and final desertion are discoverable in your experience? Have you then lost your conscientious tenderness with regard to sin? and are you inclined to forsake God? If so, you have reason indeed to be alarmed. But if your conscience is tenderly alive; if you are resolved to cleave to the Lord; if the language of your heart is, I cannot forsake God, I cannot live without his presence; though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: then you have reason to hope that he will visit you again. It is by these exercises that he still maintains his interest in you.

Once more. Are sense and feelings suitable to judge of the dispensations of God by? Can their testimony be safely relied on? Is it safe to argue thus: 'If God bad any love for my soul, I should feel it now as well as in former times; but I cannot feel it, therefore it is gone?' May you not as well conclude, when the sun is invisible to you, that he has ceased to exist? Read Isaiah 1:10.

Now if there is nothing in the divine dealings with you which is a reasonable ground of your despondency and distress, let us inquire what there is in your own conduct for which you should be so cast down:

1. Have you committed sins from which you were formerly recovered with shame and sorrow? And do you thence conclude that you sin allowedly and habitually, and that your oppositions to sin were hypocritical? But do not too hastily give up all for lost. Is not your repentance and care renewed as often as you commit sin? Is it not the sin itself which troubles you, and is it not true, that the oftener you sin the more you are distressed? It is not so in customary sinning; of which Bernard excellently discourses thus: “When a man accustomed to restrain, sins grievously, it seems insupportable to him, yea he seems to descend alive into hell. In process of time it seems not insupportable, but heavy, and between insupportable and heavy there is no small descent. Next, such sinning becomes light, his conscience smites but faintly, and he regards not her rebukes. Then he is not only insensible to his guilt, but that which was bitter and displeasing has become in some degree sweet and pleasant. Now it is made a custom, and not only pleases, but pleases habitually. At length custom becomes nature; he cannot be dissuaded from it, but defends and pleads for it.” This is allowed and customary sinning, this is the way of the wicked. But is not your way the contrary of this?

2. Do you apprehend a decline of your affections from God and from spiritual subjects? This may be your case, and yet there may be hope. But possibly you are mistaken with regard to this. There are many things to be learnt in Christian experience; it has relation to a great variety of subjects. You may now be learning what it is very necessary for you to know as a Christian. Now, what if you are not sensible of so lively affections, of such ravishing views as you had at first; may not your piety be growing more solid and consistent, and better adapted to practical purposes? Does it follow from your not always being in the same frame of mind, or from the fact that the same objects do not at all times excite the same feelings, that you have no true religion? Perhaps you deceive yourself by looking forward to what you would be, rather than contemplating what you are, compared with what you once were.

3. If the strength of your love to creature-enjoyments is the ground of desperate conclusions respecting yourself, perhaps you argue thus: “I fear that I love the creature more than God, if so, I have not true love to God. I sometimes feel stronger affections toward earthly comforts than I do toward heavenly objects, therefore my soul is not upright within me.” If, indeed, you love the creature for itself, if you make it your end, and religion but a means, then you conclude rightly; for this is incompatible with supreme love to God. But may not a man love God more ardently and unchangeably than he does any thing, or all things else, and yet, when God is not the direct object of his thoughts, may he not be sensible of more violent affection for the creature than he has at that time for God? As rooted malice indicates a stronger hatred than sudden though inure violent passion; so we must judge of our love, not by a violent motion of it now and then, but by the depth of its root and the constancy of its exercise. Perhaps your difficulty results from bringing your love to some foreign and improper test. Many persons have feared that when brought to some eminent trial they should renounce Christ and cleave to the creature; but when the trial came, Christ was every thing, and the world as nothing in their esteem. Such were the fears of some martyrs whose victory was complete. But you may expect divine assistance only at the time of, and in proportion to your necessity. If you would try your love, see whether you are willing to forsake Christ now.

4. Is the want of that enlargement in private which you find in public exercises an occasion of doubts and fears? Consider then whether there are not some circumstances attending public duties which are peculiarly calculated to excite your feelings and elevate your mind, and which

cannot affect you in private. If so, your exercises in secret, if performed faithfully and in a suitable manner, may he profitable, though they have not all the characteristics of those in public. If you imagine that you have spiritual enlargement and enjoyment in public exercises while you neglect private duties, doubtless you deceive yourself. Indeed if you live in the neglect of secret duties, or are careless about them, you have great reason to fear. But if you regularly and faithfully perform them, it does not follow that they are vain and worthless, or that they are not of great value, because they are not attended with so much enlargement as you sometimes find in public. And what if the Spirit is pleased more highly to favor you with his gracious influence in one place and at one time than another, should this be a reason for murmuring and unbelief, or for thankfulness?

5. The vile or blasphemous suggestions of Satan sometimes occasion great perplexity and distress.— They seem to lay open an abyss of corruption in the heart, and to say there can be no grace here. But there may be grace in the heart where such thoughts are injected, though not, in the heart which consents to and cherishes them. Do you then abhor and oppose them? do you utterly refuse to give up yourself to their influence, and strive to keep holy and reverend thoughts of God, and of all religious objects? If so, such suggestions are involuntary, and no evidence against your piety.

6. Is the seeming denial of your prayers an occasion of despondency? Are you disposed to say, “If God had any regard for my soul he would have heard my petitions before now; but I have no answer from him, and therefore no interest in him?” But stay: though God’s abhorring and finally rejecting prayer is an evidence that he rejects the person who prays, yet, dare you conclude that he has rejected you, because an answer to your prayers is delayed, or because you do not discover it if granted? “May not God bear long with his own elect, that cry unto him day and night?”

Others have stumbled upon the same ground with you: “I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardst the voice of my supplication.” Now are there not some things in your experience which indicate that your prayers are not rejected, though answer to them is deferred? Are you not disposed to continue praying though you do not discover an answer? Are you not disposed still to ascribe righteousness to God, while you consider the cause of his silence as being in yourself? Thus did David: “O my God, I cry in the day time, and thou hearest not; and in the night, and am not silent: but thou art holy,” &c. Does not the delay of an answer to your prayers excite you to examine your own heart and try your ways, that you may find and remove the difficulty? If so, you may have reason for humiliation, but not for despair.

Thus I have shown you how to keep your heart in dark and doubting seasons. God forbid that any false heart should encourage itself from these things. It is lamentable, that when we give saints and sinners their proper portions, each is so prone to take up the other’s part.

XI. Another season, wherein the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when sufferings for religion are laid upon us. . . .

XI. Another season, wherein the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when sufferings for religion are laid upon us. Blessed is the man who in such a season is not offended in Christ. Now, whatever may be the kind or degree of your sufferings, if they are sufferings for Christ’s sake and the Gospel’s, spare no diligence to keep your heart. If you are tempted to shrink or waver under them, let what follows help you to repel and to surmount the instigation:

1. What reproach would you cast upon the Redeemer and his religion by deserting him at such a time as this! You would proclaim to the world, that how much soever you have boasted of the promises when you are put to the proof you dare hazard no thing upon your faith in them; and this will give the enemies of Christ an occasion to blaspheme. And will you thus furnish the triumphs of the uncircumcised? Ah, if you did but value the name of Christ as much as many wicked men value their names, you could never endure that his should be exposed to contempt. Will proud dust and ashes hazard death or hell rather than have their names disgraced, and will you endure nothing to maintain the honor of Christ?

2. Dare you violate your conscience out of complaisance to flesh and blood? Who will comfort you when your conscience accuses and condemns you? What happiness can there be in life, liberty or friends, when inward peace is taken away? Consider well what you do.

3. Is not the public interest of Christ and his cause infinitely more important than any interest of your own, and should you not prefer his glory and the welfare of his kingdom before every thing else? Should any temporary suffering, or any sacrifice which you can be called to make, be suffered to come into competition with the honor of his name?

4. Did the Redeemer neglect your interest and think lightly of you, when for your sake he endured sufferings between which and yours there can be no comparison? Did he hesitate and shrink back? No: “He endured the cross, despising the shame.” And did he with unbroken patience and constancy endure so much for you; and will you flinch from momentary suffering in his cause?

5. Can you so easily cast off the society and the privileges of the saints and go over to the enemy’s side? Are you willing to withhold your support from those who are determined to persevere, and throw your influence in the scale against them? Rather let your body and soul be rent asunder. “If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”

6. How can you stand before Christ in the day of judgment, if you desert him now? “He that is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” Yet a little while, and the Son of man will come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, to judge the world. He will sit upon the throne of judgment, while all the nations are brought before him. Imagine yourself now to be witnessing the transactions of that day. Behold the wicked; behold the apostates; and hear the consuming sentence which is pronounced upon them, and see them sinking in the gulf of infinite and everlasting wo! And will you desert Christ now, will you forsake his cause to save a little suffering, or to protract an unprofitable life on earth, and thus expose yourself to the doom of the apostate? Remember, that if you can silence the remonstrances of conscience now, you cannot hinder the sentence of the Judge then. By these means keep your heart, that it depart not from the living God.

XII. The last season which I shall mention, in which the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when we are warned by sickness that our dissolution is at hand. . . .

XII. The last season which I shall mention, in which the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when we are warned by sickness that our dissolution is at hand. When the child of God draws nigh to eternity, the adversary makes his last effort; and as he cannot win the soul from God, as he cannot dissolve the bond which unites the soul to Christ, his great design is to awaken fears of

death, to fill the mind with aversion and horror at the thoughts of dissolution from the body. Hence, what shrinking from a separation, what fear to grasp death's cold hand, and unwillingness to depart, may sometimes be observed in the people of God. But we ought to die, as well as live, like saints.

I shall offer several considerations calculated to help the people of God in time of sickness, to keep their hearts loose from all earthly objects, and cheerfully willing to die:

1. Death is harmless to the people of God; its shafts leave no sting in them. Why then are you afraid that your sickness may be unto death? If you were to die in your sins; if death were to reign over you as a tyrant, to feed upon you as a lion doth upon his prey; if death to you were to be the precursor of hell, then you might reasonably startle and shrink back from it with horror and dismay. But if your sins are blotted out; if Christ has vanquished death in your behalf, so that you have nothing to encounter but bodily pain, and possibly not even that; if death will be to you the harbinger of heaven, why should you be afraid? why not bid it welcome? It cannot hurt you; it is easy and harmless; it is like putting off your clothes, on taking rest.

2. It may keep your heart from shrinking back, to consider that death is necessary to fit you for the full enjoyment of God. Whether you are willing to die or not, there certainly is no other way to complete the happiness of your soul. Death must do you the kind office to remove this veil of flesh, this animal life which separates you from God, before you can see and enjoy him fully. "Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord." And who would not be willing to die for the perfect enjoyment of God? Methinks one should look and sigh, like a prisoner, through the grates of this mortality: "O that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest." Indeed most men need patience to die; but a saint, who understands what death will introduce him to, rather needs patience to live. On his death-bed he should often look out and listen to his Lord's coming; and when he perceives his dissolution to be near, he should say, "The voice of my beloved; behold he cometh, leaping over the mountains, skipping over the hills."

3. Consider that the happiness of heaven commences immediately after death. That happiness will not be deferred till the resurrection; but as soon as death has passed upon you, your soul will be swallowed up in life. When you have once loosed from this shore, you shall be quickly wafted to the shore of a glorious eternity. And can you not say, I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ? Did the soul and body die together, or did they sleep till the resurrection, as some have fancied, it would have been folly for Paul to desire a dissolution for the enjoyment of Christ; because he would have enjoyed more in the body than he could have enjoyed out of it. The Scripture speaks of but two ways in which the soul can properly live: viz, by faith and vision. These two comprehend its present and future existence.

Now, if when faith fails, sight should not immediately succeed, what would become of the soul? But the truth on this subject is clearly revealed in Scripture. See Luke 23:3; John 14:3, &c. What a blessed change then will death make in your condition! Rouse up, dying saint, and rejoice; let death do his work, that the angels may conduct your soul to the world of light.

4. It may increase your willingness to die, to reflect that by death God often removes his people out of the way of great troubles and temptations. When some extraordinary calamity is coming upon the world, God sometimes removes his saints out of the way of the evil. Thus Methuselah

died the year before the flood; Augustine a little before the sacking of Hippo; Pareus just before the taking of Heidelburg. Luther observes that all the apostles died before the destruction of Jerusalem; and Luther himself died before the wars broke out in Germany. Now it may be that by death you will escape some grievous trial, which you could not and need not endure. But if no extraordinary trouble would come upon you in case your life were prolonged, yet God designs by death to relieve you from innumerable evils and burdens which are inseparable from the present state. Thus you will be delivered from indwelling sin, which is the greatest trouble; from all temptations from whatever source; from bodily tempers and embarrassments; and from all the afflictions and sorrows of this life. The days of your mourning will be ended, and God will wipe away all tears from your eyes. Why then should you not hasten to depart?

5. If you still linger, like Lot in Sodom, what are your pleas and pretences for a longer life? Why are you unwilling to die? Are you concerned for the welfare of your relations? If so, are you anxious for their temporal support? Then let the word of God satisfy you: “Leave thy fatherless children to me, I will keep them alive, and let thy widows trust in me.” Luther says, in his last will, “Lord, thou hast given inc a wife and children, I have nothing to leave them, but I commit them unto thee. O Father of the fatherless and Judge of widows, nourish, keep and teach them.” But are you concerned for the spiritual welfare of your relations? Remember that you cannot convert them, if you should live; and God can make your prayers and counsels effectual when you are dead.

Perhaps you desire to serve God longer in this world. But if he has nothing further for you to do here, why not say with David, “Here am I, let him do what seemeth him good.” He is calling you to higher service in heaven, and can accomplish by other hands what you desire to do further here.—Do you feel too imperfect to go to heaven? Consider that you must be imperfect until you die; your sanctification cannot be complete until you get to heaven.

‘But,’ you say, ‘I want assurance; if I had that I could die easily.’ Consider, then, that a hearty willingness to leave all the world to be freed from sin, and to be with God, is the direct way to that desired assurance; no carnal person was ever willing to die upon this ground.

Thus I have shown how the people of God, in the most difficult seasons, may keep their hearts with alt diligence.

I now proceed to improve and apply the subject: . . .

You have seen that the keeping of the heart is the great work of a Christian, in which the very soul and life of religion consists, and without which all other duties are of no value in the sight of God. Hence, to the consternation of hypocrites and formal professors, I infer:

1. That the pains and labors which many persons have undergone in religion are of no value, and will turn to no good account. Many splendid services have been performed by men, which God will utterly reject: they will not stand on record in order to an eternal acceptance, because the performers took no heed to keep their hearts with God. This is that fatal rock on which thousands of vain professors dash and ruin themselves eternally; they are exact about the externals of religion, but regardless of their hearts. O how many hours have some professors spent in hearing, praying, reading and conferring! and yet, as to the main end of religion, they might as well have sat still and done nothing, the great work, I mean heart-work, being all the while neglected. Tell me, vain professor, when did you shed a tear for the deadness, hardness, unbelief or earthliness of

your heart? And do you think your easy religion can save you? If so, you must invert Christ's words, and say, Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to life, and many there be that go in thereat! Hear me, ye self-deluding hypocrite; you who have put off God with heartless duties; you who have acted in religion as if you had been blessing an idol; you who could not search your heart, and regulate it, and exercise it in your performances; how will you abide the coming of the Lord? how will you hold up your head before him, when he shall say. 'O you dissembling, false-hearted man! how could you profess religion? with what face could you so often tell me that you loved me, when you knew in your conscience that your heart was not with me?' O tremble to think what a fearful judgment it is to be given over to a heedless and careless heart, and then to have religious duties instead of a rattle to quiet and still the conscience!

2. I infer for their humiliation, that unless the people of God spend more time and pains about their hearts than they ordinarily do, they are never like to do God much service, or to possess much comfort in this world. I may say of that Christian who is remiss and careless in keeping his heart, as Jacob said of Reuben, Thou shalt not excel. It grieves me to see how many Christians there are who live at a poor, low rate, both of service and comfort, and who go up and down dejected and complaining. But how can they expect it should be otherwise, while they live so carelessly?

O how little of their time is spent in the closet, in searching, humbling, and quickening their hearts!

Christian, you say your heart is dead, and do you wonder that it is, so long as you keep it not with the fountain of life? If your body had been dieted as your soul has, that would have been dead too. And you may never expect that your heart will be in a better state until you take more pains with it.

O Christians! I fear your zeal and strength have run in the wrong channel; I fear that most of us may take up the Church's complaint: "They have made me the keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vine-yard have I not kept." Two things have eaten up the time and strength of the professors of this generation, and sadly diverted them from heart-work.

First:—Fruitless controversies, started by Satan, I doubt not for the very purpose of taking us off from practical godliness, to make us puzzle our heads when we should be inspecting our hearts. How little have we regarded the observation: "It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, and not with meats," (that is, with disputes and controversies about meats,) "which have not profited them that have been occupied therein." How much better it is to see men live exactly, than to hear them dispute with subtlety! These unfruitful questions, how have they rent the churches, wasted time and spirits, and taken Christians off from their main business! 'What think you, would it not have been better if the questions agitated among the people of God of late had been such as these:—"How shall a man distinguish the special from the common operations of the Spirit? How may a soul discern its first backslidings from God? How may a backsliding Christian recover his first love? How may the heart be preserved from unseasonable thoughts in duty? How may a bosom-sin be discovered and mortified?" &c. Would not this course have tended more to the honor of religion and the comfort of souls? I am ashamed that the professors of this generation are yet insensible of their folly. O that God would turn their disputes and contentions into practical godliness!

Second:—Worldly cares and incumbrances have greatly increased the neglect of our hearts. The heads and hearts of multitudes have been filled with such a crowd and noise of worldly business

that they have lamentably declined in their zeal, their love, their delight in God, and their heavenly, serious, and profitable way of conversing with men. How miserably have we entangled ourselves in this wilderness of trifles! Our discourses, our conferences, nay, our very prayers are tinged with it. We have had so much to do without, that we have been able to do but little within. And how many precious opportunities have we thus lost? How many admonitions of the Spirit have passed over unfruitfully? How often has the Lord called to us, when our worldly thoughts have prevented us from hearing? But there certainly is a way to enjoy God even in our worldly employments. If we lose our views of him when engaged in our temporal affairs, the fault is our own. Alas! that Christians should stand at the door of eternity, having more work upon their hands than their time is sufficient for, and yet be filling their heads and hearts with trifles!

3. I infer, lastly, for the awakening of all, that if the keeping of the heart be the great work of a Christian, then there are but few real Christians in the world. If every one who has learned the dialect of Christianity, and who can talk like a saint; if every one who has gifts and parts, and who can make shift to preach, pray, or discourse like a Christian: in a word, if all such as associate with the people of God and partake of ordinances may pass for Christians, then indeed the number is great. But alas! how few can he found, if you judge them by this rule,—how few are there who conscientiously keep their hearts, watch their thoughts and look scrupulously to their motives! Indeed there are few closet-men among professors. It is easier for men to be reconciled to any other duties in religion than to these. The profane part of the world will not so much as meddle with the outside of any religious duties, and least of all with these; and as to the hypocrite, though he may be very particular in externals, you can never persuade him to undertake this inward, this difficult work; this work, to which there is no inducement from human applause; this work, which would quickly discover what the hypocrite cares not to know: so that by general consent this heart-work is left to the hands of a few retired ones, and I tremble to think in how few hands it is.

II. If the keeping of the heart be so important a business; if such great advantages result from it; if so many valuable interests be wrapt up in it, then let me call upon the people of God every where to engage heartily in this work. O study your hearts, watch your hearts, keep your hearts! Away with fruitless controversies and all idle questions; away with empty names and vain shows; away with unprofitable discourse and bold censures of others, and turn in upon yourselves. O that this day, this hour, you would resolve upon doing so!

Reader, methinks I shall prevail with you. All that I beg for is this, that you would step aside oftener to talk with God and your own heart; that you would not suffer every trifle to divert you; that you would keep a more true and faithful account of your thoughts and affections; that you would seriously demand of your own heart at least every evening, ‘O my heart, where hast thou been today, and what has engaged thy thoughts?’

If all that has been said by way of inducement be not enough, I have yet some motives to offer you:

If all that has been said by way of inducement be not enough, I have yet some motives to offer you:

1. The studying, observing, and diligently keeping your own heart, will surprisingly help you to understand the deep mysteries of religion. An honest, well-experienced heart is an excellent help

to the head. Such a heart will serve for a commentary on a great part of the Scriptures. By means of such a heart you will have a better understanding of divine things than the most learned (graceless) man ever had, or call have; you will not only have a clearer, but a more interesting and profitable apprehension of them. A man may discourse orthodoxy and profoundly of the nature and effects of faith, the troubles and comforts of conscience, and the sweetness of communion with God, who never felt the efficacy and sweet impression of these things upon his own soul. But how dark and dry are his notions compared with those of an experienced Christian!

2. The study and observation of your own heart will powerfully secure you against the dangerous and infecting errors of the times in which you live. For what think you is the reason why so many professors have departed from the faith, giving heed to fables? why have so many been led away by the error of the wicked? why have those who have sown corrupt doctrines had such plentiful harvests among us, but because they have met with a race of professors who never knew what belongs to practical godliness and the study and keeping of their hearts?

3. Your care and diligence in keeping your heart will prove one of the best evidences of your sincerity. I know no external act of religion which truly distinguishes the sound from the unsound professor. It is marvellous how far hypocrites go in all external duties; how plausibly they can order the outward man, hiding all their indecencies from the observation of the world. But they take no heed to their hearts; they are not in secret what they appear to be in public; and before this test no hypocrite can stand. They may, indeed, in a fit of terror, or on a death-bed, cry out of the wickedness of their hearts; but such extort ed complaints are worthy of no regard. No credit, in law, is to be given to the testimony of one upon the rack, because it may be supposed that the extremity of his torture will make him say any thing to get relief. But if self-jealousy, care and watchfulness be the daily workings and frames of your heart, you have some evidence of your sincerity.

4. How comfortable and how profitable would all ordinances and duties be to you, if your heart was faithfully kept. What lively communion might you have with God every time you approach him, if your heart was in a right frame! You might then say with David, “My meditation of Him shall be sweet.” It is the indisposition of the heart which renders ordinances, and secret duties so comfortless to some. They strive to raise their hearts to God, now pressing this argument upon them, then that, to quicken and affect them; yet they often get nearly through the exercise before their hearts begin to be interested in it; and some times they go away no better than they came. But the Christian whose heart is prepared by being constantly kept, enters immediately and heartily into his duties; he outstrips his sluggish neighbor, gets the first sight of Christ in a sermon, the first seal from Christ in a sacrament, the first communication of grace and love in secret prayer. Now if there be any thing valuable and comfortable in ordinances and private duties, look to your heart and keep it, I beseech you.

5. An acquaintance with your own heart will furnish you a fountain of matter in prayer. The man who is diligent in heart-work, will be richly supplied with matter in his addresses to God. He will not be confused for want of thoughts; his tongue will not falter for want of expressions.

6. The most desirable thing in the world, viz, the revival of religion among a people, may be effected by means of what I am urging upon you.

O that I might see the time when professors shall not walk in a vain show; when they shall please themselves no more with a name to live, while they are spiritually dead; when they shall be no more a company of frothy, vain persons; but when holiness shall shine in their conversation, and awe the world, and command reverence from all that are around them; when they shall warm the heart of those who come near them, and cause it to be said, God is in these men of a truth. And may such a time be expected? Until heart-work becomes the business of professors, I have no hope of seeing a time so blessed! Does it not grieve you to see how religion is contemned and trampled under foot, and the professors of it ridiculed and scorned in the world? Professors, would you recover your credit? would you obtain an honorable testimony in the consciences of your very enemies? Then keep your hearts.

7. By diligence in keeping our hearts we should prevent the occasions of fatal scandals and stumbling-blocks to the world. Wo to the world because of offences!

Keep your heart faithfully, and you will be prepared for any situation or service to which you may be called. This, and this only can properly fit you for usefulness in any station; but with this you can endure prosperity or adversity; you can deny yourself, and turn your hand to any work. Thus Paul turned every circumstance to good account, and made himself so eminently useful. When he preached to others, he provided against being cast away himself: he kept his heart; and every thing in which lie excelled seems to have had a close connection with his diligence in keeping his heart.

9. If the people of God would diligently keep their hearts, their communion with each other would be unspeakably more inviting and profitable. Then “how goodly would be thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!” It is the fellowship which the people of God have with the Father and with the Son that kindles the desires of others to have communion with them. I tell you, that if saints would be persuaded to spend more time and take more pains about their hearts, there would soon be such a divine excellence in their conversation that others would account it no small privilege to be with or near them. It is the pride, passion and earthliness of our hearts, that has spoiled Christian fellowship. Why is it that when Christians meet they are often jarring and contending, but because their passions arc unmortified? Whence come their uncharitable censures of their brethren, but from their ignorance of themselves? Why are they so rigid and unfeeling toward those who have fallen, but because they do not feel their own weakness and liability to temptation? Why is their discourse so light and unprofitable when they meet, but because their hearts are earthly and vain? But now, if Christians would study their hearts more and keep them better, the beauty and glory of communion would be restored. They would divide no more, contend no more, censure rashly no more. They will feel right one toward another, when each is daily humbled under a sense of the evil of his own heart.

10. Lastly:—Keep your heart, and then the comforts of the Spirit and the influence of all ordinances will be more fixed and lasting than they now are. And do the consolations of God seem small to you?” Ah, you have reason to be ashamed that the ordinances of God, as to their quickening and comforting effects, should make so light and transient an impression on your heart.

Now, reader, consider well these special benefits of keeping the heart which I have mentioned. Examine their importance. Are they small matters? Is it a small matter to have your understanding assisted? your endangered soul rendered safe? your sincerity proved? your communion with God

sweetened? your heart filled with matter for prayer? Is it a small thing to have the power of godliness? all fatal scandals removed? an instrumental fitness to serve Christ obtained? the communion of saints restored to its primitive glory? and the influence of ordinances abiding in the souls of saints? If these are no common blessings, no ordinary benefits, then surely it is a great and in dispensable duty to keep the heart with all diligence. And now are you inclined to undertake the business of keeping your heart? are you resolved upon it? I charge you, then, to engage in it earnestly. Away with every cowardly feeling, and make up your mind to encounter difficulties. Draw your armor from the word of God. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in its commands, its promises, its threatenings; let it be fixed in your understanding, your memory, your conscience, your affections. You must learn to wield the sword of the Spirit (which is the word of God) familiarly, if you would defend your heart and conquer your enemies. You must call yourself frequently to an account; examine yourself as in the presence of the all seeing God; bring your conscience, as it were, to the bar of judgment. Beware how you plunge yourself into a multiplicity of worldly business; how you practise upon the maxims of the world; and how you venture at all to indulge your depraved propensities. You must exercise the utmost vigilance to discover and check the first symptoms of departure from God, the least decline of spirituality, or the least indisposition to meditation by yourself and holy conversation and fellowship with others. These things you must undertake, in the strength of Christ, with invincible resolution in the outset. And if you thus engage in this great work, he assured you shall not spend your strength for naught; comforts which you never felt or thought of will flow in upon you from every side. The diligent prosecution of this work will constantly afford you the most powerful excitements to vigilance and ardor in the life of faith, while it increases your strength and wears out your enemies. And when you have kept your heart with all diligence a little while; when you have fought the battles of this spiritual warfare, gained the ascendancy over the corruptions within, and vanquished the enemies without, then God will open the gate of heaven to you, and give you the portion which is promised to them that overcome. Awake then, this moment; get the world under your feet pant not for the things which a man may have, and eternally lose his soul; but bless God that you may have his service here, and the glory hereafter which he appoints to his chosen.

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

04.13. Keep Heart Sufferings for Religion Laid on Us

Keeping the Heart When Sufferings for Religion are Laid on Us

X. The time of doubting and of spiritual darkness constitutes another season when it is very difficult to keep the heart. . . .

X. The time of doubting and of spiritual darkness constitutes another season when it is very difficult to keep the heart. When the light and comfort of the divine presence is withdrawn; when the believer, from the prevalence of indwelling sin in one form or other, is ready to renounce his hopes, to infer desperate conclusions with respect to himself, to regard his former comforts as vain delusions, and his professions as hypocrisy; at such a time much diligence is necessary to keep the heart from despondency. The Christian's distress arises from his apprehension of his spiritual state, and in general he argues against his possessing true religion, either from his having relapsed into the same sins from which he had formerly been recovered with shame and sorrow; or from the sensible declining of his affections from God; or from the strength of his affections toward creature enjoyments; or from his enlargement in public, while he is often confined and barren in private duties; or from some horrible suggestions of Satan, with which his soul is greatly perplexed; or, lastly, from God's silence and seeming denial of his long depending prayers. Now in order to the establishment and support of the heart under these circumstances, it is necessary that you be acquainted with some general truths which have a tendency to calm the trembling and doubting soul; and that you be rightly instructed with regard to the above-mentioned causes of disquiet. Let me direct your attention to the following general truths:

1. Every appearance of hypocrisy does not prove the person who manifests it to be a hypocrite. You should carefully distinguish between the appearance and the predominance of hypocrisy. There are remains of deceitfulness in the best hearts; this was exemplified in David and Peter; but the prevailing frame of their hearts being upright, they were not denominated hypocrites for their conduct.

2. We ought to regard what can be said in our favor, as well as what may be said against us. It is the sin of upright persons sometimes, to exercise an unreasonable severity against themselves. They do not impartially consider the state of their souls. To make their state appear butter than it really is, indeed is the damning sin of self-flattering hypocrites; and to make their state appear worse than it really is, is the sin and folly of some good persons. But why should you be such an enemy to your own peace? Why read over the evidences of God's love to your soul, as a man does a book which he intends to confute? Why do you study evasions, and turn off those comforts which are due to you?

3. Every thing which may be an occasion of grief to the people of God, is not a sufficient ground for their questioning the reality of their religion. Many things may trouble, which ought not to stumble you. If upon every occasion you should call in question all that had ever been wrought upon you, your life would be made up of doubtings and fears, and you could never attain that settled inward

peace, and live that life of praise and thankfulness which the Gospel requires.

4. The soul is not at all times in a suitable state to pass a right judgment upon itself. It is peculiarly unqualified for this in the hour of desertion or temptation. Such seasons must be improved rather for watching and resisting, than for judging and determining.

5. Whatever be the ground of one's distress, it should drive him to, not from God. Suppose you have sinned thus and so, or that you have been thus long and sadly deserted, yet you have no right to infer that you ought to be discouraged, as if there was no help for you in God. When you have well digested these truths, if your doubts and distress remain, consider what is now to be offered:

1. Are you ready to conclude that you have no part in the favor of God, because you are visited with some extraordinary affliction? If so, do you then rightly conclude that great trials are tokens of God's hatred? Does the Scripture teach this? And dare you infer the same with respect to all who have been as much or more afflicted than yourself? If the argument is good in your case, it is good in application to theirs, and more conclusive with respect to them, in proportion as their trials were greater than yours. Wo then to David, Job, Paul, and all who have been afflicted as they were! But had you passed along in quietness and prosperity; had God withheld those chastisements with which he ordinarily visits his people, would you not have had far more reason for doubts and distress than you now have?

2. Do you rashly infer that the Lord has no love to you, because he has withdrawn the light of his countenance? Do you imagine your state to be hopeless, because it is dark and uncomfortable? Be not hasty in forming this conclusion. If any of the dispensations of God to his people will bear a favorable as well as a harsh construction, why should they not be construed in the best sense? And may not God have a design of love rather than of hatred in the dispensation under which you mourn? May he not depart for a season, without departing for ever? You are not the first that have mistaken the design of God in withdrawing himself. "Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, my Lord hath forgotten me." But was it so? What saith the answer of God? "Can a woman forget her sucking child?" &c. But do you sink down under the apprehension that the evidences of a total and final desertion are discoverable in your experience? Have you then lost your conscientious tenderness with regard to sin? and are you inclined to forsake God? If so, you have reason indeed to be alarmed. But if your conscience is tenderly alive; if you are resolved to cleave to the Lord; if the language of your heart is, I cannot forsake God, I cannot live without his presence; though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: then you have reason to hope that he will visit you again. It is by these exercises that he still maintains his interest in you.

Once more. Are sense and feelings suitable to judge of the dispensations of God by? Can their testimony be safely relied on? Is it safe to argue thus: 'If God bad any love for my soul, I should feel it now as well as in former times; but I cannot feel it, therefore it is gone?' May you not as well conclude, when the sun is invisible to you, that he has ceased to exist? Read Isaiah 1:10.

Now if there is nothing in the divine dealings with you which is a reasonable ground of your despondency and distress, let us inquire what there is in your own conduct for which you should be so cast down:

1. Have you committed sins from which you were formerly recovered with shame and sorrow? And do you thence conclude that you sin allowedly and habitually, and that your oppositions to sin were hypocritical? But do not too hastily give up all for lost. Is not your repentance and care renewed as often as you commit sin? Is it not the sin itself which troubles you, and is it not true, that the oftener you sin the more you are distressed? It is not so in customary sinning; of which Bernard excellently discourses thus: “When a man accustomed to restrain, sins grievously, it seems insupportable to him, yea he seems to descend alive into hell. In process of time it seems not insupportable, but heavy, and between insupportable and heavy there is no small descent. Next, such sinning becomes light, his conscience smites but faintly, and he regards not her rebukes. Then he is not only insensible to his guilt, but that which was bitter and displeasing has become in some degree sweet and pleasant. Now it is made a custom, and not only pleases, but pleases habitually. At length custom becomes nature; he cannot be dissuaded from it, but defends and pleads for it.” This is allowed and customary sinning, this is the way of the wicked. But is not your way the contrary of this?

2. Do you apprehend a decline of your affections from God and from spiritual subjects? This may be your case, and yet there may be hope. But possibly you are mistaken with regard to this. There are many things to be learnt in Christian experience; it has relation to a great variety of subjects. You may now be learning what it is very necessary for you to know as a Christian. Now, what if you are not sensible of so lively affections, of such ravishing views as you had at first; may not your piety be growing more solid and consistent, and better adapted to practical purposes? Does it follow from your not always being in the same frame of mind, or from the fact that the same objects do not at all times excite the same feelings, that you have no true religion? Perhaps you deceive yourself by looking forward to what you would be, rather than contemplating what you are, compared with what you once were.

3. If the strength of your love to creature-enjoyments is the ground of desperate conclusions respecting yourself, perhaps you argue thus: “I fear that I love the creature more than God, if so, I have not true love to God. I sometimes feel stronger affections toward earthly comforts than I do toward heavenly objects, therefore my soul is not upright within me.” If, indeed, you love the creature for itself, if you make it your end, and religion but a means, then you conclude rightly; for this is incompatible with supreme love to God. But may not a man love God more ardently and unchangeably than he does any thing, or all things else, and yet, when God is not the direct object of his thoughts, may he not be sensible of more violent affection for the creature than he has at that time for God? As rooted malice indicates a stronger hatred than sudden though inure violent passion; so we must judge of our love, not by a violent motion of it now and then, but by the depth of its root and the constancy of its exercise. Perhaps your difficulty results from bringing your love to some foreign and improper test. Many persons have feared that when brought to some eminent trial they should renounce Christ and cleave to the creature; but when the trial came, Christ was every thing, and the world as nothing in their esteem. Such were the fears of some martyrs whose victory was complete. But you may expect divine assistance only at the time of, and in proportion to your necessity. If you would try your love, see whether you are willing to forsake Christ now.

4. Is the want of that enlargement in private which you find in public exercises an occasion of doubts and fears? Consider then whether there are not some circumstances attending public duties which are peculiarly calculated to excite your feelings and elevate your mind, and which

cannot affect you in private. If so, your exercises in secret, if performed faithfully and in a suitable manner, may he profitable, though they have not all the characteristics of those in public. If you imagine that you have spiritual enlargement and enjoyment in public exercises while you neglect private duties, doubtless you deceive yourself. Indeed if you live in the neglect of secret duties, or are careless about them, you have great reason to fear. But if you regularly and faithfully perform them, it does not follow that they are vain and worthless, or that they are not of great value, because they are not attended with so much enlargement as you sometimes find in public. And what if the Spirit is pleased more highly to favor you with his gracious influence in one place and at one time than another, should this be a reason for murmuring and unbelief, or for thankfulness?

5. The vile or blasphemous suggestions of Satan sometimes occasion great perplexity and distress.— They seem to lay open an abyss of corruption in the heart, and to say there can be no grace here. But there may be grace in the heart where such thoughts are injected, though not, in the heart which consents to and cherishes them. Do you then abhor and oppose them? do you utterly refuse to give up yourself to their influence, and strive to keep holy and reverend thoughts of God, and of all religious objects? If so, such suggestions are involuntary, and no evidence against your piety.

6. Is the seeming denial of your prayers an occasion of despondency? Are you disposed to say, “If God had any regard for my soul he would have heard my petitions before now; but I have no answer from him, and therefore no interest in him?” But stay: though God’s abhorring and finally rejecting prayer is an evidence that he rejects the person who prays, yet, dare you conclude that he has rejected you, because an answer to your prayers is delayed, or because you do not discover it if granted? “May not God bear long with his own elect, that cry unto him day and night?”

Others have stumbled upon the same ground with you: “I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardst the voice of my supplication.” Now are there not some things in your experience which indicate that your prayers are not rejected, though answer to them is deferred? Are you not disposed to continue praying though you do not discover an answer? Are you not disposed still to ascribe righteousness to God, while you consider the cause of his silence as being in yourself? Thus did David: “O my God, I cry in the day time, and thou hearest not; and in the night, and am not silent: but thou art holy,” &c. Does not the delay of an answer to your prayers excite you to examine your own heart and try your ways, that you may find and remove the difficulty? If so, you may have reason for humiliation, but not for despair.

Thus I have shown you how to keep your heart in dark and doubting seasons. God forbid that any false heart should encourage itself from these things. It is lamentable, that when we give saints and sinners their proper portions, each is so prone to take up the other’s part.

XI. Another season, wherein the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when sufferings for religion are laid upon us. . . .

XI. Another season, wherein the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when sufferings for religion are laid upon us. Blessed is the man who in such a season is not offended in Christ. Now, whatever may be the kind or degree of your sufferings, if they are sufferings for Christ’s sake and the Gospel’s, spare no diligence to keep your heart. If you are tempted to shrink or waver under them, let what follows help you to repel and to surmount the instigation:

1. What reproach would you cast upon the Redeemer and his religion by deserting him at such a time as this! You would proclaim to the world, that how much soever you have boasted of the promises when you are put to the proof you dare hazard no thing upon your faith in them; and this will give the enemies of Christ an occasion to blaspheme. And will you thus furnish the triumphs of the uncircumcised? Ah, if you did but value the name of Christ as much as many wicked men value their names, you could never endure that his should be exposed to contempt. Will proud dust and ashes hazard death or hell rather than have their names disgraced, and will you endure nothing to maintain the honor of Christ?

2. Dare you violate your conscience out of complaisance to flesh and blood? Who will comfort you when your conscience accuses and condemns you? What happiness can there be in life, liberty or friends, when inward peace is taken away? Consider well what you do.

3. Is not the public interest of Christ and his cause infinitely more important than any interest of your own, and should you not prefer his glory and the welfare of his kingdom before every thing else? Should any temporary suffering, or any sacrifice which you can be called to make, be suffered to come into competition with the honor of his name?

4. Did the Redeemer neglect your interest and think lightly of you, when for your sake he endured sufferings between which and yours there can be no comparison? Did he hesitate and shrink back? No: “He endured the cross, despising the shame.” And did he with unbroken patience and constancy endure so much for you; and will you flinch from momentary suffering in his cause?

5. Can you so easily cast off the society and the privileges of the saints and go over to the enemy’s side? Are you willing to withhold your support from those who are determined to persevere, and throw your influence in the scale against them? Rather let your body and soul be rent asunder. “If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”

6. How can you stand before Christ in the day of judgment, if you desert him now? “He that is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” Yet a little while, and the Son of man will come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, to judge the world. He will sit upon the throne of judgment, while all the nations are brought before him. Imagine yourself now to be witnessing the transactions of that day. Behold the wicked; behold the apostates; and hear the consuming sentence which is pronounced upon them, and see them sinking in the gulf of infinite and everlasting wo! And will you desert Christ now, will you forsake his cause to save a little suffering, or to protract an unprofitable life on earth, and thus expose yourself to the doom of the apostate? Remember, that if you can silence the remonstrances of conscience now, you cannot hinder the sentence of the Judge then. By these means keep your heart, that it depart not from the living God.

XII. The last season which I shall mention, in which the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when we are warned by sickness that our dissolution is at hand. . . .

XII. The last season which I shall mention, in which the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when we are warned by sickness that our dissolution is at hand. When the child of God draws nigh to eternity, the adversary makes his last effort; and as he cannot win the soul from God, as he cannot dissolve the bond which unites the soul to Christ, his great design is to awaken fears of

death, to fill the mind with aversion and horror at the thoughts of dissolution from the body. Hence, what shrinking from a separation, what fear to grasp death's cold hand, and unwillingness to depart, may sometimes be observed in the people of God. But we ought to die, as well as live, like saints.

I shall offer several considerations calculated to help the people of God in time of sickness, to keep their hearts loose from all earthly objects, and cheerfully willing to die:

1. Death is harmless to the people of God; its shafts leave no sting in them. Why then are you afraid that your sickness may be unto death? If you were to die in your sins; if death were to reign over you as a tyrant, to feed upon you as a lion doth upon his prey; if death to you were to be the precursor of hell, then you might reasonably startle and shrink back from it with horror and dismay. But if your sins are blotted out; if Christ has vanquished death in your behalf, so that you have nothing to encounter but bodily pain, and possibly not even that; if death will be to you the harbinger of heaven, why should you be afraid? why not bid it welcome? It cannot hurt you; it is easy and harmless; it is like putting off your clothes, on taking rest.

2. It may keep your heart from shrinking back, to consider that death is necessary to fit you for the full enjoyment of God. Whether you are willing to die or not, there certainly is no other way to complete the happiness of your soul. Death must do you the kind office to remove this veil of flesh, this animal life which separates you from God, before you can see and enjoy him fully. "Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord." And who would not be willing to die for the perfect enjoyment of God? Methinks one should look and sigh, like a prisoner, through the grates of this mortality: "O that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest." Indeed most men need patience to die; but a saint, who understands what death will introduce him to, rather needs patience to live. On his death-bed he should often look out and listen to his Lord's coming; and when he perceives his dissolution to be near, he should say, "The voice of my beloved; behold he cometh, leaping over the mountains, skipping over the hills."

3. Consider that the happiness of heaven commences immediately after death. That happiness will not be deferred till the resurrection; but as soon as death has passed upon you, your soul will be swallowed up in life. When you have once loosed from this shore, you shall be quickly wafted to the shore of a glorious eternity. And can you not say, I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ? Did the soul and body die together, or did they sleep till the resurrection, as some have fancied, it would have been folly for Paul to desire a dissolution for the enjoyment of Christ; because he would have enjoyed more in the body than he could have enjoyed out of it. The Scripture speaks of but two ways in which the soul can properly live: viz, by faith and vision. These two comprehend its present and future existence.

Now, if when faith fails, sight should not immediately succeed, what would become of the soul? But the truth on this subject is clearly revealed in Scripture. See Luke 23:3; John 14:3, &c. What a blessed change then will death make in your condition! Rouse up, dying saint, and rejoice; let death do his work, that the angels may conduct your soul to the world of light.

4. It may increase your willingness to die, to reflect that by death God often removes his people out of the way of great troubles and temptations. When some extraordinary calamity is coming upon the world, God sometimes removes his saints out of the way of the evil. Thus Methuselah

died the year before the flood; Augustine a little before the sacking of Hippo; Pareus just before the taking of Heidelburg. Luther observes that all the apostles died before the destruction of Jerusalem; and Luther himself died before the wars broke out in Germany. Now it may be that by death you will escape some grievous trial, which you could not and need not endure. But if no extraordinary trouble would come upon you in case your life were prolonged, yet God designs by death to relieve you from innumerable evils and burdens which are inseparable from the present state. Thus you will be delivered from indwelling sin, which is the greatest trouble; from all temptations from whatever source; from bodily tempers and embarrassments; and from all the afflictions and sorrows of this life. The days of your mourning will be ended, and God will wipe away all tears from your eyes. Why then should you not hasten to depart?

5. If you still linger, like Lot in Sodom, what are your pleas and pretences for a longer life? Why are you unwilling to die? Are you concerned for the welfare of your relations? If so, are you anxious for their temporal support? Then let the word of God satisfy you: “Leave thy fatherless children to me, I will keep them alive, and let thy widows trust in me.” Luther says, in his last will, “Lord, thou hast given inc a wife and children, I have nothing to leave them, but I commit them unto thee. O Father of the fatherless and Judge of widows, nourish, keep and teach them.” But are you concerned for the spiritual welfare of your relations? Remember that you cannot convert them, if you should live; and God can make your prayers and counsels effectual when you are dead.

Perhaps you desire to serve God longer in this world. But if he has nothing further for you to do here, why not say with David, “Here am I, let him do what seemeth him good.” He is calling you to higher service in heaven, and can accomplish by other hands what you desire to do further here.—Do you feel too imperfect to go to heaven? Consider that you must be imperfect until you die; your sanctification cannot be complete until you get to heaven.

‘But,’ you say, ‘I want assurance; if I had that I could die easily.’ Consider, then, that a hearty willingness to leave all the world to be freed from sin, and to be with God, is the direct way to that desired assurance; no carnal person was ever willing to die upon this ground.

Thus I have shown how the people of God, in the most difficult seasons, may keep their hearts with alt diligence.

I now proceed to improve and apply the subject: . . .

You have seen that the keeping of the heart is the great work of a Christian, in which the very soul and life of religion consists, and without which all other duties are of no value in the sight of God. Hence, to the consternation of hypocrites and formal professors, I infer:

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3. Your care and diligence in keeping your heart will prove one of the best evidences of your sincerity. I know no external act of religion which truly distinguishes the sound from the unsound professor. It is marvellous how far hypocrites go in all external duties; how plausibly they can order the outward man, hiding all their indecencies from the observation of the world. But they take no heed to their hearts; they are not in secret what they appear to be in public; and before this test no hypocrite can stand. They may, indeed, in a fit of terror, or on a death-bed, cry out of the wickedness of their hearts; but such extort ed complaints are worthy of no regard. No credit, in law, is to be given to the testimony of one upon the rack, because it may be supposed that the extremity of his torture will make him say any thing to get relief. But if self-jealousy, care and watchfulness be the daily workings and frames of your heart, you have some evidence of your sincerity.

4. How comfortable and how profitable would all ordinances and duties be to you, if your heart was faithfully kept. What lively communion might you have with God every time you approach him, if your heart was in a right frame! You might then say with David, “My meditation of Him shall be sweet.” It is the indisposition of the heart which renders ordinances, and secret duties so comfortless to some. They strive to raise their hearts to God, now pressing this argument upon them, then that, to quicken and affect them; yet they often get nearly through the exercise before their hearts begin to be interested in it; and some times they go away no better than they came. But the Christian whose heart is prepared by being constantly kept, enters immediately and heartily into his duties; he outstrips his sluggish neighbor, gets the first sight of Christ in a sermon, the first seal from Christ in a sacrament, the first communication of grace and love in secret prayer. Now if there be any thing valuable and comfortable in ordinances and private duties, look to your heart and keep it, I beseech you.

5. An acquaintance with your own heart will furnish you a fountain of matter in prayer. The man who is diligent in heart-work, will be richly supplied with matter in his addresses to God. He will not be confused for want of thoughts; his tongue will not falter for want of expressions.

6. The most desirable thing in the world, viz, the revival of religion among a people, may be effected by means of what I am urging upon you.

O that I might see the time when professors shall not walk in a vain show; when they shall please themselves no more with a name to live, while they are spiritually dead; when they shall be no more a company of frothy, vain persons; but when holiness shall shine in their conversation, and awe the world, and command reverence from all that are around them; when they shall warm the heart of those who come near them, and cause it to be said, God is in these men of a truth. And may such a time be expected? Until heart-work becomes the business of professors, I have no hope of seeing a time so blessed! Does it not grieve you to see how religion is contemned and trampled under foot, and the professors of it ridiculed and scorned in the world? Professors, would you recover your credit? would you obtain an honorable testimony in the consciences of your very enemies? Then keep your hearts.

7. By diligence in keeping our hearts we should prevent the occasions of fatal scandals and stumbling-blocks to the world. Wo to the world because of offences!

Keep your heart faithfully, and you will be prepared for any situation or service to which you may be called. This, and this only can properly fit you for usefulness in any station; but with this you can endure prosperity or adversity; you can deny yourself, and turn your hand to any work. Thus Paul turned every circumstance to good account, and made himself so eminently useful. When he preached to others, he provided against being cast away himself: he kept his heart; and every thing in which lie excelled seems to have had a close connection with his diligence in keeping his heart.

9. If the people of God would diligently keep their hearts, their communion with each other would be unspeakably more inviting and profitable. Then “how goodly would be thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!” It is the fellowship which the people of God have with the Father and with the Son that kindles the desires of others to have communion with them. I tell you, that if saints would be persuaded to spend more time and take more pains about their hearts, there would soon be such a divine excellence in their conversation that others would account it no small privilege to be with or near them. It is the pride, passion and earthliness of our hearts, that has spoiled Christian fellowship. Why is it that when Christians meet they are often jarring and contending, but because their passions arc unmortified? Whence come their uncharitable censures of their brethren, but from their ignorance of themselves? Why are they so rigid and unfeeling toward those who have fallen, but because they do not feel their own weakness and liability to temptation? Why is their discourse so light and unprofitable when they meet, but because their hearts are earthly and vain? But now, if Christians would study their hearts more and keep them better, the beauty and glory of communion would be restored. They would divide no more, contend no more, censure rashly no more. They will feel right one toward another, when each is daily humbled under a sense of the evil of his own heart.

10. Lastly:—Keep your heart, and then the comforts of the Spirit and the influence of all ordinances will be more fixed and lasting than they now are. And do the consolations of God seem small to you?” Ah, you have reason to be ashamed that the ordinances of God, as to their quickening and comforting effects, should make so light and transient an impression on your heart.

Now, reader, consider well these special benefits of keeping the heart which I have mentioned. Examine their importance. Are they small matters? Is it a small matter to have your understanding assisted? your endangered soul rendered safe? your sincerity proved? your communion with God

sweetened? your heart filled with matter for prayer? Is it a small thing to have the power of godliness? all fatal scandals removed? an instrumental fitness to serve Christ obtained? the communion of saints restored to its primitive glory? and the influence of ordinances abiding in the souls of saints? If these are no common blessings, no ordinary benefits, then surely it is a great and in dispensable duty to keep the heart with all diligence. And now are you inclined to undertake the business of keeping your heart? are you resolved upon it? I charge you, then, to engage in it earnestly. Away with every cowardly feeling, and make up your mind to encounter difficulties. Draw your armor from the word of God. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in its commands, its promises, its threatenings; let it be fixed in your understanding, your memory, your conscience, your affections. You must learn to wield the sword of the Spirit (which is the word of God) familiarly, if you would defend your heart and conquer your enemies. You must call yourself frequently to an account; examine yourself as in the presence of the all seeing God; bring your conscience, as it were, to the bar of judgment. Beware how you plunge yourself into a multiplicity of worldly business; how you practise upon the maxims of the world; and how you venture at all to indulge your depraved propensities. You must exercise the utmost vigilance to discover and check the first symptoms of departure from God, the least decline of spirituality, or the least indisposition to meditation by yourself and holy conversation and fellowship with others. These things you must undertake, in the strength of Christ, with invincible resolution in the outset. And if you thus engage in this great work, he assured you shall not spend your strength for naught; comforts which you never felt or thought of will flow in upon you from every side. The diligent prosecution of this work will constantly afford you the most powerful excitements to vigilance and ardor in the life of faith, while it increases your strength and wears out your enemies. And when you have kept your heart with all diligence a little while; when you have fought the battles of this spiritual warfare, gained the ascendancy over the corruptions within, and vanquished the enemies without, then God will open the gate of heaven to you, and give you the portion which is promised to them that overcome. Awake then, this moment; get the world under your feet pant not for the things which a man may have, and eternally lose his soul; but bless God that you may have his service here, and the glory hereafter which he appoints to his chosen.

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

04.14. Keep Heart When Sickness WarnsDeath Approaching

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XII. The last season which I shall mention, in which the heart must be kept with all diligence, is when we are warned by sickness that our dissolution is at hand. When the child of God draws nigh to eternity, the adversary makes his last effort; and as he cannot win the soul from God, as he cannot dissolve the bond which unites the soul to Christ, his great design is to awaken fears of death, to fill the mind with aversion and horror at the thoughts of dissolution from the body. Hence, what shrinking from a separation, what fear to grasp death's cold hand, and unwillingness to depart, may sometimes be observed in the people of God. But we ought to die, as well as live, like saints.

I shall offer several considerations calculated to help the people of God in time of sickness, to keep their hearts loose from all earthly objects, and cheerfully willing to die:

1. Death is harmless to the people of God; its shafts leave no sting in them. Why then are you afraid that your sickness may be unto death? If you were to die in your sins; if death were to reign over you as a tyrant, to feed upon you as a lion doth upon his prey; if death to you were to be the precursor of hell, then you might reasonably startle and shrink back from it with horror and dismay. But if your sins are blotted out; if Christ has vanquished death in your behalf, so that you have nothing to encounter but bodily pain, and possibly not even that; if death will be to you the harbinger of heaven, why should you be afraid? why not bid it welcome? It cannot hurt you; it is easy and harmless; it is like putting off your clothes, on taking rest.

2. It may keep your heart from shrinking back, to consider that death is necessary to fit you for the full enjoyment of God. Whether you are willing to die or not, there certainly is no other way to complete the happiness of your soul. Death must do you the kind office to remove this veil of flesh, this animal life which separates you from God, before you can see and enjoy him fully. "Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord." And who would not be willing to die for the perfect enjoyment of God? Methinks one should look and sigh, like a prisoner, through the grates of this mortality: "O that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest." Indeed most men need patience to die; but a saint, who understands what death will introduce him to, rather needs patience to live. On his death-bed he should often look out and listen to his Lord's coming; and when he perceives his dissolution to be near, he should say, "The voice of my beloved; behold he cometh, leaping over the mountains, skipping over the hills."

3. Consider that the happiness of heaven commences immediately after death. That happiness will not be deferred till the resurrection; but as soon as death has passed upon you, your soul will be swallowed up in life. When you have once loosed from this shore, you shall be quickly wafted to the shore of a glorious eternity. And can you not say, I desire to be dissolved, and to be with

Christ? Did the soul and body die together, or did they sleep till the resurrection, as some have fancied, it would have been folly for Paul to desire a dissolution for the enjoyment of Christ; because he would have enjoyed more in the body than he could have enjoyed out of it. The Scripture speaks of but two ways in which the soul can properly live: viz, by faith and vision. These two comprehend its present and future existence.

Now, if when faith fails, sight should not immediately succeed, what would become of the soul? But the truth on this subject is clearly revealed in Scripture. See Luke 23:3; John 14:3, &c. What a blessed change then will death make in your condition! Rouse up, dying saint, and rejoice; let death do his work, that the angels may conduct your soul to the world of light.

4. It may increase your willingness to die, to reflect that by death God often removes his people out of the way of great troubles and temptations. When some extraordinary calamity is coming upon the world, God sometimes removes his saints out of the way of the evil. Thus Methuselah died the year before the flood; Augustine a little before the sacking of Hippo; Pareus just before the taking of Heidelburg. Luther observes that all the apostles died before the destruction of Jerusalem; and Luther himself died before the wars broke out in Germany. Now it may be that by death you will escape some grievous trial, which you could not and need not endure. But if no extraordinary trouble would come upon you in case your life were prolonged, yet God designs by death to relieve you from innumerable evils and burdens which are inseparable from the present state. Thus you will be delivered from indwelling sin, which is the greatest trouble; from all temptations from whatever source; from bodily tempers and embarrassments; and from all the afflictions and sorrows of this life. The days of your mourning will be ended, and God will wipe away all tears from your eyes. Why then should you not hasten to depart?

5. If you still linger, like Lot in Sodom, what are your pleas and pretences for a longer life? Why are you unwilling to die? Are you concerned for the welfare of your relations? If so, are you anxious for their temporal support? Then let the word of God satisfy you: “Leave thy fatherless children to me, I will keep them alive, and let thy widows trust in me.” Luther says, in his last will, “Lord, thou hast given inc a wife and children, I have nothing to leave them, but I commit them unto thee. O Father of the fatherless and Judge of widows, nourish, keep and teach them.” But are you concerned for the spiritual welfare of your relations? Remember that you cannot convert them, if you should live; and God can make your prayers and counsels effectual when you are dead.

Perhaps you desire to serve God longer in this world. But if he has nothing further for you to do here, why not say with David, “Here am I, let him do what seemeth him good.” He is calling you to higher service in heaven, and can accomplish by other hands what you desire to do further here.—Do you feel too imperfect to go to heaven? Consider that you must be imperfect until you die; your sanctification cannot be complete until you get to heaven.

‘But,’ you say, ‘I want assurance; if I had that I could die easily.’ Consider, then, that a hearty willingness to leave all the world to be freed from sin, and to be with God, is the direct way to that desired assurance; no carnal person was ever willing to die upon this ground.

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3. Your care and diligence in keeping your heart will prove one of the best evidences of your sincerity. I know no external act of religion which truly distinguishes the sound from the unsound professor. It is marvellous how far hypocrites go in all external duties; how plausibly they can order the outward man, hiding all their indecencies from the observation of the world. But they take no heed to their hearts; they are not in secret what they appear to be in public; and before this test no hypocrite can stand. They may, indeed, in a fit of terror, or on a death-bed, cry out of the wickedness of their hearts; but such extort ed complaints are worthy of no regard. No credit, in law, is to be given to the testimony of one upon the rack, because it may be supposed that the extremity of his torture will make him say any thing to get relief. But if self-jealousy, care and watchfulness be the daily workings and frames of your heart, you have some evidence of your sincerity.

4. How comfortable and how profitable would all ordinances and duties be to you, if your heart was faithfully kept. What lively communion might you have with God every time you approach him, if your heart was in a right frame! You might then say with David, “My meditation of Him shall be sweet.” It is the indisposition of the heart which renders ordinances, and secret duties so comfortless to some. They strive to raise their hearts to God, now pressing this argument upon them, then that, to quicken and affect them; yet they often get nearly through the exercise before

their hearts begin to be interested in it; and some times they go away no better than they came. But the Christian whose heart is prepared by being constantly kept, enters immediately and heartily into his duties; he outstrips his sluggish neighbor, gets the first sight of Christ in a sermon, the first seal from Christ in a sacrament, the first communication of grace and love in secret prayer. Now if there be any thing valuable and comfortable in ordinances and private duties, look to your heart and keep it, I beseech you.

5. An acquaintance with your own heart will furnish you a fountain of matter in prayer. The man who is diligent in heart-work, will be richly supplied with matter in his addresses to God. He will not be confused for want of thoughts; his tongue will not falter for want of expressions.

6. The most desirable thing in the world, viz, the revival of religion among a people, may be effected by means of what I am urging upon you.

O that I might see the time when professors shall not walk in a vain show; when they shall please themselves no more with a name to live, while they are spiritually dead; when they shall be no more a company of frothy, vain persons; but when holiness shall shine in their conversation, and awe the world, and command reverence from all that are around them; when they shall warm the heart of those who come near them, and cause it to be said, God is in these men of a truth. And may such a time be expected? Until heart-work becomes the business of professors, I have no hope of seeing a time so blessed! Does it not grieve you to see how religion is contemned and trampled under foot, and the professors of it ridiculed and scorned in the world? Professors, would you recover your credit? would you obtain an honorable testimony in the consciences of your very enemies? Then keep your hearts.

7. By diligence in keeping our hearts we should prevent the occasions of fatal scandals and stumbling-blocks to the world. Wo to the world because of offences!

Keep your heart faithfully, and you will be prepared for any situation or service to which you may be called. This, and this only can properly fit you for usefulness in any station; but with this you can endure prosperity or adversity; you can deny yourself, and turn your hand to any work. Thus Paul turned every circumstance to good account, and made himself so eminently useful. When he preached to others, he provided against being cast away himself: he kept his heart; and every thing in which lie excelled seems to have had a close connection with his diligence in keeping his heart.

9. If the people of God would diligently keep their hearts, their communion with each other would be unspeakably more inviting and profitable. Then “how goodly would be thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!” It is the fellowship which the people of God have with the Father and with the Son that kindles the desires of others to have communion with them. I tell you, that if saints would be persuaded to spend more time and take more pains about their hearts, there would soon be such a divine excellence in their conversation that others would account it no small privilege to be with or near them. It is the pride, passion and earthliness of our hearts, that has spoiled Christian fellowship. Why is it that when Christians meet they are often jarring and contending, but because their passions arc unmortified? Whence come their uncharitable censures of their brethren, but from their ignorance of themselves? Why are they so rigid and unfeeling toward those who have fallen, but because they do not feel their own weakness and

liability to temptation? Why is their discourse so light and unprofitable when they meet, but because their hearts are earthly and vain? But now, if Christians would study their hearts more and keep them better, the beauty and glory of communion would be restored. They would divide no more, contend no more, censure rashly no more. They will feel right one toward another, when each is daily humbled under a sense of the evil of his own heart.

10. Lastly:—Keep your heart, and then the comforts of the Spirit and the influence of all ordinances will be more fixed and lasting than they now are. And do the consolations of God seem small to you?" Ah, you have reason to be ashamed that the ordinances of God, as to their quickening and comforting effects, should make so light and transient an impression on your heart.

Now, reader, consider well these special benefits of keeping the heart which I have mentioned. Examine their importance. Are they small matters? Is it a small matter to have your understanding assisted? your endangered soul rendered safe? your sincerity proved? your communion with God sweetened? your heart filled with matter for prayer? Is it a small thing to have the power of godliness? all fatal scandals removed? an instrumental fitness to serve Christ obtained? the communion of saints restored to its primitive glory? and the influence of ordinances abiding in the souls of saints? If these are no common blessings, no ordinary benefits, then surely it is a great and in dispensable duty to keep the heart with all diligence. And now are you inclined to undertake the business of keeping your heart? are you resolved upon it? I charge you, then, to engage in it earnestly. Away with every cowardly feeling, and make up your mind to encounter difficulties. Draw your armor from the word of God. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in its commands, its promises, its threatenings; let it be fixed in your understanding, your memory, your conscience, your affections. You must learn to wield the sword of the Spirit (which is the word of God) familiarly, if you would defend your heart and conquer your enemies. You must call yourself frequently to an account; examine yourself as in the presence of the all seeing God; bring your conscience, as it were, to the bar of judgment. Beware how you plunge yourself into a multiplicity of worldly business; how you practise upon the maxims of the world; and how you venture at all to indulge your depraved propensities. You must exercise the utmost vigilance to discover and check the first symptoms of departure from God, the least decline of spirituality, or the least indisposition to meditation by yourself and holy conversation and fellowship with others. These things you must undertake, in the strength of Christ, with invincible resolution in the outset. And if you thus engage in this great work, he assured you shall not spend your strength for naught; comforts which you never felt or thought of will flow in upon you from every side. The diligent prosecution of this work will constantly afford you the most powerful excitements to vigilance and ardor in the life of faith, while it increases your strength and wears out your enemies. And when you have kept your heart with all diligence a little while; when you have fought the battles of this spiritual warfare, gained the ascendancy over the corruptions within, and vanquished the enemies without, then God will open the gate of heaven to you, and give you the portion which is promised to them that overcome. Awake then, this moment; get the world under your feet pant not for the things which a man may have, and eternally lose his soul; but bless God that you may have his service here, and the glory hereafter which he appoints to his chosen.

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be

glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

04.15. Special Warning Hypocrites & Formal Professor

A Special Warning to Hypocrites and Formal Professors

You have seen that the keeping of the heart is the great work of a Christian, in which the very soul and life of religion consists, and without which all other duties are of no value in the sight of God. Hence, to the consternation of hypocrites and formal professors, I infer:

1. That the pains and labors which many persons have undergone in religion are of no value, and will turn to no good account. Many splendid services have been performed by men, which God will utterly reject: they will not stand on record in order to an eternal acceptance, because the performers took no heed to keep their hearts with God. This is that fatal rock on which thousands of vain professors dash and ruin themselves eternally; they are exact about the externals of religion, but regardless of their hearts. O how many hours have some professors spent in hearing, praying, reading and conferring! and yet, as to the main end of religion, they might as well have sat still and done nothing, the great work, I mean heart-work, being all the while neglected. Tell me, vain professor, when did you shed a tear for the deadness, hardness, unbelief or earthliness of your heart? And do you think your easy religion can save you? If so, you must invert Christ's words, and say, Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to life, and many there be that go in thereat! Hear me, ye self-deluding hypocrite; you who have put off God with heartless duties; you who have acted in religion as if you had been blessing an idol; you who could not search your heart, and regulate it, and exercise it in your performances; how will you abide the coming of the Lord? how will you hold up your head before him, when he shall say. 'O you dissembling, false-hearted man! how could you profess religion? with what face could you so often tell me that you loved me, when you knew in your conscience that your heart was not with me?' O tremble to think what a fearful judgment it is to be given over to a heedless and careless heart, and then to have religious duties instead of a rattle to quiet and still the conscience!

2. I infer for their humiliation, that unless the people of God spend more time and pains about their hearts than they ordinarily do, they are never like to do God much service, or to possess much comfort in this world. I may say of that Christian who is remiss and careless in keeping his heart, as Jacob said of Reuben, Thou shalt not excel. It grieves me to see how many Christians there are who live at a poor, low rate, both of service and comfort, and who go up and down dejected and complaining. But how can they expect it should be otherwise, while they live so carelessly?

O how little of their time is spent in the closet, in searching, humbling, and quickening their hearts!

Christian, you say your heart is dead, and do you wonder that it is, so long as you keep it not with the fountain of life? If your body had been dieted as your soul has, that would have been dead too. And you may never expect that your heart will be in a better state until you take more pains with it.

O Christians! I fear your zeal and strength have run in the wrong channel; I fear that most of us may take up the Church's complaint: "They have made me the keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vine-yard have I not kept." Two things have eaten up the time and strength of the professors

of this generation, and sadly diverted them from heart-work.

First:—Fruitless controversies, started by Satan, I doubt not for the very purpose of taking us off from practical godliness, to make us puzzle our heads when we should be inspecting our hearts. How little have we regarded the observation: “It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, and not with meats,” (that is, with disputes and controversies about meats,) “which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.” How much better it is to see men live exactly, than to hear them dispute with subtlety! These unfruitful questions, how have they rent the churches, wasted time and spirits, and taken Christians off from their main business! ‘What think you, would it not have been better if the questions agitated among the people of God of late had been such as these:—“How shall a man distinguish the special from the common operations of the Spirit? How may a soul discern its first backslidings from God? How may a backsliding Christian recover his first love? How may the heart be preserved from unseasonable thoughts in duty? How may a bosom-sin be discovered and mortified?“ &c. Would not this course have tended more to the honor of religion and the comfort of souls? I am ashamed that the professors of this generation are yet insensible of their folly. O that God would turn their disputes and contentions into practical godliness!

Second:—Worldly cares and incumbrances have greatly increased the neglect of our hearts. The heads and hearts of multitudes have been filled with such a crowd and noise of worldly business that they have lamentably declined in their zeal, their love, their delight in God, and their heavenly, serious, and profitable way of conversing with men. How miserably have we entangled ourselves in this wilderness of trifles! Our discourses, our conferences, nay, our very prayers are tinged with it. We have had so much to do without, that we have been able to do but little within. And how many precious opportunities have we thus lost? How many admonitions of the Spirit have passed over unfruitfully? How often has the Lord called to us, when our worldly thoughts have prevented us from hearing? But there certainly is a way to enjoy God even in our worldly employments. If we lose our views of him when engaged in our temporal affairs, the fault is our own. Alas! that Christians should stand at the door of eternity, having more work upon their hands than their time is sufficient for, and yet be filling their heads and hearts with trifles!

3. I infer, lastly, for the awakening of all, that if the keeping of the heart be the great work of a Christian, then there are but few real Christians in the world. If every one who has learned the dialect of Christianity, and who can talk like a saint; if every one who has gifts and parts, and who can make shift to preach, pray, or discourse like a Christian: in a word, if all such as associate with the people of God and partake of ordinances may pass for Christians, then indeed the number is great. But alas! how few can he found, if you judge them by this rule,—how few are there who conscientiously keep their hearts, watch their thoughts and look scrupulously to their motives! Indeed there are few closet-men among professors. It is easier for men to be reconciled to any other duties in religion than to these. The profane part of the world will not so much as meddle with the outside of any religious duties, and least of all with these; and as to the hypocrite, though he may be very particular in externals, you can never persuade him to undertake this inward, this difficult work; this work, to which there is no inducement from human applause; this work, which would quickly discover what the hypocrite cares not to know: so that by general consent this heart-work is left to the hands of a few retired ones, and I tremble to think in how few hands it is.

II. If the keeping of the heart be so important a business; if such great advantages result from it; if so many valuable interests be wrapt up in it, then let me call upon the people of God every where to engage heartily in this work. O study your hearts, watch your hearts, keep your hearts! Away with fruitless controversies and all idle questions; away with empty names and vain shows; away with unprofitable discourse and bold censures of others, and turn in upon yourselves. O that this day, this hour, you would resolve upon doing so!

Reader, methinks I shall prevail with you. All that I beg for is this, that you would step aside oftener to talk with God and your own heart; that you would not suffer every trifle to divert you; that you would keep a more true and faithful account of your thoughts and affections; that you would seriously demand of your own heart at least every evening, 'O my heart, where hast thou been today, and what has engaged thy thoughts?'

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2. The study and observation of your own heart will powerfully secure you against the dangerous and infecting errors of the times in which you live. For what think you is the reason why so many professors have departed from the faith, giving heed to fables? why have so many been led away by the error of the wicked? why have those who have sown corrupt doctrines had such plentiful harvests among us, but because they have met with a race of professors who never knew what belongs to practical godliness and the study and keeping of their hearts?

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04.16. A Special Encouragement to the People of God

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great. But alas! how few can he found, if you judge them by this rule,—how few are there who conscientiously keep their hearts, watch their thoughts and look scrupulously to their motives! Indeed there are few closet-men among professors. It is easier for men to be reconciled to any other duties in religion than to these. The profane part of the world will not so much as meddle with the outside of any religious duties, and least of all with these; and as to the hypocrite, though he may be very particular in externals, you can never persuade him to undertake this inward, this difficult work; this work, to which there is no inducement from human applause; this work, which would quickly discover what the hypocrite cares not to know: so that by general consent this heart-work is left to the hands of a few retired ones, and I tremble to think in how few hands it is.

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2. The study and observation of your own heart will powerfully secure you against the dangerous and infecting errors of the times in which you live. For what think you is the reason why so many professors have departed from the faith, giving heed to fables? why have so many been led away by the error of the wicked? why have those who have sown corrupt doctrines had such plentiful harvests among us, but because they have met with a race of professors who never knew what belongs to practical godliness and the study and keeping of their hearts?

3. Your care and diligence in keeping your heart will prove one of the best evidences of your sincerity. I know no external act of religion which truly distinguishes the sound from the unsound

professor. It is marvellous how far hypocrites go in all external duties; how plausibly they can order the outward man, hiding all their indecencies from the observation of the world. But they take no heed to their hearts; they are not in secret what they appear to be in public; and before this test no hypocrite can stand. They may, indeed, in a fit of terror, or on a death-bed, cry out of the wickedness of their hearts; but such extort ed complaints are worthy of no regard. No credit, in law, is to be given to the testimony of one upon the rack, because it may be supposed that the extremity of his torture will make him say any thing to get relief. But if self-jealousy, care and watchfulness be the daily workings and frames of your heart, you have some evidence of your sincerity.

4. How comfortable and how profitable would all ordinances and duties be to you, if your heart was faithfully kept. What lively communion might you have with God every time you approach him, if your heart was in a right frame! You might then say with David, “My meditation of Him shall be sweet.” It is the indisposition of the heart which renders ordinances, and secret duties so comfortless to some. They strive to raise their hearts to God, now pressing this argument upon them, then that, to quicken and affect them; yet they often get nearly through the exercise before their hearts begin to be interested in it; and some times they go away no better than they came. But the Christian whose heart is prepared by being constantly kept, enters immediately and heartily into his duties; he outstrips his sluggish neighbor, gets the first sight of Christ in a sermon, the first seal from Christ in a sacrament, the first communication of grace and love in secret prayer. Now if there be any thing valuable and comfortable in ordinances and private duties, look to your heart and keep it, I beseech you.

5. An acquaintance with your own heart will furnish you a fountain of matter in prayer. The man who is diligent in heart-work, will be richly supplied with matter in his addresses to God. He will not be confused for want of thoughts; his tongue will not falter for want of expressions.

6. The most desirable thing in the world, viz, the revival of religion among a people, may be effected by means of what I am urging upon you.

O that I might see the time when professors shall not walk in a vain show; when they shall please themselves no more with a name to live, while they are spiritually dead; when they shall be no more a company of frothy, vain persons; but when holiness shall shine in their conversation, and awe the world, and command reverence from all that are around them; when they shall warm the heart of those who come near them, and cause it to be said, God is in these men of a truth. And may such a time be expected? Until heart-work becomes the business of professors, I have no hope of seeing a time so blessed! Does it not grieve you to see how religion is contemned and trampled under foot, and the professors of it ridiculed and scorned in the world? Professors, would you recover your credit? would you obtain an honorable testimony in the consciences of your very enemies? Then keep your hearts.

7. By diligence in keeping our hearts we should prevent the occasions of fatal scandals and stumbling-blocks to the world. Wo to the world because of offences!

Keep your heart faithfully, and you will be prepared for any situation or service to which you may be called. This, and this only can properly fit you for usefulness in any station; but with this you can endure prosperity or adversity; you can deny yourself, and turn your hand to any work. Thus Paul

turned every circumstance to good account, and made himself so eminently useful. When he preached to others, he provided against being cast away himself: he kept his heart; and every thing in which lie excelled seems to have had a close connection with his diligence in keeping his heart.

9. If the people of God would diligently keep their hearts, their communion with each other would be unspeakably more inviting and profitable. Then “how goodly would be thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!” It is the fellowship which the people of God have with the Father and with the Son that kindles the desires of others to have communion with them. I tell you, that if saints would be persuaded to spend more time and take more pains about their hearts, there would soon be such a divine excellence in their conversation that others would account it no small privilege to be with or near them. It is the pride, passion and earthliness of our hearts, that has spoiled Christian fellowship. Why is it that when Christians meet they are often jarring and contending, but because their passions arc unmortified? Whence come their uncharitable censures of their brethren, but from their ignorance of themselves? Why are they so rigid and unfeeling toward those who have fallen, but because they do not feel their own weakness and liability to temptation? Why is their discourse so light and unprofitable when they meet, but because their hearts are earthly and vain? But now, if Christians would study their hearts more and keep them better, the beauty and glory of communion would be restored. They would divide no more, contend no more, censure rashly no more. They will feel right one toward another, when each is daily humbled under a sense of the evil of his own heart.

10. Lastly:—Keep your heart, and then the comforts of the Spirit and the influence of all ordinances will be more fixed and lasting than they now are. And do the consolations of God seem small to you?” Ah, you have reason to be ashamed that the ordinances of God, as to their quickening and comforting effects, should make so light and transient an impression on your heart.

Now, reader, consider well these special benefits of keeping the heart which I have mentioned. Examine their importance. Are they small matters? Is it a small matter to have your understanding assisted? your endangered soul rendered safe? your sincerity proved? your communion with God sweetened? your heart filled with matter for prayer? Is it a small thing to have the power of godliness? all fatal scandals removed? an instrumental fitness to serve Christ obtained? the communion of saints restored to its primitive glory? and the influence of ordinances abiding in the souls of saints? If these are no common blessings, no ordinary benefits, then surely it is a great and in dispensable duty to keep the heart with all diligence. And now are you inclined to undertake the business of keeping your heart? are you resolved upon it? I charge you, then, to engage in it earnestly. Away with every cowardly feeling, and make up your mind to encounter difficulties. Draw your armor from the word of God. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in its commands, its promises, its threatenings; let it be fixed in your understanding, your memory, your conscience, your affections. You must learn to wield the sword of the Spirit (which is the word of God) familiarly, if you would defend your heart and conquer your enemies. You must call yourself frequently to an account; examine yourself as in the presence of the all seeing God; bring your conscience, as it were, to the bar of judgment. Beware how you plunge yourself into a multiplicity of worldly business; how you practise upon the maxims of the world; and how you venture at all to indulge your depraved propensities. You must exercise the utmost vigilance to discover and check the first symptoms of departure from God, the least decline of spirituality, or the least indisposition

to meditation by yourself and holy conversation and fellowship with others. These things you must undertake, in the strength of Christ, with invincible resolution in the outset. And if you thus engage in this great work, he assured you shall not spend your strength for naught; comforts which you never felt or thought of will flow in upon you from every side. The diligent prosecution of this work will constantly afford you the most powerful excitements to vigilance and ardor in the life of faith, while it increases your strength and wears out your enemies. And when you have kept your heart with all diligence a little while; when you have fought the battles of this spiritual warfare, gained the ascendancy over the corruptions within, and vanquished the enemies without, then God will open the gate of heaven to you, and give you the portion which is promised to them that overcome. Awake then, this moment; get the world under your feet pant not for the things which a man may have, and eternally lose his soul; but bless God that you may have his service here, and the glory hereafter which he appoints to his chosen.

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

04.17. Ten Motives Exhorting to Hearty Engagement

Ten Motives Exhorting to a Hearty Engagement in Keeping the Heart If all that has been said by way of inducement be not enough, I have yet some motives to offer you:

If all that has been said by way of inducement be not enough, I have yet some motives to offer you:

1. The studying, observing, and diligently keeping your own heart, will surprisingly help you to understand the deep mysteries of religion. An honest, well-experienced heart is an excellent help to the head. Such a heart will serve for a commentary on a great part of the Scriptures. By means of such a heart you will have a better understanding of divine things than the most learned (graceless) man ever had, or call have; you will not only have a clearer, but a more interesting and profitable apprehension of them. A man may discourse orthodoxy and profoundly of the nature and effects of faith, the troubles and comforts of conscience, and the sweetness of communion with God, who never felt the efficacy and sweet impression of these things upon his own soul. But how dark and dry are his notions compared with those of an experienced Christian!

2. The study and observation of your own heart will powerfully secure you against the dangerous and infecting errors of the times in which you live. For what think you is the reason why so many professors have departed from the faith, giving heed to fables? why have so many been led away by the error of the wicked? why have those who have sown corrupt doctrines had such plentiful harvests among us, but because they have met with a race of professors who never knew what belongs to practical godliness and the study and keeping of their hearts?

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"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be

glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

05.00. The Method of Grace

The Method of Grace by John Flavel The Work of the Spirit, the Internal and Most Effectual Means of the Application of Christ

Saving Faith The Believer’s Fellowship with Christ All Men Invited to Apply Jesus Christ Christ, the Physician of Souls Christ, "The Mercy"

Christ, "Altogether Lovely"

Christ, "The Desire of All Nations"

Christ, "The Lord of Glory"

Christ, "The Consolation of Israel" The Forgiveness of Sins The Liberty of Believers Reconciliation and Glorification Necessity of Being Slain by the Law Necessity of Being Slain by the Law, Continued Necessity of Being Taught of God The Mortification of Sin The Imitation of Christ The Imitation of Christ, Continued Aggravation of the Sin, and Punishment of Unbelief Satan’s Blinding—the Cause of Unbelief, and Forerunner of Destruction

05.01. The Work of the Spirit, the Internal and Most

Concerning the Work of the Spirit, as the Internal,

and Most Effectual Mean of the Application of Christ

"No man can come to me, except the Father which has sent me draw him." John 6:44 Our last discourse informed you of the usefulness and influence of the preaching of the gospel, in order to the application of Christ to the souls of men. There must be (in God's ordinary way) the external ministerial offer of Christ, before men can have union with him. But yet, all the preaching in the world can never effect this union with Christ in itself, and in its oven virtue, except a supernatural and mighty power go forth with it for that end and purpose. Let Boanerges and Barnabas try their strength, let the angels of heaven be the preachers; until God draw, the soul cannot come to Christ. No saving benefit is to be had by Christ, without union with his person, no union with his person without faith, no faith ordinarily wrought without the preaching of the gospel by Christ's ambassadors, their preaching has no saving efficacy without Gods drawings, as will evidently appear by considering these words and the occasion of them. The occasion of these words is found (as learned Cameron well observes) in John 6:42, "And they said, is not this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?" Christ had been pressing upon them in his ministry, the great and necessary duty of faith; but notwithstanding the authority of the preacher; the holiness of his life; the miracles by which he confirmed his doctrine; they still objected against him, "is not this the carpenter's son?" From whence Christ takes occasion for these words; "No man can come unto me, except my Father which has sent me, draw him," q. d. In vain is the authority of my person urged; in vain are all the miracles wrought in your sight, to confirm the doctrine preached to you; until that secret, almighty power of the Spirit be put forth upon your hearts, you will not, you cannot, come unto me. The words are a negative proposition, In which the author, and powerful manner of divine operation in working faith, are contained: these must be drawing before believing, and that drawing must be the drawing of God: every word has its weight: we will consider them in the order they lie in the text.

"Oudeis", - No Man] not one, let his natural qualifications be what they will, let his external advantages, in respect of means and helps, be never so great: it is not in the power of any man; all persons, in all ages, need the same power of God, one at well as another; every man is alike dead, impotent, and averse to faith in his natural capacity. No man, or - not one, among all the sons of

men.

"Dunatai" - Can] or is able: he speaks of impotency to special and saving actions, such as believing in Christ is: no act that is saving can be done without the concurrence of special grace. Other acts that have a remote tendency to it, are performed by a more general concourse and common assistance; so men may come to the word, and attend to what is spoken, remember and consider what the word tells them; but as to believing or coming to Christ, that no man can do of

himself, or by a general and common assistance. No man can.

"Echtein pros me", - Come unto me,] that is believe in me unto salvation. Coming to Christ, and believing in him, are terms aequipollent, and are indifferently used to express the nature of saving faith, as is plain, John 6:35. "He who comes to me shall never hunger, and he who believes on me shall never thirst:" it notes the terms from which and to which the soul moves, and the voluntariness of the motion, notwithstanding that divine power by which the will is drawn to Christ.

"Ean me ho Pater", Except my Father] not excluding the other two Persons; for every word of God relating to the creatures is common to all the three Persons; nor only to note that the Father is the first in order of working: but the reason is hinted in the next words.

"Ho pempsas me", - Who has sent me,] God has entered into covenant with the Son, and sent him, stands obliged thereby, to bring the promised seed to him, and that he does by drawing them to Christ by faith: so the next words tell us the Father does, "Elkuse auton". - Draw him.] That is, powerfully and effectually incline his will to come to Christ: "Not by a violent co-action, but by a benevolent bending of the will which was averse;" and as it is not in the way of force and compulsion, so neither is it by a simple moral suasion, by the bare proposal of an object to the will, and so leaving the sinner to his own election; but it is such a persuasion, as has a mighty overcoming efficacy accompanying which more anon. The words thus opened, the observation will be this:

Doctrine. That it is utterly impossible for any man to come to Jesus Christ, unless he be drawn unto him by the special and mighty power of God. No man is compelled to come to Christ against his will, he who comes, comes willingly, but even that will and desire to come is the effect of grace, Php 2:13. "It is God that works in you, both to will and to do of his own good pleasure."

"If we desire the help and assistance of grace, (says Fulgentius) even the desire is of grace; grace must first be shed forth upon us, before we can begin to desire it." "By grace are we saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God," Ephesians 2:8. Suppose the utmost degree of natural ability; let a man be as much disposed and prepared as nature can dispose or prepare him, and to all this, add the proposal of the greatest arguments and motives to induce him to come; let all these have the advantage of the fittest season to work upon his heart; yet no man can come until God draw him: we move as we are moved: as Christ's coming to us, so our coming to him are the pure effects of grace.

Three things require explication in this point before us.

First, What the drawing of the Father imports.

Secondly, In what manner he draws men to Christ.

Thirdly, How it appears that none can come until they be so drawn.

First, What the drawing of the Father imports. To open this, let it be considered, that drawing is usually distinguished into physical and moral. The former is either by co-action, force, and compulsion; or, by a sweet congruous efficacy upon the will. As to violence and compulsion, it is none of God's way and method, it being both against the nature of the will of man, which cannot be forced, and against the will of Jesus Christ, who loves to reign over a free and willing people,

Psalms 110:5. "Your people shall be willing in the day of your power." Or, as that word may be rendered, they shall be voluntarinesses, as willing as willingness itself. It is not then by a forcible co-action, but in a moral way of persuasion, that God the Father draws men to Jesus Christ: He draws with the bands of a man, as they are called, Hos. 11:14 that is in a way of rational conviction of the mind and conscience, and effectual persuasion of the will. But yet by moral persuasion, we must not understand a simple and bare proposal or tender of Christ and grace, leaving it still at the sinners choice, whether he will comply with it or no. For though God does not force the will contrary to its nature, yet there is a real internal efficacy implied in this drawing, or an immediate operation of the Spirit upon the heart and will, which, in a way congruous and suitable to its nature, takes away the rebellion and reluctance of it, and of unwilling, makes it willing to come to Christ. And, in this respect, we own a physical, as well as a moral influence of the Spirit in this work; and so scripture expresses its Ephesians 1:19-20. "That we may know what is the exceeding greatness of his power towards us who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead." Here is much more than a naked proposal made to the will; there is a power as well as a tender; greatness of power; and yet more, the exceeding greatness of his power; and this power has an actual efficacy ascribed to it, he works upon our hearts and wills according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead. Thus he fulfils in us all the good pleasure of his will, and the work of faith with power, 2 Thessalonians 1:11. And this is that which the schools call gratia efficax, effectual grace; and others victrix delectatio, an overcoming, conquering delight: thus the work is carried on with a most efficacious sweetness. So that the liberty of the will is not infringed, while the obstinacy of the will is effectually subdued

and overruled. For want of this, there are so many almost Christians in the world; hence are all those vanishing and imperfect works which come to nothing, called in scripture, a morning cloud, an early dew. Had this mighty power gone forth with the word, they had never vanished or perished like embryos as they do. So then, God draws not only in a moral way, by proposing a suitable object to the will, but also in a physical way, or by immediate powerful influence upon the will; not infringing the liberty of it, but yet infallibly and effectually persuading it to come to Christ.

Secondly, Next let us consider the marvelous way and manner in which the Lord draws the souls of poor sinners to Jesus Christ, and you will find he does it,

1. Gradually,

2. Congruously,

3. Powerfully,

4. Effectually, and

5. Finally.

First, This blessed work is carried on by the Spirit gradually; bringing the soul step by step in the due method and order of the gospel to Christ; illumination, conviction, compunction, prepare the way to Christ; and then faith unites the soul to him: without humiliation there can be no faith, Matthew 21:32. "You repented not, that you might believe." It is the burdensome sense of sin, that brings the soul to Christ for rest, Matthew 11:28. "Come unto me all you that are weary and heavy

laden." But without conviction there can be no compunction, no humiliation; he who is not convinced of his sin and misery, never bewails it, nor mourns for it. Never was there one tear of true repentance seen to drop from the eye of an unconvinced sinner. And without illumination there can be no conviction; for what is conviction, but the application of the light which is in the understanding, or mind of a man, to his heart and conscience? Acts 2:5-7. In this order, therefore, the Spirit (ordinarily) draws souls to Christ, he shines into their minds by illumination; applies that light to their consciences by effectual conviction; breaks and wounds their hearts for sin in compunction; and then moves the will to embrace and close with Christ in the way of faith for life and salvation.

These several steps are more distinctly discerned in some Christians than in others; they are more clearly to be seen in the adult convert, than in those that were drawn to Christ in their youth; in such as were drawn to him out of a state of profaneness, than in those that had the advantage of a pious education; but in this order the work is carried on ordinarily in all, however it differ in point of clearness in the one and in the other. Secondly, He draws sinners to Christ congruously, and very agreeably to the nature and way of man, so he speaks, Hosea 11:4. "I drew them with the cords of a man, with bands of love," Not as beasts are drawn; but as men are inclined and wrought to compliance, by rational conviction of their judgments, and powerful persuasion of their wills: the minds of sinners are naturally blinded by ignorance, 2 Corinthians 4:3-4. and their affections bewitched to their lusts, Galatians 3:4. and while it is thus, no arguments or entreaties can possibly prevail to bring them off from the ways of sin to Christ. The way therefore which the Lord takes to win and draw them to Christ, is by rectifying their false apprehensions, and showing them infinitely more good in Christ than in the creature and in their lusts; yes, by satisfying their understandings, that there is goodness enough in Jesus Christ, to whom he is drawing them.

First, Enough to out-bid all temporal good, which is to be denied for his sake.

Secondly, Enough to preponderate all temporal evils, which are to be suffered for his sake.

First, That there is more good in Christ than in all temporal good things, which we are to deny or forsake upon his account. This being once clearly and convincingly discovered to the understanding, the will is thereby prepared to quit all that which entangles and withholds it from coming to Christ. There is no man that loves money so much, but he will willingly part with it, for that which is more worth to him than the sum he parts with to purchase it, Matthew 13:1-58. "The kingdom of heaven is like to a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls, who when he has found one pearl of great price, goes and sells all that he has buys it. Such an invaluable pearl is Jesus Christ; infinitely more worth than all that a poor sinner has to part with for him; and is a more real good than the creature. These are but vain shadows; Proverbs 23:1-35. Christ is a solid, substantial good: yes, he is, and by conviction appears to be a more suitable good than the creature: The world cannot justify and save, but Christ can. Christ is a more necessary good than the creature, which is only for our temporal convenience, but he is of eternal necessity. He is a more durable good than any creature comfort is, or can be: "The fashion of this world passes away," 1 Corinthians 7:13. But durable riches and righteousness are in him, Proverbs 8:17. Thus Christ appears in the day of conviction, infinitely more excellent than the world; he out-bids all the offers that the world can make; and this greatly forwards the work of drawing a soul to Jesus Christ. Secondly, And (then to remove everything out of the way to Christ) God discovers to the soul

enough in him to preponderate, and much more than will recompense all the evils and sufferings it can endure for his sake.

It is true, they that close with Christ close with his cross also: they must expect to save no more but their souls by him. He tells us what we must trust to, Luke 14:26-27. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters; yes, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." And whoever does not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. To read such a text as this, with such a comment upon it, as Satan and our flesh can make, is enough to fright a man from Christ forever. Nor is it possible by all the arguments in the world to draw any soul to Christ upon such terms as these, until the Lord convince it, that there is enough, and much more than enough in Jesus Christ to recompense all these sufferings and losses we endure for him. But when the soul is satisfied that those sufferings are but external upon the vile body, but that the benefit which comes by Christ is internal in a man's own soul; these afflictions are but temporal, Romans 8:18. But Christ and his benefits are eternal: This must needs prevail with the will to come over to Christ, notwithstanding all the evils of suffering that accompany him, when the reality of this is discovered by the Lord, and the power of God goes along with these discoveries. Thus the Lord draws us in our own way, by rational convictions of the understanding, and allurements of the will. And it is possible this may be the reason why some poor souls misjudge the working of the Spirit of God upon themselves, thinking they never had that wonderful and mighty power of God in conversion, acting upon their hearts, because they find all that is done upon their hearts that way is done in the ordinary course and method of nature; They consider, compare, are convinced, and then resolved to choose Christ and his ways; whereas they expect to feel some strange operations, that shall have the visible characters of the immediate power of God upon them, and such a power they might discern, if they would consider it as working, in this way and method: but they cannot distinguish God's acts from their own, and that puzzles them.

Thirdly, The drawings of the Father are very powerful. "The arm of the Lord is revealed in this work," Isaiah 53:1. It was a powerful word indeed that made the light at first shine out of darkness, and no less power is required to make it shine into our hearts, 2 Corinthians 5:14. That day in which the soul is made willing to come to Christ, is called, "the day of his power," Psalms 110:3. The scripture expresses the work of conversion by a threefold metaphor, namely, That of a resurrection from the dead, Romans 4:4. That of creation Ephesians 2:10. And That of victory or conquest, 2 Corinthians 10:4-5. All these set forth the infinite power of God in this work; for no less than Almighty Power is required to each of them, and if you strictly examine the distinct notions, you shall find the power of God more and more illustriously displayed in each of them. To raise the dead, is the effect of Almighty Power; but then

the resurrection supposes pre-existent matter. In the work of creation, there is no pre-existent matter; but then there is no opposition: That which is not, rebels not against the power which gives it being. But victory and conquest suppose opposition, all the power of corrupt nature arming itself, and fighting against God: but yet not able to frustrate his design.

Let the soul whom the Father draws, struggle and reluctate as much as it can, it shall come, yes, and come willingly too, when the drawing power of God is upon it. O the self-conflicts, the contrary resolves, with which the soul finds itself distracted, and rent asunder! The hopes and fears; the

encouragements and discouragements; they will, and they will not: but victorious grace conquers all opposition at last. We find an excellent example of this in blessed Augustin, who speaks of this very work;, the drawing of his soul to Christ, and how he felt in that day two wills in himself, "one old, the other new; one carnal, the other spiritual; and how in these their contrary motions and conflicts, he was torn asunder in his own thoughts and resolutions, suffering that unwillingly which he did willingly." And certainly, if we consider how deep the soul is rooted by natural inclination, and long continued custom in sin, how extremely averse it is to the ways of strict godliness and mortification; how Satan, that invidious enemy, that strong man armed, fortifies the soul to defend his possession against Christ, and entrenches himself in the understanding, will, and affections, by deep-rooted prejudices against Christ and holiness, it is a wonder of wonders to see a soul quitting all its beloved lusts, and fleshly interests and endearments, and coming willingly under Christ's yoke.

Fourthly, the drawings of God are very effectual: There is indeed a common and ineffectual work upon hypocrites and apostates, called in scripture a "morning cloud and early dew", Hosea 6:4. These may believe for a time, and fall away at last, Luke 8:13. Their wills may be half won, they may be drawn half way to Christ, and return again. So it was with Agrippa, Acts 26:28. "en oligoi me peiteis", within a very little you persuades me to be a Christian: But in God's elected ones it is effectual: Their wills are not only almost, but altogether persuaded to embrace Christ, and quit the ways of sin, however pleasant, gainful, and dear they have been to them. The Lord not only draws, but draws home those souls to Christ, John 6:37. "All that the Father has given me, shall come to me."

It is confessed, that in drawing home of the very elect to Christ, there may be, and frequently are, many pauses, stands, and demurs; they have convictions, affections, and resolutions stirring in them, which, like early blossoms, seem to be nipped and die away again. There is frequently, (in young ones especially), an hopeful appearance of grace; they make conscience of avoiding sins, and performing duties: they have sometimes great awakenings under the Word, they are observed to retire for meditation and prayer; and delight to be in the company of Christians: and after all this, youthful lusts and vanities are found to stifle and cheek these hopeful beginnings, and the work seems to stand, (it may be some years), at a pause; however, at last, the Lord makes it victorious over all opposition, and sets it home with power upon their hearts. Fifthly, To conclude, those whom the Father draws to Christ, he draws them finally and forever. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance," Romans 11:29. they are so, as to God the giver; he never repents, that he has called his people into the fellowship of his Son Christ Jesus: and they are so on the believer's part; he is never sorry, whatever he afterwards meets with, that he is come to Christ.

There is a time when Christians are drawn to Christ, but there shall never be a time in which they shall be drawn away from Christ, John 10:29. There is no plucking them out of the Father's hand. It was common to a proverb, in the primitive times, when they would express an impossibility, to say, "You may as soon draw a Christian from Christ, as do it." When Christ asked that question of the disciples, "Will you also go away? Lord, (said Peter, in the name of them all), to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life," John 6:68. They who are thus drawn, do with full purpose of heart, cleave unto the Lord. And thus of the manner and quality of effectual drawing.

Thirdly, In the last place, I am to evince the impossibility of coming to Christ without the Father's drawings; and this will evidently appear upon the consideration of these two particulars. First, The difficulty of this work is above all the power of nature to overcome.

Secondly, That little power and ability that nature has, it will never employ to such a purpose as this, until the drawing power of God be upon the will of a sinner.

First, If all the power of nature were employed in this design, yet such are the difficulties of this work, that it surmounts all the abilities of nature. This the scripture very plainly affirms, Ephesians 2:8. "By grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." To think of Christ is easy, but to come to Christ, is to nature impossible. To send forth cold and ineffectual wishes to Christ we may, but to bring Christ and the soul together, requires the Almighty power of God, Ephesians 1:19. The grace of faith by which we come to Christ, is as much the free gift of God, as Christ himself, who is the object of faith, Php 1:29. "To you it is freely given to believe." And this will easily appear to your understandings, if you do but consider

The Subject, Act, and Enemies of this work of faith, or coming to Christ.

First, Consider the subject of faith in which it is wrought; or what it is that is drawn to Christ: It is the heart of a sinner which is naturally as indisposed for this work, as the wood which Elijah laid in order upon the altar was to catch fire, when he had poured so much water upon it, as did not only wet the wood, but also filled up the trench round about it, 1 Kings 18:33. For it is naturally a dark, blind, and ignorant heart, Job 11:12. And such an heart can never believe, until he who commanded the light to shine out of darkness do shine into it, 2 Corinthians 4:6. Nor will it avail anything to say, though man be born in darkness and ignorance, yet afterwards he may acquire knowledge in the use of means, as we see many natural men do to a very high degree: For this is not that light that brings the soul to Christ, yes, this natural unsanctified light blinds the soul, and prejudices it more against Christ than ever it was before, 1 Corinthians 1:21; 1 Corinthians 1:26. As it is a blind, ignorant heart, so it is a selfish heart by nature: All its designs and aims terminate in self; this is the center and weight of the soul, no righteousness but its own is sought after, that, or none, Romans 10:3. Now, for a soul to renounce and deny self, in all its forms, modes, and interests, as everyone does that comes to Christ; to disclaim and deny natural, moral, and religious self, and come to Christ as a poor, miserable, wretched empty creature; to live upon his righteousness forever, is as supernatural and wonderful, as to see the hills and mountains start from their bases and centers, and fly like wandering atoms in the air.

Nay, this heart which is to come to Christ, is not only dark and selfish, but full of pride. O, it is a desperate proud heart by nature, it cannot submit to come to Christ, as Benhadad's servant came to the king of Israel, with sackcloth on their loins, and ropes upon their heads. To take guilt, shame, and confusion of face to ourselves, and acknowledge the righteousness of God in our eternal damnation; to come to Christ naked and empty, as one that justifies the ungodly. I say, nature left to itself, would as soon be damned as do this; the proud heart can never come to this, until the Lord has humbled and broken it by his power.

Secondly, Let us take the act of faith into consideration also, as it is here described by the soul's coming to Jesus Christ; and you will find a necessity of the Father's drawings; for this evidently implies, that which is against the stream and current of corrupt nature, and that which is above the

sphere and capacity of the most refined and accomplished nature.

First, It is against the stream and current of our corrupt nature to come to Christ. For let us but consider the term from which the soul departs, when it comes to Christ. In that day it leaves all its lusts, and ways of sin, however pleasant, sweet, and profitable they have been unto it, Isaiah 55:7. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord." Way and thoughts, that is both the practice of, and delight he had in sin, must be forsaken, and the outward and inward man must be cleansed from it. Now there are in the bosoms of unregenerate men such darling lusts, that have given them so much practical and speculative pleasure, which have brought so much profit to them, which have been born and bred up with them; and which, upon all these accounts, are endeared to their souls to that degree, that it is easier for them to die, than to forsake them, yes, nothing is more common among such men, than to venture eternal damnation, rather than suffer a separation from their sins. And which is yet more difficult in coming to Christ, the soul forsakes not only its sinful self; but its righteous self, that is not only its worst sins, but its best performances, accomplishments, and excellencies. Now this is one of the greatest straits that nature can be put to. Righteousness by works was the first liquor that ever was put into the vessel, and it still retains the tang and savor of it, and will to the end of the world, Romans 10:3 "For they, being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." "ouk hupetagesan", they have not submitted.

To come naked and empty to Christ, and receive all from him as a free gift, is, to proud corrupt nature, the greatest abasement and submission in the world.

Let the gospel furnish its table with the richest and costliest dainties that ever the blood of Christ purchased, such is the pride of nature, that it disdains to taste them, except it may also pay for the same. If the old hive be removed from the place where it was accustomed to stand, the bees will come home to the old place, yes, and many of them you shall find will die there, rather than go to the hive, though it stand in a far better place than it did before. Just so stands the case with men. The hive is removed, that is we are not to expect righteousness as Adam did, by obeying and working, but by believing and coming to Christ; but nature had as soon be damned as do it is: It still goes about to establish its own righteousness.

Virtues, duties, and moral excellencies, these are the ornaments of nature; here is nature set off in its sumptuous attire, and rich embellishments, and now to renounce it, disclaim and despise it, as dross and dung, in comparison of Christ, as believers do, Php 3:8. this, I say, is against the grain of nature. We reckon it the strange effect of self-denial in Mahomet the Great, who being so enamored with his beautiful Irene, would be persuaded, upon reasons of state, with his own hand to strike off her head: and that even when she appeared in all her rich ornaments before him, rather like such a goddess, as the poets in their ecstasies use to feign, than a mortal creature. And yet certainly this is nothing to that self-denial which is exercised in our coming to Christ. Secondly, And if we look to the other term to which the soul moves, we shall find it acting as much above the sphere and ability of improved nature, as here it acts and moves against the stream and current of corrupted nature: for how wonderful and supernatural an adventure is that, which the soul makes in the day that it comes to Jesus Christ.

Surely, for any poor soul to venture itself forever upon Jesus Christ whom it never saw, nay, upon Christ, whose very existence its own unbelief calls in question whether he be or no: and that when it is even weighed down to the dust, with the burdensome sense of its own vileness and total unworthiness, feeling nothing in itself but sin and misery, the workings of death and fears of wrath: to go to Christ, of whose pardoning grace and mercy it never had any the least experience, nor can find any ground of hope in it self that it shall be accepted; this is as much above the power of nature, as it is for a stone to rise from the earth, and fix itself among the stars. Well might the apostle ascribe it to that Almighty Power which raised up Christ from the dead, Ephesians 1:19-20. If the Lord draw not the soul, and that omnipotently, it can never come from itself to Christ. And yet farther, Thirdly, The natural impossibility of coming to Christ, will more clearly appear, if we consider the enemies to faith, or what blocks are rolled by Satan and his instruments into the way to Christ: to mention, in this place, no more but our own carnal reason, as it is armed and managed by the subtlety of Satan, what a wonder is it that any soul should come to Christ?

These are the strong holds, (mentioned 2 Corinthians 10:4.) out of which those objections, fears, and discouragements sally, by which the soul is fiercely assaulted in the way to Christ. Will you forsake all your pleasures, merry company, and sensible comforts, to live a sad, retired, pensive life? Will you beggar and undo yourself, let go all your comforts in hand, for an hope of that which your eyes never saw, nor have you any certainty that it is any more than a fancy! Will you that have lived in reputation and credit all your life, now become the scorn and contempt of the world? Think you yourself able to live such a strict, severe, mortified, and self-denying, life, as the word of God requires? And what if persecution should arise, (as you may expect it will,) can you forsake father and mother, wife and children, yes, and give up your own life too, to a cruel and bloody death! be advised better, before you resolve in so important a matter. What think you of your forefathers, that lived and died in that way you are now living? Are you wiser than they? Do not the generality of men walk in the same paths you have hitherto walked in? If this way lead to hell, as you fear it may, think then how many millions of men must perish as well as yourself; and is such a supposition consistent with the gracious and merciful nature of God? Besides, think what sort of people those are, unto whom you are about to join yourself in this new way? Are there not to be found among them many things to discourage you, and cool your zeal? They are generally of the lower and baser sort of men, poor and despicable: Sees you not, though their profession be holy, how earthly, carnal, proud, factious, and hypocritical, many of them are found to be! And doubtless, the rest are like them, though their hypocrisy be not yet discovered.

O what stands and demurs, what hesitations and doubts, is the soul clogged with in its way to Christ! But yet none of these can withhold and detain the soul when the Father draws: Greater then is he who is in us, than he who is in the world. And thus you see the nature, manner, and efficacy of divine drawings, and how impossible it is for any soul to come to Christ without them. The inferences and improvements of the point follow. Inference 1. How deeply and thoroughly is the nature of man corrupted, and what an enemy is every man to his own happiness, that he must be drawn to it? John 5:40 "You will not come unto me, that you might have life."

Life is desirable in every man’s eyes, and eternal life is the most excellent: yet, in this, the world is rather agreed to die and perish forever than come to Christ for life. Had Christ told us of fields and vineyards, sheep and oxen, gold and silver, honors and sensual pleasures, who would not have come to him for these? But to tell of mortification, self denial, strictness of life, and sufferings for

his sake, and all this for an happiness to be enjoyed in the world to come, nature will never like such a proposition as this.

You see where it sticks, not in a simple inability to believe, but in an inability complicated with enmity; they neither call come, nor will come to Christ. It is true, all that do come to Christ, come willingly, but thanks be to the grace of God, that has freed and persuaded the will, else they never had been willing to come. Who ever found his own heart first stir and move towards Christ? How long may we wait and expect before we shall feel our hearts naturally burn with desires after, and love to Jesus Christ? This aversion of the will and affections from God is one of the main roots of original sin. No argument can prevail to bring the soul to Christ, until this be mastered and overpowered by the Father's drawing. In our motions to sin we need restraining, but in all our motions to Christ we as much need drawing. He who comes to heaven may say, Lord, if I had had mine own way and will, I had never come here: if you had not drawn me, I should never have come to you. O the riches of the grace of God! Oh unparalleled mercy and goodness! not only to prepare such a glory as this for an unworthy soul, but to put forth the exceeding greatness of your power, afterwards to draw an unwilling soul to the enjoyment of it.

Infer. 2 What enemies are they to God and the souls of men that do all they can to discourage and hinder the conversion of men to Christ? God draws forward, and these do all that in them lies to draw backward, that is to prejudice and discourage them from coming to Jesus Christ in the way of faith: this is a direct opposition to God, and a plain confederacy with the devil.

O how many have been thus discouraged in their way to Christ by their carnal relations, I cannot say friends! Their greatest enemies have been the men of their own house. These have pleaded (as if the devil had hired and feed them) against the everlasting welfare of their own flesh. O cruel parents, brethren, and sisters, that jeer, frown, and threaten, where they should encourage, assist, and rejoice! Such parents are the devil's children Satan chooses such instruments as you are, above all others, for this work: he knows what influence and authority you have upon them, and over them; and what fear, love, and dependence they have for you, and upon you; so that none in all the world are like to manage the design of their damnation so effectually, as you are like to do. Will you neither come to Christ yourselves, nor suffer your dear relations that would? Had you rather find them in the ale-house than in the closet? Did you instrumentally give them their being, and will you be the instruments of ruining forever those beings they had from you? Did you so earnestly desire children, so tenderly nurse and provide for them; take such delight in them and, after all this, do what in you lies to damn and destroy them? If these lines shall fall into any such hands, O that God would set home the conviction and sense of this horrid evil upon their hearts. And no less guilty of this sin are scandalous and loose professors, who serve to furnish the devil with the greatest arguments he has to dissuade men from coming to Christ; it is your looseness and hypocrisy by which he hopes to scare others from Christ. It is said, Song of Solomon 2:7. "I charge you by the roes and hinds of the field, that you stir not up, nor awake my beloved until he please."

Roes and hinds, like young converts and comers towards Christ, are shy and timorous creatures, that start at the least sound, or yelp of a dog, and fly away. Take heed what you do in this case, lest you go down to hell under the guilt of damning more souls than your own.

Infer. 3. Learn hence the true ground and reason of those strange, amazing, and supernatural effects, that you behold and so admire in the world, as often as you see sinners forsaking their pleasant, profitable corruptions and companions, and embracing the ways of Christ, godliness, and mortification.

It is said, 1 Peter 4:4. "They think it strange, that you run not with them into the same excess of riot." The word is "en hoi ksenidzontai", they stand at a gaze, as the hen that has hatched partridge eggs does, when she sees them take the wing and fly away from her.

Beloved, it is the world's wonder to see their companions in sin forsake them; those that were once as profane and vain as themselves, it may be more, to forsake their society, retire into their closets, mourn for sin, spend their time in meditation and prayer, embrace the severest duties, and content to run the greatest hazards in the world for Christ; but they see not that Almighty Power that draws them, which is too strong for all the sinful ties and engagements in the world to withhold and detain them. A man would have wondered to see Elisha leave the oxen, and run after Elijah, saying, "Let me go, I pray you, and kiss my father and mother, and then I will follow you; when Elijah had said nothing to persuade him to follow him only as he passed by him, he cast his mantle on him, 1 Kings 10:19-20. Surely that soul whom God draws, must needs leave all and follow Christ, for the power of God rests on it. All carnal ties and engagements to sin break and give way, when the Father draws the soul to Christ in the day of his power.

Infer. 4. Is this the first spring of spiritual motion after Christ? Learn then from hence, how it comes to pass that so many excellent sermons and powerful persuasions are ineffectual, and cannot draw and win one soul to Christ. Surely it is because ministers draw alone; and the special saving power of God goes not forth at all times alike with their endeavors.

Paul was a chosen vessel, filled with a greater measure of gifts and graces by the Spirit, than any that went before him or followed after him; and, as his talents, so his diligence in improving them was beyond any recorded example we read of among men; "He rather flew like a seraphim, than traveled upon his Master's errand about the world." Apollos was an eloquent preacher, and mighty in the scriptures, yet Paul is "nothing, and Apollos nothing; but God that gives the increase," 1 Corinthians 3:7. We are too apt to admire men, yes, and the best are but too apt to go forth in the strength of their own parts and preparations; but God secures his own glory, and magnifies his own power, frequently, in giving success to weaker endeavors, and men of lower abilities, when he withholds it from men of more raised, refined, and excellent gifts and abilities.

It is our great honor, who are the ministers of the gospel, that we are "sunergoi", workers together with God, 1 Corinthians 3:9. in his strength we can prevail; "the weapons of our warfare are mighty through God," 2 Corinthians 10:4. But if his presence, blessing, and assistance be not with us, we are nothing, we can do nothing. If we prepare diligently, pray heartily, preach zealously, and our hearers go as they came, without any spiritual effects and fruits of our labors, what shall we say, but as Martha said to Christ, "Lord, if you had been here my brother had not died:" Had the Spirit of God gone forth with his especial efficacy and blessing, with this prayer, or that sermon, these souls had not departed dead and senseless from under it.

Infer. 5. Does all success and efficacy depend upon the Father's drawings? Let none then despair of their unregenerate and carnal relations, over whose obstinacy they do, and have cause to

mourn.

What, if they have been as many years under the preaching of the gospel, as the poor man lay at the pool of Bethesda, and hitherto to no purpose? A time may come at last, (as it did for him) when the Spirit of God may move upon the waters; I mean put a quickening and converting power into the means, and then the desire of your souls for them shall be fulfilled.

It may be you have poured out many prayers and tears to the Lord for them; you have cried for them as Abraham for his son, "O that Ishmael might live before you!" O that this poor husband, wife, child, brother, or sister, might live in your sight; and still you see them continue carnal, dead, and senseless: Well, but yet not give up your hopes, nor cease your pious endeavors, the time may come when the Father may draw as well as you, and them you shall see them quit all, and come to Christ; and nothing shall hinder them.

They are now drawn away of their own lusts; they are easily drawn away by their sinful companions; but when God draws, none of these shall withdraw them from the Lord Jesus. What is their ignorance, obstinacy, and hardness of heart, before that mighty power that subdues all things to itself? Go therefore to the Lord by prayer for them, and say, Lord, I have labored for my poor relations in vain, I have spent my exhortations to little purpose; the work is too difficult for me, I can carry it no farther, but you can: O let your power go forth; they shall be willing in the day of your power.

Inference. 6. If none can come to Christ except the Father draw them, then surely none can be drawn from Christ except the Father leave them: That power which at first drew them to Christ can secure and establish them in Christ to the end. John 10:29. "My Father which gave them me is greater then all, and non man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand." When the power of God at first draws us out of our natural state to Christ, it finds us not only impotent but obstinate, not only unable, but unwilling to come; and yet this power of God prevails against all opposition; how much more is it able to preserve and secure us, when his fear is put into our inward parts, so that we dare not depart, we have no will to depart from him? Well then if the world say, I will ensnare you; if the devil say, I will destroy you; if the flesh say, I will betray you; yet you are secure and safe, as long as God has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you,", Hebrews 13:5.

Infer. 7. Let this engage you to a constant attendance upon the ordinances of God, in which this drawing power of God is sometimes put forth upon the hearts of men.

Beloved, there are certain seasons in which the Lord comes near to men in the ordinances and duties of his worship; and we know not at what time the Lord comes forth by his Spirit upon this design: he many times comes in an hour when we think not of him! "I am found of them that sought me not", Isaiah 65:1. It is good therefore to be found in the way of the Spirit. Had that poor man, that lay so long at the pool of Bethesda, reasoned thus with himself, So long have I lain here in vain expecting a cure, it is to no purpose to wait longer, and so had been absent at that very time when the angel came down, he had, in all likelihood, carried his disease to the grave with him.

How do you know but this very sabbath, this sermon, this prayer, which you have no heart to attend, and are tempted to neglect, may be the season and instrument wherein, and by which, the Lord may do that for your soul which was never done before?

Infer. 8. To conclude, How are all the saints engaged to put forth all the power and ability they have for God, who has put forth his infinite Almighty Power to draw them to Christ?

God has done great things for your souls; he has drawn you out of the miserable state of sin and wrath; and that when he let others go, by nature as good as you, he has drawn you into union with Christ, and communion with his glorious privileges. O that you would henceforth employ all the power you have for God in the duties of obedience, and in drawing others to Christ, as much as in you lies, and say continually with the Church, "Draw me, we will run after you," Song of Solomon 1:4.

Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ.

05.02. Saving Faith

Saving Faith

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God; even to then that believe on his name." John 1:12

The nature and excellency of saving faith, together with its relation to justification, as an instrument in receiving Christ and his righteousness, having been discoursed doctrinally already; I now come to make application of it, according to the nature of this weighty and fruitful point.

And the uses I shall make of it will be for our,

1. Information,

2. Examination,

3. Exhortation,

4. Direction.

First Use of Information.

Use 1. And in the first, this point yields us many great and useful truths for our information: As, Inference 1. Is the receiving of Christ the vital and saving act of faith, which gives the soul right to the person and privileges of Christ? Then it follows, That the rejecting of Christ by unbelief, must needs be the damning and soul-destroying sin, which cuts a man off from Christ, and all the benefits purchased by his blood. If there be life in receiving, there must needs be death in rejecting Christ.

There is no grace more excellent than faith; no sin more execrable and abominable than unbelief. Faith is the saving grace, and unbelief the damning sin, Mark 16:16. "He who believes not shall be damned." See John 3:18; John 3:36. and John 8:24. And the reason why this sin of unbelief is the damning sin is this, because, in the justification of a sinner, there must be a cooperation of all the con-causes that have a joint influence on that blessed effect. As there must be free grace for an impulsive cause, the blood of Christ as the meritorious cause, so, of necessity, there must be faith, the instrumental cause, to receive and apply what the free grace of God designed, and the blood of Christ purchased for us. For where there are many social causes, or con-causes to produce one effect, there the effect is not produced until the last cause be in act.

"To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whoever believes in him shall receive remission of sins," Acts 10:43. Faith in its place is as necessary as the blood of Christ in its place: "It is Christ in you the hope of glory," Colossians 1:27. Not Christ in the womb, not Christ in the grave, nor Christ in heaven, except he be also Christ in you.

Though Christ be come in the flesh; though he died and rose again from the dead; yet if you believe not, you must for all that die in your sins, John 8:24. And what a dreadful thing is this! better die any death whatever than die in your sins. If you die in your sins, you will also rise in your sins, and stand at the bar of Christ in your sins: you can never receive remission, until first you have received Christ. O cursed unbelief, which damns the soul: dishonors God, 1 John 5:10. slights Jesus Christ, the wisdom of God, as if that glorious design of redemption by his blood, the triumph and master-piece of divine wisdom, were mere foolishness, 1 Corinthians 1:23-24. Frustrates the great design of the gospel, Galatians 4:1-31 and consequently it must be the sin of sins, the worst and most dangerous of all sins; leaving a man under the guilt of all his other sins.

Inference. 2. If such a receiving of Christ, as has been described, be saving and justifying faith, when faith is a work of greater difficulty than most men understand it to be, and there are but few sound believers in the world.

Before Christ can be received, the heart must be emptied and opened: but most men's hearts are full of self-righteousness and vain confidence: this was the case of the Jews, Romans 10:3. "Being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God."

Man's righteousness was once in himself, and what liquor is first put into the vessel, it ever afterwards savors of it. It is with Adam's posterity as with bees, which have been accustomed to go to their own hive, and carry all there; if the hive be removed to another place, they will still fly to the old place, hover up and down about it, and rather die there than go to a new place. So it is with most men. God has removed their righteousness from doing to believing; from themselves to Christ, but who shall prevail with them to forsake self? Nature will venture to be damned rather than do it: there is much submission in believing, and great self denial: a proud self-conceited heart will never stoop to live upon the stock of another's righteousness.

Besides, it is no easy thing to persuade men to receive Christ as their Lord in all things, and submit their necks to his strict and holy precepts, though it be a great truth that "Christ's yoke does not gall, but grace and adorn the neck that bears it;" that the truest and sweetest liberty is in our freedom from our lusts, not in our fulfilling them; yet who can persuade the carnal heart to believe this? And much less will men ever be prevailed withal, to forsake father, mother, wife, children, inheritance, and life it self, to follow Christ: and all this upon the account of spiritual and invisible things: and yet this must be done by all that receive the Lord Jesus Christ upon gospel terms; yes, and before the soul has any encouraging experience of its own, to balance the manifold discouragements of sense, and carnal reason, improved by the utmost craft of Satan to dismay it: for experience is the fruit and consequent of believing. So that it may well be placed among the great mysteries of godliness, that Christ is believed on in the world, 1 Timothy 3:16.

Inference. 3. Hence it will follow, That there may be more true and sound believers in the world, than know, or dare conclude themselves to be such.

For, as many ruin their own souls by placing the essence of saving faith in naked assent, so some rob themselves of their own comfort, by placing it in full assurance. Faith, and sense of faith, are two distinct and separable mercies: you may have truly received Christ, and not receive the knowledge or assurance of it, Isaiah 1:1-31. Some there be that say, You are our God, of whom

God never said, You are my people: these have no authority to be called the sons of God: others there are, of whom God says, These are my people, yet dare not call God their God: these have authority to be called the sons of God, but know it not. They have received Christ, that is their safety, but they have not yet received the knowledge and assurance of it; that is their trouble: the Father owns his child in the cradle, who yet knows him not to be his Father. Now there are two reasons why many believers, who might argue themselves into peace, do yet live without the comforts of their faith: and this may come to pass, either from,

First, The inevidence of the premises.

Secondly, Or the weighty importance of the conclusion.

First, It may come to pass from the inevidence of the premises.

Assurance is a practical syllogism, and it proceeds thus: All that truly have received Christ Jesus, they are the children of God.

I have truly received Jesus Christ. Therefore am the child of God.

The major proposition is found in the scripture, and there can be no doubt of that. The assumption depends upon experience, or internal sense; I have truly received Jesus Christ; here usually is the stumble: many great objections lie against it, which they cannot clearly answer: As,

Obj. 1. Light and knowledge are necessarily required to the right receiving of Christ, but I am dark and ignorant; many carnal, unregenerate persons know more than I do, and are more able to discourse of the mysteries of religion than I am.

Sol. But you ought to distinguish of the kinds and degrees of knowledge, and then you would see that your bewailed ignorance is no bar to your interest in Christ. There are two kinds of knowledge:

1. Natural. | 2. Spiritual.

There is a natural knowledge, even of spiritual objects, a spark of nature blown up by an advantageous education; and though the objects of this knowledge be spiritual things, yet the light in which they are discerned is but a mere natural light.

And there is a spiritual knowledge of spiritual things, the teaching of the anointing, as it is called, 1 John 2:27. that is the effect and fruit of the Spirit's sanctifying work upon our souls, when the experience of a man's own heart informs and teaches his understanding, when by feeling the workings of grace in our own souls we come to understand its nature; this is spiritual knowledge.

Now, a little of this knowledge is a better evidence of a man's interest in Christ, than the most raised and excellent degree of natural knowledge: As the philosopher truly observes; Praestat paucula de meliori scientia degustasse, quam de ignobilori multa: One grain of knowledge of the best and most excellent things, is better than much knowledge of common things. So it is here, a little spiritual knowledge of Jesus Christ, that has life and savor in it, is more than all the natural, sapless knowledge of the unregenerate, which leaves the heart dead, carnal, and barren: it is not the quantity, but the kind, not the measure, but the savor: If you know so much of the evil of sin, as renders it the most bitter and burdensome thing in the world to you, and so much of the necessity and excellency of Christ, as renders him the most sweet and desirable thing in the world to you,

though you may be defective in many degrees of knowledge, yet this is enough to prove yours to be the fruit of the Spirit: you may have a sanctified heart, though you have an irregular or weak head: many that knew more than you are in hell: and some that once knew as little as you, are now in heaven: In absoluto et facili stat aeternitas: God has not prepared heaven only for clear and subtle heads. A little sanctified and effectual knowledge of Christ's person, offices, suitableness, and necessity, may bring you there, when others, with all their curious speculations and notions, may perish forever.

Obj. 2. But you tell me, that assent to the truths of the gospel is necessarily included in saving faith, which, though it be not the justifying and saving act, yet it is pre-supposed and required to it. Now I have many staggering and doubtings about the certainty and reality of these things; many horrid atheistical thoughts, which shake the assenting act of faith in the very foundation, and hence I doubt I do not believe.

Sol. There may be, and often is, a true and sincere assent found in the soul, that is assaulted with violent atheistical suggestions from Satan; and thereupon questions the truth of it. And this is a very clear evidence of the reality of our assent, that whatever doubts, or contrary suggestions there be, yet we dare not in our practice contradict or slight those truths or duties which we are tempted to disbelieve, ex. gr. We are assaulted with atheistical thoughts, and tempted to slight and cast off all fears of sin, and practice of religious duties, yet when it comes to the point of practice, we dare not commit a known sin, the awe of God is upon us; we dare not omit a known duty, the tie of conscience is found strong enough to hold it close to it: in this case, it is plain we do really assent, when we think we do not. A man thinks he does not love his child, yet carefully provides for him in health, and is full of griefs and fears about him in sickness: why now, so long as I see all fatherly duties performed, and affections to his child's welfare manifested, let him say what he will as to the want of love to him, while I see this, he must excuse me if I do not believe him, when he says he has no love for him. Just so is it in this case, a man says I do not assent to the being, necessity, or excellency of Jesus Christ; yet, in the mean time, his soul is filled with cares and fears about securing his interest in him, he is found panting and thirsting for him with vehement desires, there is nothing in all the world would give him such joy, as to be well assured of an interest in him; while it is thus with any man, let him say or think what he will of his assent, it is manifest by this he does truly and heartily assent, and there can be no better proof of it than these real effects produced by it.

Secondly, But if these, and other objections were never so fully answered for the clearing of the assumption, yet it often falls out, that believers are afraid to draw the conclusion; and that fear partly arises from,

First, The weighty importance of this matter.

Secondly, The sense of the deceitfulness of their own hearts.

First, The conclusion is of infinite importance to them, it is the everlasting happiness of their souls, than which nothing is, or can be of greater weight upon their spirits: things in which we are most deeply concerned, are not lightly and hastily received by us: it seems so great and so good, that we are still apt (if there be any room for it) to suspect the truth and certainty thereof, as never being sure enough.

Thus when the women that were the first messengers and witnesses of Christ's resurrection, Luke 24:10-11. came and told the disciples those wonderful and comfortable tidings, it is said, "That their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not." They thought it was too good to be true; too great to be hastily received; so it is in this case.

Secondly, The sense they have of the deceitfulness of their own hearts, and the daily workings of hypocrisy there, makes them afraid to conclude in so great a point as this is.

They know that very many daily cozen and cheat themselves in this matter; they know also that their own hearts are full of falseness and deceit; they find them so in their daily observations of them; and what if they should prove so in this? Why then they are lost forever! They also know there is not the like danger in their fears and jealousies, that would be in their vain confidences and presumptions; by the one, they are only deprived of their present comfort, but by the other, they would be ruined forever: and therefore choose rather to dwell with their own fears (though they be uncomfortable companions) than run the danger of so great a mistake, which would be infinitely more fatal. And this being the common case of most Christians, it follows that there must be many more believers in the world than do think, or dare conclude themselves to be such.

Inference. 4. If the right receiving of Jesus Christ, be true, saving, and justifying faith, then those that have the least, and lowest degree and measure of saving faith, have cause forever to admire the bounty and riches of the grace of God to then therein.

If you have received never so little of his bounty by the hand of providence, in the good things of this life, yet if he have given you any measure of true saving faith, he has dealt bountifully in deed with you: this mercy alone is enough to balance all other wants and inconveniences of this life, "poor in the world, rich in faith, James 2:5. O, let your hearts take in the full sense of this bounty of God to you; say with the apostle, Ephesians 1:3. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus", and you will in this one mercy, find matter enough of praise and thanksgiving, wonder and admiration to your dying day, yes, to all eternity: for, do but consider,

First, The smallest measure of saving faith which is found in any of the people of God, receives Jesus Christ; and in receiving him, what mercy is there which the believing soul does not receive in him, and with him? Romans 8:32.

O believer, though the arms of your faith be small and weak, yet they embrace a great Christ, and receive the richest gift that ever God bestowed upon the world: no sooner are you become a believer, but Christ is in you the hope of glory; and you have authority to become a son or daughter of God; you have the broad seal of heaven to confirm your title and claim to the privileges of adoption, for "to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." [To as many] be they strong, or be they weak, provided they really receive Christ by faith; there is authority or power given, so that it is no act of presumption in them to say, God is our Father, heaven is our inheritance. O precious faith! the treasures of ten thousand worlds cannot purchase such privileges as these: all the crowns and scepters of the earth, sold at full value, are no price for such mercies.

Secondly, The least degree of saving faith brings the soul into a state of perfect and full justification. For if it receives Jesus Christ, it must needs therefore in him, and with him, receive a

free, full, and final pardon of sin: the least measure of faith receives remission for the greatest sins. "By him all that believe are justified from all things," Acts 13:39. It unites your soul with Christ, and then, as the necessary consequent of that union, there is no condemnation, Romans 8:1. "ouden katakrima", not one condemnation, however many our sins have been.

Thirdly, The least measure or degree of saving faith, is a greater mercy than God has bestowed, or ever will bestow upon many that are far above you in outward respects: All men have not faith: nay, it is but a remnant among men that believe. Few of the nobles and potentates of the world have such a gift as this: they have houses and lands, yes, crowns and scepters, but no faith, no Christ, no pardon; they have authority to rule over men, but no authority to become the sons of God, 1 Corinthians 1:26-27.

Say therefore in your most debased, straitened, afflicted condition, "Return to your rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you."

Fourthly, The least degree of saving faith is more than all the power of nature can produce. There must be a special revelation of the arm of the Lord in that work, Isaiah 53:1. Believers are not born of the flesh, nor of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God," John 1:12-13. A11 believing motions towards Christ, are the effects of the Father's drawing, John 6:44. A glorious and irresistible power goes forth from God to produce it, whence it is called "the faith of the operation of God," Colossians 2:12.

So then, let not believers despise the day of small things, or overlook that great and infinite mercy which is enrapt up in the least degree of saving faith.

Infer. 5. Learn hence the impossibility of their salvation, who neither know the nature, nor enjoy the means of saving faith. My soul pities and mourns over the infidel world. Ah! What will become of the millions of poor unbelievers! there is but one door of salvation, namely, Christ; and but one key of faith to open that floor: and as that key was never given to the Heathen world: so it is laid aside, or taken away from the people by their cruel guides, all over the Popish world; were you among them, you should hear nothing else pressed as necessary to your salvation but a blind, implicit faith, to believe as the church believes; that is, to believe they know not what.

To believe as the pope believes; that is as an infidel believes, for so they confess he may be, and though there be such a thing as an explicit faith sometimes spoken of among them, yet it is very sparingly discoursed, very falsely described, and exceedingly slighted by them as the merest trifle in the world.

First, It is but sparingly discoursed of: they love not to accustom the people's ears to such a doctrine; one of themselves confesses that there is so deep a silence of explicit, particular faith in the Romish church, that you may find many everywhere, that believe no more of these things than Heathen philosophers.

Secondly, When it is preached or written of, it is falsely described: for they place the whole nature and essence of justifying and saving faith in a naked assent, which the devils have as well as men, James 2:19. No more than this is pressed upon the people at any time, as necessary to their salvation.

Thirdly, And even this particular explicit faith, when it is spoken or written of, is exceedingly slighted. I think if the devil himself were in the pulpit, he could hardly tell how to bring men to a more low and slight esteem of faith; to represent it more as a very trifle, or a quite needless thing, than these his agents have done. Some say if a man believe with a particular explicit faith, that is if he actually assent to the scripture-truths once in a year, it is enough. Yes, and others think it too much to oblige people to believe once in twelve months; and, for their ease, tell them, if they believe once in twelve years it is sufficient; and, lest this should be too great a task, others affirm, that if it be done but once in their whole life, and that at the point of death too, it is enough, especially for the crude and common people. Good God! what a doctrine is here! It was a saying long ago of Gregory (as I remember,) Malus minister est nisius diaboli: A wicked minister is the devil's goshawk, that goes a birding for hell; and O what game leave these hawks of hell among such numerous flocks of people! O, bless God while you live for your deliverance from popery; and see that you prize the gospel, and means of grace you enjoy at an higher rate, lest God bring you once more under that yoke, which neither you nor your fathers could bear.

Second use for examination.

Does saving faith consist in a due and right receiving of the Lord Jesus Christ? Then let me persuade you to examine yourselves in this great point of faith. Reflect solemnly upon the transactions that have been between Christ and your souls; think close on this subject of meditation.

If all you were worth in the world lay in one precious stone, and that stone were to be tried by the skillful Lapidary, whether it were true or false, whether it would fly or endure under the smart stroke of his hammer, sure your thoughts could not be unconcerned about the issue. Why all that you are worth in both worlds depends upon the truth of your faith which is now to be tried.

Therefore read not these lines with a running, careless eye, but seriously ponder the matter before you. You would be loth to put to sea, though it were but to cross the channel, in a rotten leaky bottom: And will you dare to venture into the ocean of eternity in a false rotten faith! God forbid. You know the Lord is coming to try every man's faith as by fire, and that we must stand or fall for ever with the sincerity or hypocrisy of our faith. Surely, you can never be too exact and careful about that, on which your whole estate depends, and that forever.

Now there are three things upon which we should have a very tender and watchful eye, for the discovery of the sincerity of our faith, and they are,

The Antecedents, Concomitants, Consequences of Faith.

As these are, so we must judge and reckon our faith to be. And, accordingly they furnish us with three general marks or trials of faith.

First, If you would discern the sincerity of your faith, examine whether those antecedents, and preparative works of the spirit, were ever found in your souls, which use to introduce and usher it into the souls of God's elect: Such are illumination, conviction, self-despair, and earnest cries to God.

First, Illumination is a necessary antecedent to faith: You can not believe until God has opened your eyes to see your sin, your misery by sin, and your remedy in Jesus Christ alone: You find this

act of the Spirit to be the first in order both of nature and time, and introductive to all the rest, Acts 26:18. "To turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God." As faith without works (which must be a consequent to it) is dead, so faith without light, which must be an antecedent to it, is blind: Faith is the hand by which Christ is received, but knowledge is the eye by which that hand is directed.

Well then, has God opened your eyes to see sin and misery in another manner than ever you saw them before? For certainly, if God has opened your eyes by saving illuminations, you will find as great a difference between your former and present apprehensions of sin and danger, as between the painted lion upon the wall or a sign-post, and the real living lion that meets you roaring in the way.

Secondly, Conviction is an antecedent to believing: Where this goes not before, no faith can follow after: The Spirit first convinces of sin, then of righteousness John 16:8. So Mark 1:15. "Repent you, and believe the gospel". Believe it, O man! that bosom of your must be wounded, that vain and frothy heart of your must be pierced and stung with conviction, sense, and sorrow for sin: You must have some sick days, and restless sights for sin, if ever you rightly close with Christ by faith. It is true, there is much difference found in the strength, depth, and continuance of conviction, and spiritual troubles in converts; but sure it is, the child of faith is not ordinarily born without some pangs. Conviction is the application of that light which God makes to shine in our minds, to our particular case and condition by the conscience; and sure, when men come to see their miserable and sad estate by a true light, it cannot but wound them, and that to the very heart.

Thirdly, Self-despair, or a total and absolute loss in ourselves about deliverance, and the way of escape, either by ourselves, or any other mere creature, does, and must go before faith.

So it was with those believers, Acts 2:37. "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" They are the words of men at a total loss: It is the voice of poor distressed souls, that saw themselves in misery, but knew not, saw not, nor could devise any way of escape from it, by anything they could do for themselves, or any other creature for them: And hence the apostle uses that emphatical word, Galatians 3:23. "sungkekleisminoi", that is shut up to the faith, that is as men besieged and distressed in a garrison in a time of storm, when the enemy pours in upon them through the breaches, and overpowers them: There is but one sally-port or gate, at which they can escape, and to that they all throng, as despairing of life, if they take any other course. Just so do men’s convictions besiege them, distress them, beat them off from all their holds and entrenchments, and bring them to a pinching distress in themselves, shutting them up to Christ as the only way to escape. Duties cannot save me, reformation cannot save me; nor angels, nor men can save me; there is no way but one, Christ, or condemnation forever.

I thought once, that a little repentance, reformation, restitution, and a stricter life, might be a way to escape the wrath to come; but I find the bed is too short, and the covering too narrow: All is but loss, dung, dross, in comparisons with Jesus Christ; if I trust to those Egyptian reeds, they will not only fail me, but pierce and wound me too: I see no hope within the whole Horizon of sense.

Fourthly, Hence come vehement and earnest cries to God for faith, for Christ, for help from heaven, to transport the soul out of this dangerous condition, to that strong rock of salvation; to bring it out of this furious, stormy sea of trouble, where it is ready to wreck every moment, into that

safe and quiet harbor, Christ.

O when a man shall see his misery and danger, and no way to escape but Christ, and that he has no ability himself to come to Christ, to open his heart thus to receive him, but that this work of faith is wholly supernatural, the operations of God; how will the soul return again, and again upon God, with such cries as in Mark 9:1-50. "Lord, help my unbelief?" "Lord, enable me to come to Christ, give me Christ or I perish forever; What profit is there in my blood? Why should I die in the sight and presence of a Savior? O Lord, it is your own work, a most glorious work: Reveal your arm in this work upon my soul, I pray you; give me Christ, if you deny me bread? give me faith, if you deny me breath. It is more necessary that I believe, than that I live."

O Reader, reflect upon the days and nights that are past, the places where you have been conversant: where are the bed-sides, or the secret corners where you have besieged heaven with such cries?

If God have thus enlightened, convinced, distressed your soul, and thus set you a mourning after Christ, it will be one good sign that faith is come into your soul; for here are certainly the harbingers and forerunners of it, that ordinarily make way for faith into the souls of men.

Secondly, If you would be satisfied of the sincerity and truth of your faith, then examine what concomitants it is attended with in your souls. I mean, what frames and tempers your souls were in, at that time when you think you received Christ. For certainly, in those that receive Christ, (excepting those into whose hearts God has in a more still and insensible way infused faith betides, by his blessing upon pious education) such concomitant frames of spirit may be remarked as these following.

First, The heart is deeply serious, and as much in earnest in this matter, as ever it was, or can be, about anything in the world. This you see in that example of the jailer, Acts 16:29. "He came in trembling and astonished". It is the most solemn and important matter that ever the soul had before it in this world, or ever shall, or can have: How much are the hearts of men affected in their outward straits and distresses, about the concernments of the body? Their hearts are not a little concerned in such questions as these, "What shall I eat? what shall I drink?" wherewithal shall I and mine be fed and clothed? but certainly the straits that souls are in about salvation, must be allowed to be greater than these; and such questions as that of the jailer's, "Sirs! what must I do to be saved?" make deeper impressions upon the heart, than what shall I eat or drink? Some indeed have their thoughts sinking deeper into these things than others: These thoughts lie with different degrees of weight upon men: but all are most solemnly and awfully concerned about their condition: All frothiness and frolics are gone, and the heart settles itself in the deepest earnest about its eternal state.

Secondly, The heart that receives Jesus Christ is in a frame of deep humiliation and self-abasement O, when a man begins to apprehend the first approaches of grace, pardon, and mercy by Jesus Christ to his soul: when a soul is convinced of its utter unworthiness and desert of hell; and can scarce expect anything else from the just and holy God but damnation, how do the first dawnings of mercy melt and humble them! "O Lord, what am I that you should feed me, and preserve me! that you should but for a few years spare me and forbear me! but that ever Jesus Christ should love me, and give himself for me; that such a wretched sinner as I should obtain

union with his person, pardon, peace, and salvation by his blood! Lord, whence is this to such a worm as I? and will Christ indeed bestow himself upon me? shall so great a blessing as Christ ever come within the arms of such a soul as mine? will God in very deed be reconciled to me in his Son? what, to me! to such an enemy as I have been! shall my sins which are so many, so horrid, so much aggravated, beyond the sins of most men, be forgiven? O what am I, vile dust? base wretch, that ever God should do this for me!" And how is that scripture fulfilled and made good, Ezekiel 16:63 "That you may remember, and be confounded, and never open your mouth any more, because of your shame, when I am pacified towards you for all that you have done, says the Lord God." Thus, that poor broken-hearted believer stood behind Christ weeping, and washing his feet with tears, as one quite melted down, and overcome with the sense of mercy to such a vile sinner, Luke 7:38.

Thirdly, The soul that receives Jesus Christ is in a weary condition, restless, and full of disquietness, neither able to bear the burden of sin, nor knowing how to be discharged from it, except Christ will give it ease, Matthew 11:28, "Come unto me," that is, believe in me, "you that are weary and heavy laden:" If they do not look into their own souls, they know there is no safety, and if they do, there is no comfort. O! the burdensome sense of sin overweighs them; they are ready to fall, to sink under it.

Fourthly, The soul that rightly receives Christ, is not only in a weary, but in a longing condition: never did the deer pant more earnestly for the water-brooks: never did the hireling desire the shadow: never did a condemned person long for a pardon, more than the soul longs after Jesus Christ. O, said David, that one would give me of the water of the well of Bethlehem to drink. O, says the poor humbled sinner, that one would give me of the opened fountain of the blood of Christ to drink! O for one drop of that precious blood! O for one encouraging smile from Christ! O now were ten thousand worlds at my command, and Christ to be bought, how freely would I lay them all down to purchase him! but he is the gift of God. O that God would give me Christ, if I should go in rags, and hunger and thirst all my days in this world!

Fifthly, The soul in the time of its closing with, or receiving Christ, is in a state of conflict: It hangs between hopes and fears, encouragements and discouragements, which occasions many a sad stand and pause in the way of Christ; sometimes the number and nature of its sins discourage it, then the riches and freeness of the grace of Christ erects his hopes again: there is little hope, says unbelief; nay, it is utterly impossible, says Satan, that ever such a wretch as you should find mercy; now the hands hang down. O but then there is a necessity, an absolute necessity, I have not the choice of two, but am shut up to one way of deliverance; others have found mercy and the invitation is to all that are weary, and to all that are athirst he says, him that comes to him, he will in no wise cast out: now new hopes inspire the soul, and the hands that did hang down are strengthened.

These are the concomitant frames that accompany faith.

3. Mark. Lastly, Examine the consequents and effects of faith, if you would be satisfied of the truth and sincerity of it: and such are,

First, Evangelical meltings, and ingenuous thawings of the heart under the apprehensions of grace and mercy: Zechariah 12:10. "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn."

Secondly, Love to Christ, his ways and people, Galatians 5:6. Faith works by love, I. e. represents the love of God, and then makes use of the sweetness of it by way of argument, to constrain the soul to all acts of obedience, where it may testify the reality of its love to God and Christ.

Thirdly, Heart-purity, Acts 15:9. "Purifying the hearts by faith:" It does not only cleanse the lands but the heart. No principle in man, besides faith, can do this: morality may hide corruption, but faith only purifies the heart from it.

Fourthly, Obedience to the commands of Christ, Romans 16:26. The very name of faith is called upon obedience: for it accepts Christ as Lord, and urges upon the soul the most powerful arguments in the world to draw it to obedience.

In a word, let the poor doubting believer, that questions his faith, reflect upon those things that are unquestionable in his own experience, which being well considered, will greatly tend to his satisfaction in this point.

It is very doubtful to you whether you believe, but yet in the mean time, it may be past doubt, (being a matter of clear experience) that you have been deeply convinced of sin, struck off from all carnal props and refuges, made willing to accept Jesus Christ upon what terms soever van might enjoy him. You doubt whether Christ be yours, but it is past doubt that you have a most high and precious esteem of Christ, that you heartily long for him, that you prize and love all, whether persons or things, that bear his image: that nothing in the world would please your hearts like a transformation into his likeness: that you had rather your souls should be filled with his Spirit, than your houses with gold and silver. It is doubtful whether Christ be yours, but it is past doubt that one smile from Christ, one token of his love would do you more good than all the honors and smiles of the world; and no thing so grieves you, as your grieving him by sin does. You dare not say that you have received him, nor can you deny but that you have had many sick days and nights for him; that you have gone into many secret places with yearning affections after him. Whether he be yours or not, you cannot tell; but that you are resolved to be his, that you can tell. Whether he will save you is but a doubt, but that you resolve to lie at his feet, and wait only on him, and never go to another for salvation, is no doubt.

Well, well; poor pensive soul, if it be so, arise, lift up your dejected head, take your own Christ into your arms. These are undoubted signs of a real closure with Christ, you makes yourself poor, and yet have great riches: Such things as these are not found in them that despise and reject Christ by unbelief.

3. Use of Exhortation.

This point is likewise very improveable by way of exhortation, and that both to Unbelievers and Believers.

First, To unbelievers, who from hence must be pressed, as ever they expect to see the face of God in peace, to receive Jesus Christ as he is now offered to them in the gospel. This is the very scope of the gospel; I shall therefore press it by three great considerations, namely,

First, that is in Christ whom you are to receive.

Secondly, What is in the offer of Christ by the gospel.

Thirdly, What is in the rejecting of that offer.

First Motive.

First, Consider well what is in Christ, whom I persuade you this day to receive: Did you know what is in Christ, you would never neglect or reject him as you do: For,

First, "God is in Christ," 2 Corinthians 5:19. the Deity has chosen to dwell in his flesh; he is "God manifest in flesh," 1 Timothy 3:16. a Godhead dwelling in flesh is the world's wonder; so that in receiving Christ, you receive God himself.

Secondly, The authority of God is in Christ, Exodus 23:21. "My name is in him: Him has God the Father sealed," John 6:27. he has the commission, the great seal of heaven to redeem and save you. All power in heaven and earth is given to him, Matthew 28:18. he comes in his Father's name to you, as well as in his own name.

Thirdly, The wisdom of God is in Christ, 1 Corinthians 1:24. "Christ the wisdom of God," yes, "in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," Colossians 2:3. Never did the wisdom of God display itself before the eyes of angels and men as it has done in Christ. The "angels desire to look into it," 1 Peter 1:12. yet they are not so much concerned in the project and design of this wisdom in redemption as you are.

Fourthly, The fullness of the Spirit is in Christ, yes, it fills him so as it never did, nor will fill any creature, John 3:34. "God gives not the Spirit by measure to him: all others have their limits, stints, and measures; some more, some less; but the Spirit is in Christ without measure. O how lovely and desirable are those men that have a large measure of the Spirit in them! but he is anointed with the Spirit of holiness above all his fellows, Psalms 45:2, Psalms 45:7. Whatever grace is found in all the saints, which makes them desirable and lovely, wisdom in one, faith in another, patience in a third; they all center in Christ as the rivers do in the sea.

Fifthly, The righteousness of God is in Christ, by which only a poor guilty sinner can be justified before God, 2 Corinthians 5:21. we are "made the righteousness of God in him:" he is "Adonai Tsidkenu", "the Lord our righteousness," Jeremiah 23:6. "the author of our righteousness", or the Lord who justifies us, by that name he will be known, and called by his people, than which none can be sweeter.

Sixthly, The love of God is in Christ, yes, the very yearning affections of divine love are in him: What is Christ, but the love of God enrapt up in flesh and blood? 1 John 4:9-10. "In this was manifested the love of God towards us:" and herein is love, that God sent his Son; this is the highest flight that ever divine love made; and higher than this it cannot mount. O love, unparalleled and admirable!

Seventhly, The mercies and compassions of God are all in Christ, Jude 1:21. Mercy is the thing that poor sinners want, it is that they cry for at the last gasp; it is the only thing that can do them good. O what would they give to find mercy in that great day? Why, if you receive Christ, you shall with him receive mercy; but out of him there is no mercy to be expected from the hands of God; for God will never exercise mercy to the prejudice of his justice; and it is in Christ that justice and mercy meet and embrace each other.

Eighthly, To conclude, The salvation of God is in Christ, Acts 4:12. "Neither is there salvation in any other." Christ is the door of salvation, and faith is the key that opens that door to men. If you therefore believe not, that is if you so receive not Jesus Christ, as God has offered him, you exclude yourselves from all hopes of salvation. The devils have as much ground to expect salvation as you. You see what is in Christ to induce you to receive him.

Motive 2.

Next, I beseech you, consider what there is in the offer of Christ to sinners, to induce you to receive him. Consider well to whom and how Christ is offered in the gospel.

First, To whom is he offered; not to the fallen angels, but to you; they lie in chains of darkness, Jude 1:6 as he took not their nature, so he designs not their recovery, and therefore will have no treaty at all with them: but he is offered to you, creatures of an inferior rank and order by nature; nor is he offered to the damned, the treaty of peace is ended with them: Christ will never make then another tender of salvation; nor is he offered to millions as good as you, now living in the world. The sound of Christ and salvation is not come to their ears, but he is offered to you by the special favor and bounty of heaven; and will you not receive him?

Oh! then how will the devils, the damned, an the heathen upbraid your folly! and say, had we had one such tender of mercy, of which you have had thousands, we would never have been now in this place of torments.

Secondly, Consider how Christ is offered to you, and you shall find that he is offered,

1. Freely, as the gift of God, to your souls; you are not to purchase him, but only to receive him, Isaiah 55:1 "Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters, and you that has no money, let him come," &c.

2. Christ is offered importunately, by repeated entreaties, 2 Corinthians 5:20. "As though God did beseech you, we pray you in Christ’s name, be you reconciled to God." O! what amazing condescension is here in the God of mercy! God now beseeches you, will you not yield to the entreaties of your God? O then what will you say for yourself, when God will not hear you, when you shall entreat and cry for mercy? Which brings us to

Motive 3. Consider the sin and danger that there is in refusing or neglecting the present offers of Christ in the gospel, and surely there is much sin in it; the very malignity of sin, and the sum of all misery lies here; for in refusing Christ,

1. You put the greatest contempt and slight upon all the attributes of God that is possible for a creature to do: God has made his justice, his mercy, his wisdom, and all his attributes to shine in their brightest glory in Christ. Never was there such a display of the glory of God made to the world in any other way.

O then, what is it to reject and despise Jesus Christ, but to offer the greatest affront to the glory of God that it is possible for men to put upon it?

2. You hereby frustrate and evacuate the very design and importance of the gospel to yourselves; you "receive the grace of God in vain," 2 Corinthians 6:1. As good, yes, better has it been for you,

that Christ had never cone into the world, or, if he had, that your lot had fallen in the dark places of the earth, where you had never heard his name; yes, good had it been for that man if he had never been born.

3. Hereby a man murders his own soul. "I said therefore unto you, that you shall die in your sins; for if you believe not that I am he, you shall die in your sins," John 8:24. Unbelief is self-murder; you are guilty of the blood of your own souls: life and salvation were offered you, and you rejected them. Yes;

4. The refusing of Christ by unbelief will aggravate your damnation above all others that perish in ignorance of Christ. O, it will be more tolerable for heathens than for you; the greatest measures of wrath are reserved to punish the worst of sinners; and among sinners, none will be found worse than unbelievers.

Secondly, To believers, this point is very useful to persuade them to divers excellent duties; among which, I shall singly out two principal ones, namely,

1. To bring up their faith of acceptance, to the faith of assurance.

2. To bring up their conversations to the principles and rules of faith.

1. You that have received Jesus Christ truly, give yourselves no rest until you are fully satisfied that you have done so; acceptance brings you to heaven hereafter, but assurance will bring heaven into your souls now. O, what a life of delight and pleasure does the assured believer live! What pleasure is it to him to look back and consider where he once was, and where he now is? To look forward, and consider where he now is, and where shortly he shall be! I was in my sins, I am now in Christ. I am in Christ now, I shall be with Christ, and that forever, after a few days. I was upon the brink of hell, I am now upon the very borders of heaven; I shall be in a very little while among the innumerable company of angels and glorified saints, bearing part with them in the song of Moses, and of the Lamb, for evermore.

And why may not you that have received Christ, receive the comfort of your union with him? There be all the grounds and helps of assurance furnished to your hand, there is a real union between Christ and your souls, which is the very ground-work of assurance.

You have the scriptures before you which contain the signs of faith, and the very things within you that answer those signs in the word. So you read, and so, just so, you might feel it in your own hearts, would you attend to your own experience. The Spirit of God is ready to seal you, it is his office and his delight so to do. O therefore, give diligence to this work, attend the study of the scriptures and of your own hearts more, and grieve not the holy Spirit of God, and you may arrive to the very desire of your hearts.

2. Bring up your conversations to the excellent principles and rules of faith; "As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him," Colossians 2:6. Live as you believe; you received Christ sincerely in your first close with him, O maintain the like seriousness and sincerity in all your ways, to the end of your lives: you received him entirely and undividedly at first, let there be no exceptions against any of his commands afterward. You received him exclusively to all others, see that you watch against all self-righteousness and self-conceitedness now, and mingle nothing of your own with his blood, whatever gifts or enlargements in duty God shall give you afterwards.

You received him advisedly at first, weighing and considering the self-denying terms upon which he was offered to you; O show that it was real, and that you see no cause to repent the bargain, whatever you shall meet with in the ways of Christ and duty afterwards: convince the world of your constancy and cheerfulness in all your sufferings for Christ, that you are still of the same mind you were, and that Christ, with his cross, Christ, with a prison, Christ, with the greatest afflictions, is worthy of all acceptance: "As you have received him, so walk you in him." Let him be as sweet, as lovely, as precious to you now, as he was in the first moment you received him; yes, let your love to him, delights in him, and self-denial for him, increase with your acquaintance with him, day by day.

Use of direction.

Use: Lastly, I will close all with a few words of direction to all that are made willing to receive the Lord Jesus Christ; and sure it is but needful that help were given to poor Christians: in this matter, it is a time of trouble, fear, and great temptation; mistakes are easily made of dangerous consequence; attend heedfully, therefore, to a few directions.

Direction 1. First, In your receiving Christ, Beware you do not mistake the means for the end. Many do so, but see you do not.

Prayer, sermons, reformations, are means to bring you to Christ, but they are not Christ; to close with those duties is one thing, and to close with Christ is another thing. If I go into a boat, my design is not to dwell there, but to be carried to the place whereon I desire to be landed: so it must be in this case, all your duties must land you upon Christ; they are means to bring you to Christ.

Direct. 2. Secondly, See that you receive not Christ for a present help, but for your everlasting portion. Many do so; they will enquire after Christ, pray for Christ, cast themselves (in their way) upon Christ, and the satisfaction of his blood, when the efficacy and terror of conscience is upon them, and they feel the sting of guilt within them; but as soon as the storm is over, and the rod that conscience shaked over them laid by, there is no more talk of Christ then: alas! it was not Christ, but quietness that they sought; beware of mistaking peace for Christ.

Direct. 3. Thirdly, In receiving, Christ, come empty-handed unto him: "believing on him who justifies the ungodly," Romans 4:5 and know that the deepest sense of your own vileness, emptiness, and unworthiness, is the best frame of heart that can accompany you to Christ. Many persons stand off from Christ for want of fit qualifications; they are not prepared for Christ as they should be, I. e. they would not come naked and empty, but have something to commend them to the Lord Jesus for acceptance. O! this is the pride of men’s hearts, and the snare of the devil. Let him that has no money come: you are not to come to Christ because you are qualified, but that you may be qualified with whatever you want; and the best qualification you can bring with your is a deep sense that you have no worth nor excellency at all in you.

Direct. 4. Fourthly, In receiving Christ, beware of dangerous delays. O follow on that work until it be finished. You read of some that are almost persuaded, and of others not far from the kingdom of God; O take heed of what the prophet says, Hosea 13:13. Delays here are full of danger, life is uncertain, so are means of grace too.

The man-slayer needed no motives to quicken his flight to the city of refuge.

Direct. 5. Fifthly, See that you receive all Christ, with all your heart. To receive all Christ, is to receive his person clothed with all his offices; and to receive him with all your heart, is to receive him into your understanding, will, and affections, Acts 8:1-40. As there is nothing in Christ that may be refused, so there is nothing in you from which he must be excluded.

Direct. 6. Lastly, Understand that the opening of your hearts to receive the Lord Jesus Christ, is not a work done by any power of your own, but the arm of the Lord is revealed therein, Isaiah 53:1. It is therefore your duty and interest to be daily at the feet of God, pouring out your souls to him in secret, for abilities to believe. And so much, as to our actual reception of Christ.

Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ.

05.03. The Believer’s Fellowship with Christ

Setting forth the Believer’s Fellowship With Christ

"Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows." Psalms 45:7

The method of grace in uniting souls with Jesus Christ, has been opened in the former discourses; thus does the Spirit, (whose office it is) make application of Christ to God’s elect: The result and next fruit whereof is communion with Christ in his graces and benefits. Our mystical union is the very ground-work and foundation of our sweet, soul enriching communion and participation of spiritual privileges; we are first ingrafted into Christ, and then suck the sap and fatness of the root: first married to the person of Christ, then endowed and instated in the privileges and benefits of Christ. This is my proper work to open at this time, and from this scripture.

"The words read, are a part of that excellent song of love, that "heavenly Epithalamium, wherein the spiritual espousals of Christ and the church are figuratively and very elegantly celebrated and shadowed. The subject matter of this psalm is the very same with the whole book of the Canticles;" and in this psalm, under the figure of king Solomon, and the daughter of Egypt, whom he espoused, the spiritual espousals of Christ and the church are set forth and represented to us. Among many rapturous and elegant expressions in praise of this glorious bridegroom, Christ, this is one, which you have before you: "God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows:" I. e. enriched and filled you, in a singular and peculiar manner, with the fullness of the Spirit, whereby you are consecrated to your office: and by reason whereof you out-shine and excel all the saints, who are your fellows or co-partners in these graces. So that in these words you have two parts; namely, First, The saints’ dignity, and Secondly, Christ’s pre-eminency:

First, The saints’ dignity, which consists in this, that they are Christ’s fellows. The Hebrew word is very full and copious, and is translated "consorts, companions, co-partners, partakers: or, as ours read it, fellows:" I. e. such as are partakers with him in the anointing of the Spirit, who do, in their measure, receive the same Spirit, every Christian being anointed, modo sibi proportionato, with the same grace, and dignified with the same titles, 1 John 2:1-29. Revelation 1:6. Christ and the saints are in common one with another: Does the spirit of holiness dwell in him? so it does in them too. Is Christ King and Priest? Why, so are they too by the grace of union with him. He has made us kings and priests to God, and his Father.

This is the saints’ dignity to be Christ’s fellows, consorts, or co-partners; so that look, whatever spiritual grace or excellency is in Christ, it is not appropriated to himself, but they do share with him: for indeed he was filled with the fullness of the Spirit, for their sakes and use: as the sun is filled with light, not to shine to itself, but to others; so is Christ with grace. And therefore, some translate the text, not prae consortibus, above your fellows; but propter consortes, for your fellows. Making Christ the first receptacle of grace, who first and immediately is filled from the fountain, the

Godhead: but it is for his people, who receive and derive from him, according to their proportion.

This is a great truth, and the dignity of the saints lies chiefly in their partnership with Christ, though our translation, above your fellows, suits best, both with the importance of the word, and scope of the place.

Secondly, But then, whatever dignity is ascribed herein to the saints, there is, and still must be, a pre-eminency acknowledged, and ascribed to Christ: if they are anointed with the Spirit of grace, much more abundantly is Christ: "God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows." By the oil of gladness understand the Spirit of holiness, compared here with oil, of which there was a double use under the law, namely, a civil and a sacred use. It had a sacred and a solemn use, in the inauguration and consecration of the Jewish kings and high priests; it had also a civil, and common use, for the anointing their bodies, to make their limbs more agile, expedite, and nimbler to make the face shine, for it gave a luster, freshness, and liveliness to the countenance. It was also used in lamps, to feed and maintain the fire, and give them light. These were the principal uses of oil. Now, upon all these accounts, it excellently expresses, and figuratively, represents to us the Spirit of grace poured forth upon Christ and his people. For, First, By the Spirit poured out upon him, he was prepared for, and consecrated to his offices, he was anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power, Acts 10:38.

Secondly, As this precious oil runs down from Christ, the head, to the borders of his garments, I mean, as it is shed upon believers, so it exceedingly beautifies their faces, and makes them shine with glory.

Thirdly, It renders them apt, expedite, and ready to every good deed

Fourthly, It kindles and maintains the flame of divine love in their souls, and, like a lamp, enlightens their minds in the knowledge of spiritual things; the anointing teaches them.

"And this oil is here called the oil of gladness, because it is the cause of all joy and gladness to them that are anointed with it": Oil was used (as you heard before) at the installment of sovereign princes, which was the day of the gladness of their hearts; and, among the common people, it was liberally used at all their festivals, but never upon their days of mourning. Whence it becomes excellently expressive of the nature and use of the Spirit of grace, who is the cause and author of all joy in believers, John 17:13.

And with this oil of gladness is Christ said to be anointed above his fellows, I. e. to have a far greater share of the Spirit of grace than they: "For to everyone of the saints is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ," Ephesians 4:7. But to him the Spirit is not given by measure, John 3:34. "It has pleased the Father, that in him should all fullness dwell", Colossians 1:19. and "of his fullness we all receive grace for grace," John 1:16. The saints partake with him, and through him in the same Spirit of grace, for which reason they are his fellows; but all the grace poured out upon believers comes exceeding short of that which God has poured out upon Jesus Christ. The words being thus opened, give us this note,

Doctrine. That all true believers have a real communion or fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

From the saints' union with Christ, there does naturally and immediately result a most sweet and blessed communion and fellowship with him in graces and spiritual privileges, Ephesians 1:3.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places (or things) in Christ: in giving us his Son, he freely gives us all things," Romans 8:32. So in 1 Corinthians 1:30. "Of him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption." And once more, 1 Corinthians 3:22-23. "All are yours, and you are Christ's."

What Christ is and has is theirs by communication to them, or improvement for them, and this is very evidently implied in all those excellent scripture metaphors, by which our union with Christ is figured and shadowed out to us, as the marriage-union between a man and his wife, Ephesians 5:31-32. You know that this marital union gives the wife interest in the estate and honors of the husband, be she never so meanly descended in herself. The natural union between the head and members of the body, by which also the mystical union of Christ and believers is set forth, 1 Corinthians 12:12. excellently illustrates this fellowship or communion between them, for from Christ "the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body," as the apostle speaks, Ephesians 4:16. The union between the graft and the stock, which is another emblem of our union with Christ, John 15:1. imports, in like manner, this communion or partnership between Christ and the saints; for no sooner does the graft take hold of the stock, but the vital sap of the stock is communicated to the graft, and both live by one and the same juice.

Now, that the scope of this discourse be not mistaken, let the reader know that I am not here treating of the saint's communion or fellowship with God in his duties, as in prayer, hearing, sacraments, &c. but of that interest which believers have in the good things of Christ, by virtue of the mystical union between then through faith: there is a twofold communion of the saints with Christ.

The first is an act.

The second is a state.

There is an actual fellowship or communion the saints have with Christ in holy duties, wherein Christians let forth their hearts to God by desires, and God lets forth his comforts and refreshments again into their hearts; they open their mouths wide, and he fills them: this communion with God is the joy and comfort of a believer's life, but I am not to speak of that here. It is not any act of communion, but the state of communion, from which all acts of communion flow, and upon which they all depend, that I am now to treat of; which is nothing else but the joint interest that Christ and the saints have in the same things; as when a ship, an house, or estate, is among many partners, or joint heirs, everyone of them has a right to it, and interest in it, though some of them have a greater, and others a lesser part. So it is between Christ and his people; there is a "koinonia", i.e. a fellowship or joint interest between them, upon which ground they are called co-heirs with Christ, Romans 8:17. This communion or participation in Christ's benefits, depends upon the hypostatic union of our nature, and the mystical union of our persons with the Son of God; in the first he partakes with us, in the second we partake with him; the former is the remote, the latter the next cause thereof.

In the explication of this point, I shall speak to these four things:

1. What are those things in which Christ and believers have fellowship.

2. By what means they come to have such a fellowship with Christ.

3. How great a dignity this is to have fellowship with Jesus Christ.

4. And then apply the whole in divers practical inferences.

First, What are those things in which Christ and believers have fellowship, to which I must speak both negatively and positively.

1. Negatively, The saints have no fellowship with Jesus Christ in those things that belong to him as God; such as his consubstantiality, co-equality, and co-eternity with the Father. It is the blasphemy of the wicked Familists to talk of being godded into God, and christed into Christ. Neither men nor angels partake in these things; they are the proper and incommunicable glory of the Lord Jesus.

2. The saints have no communion or fellowship in the honor and glory of his mediatory works, namely, his satisfaction to God, or redemption of the elect. It is true, we have the benefit and fruit of his mediation and satisfaction: his righteousness also is imputed to us for our personal justification, but we share not in the least with Christ in the glory of this work; nor have we an inherent righteousness in us as Christ has; nor can we justify and save others as Christ does: we have nothing to do with his peculiar honor and praise in these things. Though we have the benefit of being saved, we may not pretend to the honor of being Saviors, as Christ is to ourselves or others. "Christ's righteousness is not made ours as to its universal value, but as to our particular necessity; nor is it imputed to us as to so many causes of salvation to others, but as to so many subjects to be saved by it ourselves."

Secondly, But then there are many glorious and excellent things which are in common between Christ and believers, though in them all he has the pre-eminence; he shines in the fullness of them, as the sun, and we with a borrowed and lesser light, but of the same kind and nature as the stars. Some of these I shall particularly, and briefly unfold in the following particulars.

First, Believers have communion with Christ in his names and titles; they are called Christians from Christ, Ephesians 3:15. from him the whole family in heaven and earth is named: this is that worthy name the apostle speaks of, James 2:7. He is the Son of God, and they also, by their union with him, have power or authority to become the sons of God, John 1:12. He is the heir of ail things, and they are joint-heirs with him, Romans 8:17. He is both King and Priest, and he has made them kings and priests, Revelation 1:6. But they do not only partake in the names and titles, but this communion consists in things as well as titles. And therefore,

Secondly, They have communion with him in his righteousness, that is the righteousness of Christ is made theirs, 2 Corinthians 5:21. and he is "the Lord our righteousness," Jeremiah 23:6. It is true, the righteousness of Christ is not inherent in us, as it is in him; but it is ours by imputation, Revelation 4:5; Revelation 4:11. and our union with him is the ground of the imputation of his righteousness to us, 2 Corinthians 5:1-21. "We are made the righteousness of God in him," Php 3:9. for Christ and believers are considered as one person, in construction of law; as a man and his wife, a debtor and surety, are one: and so his payment or satisfaction is in our name, or upon our account.

Now, this is a most inestimable privilege, the very ground of all our other blessings and mercies. O, what a benefit is this to a poor sinner, that owes to God infinitely more than he is ever able to

pay, by doing or suffering; to have such a rich treasure of merit as lies in the obedience of Christ, to discharge, in one entire payment, all his debts to the last farthing? "Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness," Isaiah 45:24. even as a poor woman that owes more than she is worth, in one moment is discharged of all her obligations, by her marriage to a wealthy man.

Thirdly, Believers have communion with Christ in his holiness or sanctification, for of God he is made unto them, not only righteousness, but sanctification also; and as in the former privilege, they have a stock of merit in the blood of Christ to justify them; so here, they have the Spirit of Christ to sanctify them, 1 Corinthians 1:30. and therefore we are said of his fullness to receive "grace for grace," John 1:16, that is say some, grace upon grace, manifold graces, or abundance of grace; or grace for grace, that is, grace answerable to grace: as in the seal and wax, there is line for line, and cut for cut, exactly answerable to each other; or grace for grace, that is, say others, the free grace of God in Christ, for the sanctification or filling of our souls with grace: be it in which sense it will, it shows the communion believers have with Jesus Christ in grace and holiness. Now, holiness is the most precious thing in the world, it is the image of God, and chief excellency at man: it is our evidence for glory, yes, and the first fruits of glory. In Christ dwells the fullness of grace, and from him, our head, it is derived and communicated to us; thus he who sanctifies, and they that are sanctified, are all of one, Hebrews 2:1-18. You would think it no small privilege to have bags of gold to go to, and enrich yourselves with, and yet that were but a very trifle in comparison to have Christ's righteousness and holiness to go to for your justification and sanctification. More particularly, Fourthly, Believers have communion with Christ in his death; they die with him, Galatians 2:20. "I am crucified with Christ," that is the death of Christ has a real killing and mortifying influence upon the lusts and corruptions of my heart and nature: true it is, he died for sin one way, and we die to sin another way: he died to expiate it, we die to it, when we mortify it: the death of Christ is the death of sin in believers; and this is a very glorious privilege; for the death of sin is the life of your souls; if sin do not die in you by mortification, you must die for sin by eternal damnation. If Christ had not died, the Spirit of God, by which you now mortify the deeds of the body, could not have been given unto you: then you must have lived vassals to your sins, and died at last in your sins; but the fruit, efficacy, and benefit of Christ's death is yours for the killing those sins in you, which else have been your ruin.

Fifthly, Believers have communion with Christ in his life and resurrection from the dead; as he rose from the dead, so do they; and that by the power and influence of his vivification and resurrection. It is the Spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus that makes us free from the law of sin and death, Romans 8:2. Our spiritual life is from Christ, Ephesians 2:1. "And you has he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins:" and hence Christ is said to live in the believer, Galatians 2:20. "Now I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me:" and it is no small privilege to partake of the very life of Christ, which is the most excellent life that ever any creature can live; yet such is the happiness of all the saints, the life of Christ is manifest in them, and such a life as shall never see death.

Sixthly, To conclude, believers have fellowship with Jesus Christ in his glory, which they shall enjoy in heaven with him: they shall be ever with the Lord," 1 Thessalonians 4:17. and that is not all, (though, as one says, it were a kind of heaven but to look through the key-hole, and have but a glimpse of Christ's blessed face) but they shall partake of the glory which the Father has given him; for so he speaks, John 17:22; John 17:24. and more particularly, they shall sit with him in his throne, Revelation 3:21. And when he comes to judge the world, he will come to be glorified in the

saints, 2 Thessalonians 1:10. So that you may see what glorious and inestimable things are, and will be in common between Christ and the saints. His titles, his righteousness, his holiness, his death, his life, his glory. I do not say that Christ will make any saint equal with him in glory; that is impossible, he will be known from all the saints in heaven, as the sun is distinguished from the stars; but they shall partake of his glory, and be filled with his joy there; and thus you see what those things are that the saints have fellowship with Christ

in.

Secondly, Next I would open the way and means by which we come to have fellowship with Jesus Christ in these excellent privileges; and this I shall do briefly in the following positions.

Position 1.

First, No man has fellowship with Christ in any special saving privilege by nature, howsoever it be cultivated or improved; but only by faith uniting him to the Lord Jesus Christ; It is not the privilege of our first, but second birth. This is plain from John 1:1-51, "But to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even as many as believe on his name, who are born not of flesh, nor of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God." We are by nature children of wrath, Ephesians 2:3. we have fellowship with Satan in sin and misery: the wild branch has no communication of the sweetness and fatness of a more noble and excellent root until it be ingrafted upon it, and have immediate unions and coalition with it, John 15:1-2.

Position 2.

Believers themselves have not an equal share one with another, in all the benefits and privileges of their union with Christ, but in some there is an equality, and in others an inequality; according to the measure and gift of Christ, to everyone.

In justification they are all equal: the weak and the strong believer are alike justified, because it is one and the same perfect righteousness of Christ, which is applied to the one and to the other, so that there are no different degrees of justification, but all that believe are justified from all things, Acts 13:39 and "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," Romans 8:1-39, be they never so weak in faith, or defective in degrees of grace.

But there is apparent difference in the measures of their sanctification, some are strong men, and other’s are babes in Christ, 1 Corinthians 3:1. The faith of some flourishes and grows exceedingly, 2 Thessalonians 1:3 the things that are in others are ready to die, Revelation 3:2. It is a plain case, that there is great variety found in the degrees of grace, and comfort among them that are jointly interested in Christ, and equally justified by him.

Position 3.

The saints have not fellowship and communion with Christ, in the fore-mentioned benefits and privileges by one and the same medium, but by various mediums and ways, according to the nature of the benefits, in which they participate.

For instance, they have partnership and communion with Christ, as has been said, in his righteousness, holiness, and glory, but they receive these distinct blessings by divers mediums of

communion: we have communion with Christ in his righteousness, by the way of imputation; we partake of his holiness, by the way of infusion; and of his glory in heaven, by the beatifical vision. Our justification is a relative change, our sanctification a real change, our glorification a perfect change, by redemption from all the remains both of sin and misery.

Thus has the Lord appointed several blessings for believers in Christ, and several channels of conveying them from him to us; by imputed righteousness, we are freed from the guilt of sin: by imparted holiness, we are freed from the dominion of sin, and by our glorification with Christ, we are freed from all the relics and remains both of sin and misery let in by sin upon our natures.

Position 4.

That Jesus Christ imparts to all believers, all the spiritual blessings that he is filled with, and withholds none from any that have union with him, be these blessings never so great, or they that receive them never so weak, mean, and contemptible in outward respects, Galatians 3:27 "You are the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ." The salvation that comes by Jesus Christ is stiled the

common salvation, Jude 1:3. and heaven the inheritance of the saints in light, Colossians 1:12. "There is neither Greek nor Jew, (says the apostle), circumcision, nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, hut Christ is all, and in all," Colossians 3:11. He means, there is no privilege in the one to commend them to God, and no want of anything, in the other to debar them from God; let men have or want outward excellencies, as beauty, honor, riches, nobility, gifts of the mind. sweetness of nature, and all such like ornaments, what is that to God? He looks not at these things, but respects them, and communicates his favor to them as they are in Christ: He is all and in all. The gifts and blessings of the Spirit are given to men as they are in Christ, and without respect to any external differences made in this world among men: hence we find excellent treasures of grace in mean and contemptible persons in the world, poor in the world and rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom; and as all believers, without difference, receive from Christ, so they are not debarred from any blessing that is in Christ: "All is yours, for you are Christ's, 1 Corinthians 3:1-23: ult. With Christ God freely gives us all things," Romans 8:32.

Position 5.

The communion believers have with Christ, in spiritual benefits, is a very great mystery, far above the understandings of natural men. There are no footsteps of this thing in all the works of creation; therefore the apostle calls it "The unsearchable riches of Christ," Ephesians 3:8, "aneksichniaston plouton tou Christou": The word signifies, that which has no footsteps to trace it by: yes, it is so deep a mystery, that the angels themselves stoop down to look into it, 1 Peter 1:12. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for them that love him: but God has revealed them unto us by his Spirit," 1 Corinthians 2:9-10.

Thirdly, and lastly, I shall, in a few particulars, spell the dignity and excellency of this fruit of our union with Christ, and show you, that a greater glory and honor cannot be put upon man, than to be thus in fellowship with Jesus Christ, John 17:22. "The glory which you gave me, I have given them, that they may be one, as we are one:" And therefore, more particularly, let it be considered,

First, With whom we are associated, even the Son of God; with him that is over all, God blessed forever. Our association with angels is an high advancement, for angels and saints are fellow servants in the same family, Revelation 19:10. and through Christ we are come to an innumerable company of angels, Hebrews 12:22. But hat is all this to our fellowship with Jesus Christ himself; and that in another manner than angels have? Nor though Christ be to then an head of dominion, yet not an head of vital influences, as he is to his mystical body the church; this therefore is to them a great mystery, which they greatly affect to study and pry into.

Secondly, What we are that are dignified with this title, the fellows or co-partners with Jesus Christ: not only dust by nature, (Dust you are), but sinful dust; such wretched sinners, as, by nature, and the sentence of the law, ought to be associated with devils, and partakers with them of the wrath the Almighty God to all eternity.

Thirdly, The benefits we are partakers of, in and with the Lord Jesus Christ; and, indeed, they are wonderful and astonishing things, so far as they do already appear, but yet we see but little of them comparatively, to what we shall see, 1 John 3:1-2. "Now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." O, what will that be! to see him as he is, and to be transformed into his likeness!

Fourthly, The way and manner in which we are brought into this fellowship with Christ; which is yet more admirable. The apostle gives us a strange account of it in 2 Corinthians 8:9. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might be rich:" he empties himself of his glory, that we might be filled; he is made a curse, that we might enjoy the blessing, he submits to be crowned with thorns, that us might be crowned with glory and honor; he puts himself into the number of worms, Psalms 22:6. that we might be made equal to the angels. O, the inconceivable grace of Christ!

Fifthly, The reciprocal nature of that communion which is between Christ and believers; we do not only partake of what is his, but he partakes of what is ours: he has fellowship with us in all our wants, sorrows, miseries and afflictions; and we have communion with him in his righteousness, grace, sonship and glory: he takes part of our misery, and we take part of his blessedness; our sufferings are his sufferings, Colossians 1:24. O, what an honor is it to you, poor wretch, to whom a great many would not turn aside to ask how you do; to have a King, yes, the Prince of all the kings of the earth, to pity, relieve, sympathize, groan and bleed with you, to sit by you in all your troubles, and give you his cordials; to say your troubles are my troubles, and your afflictions are my afflictions: whatever touches you, touches me also. O what name shall we give unto such grace as this is!

Sixthly, and lastly, Consider the perpetuity of this privilege: Your fellowship with Christ is interminable, and abides for ever. Christ and the saints shall be glorified together, Romans 8:17. While he has any glory they shall partake with him. It is said indeed, 1 Corinthians 15:24 that there shall be a time when Christ will deliver up the kingdom to his Father but the meaning is not that ever he will cease to be the Head of his saints, or they from being his members: No, the relation never ceases; justification, sanctification and adoptions are everlasting things, and we can never be divested of them.

Inference 1. Are the saints Christ's fellows? What honorable persons then are they! And how should they be esteemed and valued in the world! If a king, who is the fountain of honor, do but raise a man by his favor, and dignify him by bestowing some honorable title upon him, what respect and observance is presently paid him by all persons? But what are all the vain and empty titles of honor, to the glorious and substantial privileges with which believers are dignified, and raised above all other men by Jesus Christ? He is the Son of God, and they are the sons of God also: he is the Heir of all things, and they are joint heirs with Christ; he reigns in glory, and they shall retort with him: he sits upon the throne, and they shall sit with him in his throne. O that this vile world did but know the dignity of believers, they would never slight, hate, abuse, and persecute them as they do! And O that believers did but understand their own happiness and privileges by Christ, they would never droop and sink under every small trouble at that rate they do!

Inference. 2. How abundantly has God provided for all the necessities and wants of believers! Christ is a storehouse filled with blessings and mercies, and it is all for them: from him they "receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness " Romans 5:17. "Of his fullness they all receive grace for grace," John 1:16. All the fullness of Christ is made over to them for the supply of their wants: "My God shall supply all your needs, (says the apostle) according to his riches in glory by Jesus Christ," Php 4:19. If all the riches of God can supply your needs, then they shall be supplied. Say not, Christ is in the possession of consummate glory, and I am a poor creature, struggling with many difficulties, and toiling in the midst of many cares and fears in the world; for care is taken for all your wants, and orders given from heaven for their supply: My God shall supply all your need. O say with a melting heart, I have a full Christ, and he is filled for me: I have his pure and perfect righteousness to justify me, his holiness to sanctify me, his wisdom to guide me, his comforts to refresh me, his power to protect me, and his all-sufficiency to supply me. O be cheerful, be thankful, you have all your hearts can wish; and yet be humble; it is all from free-grace to empty and unworthy creatures

Inference. 3. How absurd, disingenuous, and unworthy of a Christian, is it to deny, or withhold from Christ anything he has, or by which he may be served or honored? Does Christ communicate all he has to you, and can you withhold anything from Christ? On Christ's part it is not mine, and your, but ours, or mine and yours; John 20:17 "I ascend to my Father, and your Father; to my God, and your God." But O this cursed idol self! which appropriates all to its own designs and uses. How liberal is Christ! and how penurious are we to him!

Some will not part with their credit for Christ, when yet Christ abased himself unspeakably for them. Some will not part with a drop of blood for Christ, when Christ spent the whole treasure of his blood freely for us; yes, how loth are we to part with a shilling for Christ, to relieve him in his distressed members, when as yet "we know the grace of out Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich!" O ungrateful return! O base and disingenuous spirits!" The things Christ gives us are great, and the things we deny to him are small: he parts with the greatest, and yet is denied the least. The things he communicates to us are none of ours, we have no right nor title by nature, or any desert of ours to them; the things we deny or grudge to Christ are by all titles his own, and he has the fullest and most unquestionable title to them all; what he gives to us, he gives to them that never deserved it; what we withhold from him, we withhold from one that has deserved that, and infinitely more from

us than we have or are.

He interested you freely in all his riches when you were enemies; you stand upon trifles with him, and yet call him your best and dearest friend: he gave himself and all he has to you, when you could claim nothing from him; you deny to part with these thing to Christ, who may not only claim them upon the highest title, his own sovereignty, and absolute property, but by your own act, who profess to have given all in covenant to him: what he gives you return no profit to him, but what you give or part with for him is your greatest advantage. O that the consideration of these things might shame and humble your souls!

Inference. 4. Then certainly no man is or can be supposed to be a loser by conversion, seeing from that day, whatever Christ is or has becomes his.

O what an inheritance are men possessed of by their new birth! Some men cry out, Religion will undo you; but with what eyes do these men see? Surely, you could never so reckon, except your souls were so incarnated, as to reckons pardon. Peace, adoption, holiness, and heaven, for nothing; that invisibles a non-entities, and temporals the only realities. It is true, the converted soul may lose his estate, his liberty, yes, his life for Christ but what then? Are they losers that exchange brass for gold? or part with their present comforts for an hundred-fold advantage? Mark 10:29. So that none need be frightened at religion, for the losses that attend it, while Christ and heaven are gained by it: they that count religion their loss have their portion in this life.

Inference. 5. How securely is the saints inheritance settled upon them, seeing they are in common with Jesus Christ? Christ and his saints are joint-heirs, and the inheritance cannot be alienated but by his consent: he must lose his interest, if you lose yours. Indeed Adam’s inheritance was by a single title, and moreover, it was in his own hand, and so he might, (as indeed he soon did) divest himself and his posterity of it; but it is not so between Christ and believers; we are secured in our inheritance by Christ our co-heir, who will never alienate it: and therefore it was truly observed by the father, Faelicior Job in sterquilinio, quam Adamus in paradiso: Job was happier upon the ash-heap, than Adam was in paradise. The covenant of grace is certainly the best tenure; as it has the best mercies, so it gives the fullest security top enjoy them.

Inference. 6. How rich and full is Jesus Christ, who communicates abundantly to all the saints, and yet has infinitely still more in himself, than has ever been received by them all.

Take all the faith of Abraham all the meekness of Moses, all the patience of Job, all the wisdom of Solomon, all the zeal of David, all the industry of Paul, and all the tender-heartedness of Josiah; and to this all the grace that is poured (though in lesser measure) into all the elect vessels. in the world, yet still it is short of that which remains in Christ; "He is anointed with oil of gladness above his fellows:" And in all things he has and must ever have the pre-eminence. There are many thousand stars glittering above your head, and one star differs from another star in glory, yet there is more light and glory in one sun, than in many thousand stars. Grace beautifies the children of men exceedingly, but still that is true of Christ, Psalms 45:2. "You are fairer than the children of men, grace is poured into your lips". Yet all grace is secondarily, and derivatively in the saints, but it is primitively and originally in Christ, John 5:16. Grace is imperfect and defective in them, but in him it is in its most absolute perfection and fullness, Colossians 1:19. In the saint. it is mixed with abundance of corruption, but in Christ it is altogether unmixed, and exclusive of its opposite,

Hebrews 7:26. So that as the Heathen said of moral virtue, I may much more say of Christ, That were he to be such with mortal eyes, he would compel love and admiration from all men, for "he is altogether lovely," Song of Solomon 5:1-16.

Inference. 7. What delight and singular advantage must needs be in the communion of the saints, who have communion with Jesus Christ in all his races and benefits.

"That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us: And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ", 1 John 1:3. O it is sweet to have fellowship with those that have fellowship with God in Jesus Christ. Christ has communicated to the saints varieties of graces, in different measures and degrees; And as they all receive from Christ the fountain, so it is sweet and most delightful to be improving themselves by spiritual communion one with another: Yes, for that end one is furnished with one grace more eminently than another, that the weak may be assisted by the strong, as a modern divine well observes. Athanasius was prudent and active, Basil of an heavenly, sweet temper, Chrysostom laborious, without affection, Ambrose resolved and grave, Luther courageous, and Calvin acute and judicious. Thus everyone has his proper gift from Christ, the fountain of gifts and graces, 1 Corinthians 7:7. One has quickness of parts, another solidity of judgement, but not ready and presential; one is zealous, but ungrounded; another well principled, but timorous; one is wary and prudent; another open and plain; one is trembling and melting; another cheerful and joyous; one must impart his light, another his heat: The eye, the knowing man, cannot say to the hand, the active man, I have no need of you. And O how sweet would it be, if gifts, graces, and experiences were frequently and humbly imparted: But idle notions earthly mindedness, self-interests, and want of more communion with Christ, have almost destroyed the comfort of Christian fellowship everywhere in the world.

Inference. 8. In a word, those only have ground to claim interest in Christ, who do really participate of his graces, and in whom are found the effects and fruits of their union and communion with him.

If you have interest in Christ, you have communion in his graces and benefits; and if you have such communion, it will appear in your maintaining daily actual communion with God in duties; whereby will be produced, First, The increase of your sanctification, by fresh participations from the fountain; as cloth which is often dipped into the vat receives the deeper dye, and livelier tincture; so will your souls by assiduous communion with God. It will also be discerned, Secondly, In your deeper humiliation, and spiritual sense of your own vileness: The more any man partakes of God, and is acquainted with him, and assimilated to him, the more base and vile in his own sight he still grows, Job 42:5-6. Isaiah 6:5.

Thirdly, It will appear in your more vehement longings after the full enjoyment of God in heaven, 1 Peter 1:8. and Romans 8:23. You that have the first fruits will groan within yourselves after the full harvest, and satisfying fruition; you will not be so taken with things below, as to be content with the best lot on earth for your everlasting, portion. O! if these communicated drops be so sweet, what is there in Christ the fountain?

And thus I have opened the method of grace in bringing home Christ and his benefits to God’s elect by union, in order to communion with him.

Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ.

05.04. All Men Invited to Apply Jesus Christ

Inviting All Men to Apply Jesus Christ

"Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

The doctrine of our redemption by Jesus Christ, being finished in the first part, and the way and means by which Christ is applied to sinners in the foregoing part of this treatise; I am now orderly come to the general use of the whole; which in the first place shall be by way of exhortation, to invite and persuade all men to come to Christ; who, in all the former sermons, had been represented in his garments of salvations, and in his apparel, prepared and offered to sinners as their all-sufficient and only remedy: and in the following sermons, will be represented in his perfumed garments coming out of his ivory palaces, Psalms 45:8, to allure and draw all men unto him.

For a general head to this use, which will be large, I have chosen this scripture, "Come unto me all you that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

These words are the voice of our Lord Jesus Christ himself, in which there is a vital, ravishing sound: It is your mercy to have such a joyful sound in your ears this day. And in them I will consider their dependence, parts, and scope.

As to their dependence, it is manifest they have an immediate relation to the foregoing verse, wherein Christ opens his commission, and declares the fullness of this authority and saving power, and the impossibility of comings to God any other way. "All things are delivered to me of my Father, and no man knows the Son but the Father: neither knows any man the Father save the Son, and he to whoever the Son will reveal him," Matthew 11:27. Matthew 11:28 is brought in to obviate thediscouragements of any poor, convinced, and humbled soul, who might thus object: Lord, I am fully satisfied of the fullness of your saving power, but greatly doubt whether ever I shall have the benefit thereof; for I see so much sin and guilt in myself, so great vileness and utter unworthiness, that I am over weighed, and even sink under the burden of it: My soul is discouraged because of sin.

This objection is prevented in the words of my text, "Come unto me, all you that labor, and are heavy laden", q. d. Let not the sense of your sin and misery drive you from your only remedy: Be your sins never so many, and the sense and burden of them never so heavy, yet, for all that, Come unto me: You are the persons whom I invite and call. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

In the words, three things are especially remarkable.

1. The soul’s spiritual distress and burden: Weary and heavy laden.

2. Its invitations to Christ under that burden: Come unto me.

3. Its encouragement to that great duty: I will give you rest.

First, The soul’s spiritual distress and burden expressed in two very emphatical words, "hoi kopiontes kai pefortismenoi", "You that labor and are heavy laden." The word which we translate labor, signifies a laboring even to faintness and tiring, to the consumption and waste of the spirits; and the other word signifies such a pressure by a burden that is too heavy to be borne, that we do even sink down under it.

There is some difference among expositors about the quality of this burden. Chrysostom, and some others after him, expound it of the burden of the legal rites and ceremonies, which was a heavy burden indeed, such as neither they, nor their fathers could bear.

Under the task and burden of these legal observances, they did sweat and toil to obtain a righteousness to justify them before God, and all in vain: and this is a pious sense: But others expound it of the burden of sin in general; the corruption of nature, and evils of practice, which souls convinced have brought them under the curse, anti will bring them to hell, and therefore labor and

strive, all that in them lies, by repentance and reformation, to clear themselves from it; but all in vain, while they strive in their own strength. Such are they that are here called to come to Christ, which is the second thing; namely,

Secondly, The invitation of burdened souls to Christ: "Come unto me all you that labor, and are heavy laden: Come unto me," that is believe in me, lean and rest your burdened souls upon me. I am able to ease all your burdens; in me are that righteousness and peace - which you seek in vain in all the legal rites and ceremonies; or in your repentance, reformations, and duties; but it will give you no ease, it will be no benefit to you, except you come unto me. Faith is often expressed under this notion, see John 6:37. and John 7:1-53 and it is to be further noted, that all burdened souls are invited to come, "All you that labor. What ever your sin or guilt have been, whatever your fears or discouragements are, yet come, that is believe in me.

Thirdly, Here is the encouragement Christ gives to this duty, And I will give you rest: "anapauso mas". I will refresh you, I will give you rest from your labor, your consciences shall be pacified, your hearts at rest and quiet in that pardon, peace and favor of - God which I will procure for you by my death. But here it must be heedfully noted, that this promise of rest in Christ is not made to men simply as they are sinners, nor yet as they are burdened and heavy laden sinners, but as they come to Christ, that is as they are believers. For let a man break his heart for sin, let him weep out his eyes, let him mourn as a dove, and shed as many tears for sin (if it were possible) as ever there fell drops of rain upon the ground, yet if he come not to Christ by faith, his repentance shall not save him, nor all his sorrows bring him to true rest. Hence note,

Doctrine. 1. That some souls are heavy laden with the burdensome sense of sin.

Doctrine. 2. That all burdened souls are solemnly invited to cone to Christ.

Doctrine. 3. That there is rest in Christ for all that come to him under the heavy burden of sin.

Doctrine. 1. Some souls are heavy laden with the burdensome sense of sin.

I do not say all are so, for "fools make a mock at sin," Proverbs 14:9.

It is so far from being burdensome to some, that it is a sport to them, Proverbs 10:23. But when a man's eyes are opened to see the evil that is in sin, and the eternal misery that follows it, (sin and hell being linked together with such strong chains as nothing but the blood of Christ can loose) then no burden is like that of sin. "A wounded conscience who can bear?" Proverbs 18:14. For let us but consider the efficacy that the law of God has upon the consciences of men, when it comes in the spirituality and power of it, to convince and humble the soul of a sinner. For then, First, The memory of sin long since committed, is refreshed and revived, as if it had been but yesterday: There are fresh recognitions of sin long since acted and forgotten, as if they had never been: What was done in our youth is fetched back again, and by a new impression of fear and horror set home upon the trembling conscience, Job 13:26. "You write bitter things against me, and make me to possess the sins of my youth." Conscience can call back the days that are past, and draw up a new charge upon the score of old sins, Genesis 42:21. All that ever we did is recorded and entered into the book of conscience, and now is the time to open that book, when the Lord will convince and awaken sinners. We read in Job 14:1-22 of sealing up iniquities in a bag, which is an allusion to the Clerk of the assizes, that takes all the indictments that are made against persons at the assizes and seals them up in a bag, in order to a trial. This is the first office and work of conscience; upon which

The second, namely, its accusations, do depend. These accusations of conscience are terrible things; who can stand before them? They are full, they are clear, and all of them referring to the approaching judgment of the great and terrible God.

Conscience dives into all sins, secret as well as open, and into all the circumstances and aggravations of sin, as being committed against light, against mercy, against the strivings, warnings, and regrets of conscience. So that we may say of the efficacy of conscience, as it is said, Psalms 19:6. of the influence of the sun, "nothing is hid from the heat and power thereof." "Come (says the woman of Samaria) see a man that has told me all that ever I did," John 4:29. Christ convinced her but of one sin by his discourse, but conscience, by that one, fetched in, and charged all the rest upon her. And as the accusations of conscience are full, so they are clear and undeniable. A man becomes self convinced, and there remains no shift, excuse, or plea, to defend himself. A thousand witnesses cannot prove any point more clearly than one testimony of conscience does. Matthew 22:12. "The man was speechless, a mute; muzzled (as the word signifies) by the clear testimony of his own conscience. These accusations are the second work of conscience, and they make way for the third, namely,

Thirdly, The sentence and condemnation of conscience: And truly this is an insupportable burden: The condemnation of conscience is nothing else but its application of the condemning sentence of the law to a man's person: The law curses everyone that transgresses it, Galatians 3:10. Conscience applies this curse to the guilty sinner.

So that it sentences the sinner in God's name and authority, from whence there is no appeal: The voice of conscience is the voice of God, and what it pronounces in God's name and authority, he will confirm and ratify, 1 John 3:20. "If our hearts, (I. e.) our consciences condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knows all things. This is that torment which no man cam endure. See the effects of it in Cain, in Judas, and in Spira; it is a real foretaste of hell-torments: This is that worm that never dies, Mark 9:44. For look, as a worm in the body is bred of the corruption that is

there, so the accusations and condemnations of conscience are bred in the soul by the corruption and guilt that are there. As the worm in the body preys and bites upon the tender, sensible, inward parts, so does conscience touch the very quick. This is the third enact, or work, to sentence and condemn; and this also makes

way for a fourth, namely,

Fourthly, To upbraid and reproach the sinner under his misery: and this makes a man a very terror to himself: To be pitied in misery is some relief, but to be upbraided and reproached, doubles our affliction. You know it was one of the aggravations of Christ's sufferings to be reproached by the tongues of his enemies, while he hanged in torments upon the cursed tree; but all the scoffs and reproaches, the bitter jeers and sarcasms in the world, are nothing to those of a man's own conscience, which will cut to the very bone.

O! when a man's conscience shall say to him in a day of trouble, as Reuben to his afflicted brethren, (Genesis 43:22. "Spoke I not unto you, saying, do not sin against the child, and you would not hear; therefore behold also his blood is required." So conscience, did I not warn you, threaten you, persuade you in time against these evils, but you would not hearken to me, therefore behold now you must suffer to all eternity for it. The wrath of God is kindled against your soul for it: This is the fruit of your own wilful madness and obstinacy. Now you shall know the price of sinning against God, against light and conscience. O, this is terrible! Every bite of conscience makes a poor soul to startle, and in a terrible fright to cry, O the worm! O. the bitter foretaste of hell! A wounded spirit who can bear?

This is a fourth wound of conscience, and it makes way for a fifth; for here it is as the pouring out of the vials, and the sounding of those woe-trumpets in Revelations; one woe is past, and another comes. After all these deadly blows of conscience upon the very heart of a sinner, comes another as dreadful as any that is yet named; and that is,

Fifthly, The fearful expectation of wrath to come, which it begets in the soul of a guilty sinner: Of this you read, Hebrews 10:1-39. "A fearful looking for of Judgment, and fiery indignation." And this makes the stoutest sinner faint and sink under the burden of sin. For the tongue of man cannot declare what it is to lie down and rise with those fearful expectations. The case of such sinners is somewhat like that which is described in Deuteronomy 28:65-67. "The Lord shall give you a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind. And your life shall hang in doubt before you, and you shall fear day and night, and shall have no assurance of your life. In the morning you shall say, would to God it were even: And at even you shall say, would to God it were morning: For the fear of your heart, wherewith you shall fear,- &c. Only in this it differs, in this scripture you have the terror of those described, whose temporal life hangs in doubtful suspense, but in the persons I am speaking of, it is a trembling under the apprehensions and expectations of the vengeance of eternal fire.

Believe it, friends, words cannot express what those poor creatures feel, that lie down, and rise up under these fears, and frights of conscience. Lord, what will become of me! I am free among the dead, yes, among the damned. I hang by the frail thread of a momentary life, which will, and must, break shortly, and may break the next moment, over the everlasting burnings: No pleasant bread is to be eaten in these days, but what is like the bread of condemned men.

And thus you see what the burden of sin is, when God makes it to bear upon the consciences of men, no burden of affliction is like it: losses of dearest relations, sorrows for an only son, are not so pungent and penetrating as these: For,

First, to creature-enjoyment is pleasant under these inward troubles: In other troubles they may signify something to a man's relief; but here they are nothing; the wound is too deep to be healed by anything but the blood of Jesus Christ; conscience requires as much to satisfy it, as God requires to satisfy him. When God is at peace with you, (says conscience) then will I be at peace with you too; but, until then, expect no rest nor peace from me. All the pleasures and diversions in the world shall never stop my mouth: go where you will, I will follow you like your shadow: be your portion in the world as sweet as it will, I will drop in gall and wormwood into your cup, that you shall taste no sweetness in any thing, until you have got your pardon.

These inward troubles for sin alienate the mind from all former pleasures and delights; there is no more taste or savor in them, than in the white of an egg. Music is out of tune; all instruments jar and groan. Ornaments have no beauty; what heart has a poor creature to deck that body, in which dwells such a miserable soul! to feed and pamper that carcass that has been the soul's inducement to, and instrument in sin, and must be its companion in everlasting misery!

Secondly, These inward troubles for sin put a dread into death, beyond whatever the soul saw in it before. Now it looks like the King of terrors indeed. You read in Hebrews 2:15. of some that through fear of death are all their life long subject to bondage. O what a lively comment is a soul in this case able to make upon such a text!

They would not scare at the pale horse, nor at him that sits on him, though his name be called Death, if it were not for what follows him, Revelation 6:8. but when they consider that hell follows, they tremble at the very name or thoughts of death.

Thirdly, Such is the nature of these inward troubles of spirit, that they swallow up the sense of all outward troubles. Alas! these are all lost in the deeps of soul sorrows, as the little rivulets are in the vast sea; he who is wounded at the heart will not cry Oh, at the bite of the smallest insect. And surely no greater is the proportion between outward and inward sorrows. A small matter formerly would discompose a man, and put him into a fret; now ten thousand outward troubles are lighter than a feather: For, says he, "why does the living man complain?" Am I yet on this side of eternal burnings! O let me not complain then whatever my condition be. Have I losses in the world, or pains upon my body? Alas! these are not to be named with the loss of God, and the feeling of his wrath and indignation for evermore. Thus you see what troubles, inward troubles for sin be.

Secondly, If you ask, in the second place, how it comes to pass that any soul is supported under such strong troubles of spirit, that all that feel them do not sink under them; that all that go down into these deep waters of sorrow, are not drowned in them? The answer is,

First, Though this be a very sad time with the soul (much like that of Adam, between the breach of the first covenant, and the first promise of Christ made to him) yet the souls that are thus heavy laden, do not sink, because God has a most tender care over them, and regard to them; underneath them are the everlasting arms, and thence it is they sink not: were they left to grapple with these troubles in their own strength, they could never stand. But God takes care of these mourners, that their spirits do not fail before him, and the souls that he has made; I mean those of

his elect, whom he is this way preparing for, and bringing unto Christ.

Secondly, The Lord is pleased to nourish still some hope in the soul under the greatest fears and troubles of spirit. Though it have no comfort or joy, yet it has some hope, and that keeps up the heart. The afflicted soul does, in this case, as the afflicted church, Lamentations 3:29. "He puts his mouth in the dust, if yet there may be hope:" He says, "It is good for a man to hope, and quietly to wait for the salvation of God." There are usually some glimmerings or dawnings of mercy through Christ, in the midnight darkness of inward troubles; non dantur purae, tenabrae. In hell, indeed, there is no hope to enlighten the darkness, but it is not so upon earth.

Thirdly, The experiences of others, who have been in the same deeps of trouble, are also of great use to keep up the soul above water. The experience of another is of great use to prop up a desponding mind, while as yet it has none of its own; and, in deed, for the support of souls in such cases, they were recorded. 1 Timothy 1:16. "For this cause I obtained mercy that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern "to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." For an encouraging Pattern, an eminent precedent to all poor sinners that were to come after him, that none might absolutely despair of finding mercy through Christ. You know if a man be taken sick, and none can tell what the disease is, none can say that ever they heard of such a disease before, it is exceeding frightful; but if one and another, it may be twenty, come to the sick man’s bed side, and tell him, sir, be not afraid, I have been in the very same case that you now are in, and so have many more, and all did well at last; why this is half a cure to the sick man. So it is here a great support to hear the experiences of other saints.

Fourthly, As the experiences of others support the soul under these burdens, so the riches of free grace through Jesus Christ uphold it. It is rich and abundant, Psalms 130:7-8. plenteous redemption; and it is free, and to the worst of sinners, Isaiah 1:18. And under these troubles it finds itself in the way and proper method of mercy, for so my text (a text that has upheld many thousand drooping hearts) states it. All this gives hope and encouragement under trouble.

Fifthly, and lastly, Though the state of the soul be sad and sinking, yet Jesus Christ usually makes haste in the extremity of trouble to relieve it by sweet and seasonable discoveries of his grace; cum duplicantur lateris, venit Moses, in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen. It is with Christ as it was with Joseph, whose affections yearned towards his brethren, and he was in pain until he had told them, "I am Joseph your brother." This is sweetly exhibited to us in that excellent parable of the prodigal, Luke 15:1-32, when his father saw him, being yet a great way off, he ran and fell upon his neck, and kissed him. Mercy runs nimbly to help, when souls are ready to fall under the pressure of sin. And thus you see both how they are burdened, and how upheld under the burden.

Thirdly, If it be enquired, in the last place, why God makes the burden of sin press so heavy upon the hearts of poor sinners? It is answered,

First, He does it to divorce their hearts from sin, by giving them an experimental taste of the bitterness and evil that is in sin. Men’s hearts are naturally glued with delight to their sinful courses; all the persuasions and arguments in the world are too weak to separate them from their beloved lusts. The morsels of sin go down smoothly and sweetly, they roll them with much delectation under their tongues, and it is but need that such bitter potions as these should be administered "to make their stomachs rise against sin", as that word used by the apostle in 2

Corinthians 7:11. signifies, in that you sorrowed after a Godly sort, what indignation it wrought?

It notes the rising of the stomach with rage, a being angry even unto sickness; and this is the way, the best and most effectual way to separate the soul of a sinner from his lusts; for, in these troubles, conscience says, as it is in Jeremiah 4:18. "Your way and your doings have procured these things unto you; this is your wickedness, because it is great, because it reaches unto your heart."

Secondly, The Lord does this to make Jesus Christ most welcome and desirable to the soul. Christ is not sweet until sin be made bitter to us. Matthew 9:12. "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." If once God wounds the heart of a sinner, with the stinging sense of sin, then nothing in the world is so precious, so necessary, so vehemently desired and panted for as Jesus Christ! O that I had Christ, if I did go in rags, if I did feed upon no other food all my days, but the bread and water of affliction! This is the language of a soul filled with the sense of the evil of sin.

Thirdly, The Lord does this to advance the riches of his free grace in the eyes of sinners. Grace never appears grace until sin appear to be sin. The deeper our sense of the evil of sin is, the deeper our apprehensions of the free grace of God in Christ will be.

The louder our groan have been under the burden of sin, the louder will our acclamations and praises be for our salvation from it by Jesus Christ. "To me (says Paul) the chief of sinners, was this grace given," 1 Timothy 1:15. Never does the grace of a prince so melt the heart of a traitor, as when trial, sentence, and all preparations for his execution have passed, before his unexpected pardon comes.

Fourthly, The Lord does this to prevent relapses into sin: "In that you sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought!"

2 Corinthians 2:7. The burnt child dreads the fire, the bird that is de of the talons of the hawk, trembles afterwards at the noise of his bells. "After such a deliverance as this, should we again break your commandments?" Ezra 9:13-14. Ask poor penitent soul, that has been in the deeps of sorrow for sin, Will you return to your former course of sin again? And it sounds in his ears, as if you should ask him, Will you run into the fire? Will you go to the rack again? O no, it has cost him dear already.

Fifthly, Lastly, This the Lord does, to make them both skillful and compassionate in relieving others that are under like inward troubles. None can speak so judiciously, so pertinently, so feelingly to another’s case, as he who has been in the same case himself; this furnishes them with the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season to the weary soul; by this means they are able to "comfort others with the same comforts wherewith they themselves have been comforted of God," 2 Corinthians 1:4.

Thus you have had a brief account, what the burden of sin is, how souls are supported under that burden, and why the Lord causes sin to lie so heavy upon the souls of some sinners. The improvement of all will be in a double use, namely, Of information and direction.

First use for information.

Inference 1. Is there such a load and burden in sin? What then was the burden that our Lord Jesus Christ felt and bare for us, upon whom the whole weight of all the sins of all God's elect lay! Isaiah 53:6. "He has made the iniquities of us all to meet on him." Our burden is heavy, but nothing to Christ's. O there is a vast difference between that which Christ bare, and that which we bear.

We feel but the single weight of our own sins; Christ felt the whole weight of all our sins. You do not feel the whole weight that is in any one sin; alas, it would sink you, if God should let it bear in all its aggravations and effects upon you. Psalms 130:2-3. "If you, Lord, should mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand!" You would sink presently, you can no more stand under it, than under the weight of a mighty mountain. But Christ bare all the burden upon himself; his understanding was deep and large; he knew the extent of its evil, which we do not: we have many reliefs and helps under our burden, he had none; we have friends to counsel, comfort, and pity us; all his friends and familiars forsook him, and fled in the day of his trouble: we have comforts from heaven, he had frowns from heaven: "My God, my God, (says he in that doleful day) why have you forsaken me?" There is no comparison between our load and Christ's.

Inference. 2. If there be such a burden in sin, then certainly sinners will pay dear for all the pleasure they find in sin in the days of their vanity. "What one says of crafty counsels, we may say of all sins; though they seem pleasant in their first appearance, they would be found sad in the event:" they are honey in the mouth, but the gall of asps in the belly; they tickle the fancy, but rend the conscience. O sinner, your mirth will certainly be turned into mourning, as sure as you live; that vain and frothy bosom of your shall be wounded; you shall feel the sting and pain, as well as relish the sweet and pleasure of sin. O that you would but give yourself the leisure seriously to ponder those scriptures in the margin; methinks they should have the same effect that the handwriting upon the plaster of the wall had upon that jovial king in the height of a frolic, Daniel 5:5. Reason thus with your own heart, and you will find the conclusion unavoidable; either I shall repent for sin, or I shall not: If I shall not, then must I howl under the wrath of God for sin, in the lowest hell for evermore. If I shall, then by what I have now read of the throbs and wounds of conscience, I see what this heart of mine, this vain heart of mine, must feel in this world. O how much wiser was the choice that Moses made, Hebrews 11:25. the worst of sufferings rather than the best of sin, the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season!

Inference. 3. Is there such a burden in sin, then the most tender compassion is a debt due to souls addicted and heavy laden with sin. Their condition cries for pity, whatever their tongues do; they seem to call upon you, as Job upon his friends; "Have pity, have pity upon me, O you my friends, for the hand of God has touched me", Job 19:21. And O let all that have felt the wounds and anguish of an afflicted conscience themselves, learn from their own experience tenderly to pity and help others. Galatians 6:1. "You that are spiritual, restore (it or set him in joint again) in the spirit of meekness, considering yourself."

Israel was commanded to be kind to strangers, for, says God, you know the heart of a stranger. And surely if any case in the world require help, pity, and all compassionate tenderness, this does; and yet how do some slight spiritual troubles upon others?

Parents slight them in their own children, masters in their servants; the more brutish and wicked they! O had you but felt yourselves what they feel, you would never treat them as you do. But let this comfort such poor creatures, Christ has felt them, and will pity and help them; yes, he

therefore would feel them himself, that he might have compassion upon you. If men will not, God will pity you; if men be so cruel to persecute him whom God has smitten, God will be so kind to pour balm into the grounds that sin has made: if they pull away the shoulder from you, and will not be concerned about your troubles, except it be to aggravate them, God will not serve you so: but certainly you that have passed through the same difficulties, you cannot be without compassion to them that are now grappling with them.

Inference. 4. How inexpressible dreadful is the state of the damned, who must bear the burden of all their sins upon themselves, without relief, or hope of deliverance! Mark 9:49. "where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched."

O! If sin upon the soul that is coming to Christ for deliverance, be so burdensome, what is it upon the soul that is shut out from Christ, and all hopes of deliverance forever! For, do but ponder these differences between these two burdens.

First, No soul is so capacious now, to take in the fullness of the evil and misery of sin, as they are who are gone down to the place of torments. Even as the joys of God's face above are as much unknown to them that have the fore-tastes and first fruits of them here by faith, so the misery of the damned is much unknown, even to them that have in their consciences now, the bitterest taste and sense of sin in this world: as we have the visions of heaven, so we have the visions of hell also, but darkly through a glass.

Secondly, No burden of sin presseth so continually upon the soul here as it does there. Afflicted souls, on earth, have intermissions, and breathing times; but in hell there are no lucid intervals, the wrath of God there is still flowing; it is in fluxu continuo, Isaiah 30:33. a stream of brimstone.

Thirdly, No burden of sin lies upon any of God's elect so long as on the damned, who do, and must bear it: our troubles about sin are but short, though they should run parallel with the line of life; but the troubles of the damned are parallel with the endless line of eternity.

Fourthly, Under these troubles, the soul has hope, but there, all hope is cut off: all the gospel is full of hope, it breathes nothing but hope to sinners that are moving Christ-ward under their troubles; but in hell the pangs of desperation rend their consciences forever. So that, upon all accounts, the state of the damned is inexpressibly dreadful.

Inference. 5. If the burden of sin be so heavy, how sweet then must the pardon of sin be to a sin burdened soul! Is it a refreshment to a prisoner to have his chains knocked off? A comfort to a debtor to have his debts paid, and obligations cancelled? What joy must it then be to a sin-burdened soul, to hear the voice of pardon and peace in his trembling conscience! Is the light of the morning pleasant to a man after a weary, tiresome night? the spring of the year pleasant after a hard and tedious winter? They are so indeed; but nothing so sweet as the favor, peace, and pardon of God, to a soul that has been long restless, and anxious, under the terrors and fears of conscience. For, though after pardon and peace a man remembers sin still, yet it is as one that remembers the dangerous pits, and deep waters, from which he has been wonderfully delivered, and had a narrow escape. O the inconceivable sweetness of a pardon!

Who can read it without tears of joy? Are we glad when the grinding pain of the stone, or racking fits of the cholic are over? And shall we not be transported, when the accusations and

condemnations of conscience are over? Tongue cannot express what these things are; his joy is something that no words can convey to the understanding of another, that never felt the anguish of sin.

Inference. 6. Lastly, In how sad a case are those that never felt any burden in sin, that never were kept waking and restless one night for sin?

There is a burdened conscience, and there is a benumbed conscience. The first is more painful, but the last more dangerous.

O it is a fearful blow of God upon a man's soul, to strike it senseless and stupid, so that though mountains of guilt lie upon it, it feels no pain or pressure: and this is so much more sad, because it incapacitates the soul for Christ, and is a presage and fore runner of hell. It would grieve the heart of a man, to see a delirious person in the rage and height of a fever, to laugh at those that are weeping for him, call them fools, and telling them he is as well as any of them: much so is the case of many thousand souls; the God of mercy pity them.

Second use for counsel.

The only further use I shall make of this point here, shall be to direct and counsel souls that are weary and heavy laden with the burden of sin, in order to their obtaining true rest and peace. And first,

First counsel.

Satisfy not yourselves in fruitless complaints to men. Many do so, but they are never the nearer. I grant it is lawful in spiritual distresses to complain to men, yes, and it is a great mercy if we have any near us in times of trouble that are judicious, tender and faithful, into whose bosoms we may pour out our troubles; but to rest in this, short of Christ, is no better than a snare of the devil to destroy us. Is there not a God to go to in trouble? The best of men, in the neglect of Christ, are but physicians of no value. Be wise and wary in your choice of Christian friends, to whom you open your complaints; some are not clear themselves in the doctrine of Christ and faith, others are of a dark and troubled spirit, as you are, and will but entangle you more. "As for me (says Job) is my complaint to mans and if it were so, why should not my spirit be troubled?" Job 21:4. One hour between Christ and your soul in secret, will do more to your true relief than all other counselors and comforters in the world can do.

Second counsel.

Beware of a false peace, which is more dangerous than your trouble for sin can be. Many men are afraid of their troubles, but I think they have more cause to fear their peace a great deal. There is a twofold peace that ruins most men, peace in sin, and peace with sin: O how glad are some persons when their troubles are gone; but I dare not rejoice with them. It is like him that rejoices his ague is gone, that it has left him in a deep consumption. You are got rid of your troubles, but God knows how you have left them; your wounds are skinned over, better they were kept open. Surely they have much to answer for, that help on these delusions, healing the hurt of souls slightly, by crying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace. The false peace you beget in them, will be a real trouble to yourselves in the issue, Jeremiah 6:14.

Third counsel.

Let all that are under inward troubles for sin, take heed of drawing desperate conclusions against themselves, and the final state of their own souls. Though your case be sad, it is not desperate; though the night be troublesome and tedious, keep on in the way to Christ, and light will spring up. To mourn for sin is your duty; to conclude there is no hope for you in Christ, is your sin. You have wronged God enough already, do not add a further and greater abuse to all the rest, by an absolute despair of mercy. It was your sin formerly to presume beyond any granite, it is your sin now to despair against many commands. I would say as the apostle in another case, I would not have you mourn as men that have no hope: your condition is sad as it is, but yet it is much better than once it was. You were once full of sin and void of sense, now you have the sense of sin, which is no small mercy. You were once quite out of the way and method of mercy, now you are in that very path wherein mercy meets the elect of God. Keep hope, therefore, at the bottom of all your troubles.

Fourth counsel.

Observe whether your troubles for sin produce ouch fruits and effects in your souls as theirs do, which end at last in Christ and everlasting peace.

First, One that is truly burdened with sin, will not allow himself to live in the secret practice of sin; either your trouble will put an end to your course of sinning, or your sinning will put an end to your troubles. Consult 2 Corinthians 7:11.

Secondly, True sorrow for sin, will give you very low and vile thoughts of yourselves; as you were covered with pride before, so you will be covered with shame after God has convinced and humbled

you, Romans 6:21.

Thirdly, A soul really burdened with sin will never stand in his own justification before God, nor extenuate and mince it in his confessions to him, Psalms 2:8; Psalms 2:4.

Fourthly, The burdens of sin will make a man set light by all other burdens of affliction, Lamentations 3:22. Micah 7:9. The more you feel sin, the less you feel affliction.

Fifthly, A soul truly burdened for sin will take no hearty joy or comfort in any outward enjoyment of this world, until Christ come and seek peace to the soul, Lamentations 3:28. Just so the soul sits alone and keeps silence; merry company is a burden, and music is but howling to him.

Fifth counsel.

Beware of those things that make your troubles longer than they ought to be. There be several errors and mistakes that hold poor souls much longer in their fears and terrors than else they might be; and such are,

First, Ignorance of the nature of saving faith, and the necessity of it. Until you come to believe, you cannot have peace; and while you mistake the nature, or apprehend not the necessity of faith, you are not like to find that path at peace.

Secondly, Laboring to heal the wounds that the law has made upon your consciences, by a more strict obedience to it for the future, in the neglect of Christ and his righteousness.

Thirdly, In observance of what God has already done for you, in these preparatory works of the law, in order to your salvation by Jesus Christ. O! if you would but compare what you now are, with what you lately were, it would give some relief. But the last and principal thing is this:

Sixth counsel.

Hasten to Christ in the way of faith, and you shall find rest; and until then all the world cannot give you rest. The sooner you transact with Christ, in the way of faith, the sooner you shall be at peace and enter into his rest; for those that believe do now enter into rest. You may labor and strive, look this way and that, but all in vain; Christ and peace come together. No sooner do you come to him, and roll your burden on him, receive him as he offers himself; but the soul feels itself eased on a sudden; "being justified by faith, we have peace with God", Romans 5:1. And thus in finishing the first, we are brought home to the second observation.

Doctrine. 2. That sin-burdened souls are solemnly invited to come to Christ.

This point sounds sweetly in the ear of a distressed sinner; it is the most joyful voice that ever the soul heard: the voice of blessing from mount Gerizim, the ravishing voice from mount Zion, "You are come to Jesus the Mediator." In opening of it I will show,

1. What it is to come to Christ.

2. How Christ invites men to come to him.

3. Why his invitation is directed to burdened souls.

05.05. Christ, the Physician of Souls

Christ, the Physician of Souls

"But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Matthew 9:12

Having opened, in the former discourses, the nature and method of the application of Christ to sinners; it remains now that I press it upon every soul, as it expects peace and pardon from God, to apply and put on Jesus Christ, that is to get union with him by faith, while he is yet held forth in the free and gracious offers of the gospel. To which purpose I shall now labor in this general use of exhortation, in which my last subject engaged me; wherein divers arguments will be further urged, both from

1. The titles, and

2. The privileges of Jesus Christ.

The titles of Christ are so many motives or arguments fitted to persuade men to come unto him. Among which, Christ, as the Physician of souls, comes under our first consideration, in the text before us.

The occasion of these words of Christ, was the call of Matthew the publican, who, having first opened his heart, next opened his house to Christ, and entertains him there. This strange and unexpected change, wrought upon Matthew, quickly brings in all the neighborhood, and many publicans and sinners resorted there; at which the stomachs of the proud Pharisees began to swell. From this occasion they took offence at Christ, and, in this verse, Christ takes off the offence, by such an answer as was fitted both for their conviction and his own vindication. But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, "The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick".

He gives it, says one, as a reason why he conversed so much with Publicans and sinners, and so little among the Pharisees, because there was more work for him; Christ came to be a physician to sick souls; Pharisees were so well in their own conceit, that Christ saw that they would have little to do with him, and so he applied himself to those who were more sensible of their sickness.

In the words, we have an account of the temper and state both of,

1. The secure and unconvinced sinner,

2. The humbled and convinced sinner. And,

3. Of the carriage of Christ, and his different respect to both.

First, The secure sinner is here described, both with respect to his own apprehensions of himself, as one that is whole, and also by his low value and esteem for Christ, he sees no need of him;

"The whole have no need of a physician."

Secondly, The convinced and humbled sinner is here also described, and that both by his state and condition, he is sick; and by his valuation of Jesus Christ, he greatly needs him: they that are sick need the physician.

Thirdly, We have here Christ's carriage, and different respect to both; the former he rejects and passes by, as those with whom he has no concernment; the latter he converses with in order to their cure.

The words thus opened, are fruitful in observations. I shall neither note nor insist upon any beside this one, which suits the scope of my discourse, namely,

Doctrine. That the Lord Jesus Christ is the only physician for sick souls.

The world is a great hospital, full of sick and dying souls, all wounded by one and the same mortal weapon, sin. Some are senseless of their misery, feel not their pains, value not a physician; others are full of sense, as well as danger: mourn under the apprehension of their condition, and sadly bewail it. The merciful God has, in his abundant compassion to the perishing world, sent a physician from heaven, and given him his orders under the great seal of heaven, for his office, Isaiah 61:1-2. which he opened and read in the audience of the people, Luke 4:18. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach; good tidings unto the meek, he has sent me to bind up the broken- hearted," &c. He is the tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations: he is Jehovah Rophe, the Lord that heals us; and that as he is Jehovah Tzidkenu, the Lord our righteousness.

The brazen serpent that healed the Israelites in the wilderness, was an excellent type of our great physician, Christ, and is expressly applied to him, John 3:14. He rejects none that come, and heals all whom he undertakes; but more particularly, I will, First, Point at those diseases which Christ heals in sick souls, and by what means he heals them.

Secondly, The excellency of this physician above all others: there is none like Christ, he is the only physician for wounded souls.

First, We will enquire into the diseases which Christ the physician cures, and they are reducible to two heads, namely,

1. Sin, and,

2. Sorrow.

First, The diocese of sin; in which three things are found exceeding burdensome to sick souls.

1. The guilt,

2. The dominion,

3. The inherence of sin; all cured by this physician, and how.

First, The guilt of sin; this is a mortal wound, a stab in the very heart of a poor sinner. It is a fond and groundless distinction that Papists make of sins mortal and venial; all sin, in its own nature is

mortal, Romans 6:25. "The wages of sin is death." Yet though it be so in its own nature, Christ can and does cure it by the sovereign balsam of his own precious blood, Ephesians 1:7. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." This is the deepest and deadliest wound the soul of man feels in this world. What is guilt but the obligation of the soul to everlasting punishment and misery?

It puts the soul under the sentence of God to eternal wrath; the condemning sentence of the great and terrible God; than which, nothing is found more dreadful and insupportable: put all pains, all poverty, all afflictions, all miseries, in one scale, and God's condemnation in the other, and you weigh but so many feathers against a talent of lead.

This disease, our great physicians Christ, cures, by remission, which is the dissolving of the obligation to punishment; the loosing of the soul that was bound over to the wrath and condemnation of God, Colossians 1:13-14. Hebrews 6:12. Micah 7:17-19. This remission being made, the soul is immediately cleared from all its obligations to punishment. Romans 8:1. "There is no condemnation." All bonds are cancelled, the guilt of all sins is hewed or removed, original and actual, great and small. This cure is performed upon souls by the blood of Christ; nothing is found in heaven or earth, besides his blood that is able to heal this disease. Hebrews 9:22. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission;" nor is it any blood that will do it, but that only which dropped from the wounds of Christ.

Isaiah 53:5. "By his stripes we are healed. His blood only is innocent and precious blood, 1 Peter 1:19. blood of infinite worth and value; blood of God, Acts 20:18 blood prepared for this very purpose, Hebrews 10:5. This is the blood that performs the cure, and how great a cure is it! for this cure, the souls of believers shall be praising and magnifying their great Physician in heaven to all eternity, Revelation 1:5-6. "To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, &c. to him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever."

Secondly, The next evil in sin cured by Christ, is the dominion of it over the souls of poor sinners. Where sin is in dominion, the soul is in a very sad condition; for it darkens the understanding, depraves the conscience, stiffens the will, hardens the heart, misplaces and disorders all the affections; and thus every faculty is wounded by the power and dominion of sin over the soul. How difficult is the cure of this disease! It passes the skill of angels or men to heal it; but Christ undertakes it, and makes a perfect cure of it at last, and this he does by his Spirit. As he cures the guilt of sin by pouring out his blood for us; so he cures the dominion of sin by pouring out his Spirit upon us. Justification is the cure of guilt, sanctification the cure of the dominion of sin.

For,

First, As the dominion of sin darkens the understanding, 1 Corinthians 2:14 so the Spirit of holiness which Christ sheds upon his people, cures the darkness and blindness of that noble faculty, and restores it again, Ephesians 5:8. They that were darkness are hereby light in the Lord; the anointing of the Spirit teaches them all things, 1 John 2:27.

Secondly, As the dominion of sin depraved and defiled the conscience, Titus 1:15. wounded it to that degree, as to disable it to the performance of all its offices and functions; so that it was neither able to apply, convince, or tremble at the word: So, when the Spirit of holiness is shed forth, O what a tender sense fills the renewed conscience! For what small things will it check, smite, and

rebuke! How strongly will it bind to duty, and bar against sin.

Thirdly, As the dominion of sin stiffened the will and made it stubborn and rebellious, so Christ, by sanctifying it, brings it to be pliant and obedient to the will of God. "Lord, (says the sinner) what will you have me to do!" Acts 9:6.

Fourthly, As the power of sin hardens the heart so that nothing could affect it, or make any impression upon it; when sanctification comes upon the soul, it thaws and breaks it, as hard as it was, and makes it to dissolve in the bosom of a sinner in godly sorrow, Ezekiel 36:26. "I will take away the heart of stone out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." It will now melt ingenuously under the threatenings of the word, 2 Kings 22:19 or the strokes of the rod, Jeremiah 31:18. or the manifestations of grace and mercy, Luke 7:88.

Fifthly, As the power of sin misplaced and disordered all the affections, so sanctification reduces them again and sets them right, Psalms 4:6-7. And thus you see how sanctification becomes the rectitude, health, and due temper of the soul, so far as it prevails, curing the diseases that sin in its dominion filled the soul with. True it is, this cure is not perfected in this life; there are still some remains of the old diseases in the holiest souls, notwithstanding sin be dethroned from its dominion over them: but the cure is begun, and daily advances towards perfection, and at last will be complete, as will appear in the cure of the next evil of sin; namely,

Thirdly, The inherence of sin in the soul: this is a sore disease, the very core and root of all our other complaints and ailments. This made the holy apostle bemoan himself and wail so bitterly, Romans 7:17. because of "sin that dwelt in him." And the same misery is bewailed by all sanctified persons all the world over.

It is a wonderful mercy to have the guilt and dominion of sin cured, but we shall never be perfectly sound and well, until the existence or indwelling of sin in our natures be cured too: when once that is done, then we shall feel no more pain nor sorrows for sin: and this our great Physician will at last perform for us and upon us. But as the cure of guilt was by our justification, the cure of the dominion of sin by our sanctification: so the third and last, which perfects the whole cure, will be by our glorification: and until then, it is not to be expected. For it is a clear case, that sill like ivy in the old walls, will never be gotten out until the walls be pulled down, and then it is pulled up by the roots. This cure Christ will perform in a moment, upon our dissolution. For it is plain,

First, That none but perfected souls, freed from all sin, are admitted into heaven, Ephesians 5:27. Hebrews 12:23. Revelation 21:27.

Secondly, It is as plain, that no such personal perfection and freedom is found in any man on this side death and the grave, 1 John 1:8. 1 Kings 8:46. Php 3:12. a truth sealed by the sad experience of all the saints on earth.

Thirdly, If such freedom and perfection must be before we can be perfectly happy, and no such thing be done in this life, it remains that it must be done immediately upon their dissolution, and at the very time of their glorification. As sin came in at the time of the union of their souls and bodies in the womb, will go out at the time of their separation by death; then will Christ put the last hand to this glorious work, and perfect that cure which has been so long under his hand, in this world; and thenceforth sin shall have no power upon them, it shall never tempt them more, it shall never defile

them more, it shall never grieve and sadden their hearts any more: henceforth it shall never cloud their evidences, darken their understandings, or give the least interruption to their communion with God. When sin is gone, all these, its mischievous effects, are gone with it. So that I may speak it to the comfort of all gracious hearts, according to what the Lord told the Israelites, in Deuteronomy 12:1-32 (to which I allude for illustration of this most comfortable truth) "You shall not do after all the things that you do here this day, every man whatever is right in his own eyes, for you are not as yet come to the rest, and to the inheritance which the Lord your God gives you." While you are under Christ's cure upon earth, but not perfectly healed, your understandings mistake, your thoughts wander, your affections are dead, and your communion with God is daily interrupted; but it shall not be so in heaven, where the cure is perfect: you shall not there know, love, or delight in God in the manner you do this day; for you are not as yet come to the rest, and to the inheritance which the Lord your God gives you. And so much as to the diseases of sin, and Christ's method of curing them.

Secondly, As sin is the disease of the saints, so also is sorrow: the best saints must pass through the valley of Bacha, to heaven. How many tears fall from the eyes of the saints, upon the account of outward as well as inward troubles, even after their reconciliation with God? Through much tribulation we must enter into the "kingdom of God;' Acts 14:22. It would be too great a digression in this place, to note but the more general heads under which almost infinite particulars of troubles and afflictions are found; it shall suffice only to show, that whatever distress or trouble any poor soul is in, upon any account whatever, if that soul belongs to Jesus Christ, he will take care of it for the

present, and deliver it at last by a complete cure.

First, Christ cures troubles, by sanctifying them to the souls of his that are wider affliction, and makes their very troubles medicinal and healing to them. Trouble is a scorpion, and has a deadly sting, but Christ is a wise physician, and extracts a sovereign oil out of this scorpion, that heals the wound it makes.

By afflictions, our wise Physician purges our corruptions, and so prevents or cures greater troubles by lesser; inward sorrows by outward ones. Isaiah 27:9. "By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin."

Secondly, Christ cures outward troubles by inward consolations, which are made to rise in the inner man as high as the waters of affliction do upon the outward man, 2 Corinthians 1:5. One drop of spiritual comfort is sufficient to sweeten a whole ocean of outward trouble. It was an high expression of an afflicted father, whom God comforted, just upon the death of his dear and only son, with some clearer manifestations of his love than was usual: "O (said he) might I but have such consolations as these, I could be willing (were it possible) to lay an only son into the grave every day I have to live in this world." Thus all the troubles of the world are cured by Christ. John 16:33. "In the world you shall have trouble, but in me you shall have peace.

Thirdly, Christ cures all outward sorrows and troubles in his people by death, which is their removal from the place of sorrows to peace and rest for evermore. Now God wipes all tears from their eyes, and the days of their mourning are at an end; they then put off the garments and spirit of mourning, and enter into peace, Isaiah 57:2. They come to that place and state where tears and

sighs are things unknown to the inhabitants; one step beyond the state of this mortality, brings us quite out of the sight and hearing of all troubles and lamentations. These are the diseases of souls; sin, and sorrow; and thus they are cured by Christ, the Physician.

Secondly, Next I shall show you that Jesus Christ is the only Physician of souls, none like him for a sick sinner; and this will be evident in divers respects.

First, None so wise and judicious as Jesus Christ, to understand and comprehend the nature, depth and danger of soul- diseases. O how ignorant and unacquainted are men with the state and case of afflicted souls! But "Christ has the tongue of the learned, that he should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary," Isaiah 50:4. He only understands the weight of sin, and depth of inward troubles of sin.

Secondly, None so able to cure and heal the wounds of afflicted souls as Christ is; he only has those medicines that can cure a sick soul. The blood of Christ, and nothing else, in heaven or earth, is able to cure the mortal wounds which guilt inflicts upon a trembling conscience; let men try all other receipts and costly experience shall convince them of their insufficiency. Conscience may be benumbed by stupefactive medicines, prepared by the devil, for that end; but pacified it can never be but by the blood of Christ, Heb. 16 22.

Thirdly, None so tender-hearted and sympathizing with sick souls as Jesus Christ; he is full of affections and tender compassions to afflicted souls; he is one that can have compassion, because he has had experience, Hebrews 5:2. If I must come unto the surgeon’s hands with broken bones, give me such an one to chose whose own bones have been broken, who has felt the anguish in himself. Christ knows what it is by experience, having felt the anguish of inward troubles, the weight of God’s wrath, and the terrors of a forsaking God, more than any or all the sons of men: this makes him tender over distressed souls. Isaiah 42:3. "A bruised reed he will not break, and smoking flax he will not quench."

Fourthly, None cures in so wonderful a method as Christ does; he heals us by his stripes, Isaiah 53:5. The Physician dies that the patient may live: his wounds must bleed, that ours may be cured; he feels the smart and pain, that we might have ease and comfort. No physician but Christ will cure others at this rate.

Fifthly, None so ready to relieve a sick soul as Christ; he is within the call of a distressed soul at all times. Are you sick for sin, weary of sin, and made truly willing to part with sin? lift up but your sincere cry to the Lord Jesus for help, and he will quickly be with you. When the prodigal, the emblem of a convinced, humbled sinner, said, in himself; I will return to my father, the father ran to meet him, Luke 15:20. He can be with you in a moment.

Sixthly, None so willing to receive and undertake all distressed and afflicted souls as Jesus Christ is, he refuses none that come to him. John 6:37. "He who comes unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Whatever their sins have been, or their sorrows are however they have wounded their own souls with the deepest gashes of guilt; however desperate and helpless their case appears in their own or others eyes, he never puts them off, or discourages them, if they be but willing to come, Isaiah 1:18-19.

Seventhly, None so happy and successful as Christ; he never fails of performing a perfect cure upon those he undertakes; never was it known that any soul miscarried in his hands, John 3:15-16.

Other physicians, by mistakes, by ignorance, or carelessness, fill church yards, and cast away the lives of men; but Christ suffers none to perish that commit themselves to him.

Eighthly, None so free and generous as Christ; he does all gratis; he sells not his medicines, though they be of infinite value; but freely gives them; Isaiah 55:1. "He who has no money, let him come." If any be sent away, it is the rich, Luke 1:53. not the poor and needy: those that will not accept the remedy as a free gift, but will needs purchase it at a price.

Ninthly, and lastly, None rejoice in the recovery of souls more than Christ does. O! it is unspeakably delightful to him to see the efficacy of his blood upon our souls; Isaiah 53:11. "He shall see the travail of his soul, (I. e. the success of his death and sufferings) and shall be satisfied." When he foresaw the success of the gospel upon the world, it is said, Luke 10:21. "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in Spirit". And thus you see there is no physician like Christ for sick souls

The uses of this point are,

For information and direction

First, From whence we are informed of many great and necessary truths deducible from this: As,

Inference 1. How inexpressible id the grace of God, in providing such a physician as Christ, for the sick and dying souls of sinners! O blessed be God that there is a balm in Gilead, and a Physician there! that their case is not desperate, forlorn and remediless, as that the devils and damned is. There is but one case exempted from cure, and that, such as is not incident to any sensible, afflicted soul, Matthew 12:31. and this only excepted, all manner of sins and diseases are capable of a cure. Though there be such a disease as is incurable, yet take this for your comfort, never any soul was sick, that is sensibly burdened with it, and willing to come to Jesus Christ for healing; for under that sin the will is so wounded, that they have no desire to Christ. O inestimable mercy! that the sickest sinner is capable of a perfect cure! There be thousands, and ten thousands now in heaven and earth, who said once, Never was any case like theirs; so dangerous, so hopeless. The greatest of sinners have been perfectly recovered by Christ, 1 Timothy 1:15. 1 Corinthians 6:11. O mercy, never to be duly estimated!

Infer. 2. What a powerful restraint from sin is the very method ordained by God, for the cure of it! Isaiah 53:5. "By his stripes we are healed." The Physician must die, that the patient might live; no other thing but the blood, the precious blood of Christ, is found in heaven or earth able to heal us, Hebrews 9:22; Hebrews 9:26. This blood of Christ must be freshly applied to every new wound sin makes upon our souls, 1 John 2:1-2. every new sin wounds him afresh, opens the wounds of Christ anew. O think of this again and again, you that so easily yield to the solicitations of Satan. Is it so easy and so cheap to sin as you seem to make it? Does the cure of souls cost nothing? True, it is free to us, but was it so to Christ? No, it was not; he knows the price of it, though you do not. Has Christ healed you by his stripes, and can you put him under fresh sufferings for you so easily? Have you forgot also your own sick days and nights for sin, that you are careless in resisting and preventing it? Sure it is not easy for saints to wound Christ, and their own souls, at one stroke. If

you renew your sins, you must also renew your sorrows and repentance, Psalms 51:1-19 title. 2 Samuel 12:13. you must feel the anguish and pain of a troubled spirit again, things with which the saints are not unacquainted; of which they may say, as the church, "Remembering my affliction, the wormwood and the gal], my soul has them still in remembrance," Lamentations 3:19. Yes, and if you will be remiss in your watch, and so easily incur new guilt, though a pardon in the blood of Christ may heal your souls, yet some rod or other, in the hand of a displeased father, shall afflict your bodies, or smite you in your outward comforts, Psalms 89:23.

Inference. 3. If Christ be the only physician of sick souls, what sin and folly is it for me, to take Christ's work out of his hands, and attempt to be their own physician.

Thus do those that superstitiously endeavor to heal their souls by afflicting their bodies; not Christ's blood, but their own, must be the plaster: and as blind Papists, so many carnal and ignorant Protestants strive, by confession, restitution, reformation, and stricter course of life, to heal those moulds that sin has made upon their souls, without any respect to the blood of Christ: but this course shall not profit them at all. It may, for a time divert, but can never heal them: the wounds so skinned over, will open and bleed again. God grant it be not when our souls shall be out of the reach of the true and only remedy.

Inference. 4. How sad is tile case of those souls, to whom Christ has not yet been a physician? They are mortally wounded by sin, and are like to die of their sickness, no saving, healing applications have hitherto been made unto their souls: and this is the case of the greatest part of mankind, yes, of them that live under the discoveries of Christ in the gospel. Which appears by these sad symptoms.

First, In that their eyes have not yet been opened, to see their sin and misery; in which illumination the cure of souls begin, Acts 26:18. To this day he has not given them eyes to see, Deuteronomy 29:4 but that terrible stroke of God which blinds and hardens them, is too visibly upon them, mentioned in Isaiah 6:9-10. No hope of healing, until the sinner's eyes be opened to see his sin and misery.

Secondly, In that nothing will divorce and separate them from their lusts; a sure sign they are not under Christ's cure, nor were ever made sick of sin. O if ever Christ be a physician to your soul, he will make you loathe what now you love, and say to your most pleasant and most profitable lusts, Get you hence, Isaiah 30:22. Until then, there is no ground to think that Christ is a physician to you.

Thirdly, In that they have no sensible and pressing need of Christ, nor make any earnest enquiry after him, as most certainly you would do, if you were in the way of healing and recovery. These, and many other sad symptoms, do too plainly discover the disease of sin, to be in its full strength upon your souls; and if it so continue, how dreadful will the issue be? See Isaiah 6:9-10.

Inference. 5.. What cause have they to be glad, that are under the hand and care of Christ, in order to a cure, and who do find, or may, upon due examination, find their souls are in a very hopeful way of recovery! Can we rejoice when the strength of a natural disease is broken, and nature begins to recover ease and vigor again? And shall we not much more rejoice, when our souls begin to mend, and recover sensibly, and all comfortable signs of health and life appear upon them? particularly, when the understanding, which was ignorant and dark, has the light of life

beginning to dawn into it; such is that in 1 John 2:27. When the will which was rebellious and inflexible to the will of God, is brought to comply with that holy will, saying, "Lord, what will you have me to do?" Acts 9:6.

When the heart, which was harder than an adamant, is now brought to contrition for sin, and can mourn as heartily over it, as ever a father did for a dead son, a beloved and only son; when its aversations from God are gone, at least have no such power as once they had; but the thoughts are now fixed much upon God, and spiritual things begin to grow pleasant to the soul; when times of duty come to be longed for, and the soul never better pleased than in such seasons: when the hypocrisy of the heart is purged out, so that we begin to do all that we do heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men, Col. 3:28. 1 Thessalonians 2:4. when we begin to make conscience of secret sins, Psalms 119:118. and of secret duties, Matthew 6:5-6. when we have an equal respect to all God's commandments, Psalms 119:8. and our hearts are under the holy and awful eye of God, which does indeed over-awe our souls, Genesis 17:1.

O what sweet signs of a recovering soul are these! Surely such are in the skillful hand of the great Physician, who will perfect what yet remains to be done.

Second use for direction.

In the last place, this point yields matter of advice and direction to poor souls that are under the disease of sin; and they are of two sorts, which I will distinctly speak to: namely,

First, Such as are under their first sickness of spiritual sorrow for sin, and know not what course to take: or, Secondly, Such as have been longer in the hands of Christ the Physician, but are troubled to see the cure advance so slowly upon them, and fear the issue.

First, As to those that are in their first troubles for sin, and know not what course to take for ease and safety; I would address to them these following counsels.

First, Shut your ears against the dangerous counsels of carnal persons, or relations; for as they themselves are unacquainted with these troubles, so also are they with all proper remedies: and it is very usual with the devil to convex his temptations to distressed souls, by such hands; because, by them, he can do it with least suspicion. It was Augustine's complaint, that his own father took little care for his soul; and many parents act, in this case, as if they were employed by Satan.

Secondly, Be not too eager to get out of trouble, but be content to take God's way, and wait his time. No woman that is wise, would desire to have her travail hastened one day before the due time; nor will it be your interest to hasten too soon out of trouble. It is true, times of trouble are apt to seem tedious; but a false peace will endanger you more than a long trouble: a man may lengthen is own troubles to the loss of his own peace, and may shorten them to the hazard of his own soul.

Thirdly, Open your case to wise, judicious, and experienced Christians, and especially the ministers of Christ, whose office it is to counsel and direct you in these difficulties; and let not your troubles lie, like a secret, smothering fire, always in your own breasts. I know men are more ashamed to open their sins under convictions, than they were to commit them before conviction: but this is your interest, and the true way to your rest and peace. If there be with you, or near you, an interpreter, one of a thousand, to show you your righteousness, and remedy, as it lies in Christ;

neglect not your own souls, in a sinful concealment of your case: it will be the joy of their hearts to be employed in such work as this.

Fourthly, Be much with God in secret, open your hearts to him, and pour out your complaints into his bosom. Psalms 102:1-28 bears a title very suitable to your case and duty; yes, you will find in Your troubles work kindly, and God intend a cure upon your souls, that nothing will be able to keep God and your souls asunder: whatever your incumbrances in the world be, some time will be daily redeemed, to be spent between God and you.

Fifthly, Plead hard with God in prayer for help and healing. "Heal my soul, (says David) for I have sinned against you," Psalms 41:4. Tell him Christ has his commission sealed for such as you are: he was sent to "bind up the broken hearted," Isaiah 61:1. Tell him he came into the world, "to seek and save that which was lost," and so are you now, in your own account and apprehensions. Lord, what profit is there in my blood? Will you pursue a dried leaf? And why is my heart wounded with the sense of sin, and mine eyes open to see my danger and misery; Are not these the first dawnings of mercy upon sinners? O let it appear, that the time of mercy, even the set time, is now come.

Sixthly, Understand your peace to be in Christ only, and faith to be the only way to Christ and rest; let the great enquiry of your souls be after Christ and faith; study the nature and necessity of these, and cry to God day and night for strength to carry you to Christ in the way of faith.

Secondly, As to those that have been longer under the hands of Christ, and yet are still in troubles, and cannot obtain peace, but their wounds bleed still, and all they hear in sermons, or do in the way of duty, will not bring them to rest; to such I only add two or three words for a close.

First, Consider whether you have rightly closed with Christ since your first awakening, and whether there be not some way of sin, in which you still live: if so, no wonder your wounds are kept open, and your souls are strangers to peace.

Secondly, If you be conscious of no such flaw in the foundation, consider how much of this trouble may arise from your constitution and natural temper, which being melancholy, will be doubtful and suspicious; you may find it so in other cases of less moment, and be sure Satan will not be wanting to improve it.

Thirdly, Acquaint yourselves more with the nature of true justifying faith; a mistake in that has prolonged the troubles of many; if you look for it in no other act but assurance, you may easily overlook it as it lies, in the mean time, in your affiance or acceptance. A true and proper conception of saving faith would go far in the cure of many troubled souls.

Fourthly, Be more thankful to shun sin, than to get yourselves clear of trouble: it is sad to walk in darkness, but worse to lie under guilt. Say, Lord, I would rather be grieved myself, than be a grief to your Spirit. O keep me from sin, however long you keep me under sorrow. Wait on God in the way of faith, and in a tender spirit towards sin, and your wounds shall be healed at last by your great Physician.

Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ.

05.06. Christ, "The Mercy"

Christ, "The Mercy"

"To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and remember his holy covenant." Luke 1:72

This scripture is part of Zechariah's prophecy, at the rising of that bright star, John, the harbinger and fore-runner of Christ:

They are some of the first words he spoke after Gad had loosed his tongue, which, for a time, was struck dumb for his unbelief. His tongue is now unbound, and at liberty to proclaim to all the world, the unspeakable riches of mercy through Jesus Christ, in a song of praise. Wherein note,

The mercy celebrated, namely, redemption by Christ, Luke 1:68. The description of Christ by place and property, Luke 1:69. The faithfulness of God in our redemption this way, Luke 1:70. The benefit of being so redeemed by Christ, Luke 1:71. The exact accomplishment of all the promises made to the fathers in sending Christ, the mercy promised, into the world, Luke 1:72. "To perform the mercy promised to our fathers," &t. In these words we find two parts, namely,

1. A mercy freely promised.

2. The promised mercy faithfully performed.

First, You have a mercy freely promised, namely, by God the Father, from the beginning of the world, and often repeated and confirmed in several succeeding ages, to the fathers, in his covenant-transactions.

This mercy is Jesus Christ, of whom he speaks in this prophecy the same which he stilts "An horn of salvation in the house of David," Luke 1:69.

The mercy of God in scripture, is put either for,

1. His free favor to the creature. Or,

2. The effects and fruits of that favor.

It is put for the free and undeserved favor of God to the creature, and this favor of God may respect the creature two ways, either as undeserving, or as ill-deserving.

It respected innocent man, as undeserving, for Adam could put no obligation upon his benefactor. It respects fallen man, as ills deserving. Innocent man could not merit favor, and fallen man did merit wrath: the favor or mercy of God to both is every way free; and that is the first acceptance of the word mercy: but then it is also taken for the effects and fruits of God's favor, and they are either,

1. Principal and primary: or,

2. Subordinate and secondary.

Of secondary and subordinate mercies, there are multitudes, both temporal, respecting the body, and spiritual, respecting the soul; but the principal and primary mercy is but one, and that is Christ, the first-born of mercy; the capital mercy, the comprehensive root-mercy, from whom are all other mercies; and therefore called by a singular emphasis in my text, The mercy; that is the mercy of all mercies; without whom no drop of saving mercy can flow to any of the sons of men; and in whom are all the tender affections of divine mercy yearning upon poor sinners. 'The mercy, and the mercy Promised. The first promise of Christ was made to Adam, Genesis 3:15. and was frequently renewed afterwards to Abraham, to David, and as the text speaks, unto the fathers, in their respective generations.

Secondly, We find here also the promised mercy faithfully performed; "To perform the mercy promised." What mercy soever the love of God engaged him to promise, the faithfulness of God stands engaged for the performance thereof. Christ, the promised mercy, is not only performed truly, but he is also performed according to the promise in all the circumstances thereof, exactly. So he was promised to the fathers, and just so performed to us their children: Hence the note is,

Doctrine. That Jesus Christ, the mercy of mercies, was graciously promised and faithfully performed by God to his people.

Three things are here to be opened.

First, Why Christ is stiled the mercy.

Secondly, What kind of mercy Christ is to his people.

Thirdly, How this mercy was performed.

First, Christ is the mercy, emphatically so called: the peerless, invaluable, and matchless mercy: Because he is the prime fruit of the mercy of God to sinners. The mercies of God are infinite; mercy gave the world and us our being; all our protection, provision, and comforts in this world are the fruits of mercy, the free gifts of divine favor: but Christ is the first end chief; all other mercies, compared with him, are but fruits from that mot, and streams from that fountain of mercy; the very affections of divine mercy are in Christ, as in Luke 1:78 according to the tender mercies, or as the Greek, the yearning affections of the mercy of God.

Secondly, Christ is the mercy, because all the mercy of God to sinners is dispensed and conveyed through Christ to them, John 1:1-51. Colossians 2:3. Ephesians 4:7. Christ is the medium of all divine communications, the channel of grace, through him are both the decursus et recursus gratiarum; the flows of mercy from God to us, and the returns of praise from us to God. Fond and vain therefore are all the expectations of mercy out of Christ; no drop of saving mercy runs beside this channel.

Thirdly, Christ is the mercy, because all inferior mercies derive both their nature, value, sweetness, and duration from Christ, the fountain mercy of all other mercies.

First, They derive their nature from Christ; for out of him, those things which men call mercies, are rather traps and snares, than mercies to them, Proverbs 1:32. The time will come when the rich that are christless, will wish, O that we had been poor! And nobles, that are now ennobled by the new birth, O that we had been among the low rank of men! All these things that pass for valuable

mercies, like ciphers, signify much when such an important figure as Christ stands before them, else they signify nothing to any man s comfort or benefit.

Secondly, They derive their value as well as nature from Christ: For how little, I pray you, does it signify to any man to be rich, honorable, politic, and successful in all his designs in this world, if after all he must lie down in hell?

Thirdly, All other mercies derive their sweetness from Christ, and are but insipid things without him. There is a twofold sweetness in things; one natural, another spiritual: Those that are out of Christ can relish the first, believers only relish both. They have the natural sweetness that is in mercy itself, and a sweetness supernatural from Christ and the covenant, the way in which they receive them. Hence it is, that some men taste more spiritual sweetness in their daily bread, than others do in the Lord's supper; and the same mercy, by this means, becomes a feast to soul and body at once.

Fourthly, All mercies have their duration and perpetuity from Christ; all christless persons hold their mercies upon the greatest contingencies and terms of uncertainty; if they be continued during this life, that is all: there is not one drop of mercy after death.

But the mercies of the saints are continued to eternity; the end of their mercies on earth, is the beginning of their better mercies in heaven. There is a twofold end of mercies, one perfective, another destructive; the death of the saints perfects and completes their mercies; the death of the wicked destroys and cuts off their mercies. For these reasons, Christ is called the mercy.

Secondly, In the next place, let us enquire what kind of mercy Christ is; and we shall find many lovely and transcendent properties to commend him to our souls.

First, He is free and undeserved mercy, called upon that account, The gift of God, John 4:10. And to show how free this gift was, God gave him to us when we were enemies, Romans 5:8. Needs must that mercy be free, which is given, not only to the undeserving, but to the ill deserving; the benevolence of God was the sole, impulsive cause of this gift, John 3:16.

Secondly, Christ is a full mercy, replenished with all that answers to the wishes, or wants of sinners; in him alone is found whatever the justice of an angry God requires for satisfaction, or the necessities of souls require for their supply. Christ is full of mercy, both extensively, and intensively; in him are all kinds and sorts of mercies; and in him are the highest and most perfect degrees of mercy; "For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fullness dwell," Colossians 1:19.

Thirdly, Christ is the seasonable mercy, given by the Father to us in due time, Romans 5:6. In the fullness of time, Galatians 4:4. a seasonable mercy in his exhibition to the world in general, and a seasonable mercy in his application to the soul in particular; the wisdom of God pitched upon the best time for his incarnation, and it takes the very properest for its application. When a poor soul is distressed, lost, at its wits end, and ready to perish, then comes Christ. All God's works are done in season, but none more seasonable than this great work of salvation by Christ.

Fourthly, Christ is the necessary mercy, there is an absolute necessity of Jesus Christ; hence in scripture he is called the "bread of life," John 6:41. he is bread to the hungry; he is the "water of life," John 7:37. as cold water to the thirsty soul. He is a ransom for captives, Matthew 20:28. a

garment to the naked, Romans 13. ult. Bread is not so necessary to the hungry, nor water to the thirsty, nor a ransom to the captive, nor a garment to the naked, as Christ is to the soul of a sinner: The breath of our nostrils, the life of our souls is in Jesus Christ.

Fifthly, Christ is a fountain-mercy, and all other mercies flow from him: A believer may say with Christ, "All my springs are in you;" from his merit, and from his spirit, flow our redemption, justification, sanctification, peace, joy in the Holy Spirit, and blessedness in the world to come: "In that day shall there be a fountain opened," Zechariah 13:1.

Sixthly, Christ is a satisfying mercy; he who is full of Christ, can feel the want of nothing. "I desire to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified," 1 Corinthians 2:2. Christ bounds and terminates the vast desires of the soul: He is the very sabbath of the soul. How hungry, empty, and straitened on every side is the soul of man in the abundance end fullness of all outward things, until it come to Christ? the weary motions of a restless soul, like those of a river, cannot be at rest until they pour themselves into Christ, the ocean of blessedness.

Seventhly, Christ is a peculiar mercy, intended for, and applied to a remnant among men; some would extend redemption as large as the world, but the gospel limits it to those only that believe; and those believers are upon that account called a peculiar people, 1 Peter 2:9. The offers of Christ indeed are large and general, but the application of Christ is but to few, Isaiah 53:1.

The greater cause have they to whom Christ comes, to lie with their mouths in the dust, astonished and overwhelmed with the sense of so peculiar and distinguished a mercy.

Eighthly, Jesus Christ is a table mercy, suited in every respect to all our needs and wants, 1 Corinthians 1:20. wherein the admirable wisdom of God is illustriously displayed; "You are complete in him," (says the apostle) Colossians 2:20. Are we enemies? He is reconciliation: Are we sold to sin and Satan? He is redemption: Are we condemned by the law? He is the Lord our righteousness: Has sin polluted us? He is a fountain opened for sin, and for uncleanness: Are we lost by departing from God? He is the way to the Father. Rest is not so suitable to the weary, nor bread to the hungry, as Christ is to the sensible sinner.

Ninthly, Christ is an astonishing and wonderful mercy; his Name is called wonderful, Isaiah 9:6. and as his name is, so is he; a wonderful Christ: His Person is a wonder, 1 Timothy 3:16. "Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh.*

His abasement is wonderful, Php 2:6. His love is a wonderful love; his redemption full of wonders; angels desire to look into it.

He is, and will be admired by angels and saints to all eternity.

Tenthly, Jesus Christ is an incomparable and matchless mercy; "as the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons," (says the enamored spouse) Song of Solomon 2:8. Draw the comparison how you will between Christ and all other enjoyments, you will find none in heaven nor on earth to equal him: He is more than all externals, as the light of the sun is more than that of a curdle: Nay, even the worst of Christ is better than the best of the world; his reproaches are better than the world’s pleasures, Hebrews 11:25. He is more than all spirituals, as the fountain is more than the stream. He is more than justification, as the cause is more than the effect; more than sanctification, as the person him self is more than the image or picture. He is

more than all peace, all comfort, all joy, as the tree is more than the fruit. Nay, draw the comparison between Christ and things eternal, and you will find him better than they; for what is in heaven without Christ, Psalms 73:1-28. "Whom have I in heaven but you?" If Christ should say to the saints, take heaven among you, but as for me I will withdraw myself from you; the saints would weep, even in heaven itself, and say, Lord, heaven will be no more heaven to us, except you be there, who are by far the better half of heaven.

Eleventhly, Christ is an unsearchable mercy; who can fully express his wonderful name? Proverbs 30:4. Who can tell over his unsearchable riches, Ephesians 3:8. Hence it is that souls never tire in the study or love of Christ, because new wonders are eternally rising out of him. He is a deep which no line of any created understanding, angelical or human, can fathom.

Twelfthly, and lastly, Christ is an everlasting mercy; "the same yesterday, to day, and forever," Hebrews 13:8. All other enjoyments are perishable, time-eaten things; time, like a moth, will fret them out; But the riches of Christ are durable riches, Proverbs 8:18. The graces of Christ are durable graces, John 4:14.

All the creatures are flowers, that appear and fade in their month; but this Rose of Sharon, this Lily of the Valley never withers. Thus you see the mercy performed with its desirable properties.

Thirdly, The last thing to be opened is the manner of God’s performing his mercy to his people; which the Lord did,

1. Realty and truly, as he had promised him.

2. Exactly agreeable to the promises and predictions of him.

First, Really and truly; as he had promised, so he made good the promise. Acts 2:36. "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God has made that same Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

The manifestation of Christ in the flesh was no phantasm or delusion, but a most evident and palpable truth. 1 John 1:1. "That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled." A truth so certain, that the assertors of it appealed to the very enemies of Christ for the certainty thereof, Acts 2:22. Yes, not only the sacred, but profane writers, witness to it; not only the evangelists and apostles, but even the heathen writers of those times, both Roman and Jewish, as Suetonius, Tacitus, Plinius the younger, and Josephus the Jewish antiquary, do all acknowledge it.

Secondly, As God did really and truly perform Christ the promised mercy, so he performed this promised mercy exactly agreeable to the promises, types, and predictions made of him to the fathers, even the most minute circumstances thereof. This is a great truth for our faith to be established in: let us, therefore, cast our eyes both upon the promises and performances God, with respect to Christ, the mercy of mercies. See how he was represented to the fathers long before his manifestation in the flesh; and what an one he appeared to be when he was really exhibited in the flesh.

First; As to his person and qualifications, as it was foretold, so it was fulfilled. His original was said to be unsearchable and eternal, Micah 5:2. and so he affirmed himself to be, Revelation 1:11. "I

am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." John 6:31-32. "Before Abraham was, I am." His two natures, united into one person, were plainly foretold, Zechariah 13:7. The man my Fellow; and such a one God performed, Romans 9:5. His immaculate purity and holiness were foretold, Daniel 9:24. "To anoint the most Holy;" some render it, the great Saint, the Prince of Saints; and such an one he was indeed, when he lived in this world. John 8:46. "Which of you convinces me of sin?" His Offices were foretold, the prophetical Office predicted, Deuteronomy 18:15. and fulfilled in him, John 1:18.

His priestly office foretold, Psalms 110:4. fulfilled, Hebrews 9:14. his kingly Office foretold, Micah 5:2. and in him fulfilled; his very enemies being judges, Matthew 27:37.

Secondly, As to his birth, the time, place, and manner thereof were foretold to the fathers, and exactly performed to a little.

First, The time prefixed, more generally in Jacob's prophecy, Genesis 44:10. When the scepter should depart from Judah, as, indeed, it did in Herod the Idumean: More particularly in Daniel's seventy weeks, from the decree of Darius, Daniel 9:24. answering exactly to the time of his birth; so cogent and full of proof, that Porphyry, the great enemy of Christians, had no other evasion, but that this prophecy was devised after the event: Which yet the Jews (as bitter enemies to Christ as himself) will by no means allow to be true.

And, lastly, the time of his birth was exactly pointed at in Haggai's prophecy, Haggai 2:7; Haggai 2:9. compared with Malachi 3:1. He must come while the second temple stood; at that time was a general expectation of him, John 1:19. and at that very time he came, Luke 2:38.

Secondly, The place of his birth was foretold to be Bethlehem Ephrata, Micah 5:2. and so it was, Matthew 2:5-6. to be brought up in Nazareth, Zechariah 6:12. "Behold the man whose name is the Branch."

The word is Netzer, whence is the word Nazarite. And there indeed was our Lord brought up, Matthew 2:23.

Thirdly, His parent was to be a virgin, Isaiah 7:14. punctually fulfilled, Matthew. 50: 20, 21, 22, 23.

Fourthly, His stock, or tribe, was foretold to be Judah, Genesis 49:10 and it is evident, says the apostle, "that our Lord sprang out of Judah," Hebrews 7:14.

Fifthly, His harbinger, or forerunner was foretold, Malachi 4:5-6 fulfilled in John the Baptist, Luke 1:16-17.

Sixthly, The obscurity and baseness of his birth were predicted, Isaiah 53:2. Zechariah 9:9. to which the event answered, Luke 2:12.

Thirdly, His doctrine and miracles were foretold, Isaiah 16:1-2. Isaiah 35:4-5 the accomplishment whereof in Christ is evident in the history of all the evangelism.

Fourthly, His death for us was foretold by the prophets, Daniel 9:26. "The Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself:" Isaiah 53:1-12. "He was wounded for our transgressions." And so he was, John 11:1-57. The very kind and manner of his death was prefigured in the brazen serpent, his type; and answered in his death upon the cross, John 3:14.

Fifthly, His burial in the tomb of a rich man was foretold, Isaiah 53:9. and accomplished most exactly, Matthew 27:59-60. Sixthly, His resurrection from the dead was typed out in Jonah, and fulfilled in Christ's abode three days and nights in the grave, Matthew 12:49.

Seventhly, The wonderful spreading of the gospel in the world, even to the Isles of the Gentiles, was prophesied of, Isaiah 49:6. to the truth whereof we are not only the witnesses, but the happy instances and examples of it. Thus the promised mercy was performed.

Inference 1. If Christ be the mercy of mercies, the medium of conveying all other mercies from God to men; then in vain do men expect and hope for mercy of God out of Jesus Christ.

I know many poor sinners comfort themselves with this, when they come upon a bed of sickness; I am sinful, but God is merciful: and it is very true God is merciful; plenteous in mercy; his mercy is great above the heavens; mercy pleases him; and all this they that are in Christ shall find experimentally, to their comfort and salvation. But what is all this to you, if you are christless?

There is not one drop of saving mercy that comes in any other channel than Christ to the soul of any man.

But must I then expect no mercy out of Christ? This is a hard case, very uncomfortable doctrine. Yes, you may be a Christless, and covenantless soul, and yet have variety of temporal mercies, as Ishmael had, Genesis 17:20-21. God may give you the fatness of the earth, riches, honors, pleasures, a numerous and prosperous posterity; will that content you? Yes, yes, if I may have heaven too: No, neither heaven, nor pardon, nor any other spiritual or eternal mercy may be expected out of Christ. Jude 1:21. 0 deceive not yourselves in this point; there are two bars between you and all spiritual mercies, namely, the guilt of sin, and the filth of sin; and nothing but your own union with Christ can remove these, and so open the passage for spiritual mercies to your souls.

Why, but I will repent of sin, strive to obey the commands of God, make restitution for the wrongs I have done, cry to God for mercy, bind my soul with vows and strong resolutions against sin for time to come: will not all this lay a ground work for hope of mercy to my soul? No, this will not, this cannot do.

First, All your sorrows, tears and mournings for sin cannot obtain mercy; could you shed as many tears for any sin that ever you committed, as all the children of Adam have shed upon any account whatever, since the creation of the world; they will not purchase the pardon of that one sin; for the law accepts no short payment; it requires plenary satisfaction, and will not discharge any soul without it; nor can it acknowledge or own your souls to be such. The repentance of a soul finds, through Christ, acceptance with God, but out of him it is nothing.

Secondly, All your strivings to obey the commands of God, and live more strictly for time to come, will not obtain mercy. Matthew 5:1-48. "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Thirdly, Your restitution, and reparation of wrongs you have done, cannot obtain mercy. Judas restored, and yet was damned. Man is repaired, but God is not. Remission is the act of God, it is he must loose your consciences from the bond of guilt, or they can never be loosed.

Fourthly, All your cries to God for mercy will not prevail for mercy, if you be out of Christ, Matthew 7:22. Job 27:29. A righteous judge will not reverse the just sentence of the law, though the prisoner at the bar fall upon his knees, and cry, Mercy. mercy.

Fifthly, Your vows and engagements to God for time to come cannot obtain mercy; for they being made in your own strength, it is impossible you should keep them; and if you could, yet it is impossible they should obtain remission and mercy: should you never sin more for time to come, yet how shall God be satisfied for sins past? Justice must have satisfaction, or you can never have remission, Romans 3:25-26. and no work wrought by man can satisfy divine justice; nor is the satisfaction of Christ made over to any for their discharge, but to such only as are in him: therefore never expect mercy out of Christ.

Inference. 2. Is Christ, the mercy of mercies, greater, better, and more necessary than all other mercies: then let no inferior mercy satisfy you for your portion.

God has mercies of all sorts to give, but Christ is the chief, the prime mercy of all mercies; O be not satisfied without that mercy. When Luther had a rich present sent him, "he protested God should not put him off so:" and David was of the same mind, Psalms 17:14. If the Lord should give any of you the desires of your hearts in the good things of this life, let not that satisfy you, while you are Christless.

For,

First, What is there in these earthly enjoyments, whereof the vilest men have not a greater fullness than you? Job 21:7-10, Psalms 17:10 and Psalms 73:3, Psalms 73:12.

Secondly, What comfort can all these things give to a soul already condemned as you are; John 3:18.

Thirdly, What sweetness can be in them, while they are all unsanctified things to you? enjoyments and sanctification are two distinct things, Psalms 37:16. Proverbs 10:22. Thousands of unsanctified enjoyments will not yield your souls one drop of solid spiritual comfort.

Fourthly, What pleasure can you take in these things, of which death must shortly strip you naked? You must die, you must die; and whose then shall all those things be, for which you have labored?

Be not so fond, to think of leaving a great name behind you: it is but a poor felicity (as Chrysostom well observes) to be tormented where you are, and praised where you are not: the sweeter your portion has been on earth, the more intolerable will your condition be in hell; yes, these earthly delights do not only increase the torments of the damned, but also prepare (as they are instruments of sin) the souls of men for damnation, Proverbs 1:32. "Surely the prosperity of fools shall destroy them." Be restless, therefore, until Christ, the mercy of mercies, be the root and fountain, yielding and sanctifying all other mercies to you.

Inference. 3. Is Christ, the mercy of mercies, infinitely better than all other mercies? Then let all that be in Christ be content, and well satisfied, whatever other inferior mercies the wisdom of God sees fit to deny them. You have a Benjamin s portion, a plentiful inheritance in Christ; will you yet complain? Others have houses, splendid and magnificent upon earth; but you have "an house made without hands, eternal in the heavens," 2 Corinthians 5:1. Others are clothed with rich and

costly apparel, your souls are clothed with the white, pure robes of Christ's righteousness. Isaiah 61:10. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God: for he has clothed me with the garment of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with jewels." Let those that have full tables, heavy purses, rich lands, but no Christ, be rather objects of your pity, than envy: it is better, like store cattle, to be kept lean and hungry, than with the fatted ox; to tumble in flowery meadows, thence to be lead away to the shambles. God has not a better mercy to give than Christ, your portion; in him all necessary mercies are secured to you, and your wants and straits sanctified to your good. O! therefore, never open your mouth to complain against the bountiful God.

Inference. 4. Is Christ the mercy, that is he in whom all the tender mercies of God towards poor sinners are, then let none be discouraged in going to Christ, by reason of the sin and unworthiness that are in him: his very name is mercy, and as his name is, so is he. Poor drooping sinner, encourage yourself in the way of faith; the Christ to whom you are going, is mercy itself to broken hearted sinners moving towards him in the way of faith; doubt not that mercy will repulse you; it is against both its name and nature so to do. Jesus Christ is so merciful to poor souls that come to him, that he has received and pardoned the chief of sinners; men that stood as remote from mercy as any in the world, 1 Timothy 1:1-20. 1 Corinthians 6:11. Those that shed the blood of Christ, have yet been washed in that blood from their sin, Acts 2:86, 87. Mercy receives sinners, without exception of great and heinous ones. John 7:37.

"If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink." Gospel invitations run, in general terms, to all sinners that are heavy laden, Matthew 11:28. When Mr. Bilney the martyr heard a minister preaching at this rate, O you old sinner, who have been serving the devil these fifty or sixty years; do you think that Christ will receive you now? O! said he, what a preaching of Christ is here?

Had Christ been thus preached to me in the day of my trouble for sin, what had become of me? But, blessed be God there is a sufficiency both of merit and mercy in Jesus Christ for all sinners, for the vilest among sinners, whose hearts shall be made willing to come unto him. So merciful is the Lord Jesus Christ, that he moves first, Isaiah 62:1-2. so merciful, that he upbraids none, Ezekiel 18:1-32 so merciful, that he will not despise the weakest, if sincere, desires of souls, Isaiah 13:3. so merciful, that nothing more grieves him than our unwillingness to come unto him for mercy, John 5:40. so merciful, that he waits to the last upon sinners to show them mercy, Romans 10:21. Matthew 23:37. in a word, so merciful, that it is his greatest joy when sinners come unto him, that he may show them mercy, Luke 15:5; Luke 15:22.

Object. But yet it cannot enter into my thoughts that I should obtain mercy.

Sol. First, you measure God by yourselves, 1 Samuel 24:19. "If a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away?" Man will not, but the merciful God will, upon the submission of the enemies to him.

Secondly, You are discouraged, because you have not tried. Go to Jesus Christ, poor distressed sinners; try him, and then report what a Christ you find him to be.

Object. But I have neglected the time of mercy, and now it is too late.

Sol. How know you that? Have you seen the book of life, or turned over the records of eternity? Or do you not unwarrantably intrude into the secrets of God, which belong not to you? Besides, if the treaty were at an end, how is it that your heart is now distressed for sin, and solicitous after deliverance from it?

Object. But I have waited long, and yet see no mercy for me.

Sol. May not mercy be coming, and you not see it? Or have you not waited at the wrong door? If you wait for the mercy of God through Christ, in the way of humiliation and faith, and continue waiting, assuredly mercy shall come at last.

Inference. 5. Has God performed the mercy promised to the Fathers, the great mercy, the capital mercy, Jesus Christ; then let no man distrust God for the performance of lesser mercies contained in any other promises of the scripture. The performance of this mercy secures the performance of all other mercies to us. For, First, Christ is a greater mercy than any other which yet remains to be performed, Romans 8:32.

Secondly, This mercy virtually comprehends all other mercies, 1 Corinthians 3:21-23.

Thirdly, The promises that contain all other mercies, are ratified and confirmed to believers in Christ, 2 Corinthians 1:20.

Fourthly, It was much more improbable that God would bestow his own Son upon the world, than that he should bestow any other mercy upon it. Wait, therefore, in a comfortable expectation of the fulfilling of all the rest of the promises in their seasons. Has he given you Christ? He will give you bread to eat, raiment to put on, support in troubles, and whatever else your soul or body stands in need of: The blessings contained in all other promises are fully secured by the performance of this great promise; your pardon, peace, acceptance with God now, and enjoyment of him forever shall be

fulfilled: The great mercy, Christ, makes way for all other mercies to the souls of believers.

Inference. 6. Lastly, How mad are they that part with Christ, the best of mercies, to secure and preserve any temporal lesser mercies to themselves! Thus Demas and Judas gave up Christ to gain a little of the world; O soul undoing bargain! How dear do they pay for the world, that purchase it with the loss of Christ, and their own peace forever!

Blessed be God for Jesus Christ, the Mercy of mercies.

05.07. Christ, "Altogether Lovely"

Christ, "Altogether Lovely"

"Yes, He is altogether lovely!" Song of Solomon 5:16

At Song of Solomon 5:9, you have a query propounded to the spouse, by the daughters of Jerusalem, "What is your beloved more than another beloved?" To this question the spouse returns her answers in the following verses, wherein she asserts his excellency in general. Song of Solomon 5:10. "He is the chief among ten thousands;" confirms that general assertion, by an enumeration of his particular excellencies, to Song of Solomon 5:16 where she closes up her character and encomium of her beloved, with an elegant eulogy, in the words that I have read: "Yes, he is altogether lovely."

The words, you see, are an affirmative proposition, setting forth the transcendent loveliness of the Lord Jesus Christ; and naturally resolve themselves into three parts, namely,

1. The subject.

2. The predicate.

3. The manner of predication.

First, The subject, He, namely, the Lord Jesus Christ, after whom she had been seeking, for whom she was sick of love; concerning whom these daughters of Jerusalem had enquired: whom she had endeavored so graphically to describe in his particular excellencies. This is the great and excellent subject of whom she here speaks.

Secondly, The predicate, or what she affirms or says of him, namely, That he is a lovely one, desires; according to the import of the original, "which signifies earnestly to desire, covet, or long after that which is most pleasant, grateful, delectable, and admirable." The original word is both in the abstract, and of the plural number, which speaks Christ to be the very essence of all delights and pleasures, the very soul and substance of them. As all the rivers are gathered into the ocean, which is the congregation or meeting place of all the waters in the world: so Christ is that ocean in which all true delights and pleasures meet.

Thirdly, The manner of predication; He is [altogether] lovely, Totus, totus desiderabilis; lovely in all, and in every part; as if she had said, Look on him in what respect or particular you will; cast your eye upon this lovely object, and view him any way; turn him in your serious thoughts which way you will; consider his person, his offices, his works, or any other thing belonging to him; you will find him altogether lovely, There is nothing ungrateful in him, there is nothing lovely without him. Hence note,

Doctrine. That Jesuit Christ is the loveliest person souls can set their eyes upon, Psalms 14:2. "You are fairer than the children of men."

That is said of Jesus Christ, which cannot be said of any creature; that he is "altogether lovely." In opening this lovely point I shall,

1. Weigh the importance of this phrase "altogether lovely."

2. Show you in what respect Christ is so.

First, Let us weigh this excellent expression, and particularly consider what is contained in it, and you shall find this expression "altogether lovely."

First, That it excludes all unloveliness and distastefulness from Jesus Christ. So Vatablus; "there is nothing in him which is not amiable." The excellencies of Jesus Christ are perfectly exclusives of all their opposites; there is nothing of a contrary nature or quality found in him to alloy or debase his excellency.

And in this respect Christ infinitely transcends the most excellent and loveliest creatures. For whatever loveliness is found in them, it is not without a distasteful tang; the fairest pictures must have their shadows: The most orient and resplendent stones must have their foils to set off their beauty; the best creature is but a bitter street at best: If there be somewhat pleasing, there is also somewhat distasteful; if there be gracious and natural excellencies in the same person to delight us, yet there is also some natural corruption intermixed with it to distaste us: But it is not so in our altogether lovely Christ, his excellencies are pure and unmixed; he is a sea of sweetness without one drop of gall.

Secondly, Altogether lovely, that is as there is nothing unlovely found in him, so all that is in him is wholly lovely; as every ray of God is precious, so everything that is in Christ is precious: Who can weigh Christ in a pair of balances, and tell you what his worth is? "His price is above rubies, and all that you can desire is not to be compared with him," Proverbs 8:11.

Thirdly, Altogether lovely, that is He is comprehensive of all things that are lovely: he seals up the sum of all loveliness: Quae faciunt divisa beatum, in hoc mixta fluunt: Things that shine as single stars with a particular glory, all meet in Christ as a glorious constellation. Colossians 1:19. "It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell." Cast your eyes among all created beings, survey the universe, observe strength in one, beauty in a second, faithfulness in a third, wisdom in a fourth; but you shall find none excelling in them all as Christ does. Bread has one quality, water another, raiment another, physic another; but none has all in itself as Christ has: He is bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, a garment to the naked, healing to the wounded; and whatever a soul can desire is found in him, 1 Corinthians 1:30.

Fourthly, Altogether lovely, that is Nothing is lovely in opposition to him, or in separation from him. If he be altogether lovely, then whatever is opposite to, or separate from him can have no loveliness in it; take away Christ, and where is the loveliness of any enjoyment? The best creature-comfort out of Christ, is but a broken cistern; it cannot hold one drop of true comfort, Psalms 73:26. It is with the creature, the sweetest and loveliest creature, as with a beautiful image in the glass: turn away the face and where is the image? Riches, honors, and comfortable relations are sweet when the face of Christ smiles upon us through them; but without him, what empty trifles are they all?

Fifthly, Altogether lovely, that is Transcending all created excellencies in beauty and loveliness; so much it speaks. If you compare Christ and other things, be they never so lovely, never so excellent and desirable; Christ carries away all loveliness from them; "He is (says the apostle) before all things," Colossians 1:17. Not only before all things in time, nature, and order; but before all things in dignity, glory, and true excellency: In all things he must have the pre-eminence. For let us but compare Christ's excellency with the creature's in a few particulars, and how evidently will the transcendent loveliness of Jesus Christ appear! For, First, All other loveliness is derivative and secondary; but the loveliness of Christ original and primary. Angels and men, the world and all the desirables in it, receive what excellency they have from him; they are streams from the fountain. But as the waters in the fountain itself are more abundant, so more pure and pleasant than in the streams. And the farther anything departs, and is removed from its fountain and original, the less excellency there is in it.

Secondly, The loveliness and excellency of all other things, is but relative and respective, consisting in its reference to Christ, and subserviency to his glory; but Christ is lovely, considered absolutely in himself: He is desirable for himself, other things are so for him.

Thirdly, The beauty and loveliness of all other things is fading and perishing; but the loveliness of Christ is fresh to all eternity: the sweetness of the best creatures is a fading flower; if not before, yet certainly at death it must fade away. Job 4:21.

"Does not their excellency, which is in them, go away?" Yes, yes, whether natural excellencies of the body, or acquired endowments of the mind, lovely features, amiable qualities, attracting excellencies; all these like pleasant flowers are withered, faded, and destroyed by death; "but Christ is still the same, yesterday, today, and forever," Hebrews 13:8.

Fourthly, The beauty and holiness of creatures are endearing and dangerous; a man may make an idol thereof; and dote beyond the bounds of moderation upon them, but there is no danger of excess in the love of Christ. The soul is then in the healthiest frame and temper when it is most sick of love to Christ, Song of Solomon 5:8.

Fifthly, The loveliness of every creature is of a cloying and glutting nature; our estimation of it abates and sinks by our nearer approach to it, or longer enjoyment of it: creatures, like pictures, are fairest at a due distance, but it is not so with Christ; the nearer the soul approaches him, and the longer it lives in the enjoyment of him, still the more sweet and desirable is he.

Sixthly, and lastly, All other loveliness is unsatisfying and straitening to the soul of man; there is not room enough in any one, or in all the creatures for the soul of man to dilate and expatiate itself; but it still feels itself confined and narrowed within those strait limits: And this comes to pass from the inadequateness and unsuitableness of the creature, to the nobler and more excellent soul of man, which like a ship in a narrow liver has not room to turn; and besides, is ever told anon striking ground and foundering in those shallows. But Jesus Christ is every way adequate to the vast desires of the soul; in him it has see-room enough; there it may spread all its sails, no fear of touching the bottom. And thus you see what is the importance of this phrase, Altogether lovely.

Secondly, Next I promised to show you in what respects Jesus Christ is altogether lovely. And,

First, He is altogether lovely in his person: a Deity dwelling in flesh, John 1:14. The wonderful union and perfection of the divine and human nature in Christ, render him an object of admiration and adoration to angels and men, 1 Timothy 3:16. God never presented to the world such a vision of glory before: And then consider how the human nature of our Lord Jesus Christ is replenished with all the graces of the Spirit, so as never any of all the saints was filled; O how lovely does this render him! John 3:34. "God gives not the Spirit by measure unto him." This makes him fairer than the children of men, grace being poured into his lips, Psalms 45:2. If a small measure of grace in the saints make them such sweet and desirable companions, what must the riches and fullness of the Spirit of grace filling Jesus Christ without measure, make him in the eyes of believers? O what a glory and luster must it stamp upon him!

Secondly, He is altogether lovely in his offices: for let us but consider the suitableness, fullness, and comfortableness of them.

First, The suitableness of the offices of Christ to the miseries and wants of men; and we cannot but adore the infinite wisdom of God in his investiture with them; we are, by nature, blind and ignorant, at best but groping in the dim light of nature after God, Acts 17:27. Jesus Christ is a light to lighten the Gentiles, Isaiah 49:6. When this great prophet came into the world, then did the day-spring from on high visit us, Luke 1:78. The state of nature is a state of alienation from, and enmity against God; Christ comes into the world an atoning sacrifice, making peace by the blood of his cross, Colossians 1:20. All the world, by nature, are in bondage and captivity to Satan, a lamentable thraldom; Christ comes with kingly power, to rescue sinners, as a prey from the mouth of the terrible one.

Secondly, Let the fullness of his offices be also considered, by reason whereof he is able "to save to the uttermost, all that come to God by him," Hebrews 7:25. The three offices, comprising in them all that our souls do need, become an universal relief to all our wants; and therefore,

Thirdly, Unspeakably comfortable must the offices of Christ be to the souls of sinners. If light be pleasant to our eyes, how pleasant is that light of life springing from the Sun of righteousness! Malachi 4:2. If a pardon be sweet to a condemned malefactor, how sweet must the sprinkling the blood of Jesus be to the trembling conscience of a law condemned sinner? If a rescue from a cruel tyrant be sweet to a poor captive, how sweet must it be to the ears of enslaved sinners, to hear the voice of liberty and deliverance proclaimed by Jesus Christ? Out of the several offices of Christ, as out of so many fountains, all the promises of the new covenant flow, as so many soul-refreshing streams of peace and joy: all the promises of illumination, counsel and direction flow out of the prophetical office; all the promises of reconciliation, peace, pardon, and acceptance flow out of the priestly office, with the sweet streams of joy, and spiritual comforts depending thereupon; all the promises of converting, increasing, defending, directing, and supplying grace, flow out of the kingly office of Christ; indeed, all promises may be reduced to the three offices: so that Jesus Christ must needs be altogether lovely in his offices. Thirdly, Jesus Christ is altogether lovely in his relations.

First, He is a lovely Redeemer, Isaiah 61:1. He came to open the prison-doors to them that are bound. Needs must this Redeemer be a lovely one, if we consider the depth of misery from which he redeemed us, even "from the wrath to come," 1 Thessalonians 1:10. How lovely was Titus, in the eyes of the poor enthralled Greeks, whom he delivered from their bondage! this endeared him to them to that degree, that when their liberty was proclaimed, they even trod one another to death

to see the herald that proclaimed It; and all the night following, with instruments of music, danced about his tent, crying with united voices, "a Savior, a Savior." Or, whether we consider the numbers redeemed, and the means of their redemption.

Revelation 5:9. And they sang a new song, saying, "You are worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by your blood, out of every kindred and tongue, and people, and nation." He redeemed us not with silver and gold, but with his own precious blood, by way of price, 1 Peter 1:1-25 with his out-stretched and glorious arm, by way of power, Colossians 1:13. he redeemed us freely, Ephesians 1:7. fully, Romans 8:1. seasonably, Galatians 4:4. and out of special and peculiar love, John 17:9. In a word, he has redeemed us forever, never more to come into bondage, 1 Peter 1:5. John 10:28. O how lovely is Jesus Christ in the relation of a Redeemer to God's elect!

Secondly, He is a lovely bridegroom to all that he espouses to himself. How does the church glory in him, in the words following my text; "this is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O you daughters of Jerusalem!" q. d. Heaven and earth cannot show such another: which needs no fuller proof than the following particulars.

First, That he espouses to himself, in mercy and in loving kindness, such deformed, defiled, and altogether unworthy souls as we are, who have no beauty, no excellency to make us desirable in his eyes; all the springs of his love to us are in his own bosom, Deuteronomy 7:7. he chooses us, not because we were, but that he might make us lovely, Ephesians 5:27. he passed by us when we lay in our blood, and said unto us, Live; and that was the time of love, Ezekiel 16:5.

Secondly, He expects nothing with us, and yet bestows himself, and all that he has, upon us. Our poverty cannot enrich him, but he made himself poor to enrich us, 2 Corinthians 8:9. 1 Corinthians 3:22.

Thirdly, No husband loves the wife of his bosom, as Christ loved his people, Ephesians 5:25. He loved the church and gave himself for it.

Fourthly, None bears with weaknesses and provocations as Christ does; the church is stiled "the Lamb's wife," Revelation 19:9.

Fifthly, No husband is so immortal and everlasting a husband as Christ is; death separates all other relations, but the soul's union with Christ is not dissolved in the grave; yes, the day of a believer's death, is his marriage day, the day of his fullest enjoyment of Christ. No husband can say to his wife, what Christ says to the believer, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you, Hebrews 13:5.

Sixthly, No bridegroom advances his bride to such honors by marriage, as Christ does; he relates them to God as their father; and from that day the mighty and glorious angels think it no dishonor to be their servants, Hebrews 1:14. they are brought in admiring the beauty and glory of the spouse of Christ, Revelation 21:9. Seventhly, and lastly, No marriage was ever consummated with such triumphal solemnity, as the marriage of Christ and believers shall be in heaven, Psalm. 14:14, 15. "She shall be brought to the king in raiment of needle-work, the virgins, her companions that follow her, shall be brought unto you; with gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought; they shall enter into the king's palace."

Among the Jews the marriage house was called Bethillula, the house of praise; there was joy upon all hands, but none like the joy that will be in heaven, when believers, the spouse of Christ, shall be brought there: God the Father will rejoice, to behold the blessed accomplishment and confirmation of those glorious designs of his love. Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom, will rejoice to see the travail of his soul, the blessed birth and issue of all his bitter pangs and agonies, Isaiah 53:11. The Holy Spirit will rejoice to see the completion and perfection of that sanctifying design which was committed to his hand, 2 Corinthians 5:5. to see those souls whom he once found as rough stones, now to shine as the bright, polished stones of the spiritual temple. Angels will rejoice: great was the joy when the foundation of this design was laid, in the incarnation of Christ, Luke 2:18. great therefore must their joy be, when the top-stone is set up with shouting, crying, Grace, grace, The saints themselves shall rejoice unspeakably, when they shall enter into the King's palace, and be forever with the Lord, 1 Thessalonians 4:17. Indeed there will be joy on all hands, except among the devils and damned, who shall gnash their teeth with envy at the everlasting advancement and glory of believers.

Thus Christ is altogether lovely, in the relation of a Bridegroom.

Thirdly, Christ is altogether lovely, in the relation of an Advocate. 1 John 2:1. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the Propitiation;" it is he who pleads the cause of believers in heaven; appears for them in the presence of God, to prevent all new breaches, and continues the state of friendship and peace between God and us. In this relation Christ is altogether lovely. For,

First, He makes our cause his own, and acts for us in heaven, as for himself, Hebrews 4:15. He is touched with the tender sense of our troubles and dangers, and is not only one with us, by way of representation, but also one with us in respect of sympathy and affection.

Secondly, Christ our Advocate, follows our suit and business in heaven, as his great and main design and business) therefore, in Hebrews 7:25. he is said to "live forever to make intercession for us;" as if our concernments were so minded by him there, as to give up himself wholly to that work, as if all the glory and honor which is paid him in heaven would not satisfy him, or divert him one moment from our business.

Thirdly, He pleads the cause of believers by his blood; it satisfies him not, as other advocates, to be at the expense of words and oratory, which is a cheaper way of pleading; but he pleads for us by the voice of his own blood, Hebrews 12:24. where we are said to be come "to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than that of Abel:" Every wound he received for us on earth, is a mouth opened to plead with God on our behalf in heaven.

And hence it is, that in Revelation 5:6. he is represented standing before God, as a lamb that had been slain; as it were, exhibiting and opening in heaven those deadly wounds received on earth, from the justice of God, on our account. Other advocates spend their breath, Christ his blood.

Fourthly, He pleads the cause of believers freely. Other advocates plead for reward, and exhaust the purses, while they plead the causes of their clients.

Fifthly, In a word, he obtains for us all the mercies for which he pleads; no cause miscarries in his hand, which he undertakes, Romans 8:33-34. O what a lovely Advocate is Christ for believers!

Fourthly, Christ is altogether lovely in the relation of a friend, for in this relation he is pleased to own his people, Luke 12:4-5. There are certain things in which one friend manifests his affection and friendship to another, but none like Christ. For,

First, No friend is so open hearted to his friend as Christ is to his people: he reveals the very counsels and secrets of his heart to them. John 15:15. "Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knows not what his Lord does; but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you.

Secondly, No friend in the world is so generous and bountiful to his friend, as Jesus Christ is to believers; John 15:18. he parts with his very blood for them; "Greater love (says he) has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." He has exhausted the precious treasures of his invaluable blood to pay our debts. O what a lovely friend is Jesus Christ to believers!

Thirdly, No friend sympathizes so tenderly with his friend in affliction, as Jesus Christ does with his friends: "In all our afflictions he is afflicted, Hebrews 4:15. He feels all our sorrows, wants and burdens as his own. Whence it is that the sufferings of believers are called the sufferings of Christ, Colossians 1:24.

Fourthly, No friend in the world takes that delight in his friend, as Jesus Christ does in believers. Song of Solomon 4:9. "You have ravished my heart, (says he to the spouse) you have ravished my heart with one of your eyes, with one chain of your neck. The Hebrew, here rendered "ravished", signifies to puff up, or to make one proud: how is the Lord Jesus pleased to glory in his people! how is he taken and delighted with those gracious ornaments which himself bestows upon them! No friend so lovely as Christ.

Fifthly, No friend in the world loves his friend with so fervent and strong affection as Jesus Christ loves believers. Jacob loved Rachel, and endured for her sake the parching heat of summer and cold of winter; but Christ endured the storms of the wrath of God, the heat of his indignation, for our sakes. David manifested his love to Absalom, in wishing, "O that I had died for you!"

Christ manifested his love to us, not in wishes that he had died, but in death itself, in our stead, and for our sakes.

Sixthly, No friend in the world is so constant and unchangeable in friendship as Christ is, John 13:1. "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." He bears with millions of provocations and injuries, and yet will not break friendship with his people. Peter denied him, yet he will not disown him; but after his resurrection he says, "Go, tell the disciples, and tell Peter," q. d. Let him not think he has forfeited, by that sin of his, his interest in me; though he have denied me, I will not disown him, Mark 16:7. O how lovely is Christ in the relation of a friend! I might farther show you the loveliness of Christ in his ordinances and in his providences, in his communion with us and communications to us, but there is no end of the account of Christ's loveliness: I will rather choose to press believers to their duties towards this altogether lovely Christ, which I shall briefly dispatch in a few words.

Use. First, Is Jesus Christ altogether lovely, then I beseech you set your souls upon this lovely Jesus. Methinks such an object as has been here represented, should compel love from the coldest bosom and hardest heart. Away with those empty nothings, away with this vain deceitful

world, which deserves not the thousandth part of the love you give it; let all stand aside and give way to Christ. O did you but know his worth and excellency, what he is in himself, what he has done for, and deserved from you, you would need no arguments of mine to persuade you to love him.

Secondly, Esteem nothing lovely but as it is enjoyed in Christ, or improved for Christ. Affect nothing for itself, love nothing separate from Jesus Christ. In two things we all sin in love of creatures, namely, in the excess of our affections, loving them above the rate and value of creatures; and in the inordinacy of our affections, that is in loving them out of their proper places.

Thirdly, Let us all be humbled for the baseness of our hearts, that are so free of their affections to vanities and trifles, and so hard to be persuaded to the love of Christ, who is altogether lovely. O how many pour out streams of love and delight upon the vain and empty creature; while no arguments can draw forth one drop of love from their obdurate and unbelieving hearts to Jesus Christ!

I have read of one Joannes Mollius, who was observed to go often alone, and weep bitterly; and being pressed by a friend to know the cause of his troubles; O! said he, it grieves me that I cannot bring this heart of mine to love Jesus Christ more fervently.

Fourthly, Represent Christ, as he is, to the world, by your carriage towards him. Is he altogether lovely; let all the world see and know that he is so, by your delights in him and communion with him, zeal for him, and readiness to part with any other lovely thing upon his account; proclaim his excellencies to the world, as the spouse here did; convince them how much your beloved is better than any other beloved; display his glorious excellencies in your heavenly conversations; hold him forth to others, as he is in himself, altogether lovely. See that you "walk worthy of him unto all well pleasing," Colossians 1:10. "Show forth the praises of Christ," 1 Peter 2:19. Let not that "worthy name be blasphemed through you," James 2:7. He is glorious in himself, and will put glory upon you; take heed you put not shame and dishonor upon him; he has committed his honor to you, do not betray that trust.

First, Never be ashamed to own Christ: he is altogether lovely; he can never be a shame to you; it will be your great sin to be ashamed of him. Some men glory in their shame; be not you ashamed of your glory: if you be ashamed of Christ now, he will be ashamed of you when he shall appear in his own glory, and the glory of all his holy angels. Be ashamed of nothing but sin; and among other sins, be ashamed especially for this sin, that you have no more love for him who is altogether lovely.

Sixthly, Be willing to leave everything that is lovely upon earth, that you may be with the altogether lovely Lord Jesus Christ in heaven. Lift up your voices with the spouse, Rev. 20:20. "Come Lord Jesus, come quickly." It is true, you must pass through the pangs of death into his bosom and enjoyment; but sure it is worth suffering much more than that to be with this lovely Jesus. "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and the patient waiting for Jesus Christ," 2 Thessalonians 3:5.

Seventhly, Strive to be Christ-like, as ever you would be lovely in the eyes of God and man. Certainly, my brethren, it is the Spirit of Christ within you, and the beauty of Christ upon you, which only can make you lovely persons; the more you resemble him in holiness, the more will you

discover of true excellency and loveliness; and the more frequent and spiritual your converse and communion with Christ is, the more of the beauty and loveliness of Christ will be stamped upon your spirits, changing you into the same image, from glory to glory.

Eighthly, Let the loveliness of Christ draw all men to him. Is loveliness in the creature so attractive? And can the transcendent loveliness of Christ draw none? O the blindness of man! If you see no beauty in Christ why you should desire him, it is because the God of this world has blinded your minds.

05.08. Christ, "The Desire of All Nations"

Christ, "The Desire of All Nations"

"And the desire of all nations shall come." Haggai 2:7

The former chapter is mainly spent, in reproving the negligence of the Jews, who, being discouraged from time to time, had delayed the rebuilding the temple: and, in the mean time, employed their care and cost in building and adorning their own houses: but, at last, beings persuaded to set about the work, they met with this discouragement, that such was the poverty of the present time, that the second structure would no way answer the magnificence and splendor of the first. In Solomon's days the nation was wealthy, now drained; so that there would be no proportion between the second and the first. To this grand discouragement the prophet applies this relief; that whatever should be wanting in external pomp and glory, should be more than recompensed by the presence of Jesus Christ in this second temple. For Christ, "the desire of all nations," says he, shall come into it. Which, by the way, may give us this useful note: That the presence of Jesus Christ gives a more real and excellent glory to the places of his worship, than any external beauty or outward ornaments whatever can bestow upon them. Our eyes, like the disciples, are apt to be dazzled with the goodly stones of the temple, and, in the mean time, to neglect and overlook that which gives it the greatest honor and beauty.

But to return. In these words we have both the description of Christ, and an index pointing at the time of his incarnation: he is called "the desire of all nations;" and the time of his coming in the flesh, is plainly intimated to be while the second temple should be standing. Where, by the way, we find just cause to admire at and bemoan the blindness that is happened to the Jews, who, owning the truth of this prophecy, and not able to deny the destruction of the second temple, many hundred years past, will not yet be brought to acknowledge the incarnation of the true Messiah notwithstanding.

But to the point. The character, or description of Christ, stiled the desire of all nations, who was to come into the world in the time of the second temple, Malachi 3:12. and that, after grievous concussions and shakings of the world, which were to make way for his coming; for so our prophet here speaks, "I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come," to which the apostle alludes, in Hebrews 12:26. applying this prophecy to Jesus Christ, here called the "desire of all nations:" putting the act for the object, desire for the thing desired: as in Ezekiel 24:16. "The desire of your eyes," that is the desirable wife of your bosom; so here, the "desire of all nations," that is Christ, the object of the desires of God's elect, in all nations of the world: a Savior infinitely desirable in himself, and actually desired by all the people of God, dispersed among all kindreds, tongues, and nations of the world. From whence this note is,

Doctrine. That the desires of God's elect in all kingdoms, and among, all people of the earth, are, and shall be drawn out after, and fixed upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

The merciful God beholding the universal ruins of the world by sin, has provided an universal remedy for his own elect, in every part of the earth. Christ is not impropriated to any one kingdom or nation in the world; but intended to be God's salvation to the ends of the earth; and accordingly speaks the apostle, Colossians 2:11. "There is neither Greek, nor Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all and in all." In the explication of this point two things must be enquired into.

1. Why Christ is called the desire of all nations.

2. Upon what account the people of God, in all nations, desire him.

First, Why he is called the desire of all nations, and what that phrase may import; and there are divers things that are supposed, or included in it.

First, That God the Father has appointed him as a common remedy for the sins and miseries of his people, in all parts and quarters of the world. So in the covenant of redemption, between the Father and the Son, the Lord expresses himself, Isaiah 49:6. and he said, "It is a light thing that you should be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the presented of Israel: I will also give you for a light to the Gentiles, that you may be my salvation unto the end of the earth." Suitable thereunto is that prophecy, Isaiah 52:15. "He shall sprinkle many nations." If God had not appointed him for, he could not be desired by all nations.

And, indeed, herein the grace of God does admirably shine forth in the freeness of it, that even the most barbarous nations are not excluded from the benefits of redemption by Christ. This is what the apostle admires, that Christ should be preached to the Gentiles, 1 Timothy 3:16 a people that seemed to be lost in the darkness of idolatry; yet even for them Christ was given by the Father, "Ask of me (says he) and I will give you the Heathen for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession.

Secondly, Christ, the desire of all nations, plainly notes the sufficiency that is in him, to supply the wants of the whole world; as the sun in the heavens suffices all nations for light and influence, so does the Sun of righteousness suffice for the redemption, justification, sanctification and salvation of the people of God all over the world; Isaiah 14:22. "Look unto me, and be you saved, all you ends of the earth."

Thirdly, It implies the reality that is in godliness. It shows you that religion is no fancy, as the atheistical world would persuade us; and this evidently appears in the uniform effects of it upon the hearts of all men, in all nations of the world, that are truly religious: all their desires, like so many needles touched by one and the same loadstone, move towards Jesus Christ, and all meet together in one and the same blessed object, Christ. Were it possible for the people of God to come out of all nations, kindreds and languages in the world, into one place, and there confer and compare the desires and workings of their hearts, though they never saw each other's faces, nor heard of each other's names, yet, as face answers to face in a glass, so would their desires after Christ answer to each other. All hearts work after him in the same manner; what one says, all say: These are my troubles and burdens, these my wants and miseries; the same things my desires and fears: one and the same Spirit works in all believers throughout the world; which could never be if religion were but a fancy, as some call it; or a combination or confederacy, as others call it: fancies are as various as faces; and confederacies presuppose mutual acquaintance and conference.

Fourthly, Christ, the desire of all nations, implies the vast extent his kingdom has, and shall have in the world; out of every nation under heaven some shall be brought to Christ, and to heaven by him; and though the number of God's elect, compared with the multitudes of the ungodly in all nations, is but a remnant, a little flock; and, in that comparative sense, there are few that shall be saved; yet considered absolutely, and in themselves, they are a vast number, which no man can number, Matthew 8:11. "Many shall come from the east, and from the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of heaven." In order whereunto, the gospel, like the sun in the heavens, circuits the world. It arose in the east, and takes its course towards the western world; rising, by degrees, upon the remote, idolatrous nations of the earth: out of all which a number is to be saved, even "Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands to God," Psalms 68:31. And this consideration should move us to pray earnestly for the poor Heathens, who yet sit in darkness, and the shadow of death; there is yet hope for them.

Fifthly, It holds forth this, that when God opens the eyes of men to see their sin and danger by it, nothing but Christ can give them satisfaction: it is not the amenity, fertility, riches and pleasures, the inhabitants of any kingdom of the world do enjoy, that can satisfy the desires of their souls: when once God touches their hearts with the sense of sin and misery, then Christ, and none but Christ is desirable and necessary, in the eyes of such persons.

Many kingdoms of the world abound with riches and pleasures; the providence of God has carved liberal portions of the goody things of this life to many of them, and scarce left anything to their desires that the world can afford. Yet all this can give no satisfaction without Jesus Christ, the desire of all nations, the one thing necessary, when once they come to see the necessity and excellency of him: then take the world who will, so they may have Christ, the desire of their souls. Thus we see upon what grounds and reasons Christ is stiled the desire of all nations.

Object. But there lies one great objection against this truth, which must be solved; namely, if Christ be the desire of all nations, how comes it to pass, that Jesus Christ finds no entertainment in so many nations of the world among whom Christianity is hissed at, and Christians not tolerated to live among them? Who see no beauty in him that they should desire him.

Sol. First, We must remember the nations of the world have their times and seasons of conversion; those that once embraced Christ, have now lost him, and idols are now set up in the places where he once was sweetly worshiped. The sun of the gospel is gone down upon them, and now shines in another Hemisphere; and so the nations of the world are to have their distinct days and seasons of illumination. The gospel, like the sea, gains in one place what it loses in another; and in the times and seasons appointed by the Father, they come successively to be enlightened in the knowledge of Christ; and then shall the promise be fulfilled, Isaiah 49:7. "Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his holy One, To him whom man despises, to him whom the nation abhors, to a servant of rulers; kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful.

Secondly, Let it also be remembered, that although Christ be rejected by the rulers and body of many nations; yet he is the desire of all the elect of God dispersed and scattered among those nations.

In the next place, Secondly, we are to enquire upon what account Christ becomes the desire of all nations, that is of all those in all the nations of the world, that belong to the election of grace. And the true ground and reason thereof is, because Christ only has that in himself which relieves their wants, and answers to all their need. As.

First, They are all, by nature, under condemnation, Romans 5:16, Romans 5:18 under the curse of the law; against which, nothing is found in heaven or earth, able to relieve their consciences, but the blood of sprinkling, the pure and perfect righteousness of the Lord Jesus: and hence it is, that Christ becomes so desirable in the eyes of poor sinners, all the world over. If anything in nature could be found to pacify and purge the consciences of men from guilt and fear, Christ would never be desirable in their eyes; but finding no other remedy but the blood of Jesus, to him, therefore, shall all the ends of the earth look for righteousness, and for peace.

Secondly, All nations of the world are polluted with the filth of sin, both in nature and practice, which they shall see, and bitterly bewail, when the light of the gospel shall shine among them; and the same light, by which this shall be discovered, will also discover the only remedy of this evil to lie in the spirit of Christ, the only fountain opened to all nations for sanctification and cleansing: and this will make the Lord Jesus incomparably desirous in their eyes. O how welcome will he be that comes unto them, not by blood only, but by water also, John 1:5-6.

Thirdly, When the light of the gospel shall shine upon the nations, they shall then see, that by reason of the guilt and filth of sin, they are all barred out of heaven; those doors are chained up against them, and that none but Christ can open an entrance for them into that kingdom of God! that "no man comes to the Father but by him," John 14:6. "Neither is there any name under heaven given among men, whereby they must be saved, but the name of Christ," Acts 4:12. Hence the hearts of sinners shall pant after him, as a deer pants for the water-brooks. And thus you see upon what grounds Christ becomes the desire of all nations. The improvement of all follows, in five several uses of the point; namely,

1. For information.

2. For examination.

3. For consolation.

4. For exhortation.

5. For direction.

First use for information.

First, Is Christ the desire of all nations? how vile a sin is it then in any nation, upon whom the light of the gospel has shined, to reject Jesus Christ? And say, as those in Job 21:14. "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of your ways." To thrust away his worship, government, and servants from among them; and in effect to say, as it is Luke 19:14. "We will not have this man to reign over us." Thus did the Jews, Acts 13:46. they put away Christ from among them, and thereby judged themselves unworthy of eternal life. This is at once a fearful sin, and a dreadful sign. How soon did vengeance overtake them like the overthrow of Sodom? O. let it be for a warning to all nations to the end of the world. He would have gathered the children of Israel under his wings as a hen does

her brood, even when the Roman Eagle was hovering over them, but they would not; therefore their houses were left unto them desolate, their city and temple made an heap.

Secondly, If Jesus Christ be the desire of all nations, how incomparably happy then must that nation be, that enjoys Christ in the power and purity of his gospel-ordinances! If Christ, under a veil made Canaan a glorious land, (as it is called) Daniel 11:41. what a glorious place must that nation be, that beholds him with open face in the bright sun-shine of the gospel! O England, know your happiness and the day of your visitation: what others desire, you enjoy: provoke not the Lord Jesus to depart from you, by corrupting his worship, longing after idolatry, abusing his messengers, and oppressing his people, lest his soul depart from you.

Second use for examination.

If Christ be the desire of all nations, examine whether he be the desire of your souls in particular; else you shall have no benefit by him. Are your desires after Christ true spiritual desires? Reflect, I beseech you, upon the frames and tempers of your heart. Can you say of your desires after Christ, as Peter did of his love to Christ? Lord, you know all things; you know that I desire you. Try your desires as to their sincerity by the following characters:

First, Are they vehement and ardent? Has Christ the supreme place in your desires? Do you esteem all things to be but dross and dung in comparison of the excellencies of Jesus Christ your Lord? Php 3:8. Is he to you as the refuge city to the man-slayer? Hebrews 6:18-19. As a spring of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land? Isaiah 32:2. Such vehement desires are true desires.

Secondly, Are your desires after Christ universal; that is is everything in Christ desirable in your eyes? The hypocrite, like the harlot, is for a divided Christ; they would be called by his name, but live upon their own stock, Isaiah 4:1. If his holiness and government, his cross and sufferings be desirable for his saints: such universal desires are right desires.

Thirdly, Are your desires after Christ industrious desires, using all the means of accomplishing what you desire! you say you desire Christ, but what will you do to obtain your desires? If you seek him carefully and incessantly in all the ways of duty; if you will strive in prayer, labor to believe, cut off right hands, and pluck out right eyes, that is be content to part with the most profitable and pleasant ways of sin that you may enjoy Christ, the desire of your souls; then are your desires right desires. Fourthly, Are your desires after Christ permanent desires, or only a sudden motion or fit which goes off again without effect? If your desires after Christ abide upon your hearts, if your longings be after him at all times, though not in the same height and degree, then are your desires right desires. Christ always dwells in the desires of his people; they can feel him in their desires, when they cannot discern him in their love or delight.

Fifthly, Will your desires after Christ admit no satisfaction, nor find rest any where but in the enjoyment of Christ? then are your desires right desires. The soul that desires Christ, can never be at rest until it come home to Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:2; 2 Corinthians 5:6. Php 1:23.

The devil can satisfy others with the riches and pleasure of this world, as children are quieted with rattles; but if nothing but Christ can rest and terminate your desires, surely such restless desires are right desires.

Sixthly, Do your desires after Christ spring from a deep sense of your need and want of Christ? Has conviction opened your eyes to see your misery, to feel your burthens, and to make you sensible that your remedy lies only in the Lord Jesus? then are your desires right desires. Bread and water are made necessary and desirable by hunger and thirst; by these things try the truth of your desires after Christ.

Third use for consolation.

Do you indeed, upon serious trial, find such desires after Christ as were described above? O, bless the Lord for that day wherein Christ, the desire of all nations, became the desire of your souls; and for your comfort, know that you are happy and blessed souls at present.

First, Blessed in this, that your eyes have been opened to see both the want and worth of Christ. Had not Christ applied his precious eye-salve to the eyes of your mind, you could never have desired him; you would have said with them in Isaiah 53:2-3. "He has no form nor loveliness, and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him:" Or, as they to the spouse, Song of Solomon 5:9. "What is your beloved more than another beloved." O, blessed souls, enlightened of the Lord, to see those things that are hid from them that perish!

Secondly, You are blessed in this, that your desires after Christ are a sure evidence that the desire of Christ is towards you: had he not first desired you, you could never have desired him. We may say of desires, as it is said of love, we desire him because he first desired us: our desires after Christ are inflamed from the desires of Christ after you.

Thirdly, Blessed in this, that your desires shall surely be satisfied, Matthew 5:6. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Proverbs 10:24. "The desires of the righteous shall be granted." God never raised such desires as these in the souls of his people, to be a torment to them forever.

Fourthly, Blessed in this, that God has guided your desires to make the best choice that ever was made in the world; while the desires of others are hunting after riches, pleasure, and honor in the world; toiling themselves like children in pursuit of a painted butter fly, which when they have caught, does but daub their fingers: God, meanwhile, has directed your desires to Christ, the most excellent object in heaven or earth. Any good will satisfy some men; O, happy soul, if none but Christ can satisfy you! Psalms 4:6.

Fifthly, Blessed in this, that there is a work of grace certainly wrought upon your soul; and these very desires after Christ are a part thereof.

Sixthly, Blessed in this, that these desires after Christ keep your soul active and working after him continually in the ways of duty, Psalms 27:4. "One thing have I desired, that will I seek after." Desire will be a continual spring to diligence and industry in the ways of duty; the desire of the end quickens to the use of means, Proverbs 18:1. Others may fall asleep and cast off duty, but it will be hard for you to do so, whose souls burn with desire after Christ.

Seventhly, Blessed in this, that your desires after Christ will make death much the sweeter and easier to you, Php 1:23. "I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, which is far better." When a Christian was once asked, Whether he was willing to die? He returned this answer, "Let him be unwilling to die, who is unwilling to go to Christ." And much like it, was that of another, I refuse this

life, to live with Christ.

Fourth use for exhortation.

In the fourth place, let me exhort and persuade all to make Jesus Christ the desire and choice of their souls. And here I fall in with the main scope and design of the gospel. And O that I could effectually press home this exhortation upon your hearts; let me offer some moving considerations to you, and may the lard accompany them to your hearts.

First, Every creature naturally desires its own preservation; do not you desire the preservation of your precious and immortal soul! If you do, then make Christ your desire and choice, without whom they can never be preserved, Jude 1:1.

Secondly, Do not your souls earnestly desire the bodies they live in? How tender are they over them, how careful to provide for them? though they pay a dear rent for those tenements they live in.

And is not union with Christ infinitely more desirable than the union of soul and body? O covet union with him! then shall your souls be happy, when your bodies drop off from them at death, 2 Corinthians 5:1-2 yes, soul and body shall be happy in him, and with him for evermore.

Thirdly, How do the men of this world desire the enjoyments of it? They pant after the dust of the earth; they rise early, sit up late, eat the bread of carefulness; and all this for very vanity: Shall a worldling do more for earth, than you for heaven? Shall the creature be so earnestly desired, and Christ neglected?

Fourthly, What do all your desires in this world benefit you, if you go Christless? Suppose you had the desire of your hearts in these things, how long should you have comfort in them, if you miss Christ?

Fifthly, Does Christ desire you, who have nothing lovely or desirable in you? And have you no desires after Christ, the most lovely and desirable one in both worlds? "His desires are towards you," Proverbs 8:31. O make him the desire and choice of your souls.

Sixthly, How absolutely necessary is Jesus Christ to your souls? Bread and water, breath and life, are not so necessary as Christ is; "One thing is necessary," Luke 10:42. and that one thing is Christ. If you miss your desires in other things, you may yet be happy; but if you miss Christ you are undone forever.

Seventhly, How suitable a good is Christ to your souls! comprising whatever they want, 1 Corinthians 1:30. Set your hearts where you will, none will be found to match and suit them, as Christ does.

Eighthly, How great are the benefits that will redound to you by Jesus Christ! In him you shall have a rich inheritance settled upon you: all things shall be yours, when you are Christ’s, 1 Corinthians 3:22. And is not such a Christ worth desiring?

Ninthly, All your well-grounded hopes of glory are built upon your union with Christ, 1 Corinthians 1:21. If you miss Christ, you must die without hope. Will not this draw your desires to him;

Tenthly, Suppose you were at the judgment seat of God, where you must shortly stand, and saw the terrors of the Lord in that day; the sheep divided from the goats; the sentences of absolution and condemnation passed, by the great and awful Judge, upon the righteous and wicked: would not Christ be then desirable in your eyes? As ever you expect to stand with comfort at that bar, let Christ be the desire and choice of your souls now.

Fifth use for direction.

Do these, or any other considerations, put you upon this enquiry; how shall I get my desires kindled and inflamed towards Christ? Alas! my heart is cold and dead, not a serious desire stirring in it after Christ. To such I shall offer the following directions.

Direct. 1. Redeem some time every day for meditation; get out of the noise and clamor of the world, Psalms 4:4. and seriously bethink yourselves how the present state of your soul stands, and how it is like to go with you forever: here all sound conversion begins, Psalm. 69:59.

Direct. 2. Consider seriously of that lamentable state, in which you came into the world; children of wrath by nature, under the curse and condemnation of the law: so that either Your state must be changed, or you inevitably damned, John 3:3.

Direct. 3. Consider the way and course you have taken since you came into the world, proceeding from iniquity to iniquity. What command of God have you not violated a thousand times over? What sin is committed in the world, that you are not one way or other guilty of before God? How many secret sins upon your score, unknown to the most intimate friend you have in the world? Either this guilt must be separated from your souls, or your souls from God to all eternity.

Direct. 4. Think upon the severe wrath of God due to every sin; "The wages of sin is death," Romans 6:23. And how intolerable the fullness of that wrath must be when a few drops sprinkled upon the conscience in this world, are so insupportable, that has made some to chase strangling rather than life, and yet this wrath must abide forever upon you, if you get not interest in Jesus Christ, John 3:1-36.

Direct. 5. Ponder well the happy state and condition they are in who have obtained pardon and peace by Jesus Christ, Psalm. 32:12. And seeing the grace of God is free, and you are set under the means thereof; why may not you be as capable thereof as others?

Direct. 6. Seriously consider the great uncertainty of your time, and preciousness of the opportunities of salvation, never to be recovered, when they are once past, John 9:4. let this provoke you to lay hold upon those golden seasons while they are yet with you; that you may not bewail your folly and madness, when they are out of your reach.

Direct. 7. Associate yourselves with serious Christians; get into their acquaintance, and beg their assistance; beseech them to pray for you; and see that you rest not here, but be frequently upon your knees, begging of the Lord a new heart, and a new state. In conclusion of the whole, let me beseech and bear all the people of God, as upon my knees, to take heed, and beware, lest by the carelessness and scandal of their lives they quench the weak desires beginning to kindle in the hearts of others. You know what the law of God awards for striking a woman with child, so that her fruit go from her, Exodus 21:22-23. O shed not soul-blood, by stifling the hopeful desires of any after Christ.

Blessed be God for Jesus Christ!

05.09. Christ, "The Lord of Glory"

Christ, "The Lord of Glory"

"Which, none of the princes of this world have known, for had they known him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." 1 Corinthians 2:8.

In this chapter the apostle discourses to the Corinthians, of the excellency of his ministry, both to obviate the contempt which some cast upon it for want of human ornaments, and to give the greater authority unto it among all: and whereas the spiritual simplicity of his ministry laid it under the contempt of some, he removes that several ways, by showing them,

First, That it was not suitable to the design and end of his ministry, his aim being "to know nothing among them, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified," 1 Corinthians 2:1-2.

Secondly, Neither was it for the advantage of their souls; it might indeed tickle their fancies, but could be no solid foundation to their faith and comfort, 1 Corinthians 2:4-5.

Thirdly, Though his discourses seemed jejune and dry to carnal hearers, yet they had a depth and excellency in them, which spiritual and judicious Christians saw and acknowledged, 1 Corinthians 2:6-7.

Fourthly, Therefore this excellent wisdom which he preached far transcended all the natural wisdom of this world; yes, the most raised and improved understandings of those that were most renowned and admired in that age for wisdom, 1 Corinthians 2:8. "which none of the princes of this world knew."

In which words we have,

1. A negative proposition.

2. The proof of the proposition.

First, A negative proposition: None of the princes of this world knew that spiritual wisdom which he taught. By princes of this world, or rather, principes seculi, the princes of that age, he means, as Cameron well notes, the learned Rabbis, Scribes, and Pharisees, renowned for wisdom and learning among them; and honored upon that account as so many princes: but he adds a diminutive term, which darkens all their glory: They are but the princes of this world, utterly unacquainted with the wisdom of the other world. To which he adds,

Secondly, A clear and full proof; "For had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." In which words we find one of Christ’s glorious and royal titles, The Lord of glory: upon which title will be my present discourse. The words being fitly rendered, and nothing of ambiguity in them, they give us this observation,

Doctrine. That Christ crucified is the Lord of glory.

Great and excellent is the glory of Jesus Christ, the scriptures everywhere proclaim his glory: yes, we may observe a notable climax, or gradation, in those scriptures that speak of his glory. The prophet Isaiah, speaking of him, calls him glorious; Isaiah 4:2. "In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious." John, speaking of his glory, rises a step higher, and ascribes to him a "glory as of the only begotten Son of the Father," John 1:14. that is a glory meet for, and becoming the Son of God: proper to him, and incommunicable to any other. The apostle James rises yet higher, and does not only call him glorious, or glorious as the only begotten of the Father, but the glory, James 2:1-26 glory in the abstract; "My brethren, (says he) have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glory, with respect of persons;" For the word "Lord", which is in our translation, is a supplement; Christ is glory itself, yes, the glory emphatically so stiled; the glory of heaven; the glory of Zion; the glory of our souls forever.

The author to the Hebrews goes yet higher, and calls him not simply the glory, but "the brightness of the Father's glory," Hebrews 1:3. as though he should say, the radiancy, sparkling, or beaming forth of his Father's glory; the very splendor or refulgency of divine glory. O what a glorious Lord is our Lord Jesus Christ! the bright, sparkling diamond of heaven; who shines in glory there, above the glory of angels and saints, as the glory of the sun excels the lesser, twinkling stars. When he appeared to Paul, Acts 26:13. "I saw (says he) a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me:" Needs must the glory of Christ be unspeakable, who reflects glory upon all that are with him, John 17:1-26 and stamps glory upon all that belong to him. His works on earth were glorious works, Luke 13:17. the purchased liberty of his people, a glorious liberty, Romans 8:21. the church his mystical body, a glorious church, Ephesians 5:27. the gospel which reveals him is a glorious gospel, 1 Timothy 1:11.

But more particularly let us consider the glory of Christ, as it is distinguished into his either,

1. Essential, or,

2. Mediatorial glory.

First, The essential glory of Christ, which he has as God from everlasting; which is unspeakable and inconceivable glory: For (says the apostle, Php 2:6.) "He being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God," that is he has a peerage or equality with his Father in glory; John 10:80. "I and my Father are one." And again, John 16:15. "All things that the Father has are mine:" the same name, the same nature, the same essential properties, the same will, and the same glory.

Secondly, The mediatorial glory of Christ is exceeding great. This is proper to him, as the head of the church, which he has purchased with his own blood. Of this glory the apostle speaks, Php 2:9-10. "Wherefore God also has exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name, &c. "huperupsose", exalted above all exaltation. Now the mediatorial glory of our Lord Jesus Christ consists either,

1. In the fullness of grace inherent in him; or,

2. In the dignity and authority put upon him.

First, In the tallness of grace inherent in him: The humanity of Christ is filled with grace, as the sun with light: John 1:14.

"Full of grace and truth." Never any creature was filled by the Spirit of grace, as the man Christ Jesus is filled; for "God gives not the Spirit to him by measure," John 3:34. By reason of this fullness of grace inherent in him, he is "fairer than the children of men," Psalms 14:2. excelling all the saints in spiritual luster and gracious excellencies.

Secondly, In the dignity and authority put upon him. He is crowned King in Zion; all power in heaven and earth is given unto him, Matthew 28:18. he is a law-giver to the church, James 4:12. all acts of worship are to be performed in his name; prayer, preaching, censures, sacraments, all to be administered in his name.

Church officers are commissioned by him, Ephesians 4:11. The judgment of the world in the great day will be administered by him; Matthew. 25:81. "Then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory." To conclude, Jesus Christ shall have glory and honor ascribed to him for evermore, by angels and saints, upon the account of his mediatorial work; this some divines call his passive glory, the glory which he is said to receive from his redeemed ones. Revelation 5:8-10. "And when he had taken the book, the four beasts, and the four and twenty elders, fell down before the Lamb, having everyone of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of the saints; and they sung a new song, saying, You are worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for you west slain, and have redeemed us to God by your blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation," &c. And thus you see that our Lord Jesus Christ is upon all accounts the Lord of glory.

The uses follow.

Inference 1. How wonderful was the love of Christ, the Lord of Priory, to be so abased and bumbled, as he was for us, vile and sinful dust? It is astonishing to conceive that ever Jesus Christ should strip himself of his robes of glory, to clothe himself with the mean garment of our flesh: O what a stoop did he make in his incarnation for us! If the most magnificent monarch upon earth had been degraded into a toad; if the sun in the heavens had been turned into a wandering atom; if the most glorious angel in heaven had been transformed even into a fly; it had been nothing to the abasement of the Lord of glory. This act is everywhere celebrated in scripture as the great mystery, the astonishing wonder of the whole world, 2 Timothy 3:16. Php 2:8. Romans 8:3. The Lord of glory looked not like himself, when he came in the habit of a man; Isaiah 53:3. "We hid, as it were our faces from him:" Nay, rather like a worm than a man, Psalms 22:6. "A reproach of men, and despised of the people." The birds of the air and beasts of the earth were here provided of better accommodations than the Lord of glory, Matthew 8:20. O stupendous abasement! O love unspeakable! "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich," 2 Corinthians 8:9. He put off the crown of glory to put on the crown of thorns; Quanto pro me vilior, tanto mihi charior, said Bernard; The lower he humbled himself for me, the dearer he shall be to me.

Inference. 2. How transcendently glorious is the advancement of be believers, by their union with the Lord of glory? This also is an admirable and astonishing mystery; it is the highest dignity of which our nature is capable, to be hypostatically united; and the greatest glory of which our persons are capable is to be mystically united to this Lord of glory, to be bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. O what is this! Christian, do you know and believe all this, and your heart not burn within you in love to Christ? O! then, what a heart have you? What are you, by nature, but

sinful dust, a loathsome sinner, viler than the vilest creature, cast out to the loathing of your person in the day of your nativity! O that ever the Lord of glory should unite himself to such a lump of vileness! take such a wretch into his very bosom! Be astonished, O heavens and earth, at this! this is the great mystery which the angels stooped down to look into: Such an honor as this could never have catered into the heart of man. It would have seemed a crude blasphemy in us, once to have thought or spoken of such a things, had not Christ made first the motion thereof; yet how long did you make this Lord of glory wait upon your undetermined will, before he gained your consent?

Might he not justly have spurned you into hell, upon your first refusal, and never have made you such another offer? Will you not say, Lord, what am I, and what is my father's house, that so great a King, should stoop so far beneath himself, to such a worm as I am!

That strength should unite itself to weakness, infinite glory to such baseness! O grace, grace, forever to be admired!

Inference. 3. Is Jesus Christ the Lord of glory? Then let no man count himself dishonored by suffering the vilest indignities for his sake: The Lord of glory puts glory upon the very suffering you undergo in this world for him. "Moses esteemed the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt," Hebrews 11:26. he cast a kingdom at his heels, to be crowned with reproaches, for the name of Christ. The diadem of Egypt was not half so glorious as self-denial for Christ. This Lord of' glory freely degraded himself' for you; will you stand hesitating with him upon terms? It is certainly your honor to be dishonored for Christ, Acts 5:41. to you it is given, in behalf of Christ, not only to believe, but also to suffer for his sake, Php 1:29. The gift of suffering is there matched with the gift of faith; it is given as an honorarium, a badge of honor to suffer for the Lord of glory. As all have not the honor to wear the crown of glory in heaven, so few have the honor to wear the chain of Christ upon earth. Thanus reports of Ludovicus Marsacus, a knight of France, that being led to suffer with other martyrs, who were bound, and he unbound, because a person of honor; he cried out, "Why don't you honor me with a chain too, and create me a knight of that noble order?" My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations, James 1:2. that is trials by sufferings. David thought it an honor to be vile for God, and that is a true observation that disgrace itself is glorious when endured for the Lord of glory.

Inference. 4. Is Christ the Lord of glory? How glorious then shall the saints one day be, when they shall be made like this glorious Lord, and partake of his glory in heaven?, John 17:22. "The glory which you gave me, I have given them:" Yes, the vile bodies of believers shall be made like to the glorious body of Christ, Php 3:21. What glory then will be communicated to their souls? True, his essential glory is incommunicable; but there is a glory which Christ will communicate to his people. "When he comes to judge the world, he will come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe," 2 Thessalonians 1:10. Thus he seems to account his social glory, which shall result from his saints, a great part of his own glory: As we have now fellowship with him in his sufferings, so we shall have a fellowship or communion with him in his glory: When he shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory; then the poorest believer shall be more glorious than Solomon in all his royalty. It was a pious saying of Luther, that he had rather be Christianus rusticus, quam Ethnicus Alexander; a Christian clown, then a Pagan emperor. The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor, though he live next door to a graceless nobleman:

But it does not yet appear what they shall be.

The day will come, it certainly will come, for the Lord has spoken it, when they shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

Inference. 5. How has the devil blindfolded, and deluded them that are frighted off from Christ, by the fears of being dishonored by him? Many persons have half a mind to religion, but when they consider the generality of its processors to be persons of the lowest and meanest rank in the world, and that reproaches and sufferings attend that way; they shrink back as men ashamed, and as Salvian says, Mali esse coguntur, ne viles habeantur; they chuse rather to remain wicked, than to be esteemed vile: But to them that believe, Christ is an honor; as the word which we translate "precious" might be rendered, 1 Peter 2:7. Until God open men's eyes thus, they will put evil for good, and good for evil. But O dear bought honors, for which men stake their souls and everlasting happiness! Paul was not of your mind: for birth he was an Hebrew of the Hebrews; for dignity and esteem, a Pharisee; for moral accomplishments, touching the law, blameless: Yet all this he trampled under his feet, counting it all but dross and dung in comparison of Jesus Christ. Moses had more honor to lay down for Christ than you; yet it was no temptation to him to conceal or deny the faith of Christ. Noble Galeacius would not be withheld from Christ by the splendor and glory of Italy; but O, how does the glory of this world dazzle and blind the eyes of many: "How can you believe (says Christ) who receive honor one of another?" John 5:1-47. Saints and sinners, upon this account, are wonders one to the other. It is the wonder of the world to see Christians glory in reproaches; they wonder that the saints run not with them into the same excess of riot; and it is a wonder to believers, how such poor toys and empty titles (rather than titles of honor) should keep the world as it does from Jesus Christ, and their everlasting happiness in him.

Inference. 6. If Christ be the Lord of glory, how careful should all be who profess him, that they do not dishonor Jesus Christ, whose name is called upon by them? Christ is a glory to you, be not you a shame and dishonor to him. How careful had Christians need to be, to draw every line and action of their lives exactly: The more glorious Christ is, the more circumspect and watchful you had need to be. How lovely would Jesus Christ appear to the world, if the lives of Christians did adorn the doctrine of God their Savior, in all things! Remember, you represent the Lord of glory to the world; it is not your honor only, but the honor of Christ which is engaged and concerned in your actions. O let not the carelessness or scandal of your life, make Jesus Christ ashamed to be called your Lord. When Israel had grievously revolted from God, he bids Moses rise and get down from thence; for (says he) your people, which you have brought forth out of Egypt, have corrupted themselves, Deuteronomy 9:12. as if

the Lord were ashamed to own them for his people any longer. It was a cutting question, James 2:7. apt to startle the consciences of these loose professors; "Do they not blaspheme that worthy name by which you are called? Your duty is to adorn the gospel by your conversations, Titus 2:10. The words signify to deck, trim, or adorn the gospel, to make it trim, neat, and lovely, to the eyes of beholders. When there is such a beautiful harmony, and lovely proportion between Christ's doctrine and your practices, as there is in the works of creation, wherein the loveliness and elegance of the world much consists, (for to this the apostle's word here alludes) then do we walk suitably to the Lord of glory.

Inference. 7. What delight should Christians take in their daily converse with Jesus Christ in the way of duty? Your converses in prayer, hearing, and meditation, are with the Lord of glory: The greatest peers in the kingdom count it more honor to be in the presence of a king, bare-headed, or upon the knee at court, than to have thousands standing bare to them in the country. When you are called to the duties of communion with Christ, you are called to the greatest honor, dignified with the noblest privilege creatures are capable of in this world: Had you but a sense of that honor God puts upon you by this means, you would not need so much pressing and striving, to bring a dead and backward heart into the special presence of Jesus Christ. When he says, Seek you my face, your hearts would echo to his calls; Your face, Lord, will we seek. But alas! the glory of Christ is much hid and veiled by ignorance and unbelief, from the eyes of his own people; it is but seldom the best of saints, by the eye of faith, do see the King in his glory.

Inference. 8. If Christ be so glorious, how should believers long to be with him, and behold him in his glory above? Most men need patience to die, a believer should need patience to live. Paul thought it well worth enduring the pangs of death, to get a sight of Jesus Christ in his glory, Php 1:23. "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ," (says the apostle) 2 Thessalonians 3:5. intimating that the saints have great need of patience, to enable them to endure the state of distance and separation from Christ, so long as they must endure it in this world. The spirit and the bride say, come, and let him that hears say, come, and let him that is a-thirst come: even so, come Lord Jesus, and be you as a swift roe upon the mountains of separation.

05.10. Christ, "The Consolation of Israel"

Christ, "The Consolation of Israel"

"Waiting for the Consolation of Israel." Luke 2:25

Several glorious titles of Christ have been already spoken to, out of each of which much comfort flows to believers: It is comfortable to a wounded soul to eye him as a Physician; comfortable to a condemned and unworthy soul to look upon him under the notion of mercy: The loveliness, the desirableness, and the glory of Christ, are all so many springs of consolation. But now I am to show you, from this scripture, that the saints have not only much consolation from Christ, but that Christ himself is the very consolation of believers: He is pure comfort wrapped up in flesh and blood.

In this context, you have an account of Simeon's prophecy concerning Christ; and in this text, a description of the person and quality of Simeon himself, who is described two ways.

1. By his practice.

2. By his principle.

His practice was heavenly and holy; he was a just and devout man: The principle from which his righteousness and holiness did flow, was his faith in Christ; "he waited for the consolation of Israel." In which words, by way of periphrasis, we have,

1. A description of Christ, the consolation of Israel.

2. The description of a believer, one that waited for Christ.

First, That the consolation of Israel it a phrase descriptive of Jesus Christ, is beyond all doubt, if you consult Luke 2:26. where he, that is Simeon is satisfied by receiving Christ into his arms, the consolation for which he had so long waited.

Secondly, And that waiting for Christ is a phrase describing the believers of those times that preceded the incarnation of Christ is past doubt; they all waited for that blessed day: But it was Simeon's lot to fall just upon that happy point of time, wherein the prophecies and promises of his incarnation were fulfilled.

Simeon and others that waited with him, were sensible that the time of the promise was come, which could not but raise (as indeed it did) a general expectation of him, John 9:19. But Simeon's faith was confirmed by a particular revelation, John 9:26. That he should see Christ before he saw death, which could not but greatly encourage and raise his expectation to look out for him, whose coming would be the greatest consolation to the whole Israel of God. The consolation, "paraklesis", The Spirit is frequently called in scripture, "parakletes", the Comforter: But Christ in this place is called "paraklesis", comfort, or consolation itself: The reason of both is given in John 16:14. "He shall take of mine and show it unto you:" Where Christ is said to be the matter, and the

Spirit, the applier of true comfort to the people of God. Now this consolation is here expressed both with a singular emphasis [the consolation] intimating that there is nothing of consolation in any thing besides him; all other comforts compared with this, are not worth naming. And as it is emphatically expressed, so it is also limited and bounded within the compass of God's Israel, that is true believers, stiled the Israel of Cod, whether Jews or Gentiles, Galatians 6:16. From whence the point of doctrine is,

Doctrine. That Jesus Christ is the only consolation of believers, and of none besides them.

So speaks the apostle, Php 3:3. "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Those that worship God. in the Spirit are sincere believers; to such sincere believers, Christ is consolation, our rejoicing is in Christ Jesus: And they have no consolation in anything beside him; nothing in the world can give them comfort without Christ, We have no confidence in the flesh. The gospel is glad tidings of great joy; but that which makes it to be so is Jesus Christ, whom it imparts and reveals to us, Luke 2:19-11. In the opening of this comfortable point, four things must be spoken to, for the right stating the method of our discourse. namely,

1. What is meant by consolation.

2. That Christ, and he only, is consolation to believers.

3. That believers only have consolation in Christ.

4. How it comes to pass that any believer should be dejected, since Christ is consolation to all believers.

The first thing to be opened, is the nature of consolation, which is nothing else but the cheerfulness of a man's spirit, whereby he is upheld, and fortified against all evils felt, or feared. Consolation is to the soul what health is to the body after wasting sickness; or the reviving spring to the earth after a long

and hard winter. And there are three sorts of consolation, or comfort, suitable to the disposition and temper of the mind, namely,

Natural,

Sinful, and

Spiritual.

Natural comfort is the refreshment of our natural spirits by the good creatures of God, Acts 14:17. "Filling their hearts with food and gladness." Sinful comfort is the satisfaction and pleasure men take in the fulfilling of their lusts, by the abuse of the creatures of God, James 5:5. "You have lived in pleasure upon earth," that is your life has been a life of sensuality and sin.

Spiritual comfort is the refreshment, peace, and joy, gracious souls have in Christ, by the exercise of faith, hope, and other graces, Romans 5:2. And this only deserves the name of true solid consolation: To which four things are required.

First, That the matter thereof be some spiritual, eminent, and durable good; else our consolation in it will be but as the crackling of thorns under a pot, a sudden blaze, quickly extinct with the failing matter of it. Christ only gives the matter of solid, durable consolation; the righteousness of Christ, the pardon of sin, the favor of God, the hopes of glory, are the substantial materials of a believer's consolation, Romans 5:2. Matthew 9:2. Psalms 4:6-7. 2 Peter 1:8. Things are as their foundations be.

Secondly, Interest and propriety in these comfortable things, are requisite to our consolation by them, Luke 1:47. "My spirit rejoices in God my Savior." It is no consolation to him that is hungry to see a feast; to him that is poor to see a treasure; if the one may not taste, or the other partake thereof.

Thirdly, Knowledge, and evidence of interest, in some degree is requisite to actual consolation, though without it a man may be in the state of consolation; for that which appears not, is (in point of actual comfort) as if it were not.

Fourthly, In order hereunto, the work of the Spirit upon our hearts is requisite, both to give, and clear our interest in Christ and the promises: And both these ways he is the Comforter, "The fruit of the Spirit is joy," Galatians 5:22. And thus briefly of the nature of consolation.

Secondly, Next I will show you that Christ, and he only, is matter of consolation to believers: which will demonstratively appear by this argument.

First, He who brings to their souls all that is comfortable, and removes from their souls all that is uncomfortable, must needs be the only consolation of believers.

But Jesus Christ brings to their souls all that is comfortable, and removes from their souls all that is uncomfortable.

Therefore Christ only is the consolation of believers.

First, Jesus Christ brings whatever is comfortable to the souls of believers. Is pardon comfortable to a person condemned? No thing can be matter of greater comfort in this world. Why, this Christ brings to all believers, Jeremiah 23:6. "And this is the name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our righteousness." This cannot but give strong consolation; righteousness is the foundation of peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, Romans 14:17. "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever," Isaiah 32:17. Come to a dejected soul, laboring under the burden of guilt, and say, cheer up, I bring you good tidings, there is such an estate befallen you, or such a troublesome business comfortably ended for you; alas! this will not reach the heart: If you can bring me (says he) good news from heaven, that my sins are forgiven, and God reconciled, how soon should I be comforted! And therefore (as one well observes) this was the usual receipt with which Christ cured the souls of men and women, when he was here on earth; Son or daughter, "be of good cheer, your sins be forgiven you." And, indeed, it is as easy to separate light and warmth from the beams of the sun, as cheerfulness and comfort from the voice of pardon.

Are the hopes and expectations of heaven and glory comfortable! Yes sure, nothing is comfortable if this be not, Romans 5:2. "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Now, Christ brings to the souls of men all the solid grounds and foundations upon which they build their expectations of glory,

Colossians 1:27. "Which is Christ, in you, the hope of glory." Name anything else that is solid matter of comfort to the souls of men, and the grounds thereof will be found in Christ, and in none but Christ; as might easily be demonstrated by the exoneration of multitudes of particular instances, which I cannot now insist upon.

Secondly, Jesus Christ removes from believers whatever is uncomfortable; therein relieving them against all the matters of their affliction and sorrow. As namely,

First, Is sin a burden and matter of trouble to believers?

Christ, and none but Christ, removes that burden, Romans 7:24-25. "O wretched man that I am! (says sin-burdened Paul) who will deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The satisfaction of his blood, Ephesians 5:2. The sanctification of his Spirit, John 1:5-6. His perfect deliverance of his people from the very being of sin at last, Ephesians 5:26-27. This relieves at present, and removes at last the matter and ground of all their troubles and sorrows for sin.

Secondly, Do the temptations of Satan burden believers? O yes, by reason of temptations, they go in trouble and heaviness of spirit. Temptation is an enemy under the walls; temptation greatly endangers, and therefore cannot but greatly afflict the souls of believers; but Christ brings the only matter of relief against temptations. The intercession of Christ is a singular relief at present, Luke 22:32. "But I have prayed for you that your faith fail not." And the promises of Christ are a full relief for the future; "The God of peace shall shortly tread Satan under your feet," Romans 16:20.

Thirdly, Is spiritual desertion, and the hiding of God's face, matter of affliction and casting down to believers? Yes, yes, it distresses their hearts, nothing can comfort them; "You hide your face, and I was troubled," Psalms 30:7. Outward afflictions do but break the skin, this touches the quick; they like rain fall only upon the tiles, this soaks into the house; but Christ brings to believers substantial matter of consolation against the troubles of desertion: He himself was deserted of God for a time, that they might not be deserted forever. In him also the relieving promises are made to believers, that notwithstanding God may desert them for a time, yet the union between him and them shall never be dissolved, Hebrews 13:4. Jeremiah 32:40. Though he forsake them for a moment, in respect of evidenced favor, yet he will return again and comfort them, Isaiah 54:7. Though Satan pull hard, yet he will never "be able to pluck them out of his Fathers hand," John 10:20. O, what relief is this! What consolation is Christ to a deserted believer.

Fourthly, Are outward afflictions matter of dejection and trouble? Alas, who finds them not to be so? How do our hearts fail and our spirits sink under the many smarting rods of God upon us?

But our relief and consolation under them all is in Christ Jesus; for the rod that afflicts us is in the hand of Christ that loves us, Rev. 3:29. "Whom I love, I rebuke and chasten." His design in affliction is our profit, Hebrews 12:10. That design of his for our good shall certainly be accomplished, Romans 8:28. And after that no more afflictions forever. Revelation 21:3-4. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes". So that upon the whole, two things are most evident.

First, Nothing can comfort the soul without Christ! he is the soul that animates all comforts; they would be dead things without him. Temporal enjoyments, riches, honors, health, relations yield not a drop of true comfort without Christ. Spiritual enjoyments, ministers, ordinances, promises, are

fountains sealed and springs shut up; until Christ open them, a man may go comfortless in the midst of them all.

Secondly, No troubles, sorrows, or deletions can deject or sink the soul that Christ comforts, 2 Corinthians 6:20. "As sorrowful, yet always rejoining." A believer may walk with a heart full of comfort amidst all the troubles of this world: Christ makes the darkness and troubles to be light round about his people. So that the conclusion stands firm, and never to be shaken, that Christ, and Christ only, is the consolation of believers; which was the thing to be proved. In the third place, I am to show you that believers, and none but believers, can have consolation in Christ; which will convincingly appear from the consideration of those things which we laid down before as the requisites to all true spiritual consolation. For,

First, No unbeliever has the materials, out of which spiritual comfort is made, which (as I there told you) must be some solid, spiritual, and eternal good, as Christ and the covenant are: what do unregenerate men rejoice in but trifles and mere vanities, in a thing of nothing? Amos 6:13. See how their mirth is described in Job 21:12. "They take their timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ." He does not say, they take the Bible, turn to the promises, and rejoice in Christ and the covenant; it is not the melody of a good conscience, the joy of the Holy Spirit; no, no, they have no acquaintance with such music as that; but the rejoicing of believers is in those things, 2 Corinthians 1:12. and this is well built consolation, which reaches the heart.

Secondly, I told you that propriety and interest in Christ and the promises are required to all spiritual consolation: but no unbeliever has any title or interest in Christ and the promises, and so they can signify nothing to him in point of comfort. It is not another man’s money, but my own, that must feed, clothe and comfort me; nor is it another man’s Christ, but my own Christ, that must justify, save, and comfort my soul.

Thirdly, You were told, that evidence of a man’s peace and reconciliation with God, is necessary to his actual consolation, which no unbeliever can possibly have; he has neither grace within him to make him a qualified subject of any special promise, nor any witness or seal of the Spirit, to confirm and clear his propriety in Christ; for he never seals, but where he first sanctifies. So that it is beyond all contradiction, that believers, and none but believers are partakers of the consolations that are in Christ Jesus.

Fourthly and lastly, There is one inquiry remains to be satisfied; namely, seeing Jesus Christ is consolation to believers, how it comes to pass, that so many believers in the world should walk so dejectedly as they do, without any spiritual consolation?

First, This need not be wondered at, if we consider that the consolations of Christ are of two sorts, seminal and in preparation, or actual in present possession. Every believer in the world has the root and seed of comfort planted and sown for him, Psalms 97:11.

"Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." They have Christ and the promises, which are the seeds of consolation, and will bring forth joy at last, though at present they have no actual consolation; the seed of all joy is sown, and in due time they shall reap the full lope fruit thereof.

Secondly, It must be remembered, that interest and evidence are distinct blessings, every believer has interest in Christ: but every believer has not the evidence thereof, Isaiah 1:10. "Who is among you, that fears the Lord, and obeys the voice of his servant; that walks in darkness, and has no light?" Every child of God is not of sufficient age to know his Father, or take comfort in that blessed inheritance whereunto he is begotten again, 1 Peter 1:3-4.

Thirdly, Every believer does not walk with like strictness, and exact holiness: all do not exercise faith in a like degree. Among Christians some are strong in grace, rich in faith, strict in obedience, tender of sin to an eminent degree; these usually are owners of much consolation: but others are weak in grace, poor in faith, comparatively careless of their hearts and ways, frequently grieving the good Spirit of God, and wounding their own consciences (the vessel into which spiritual consolation is poured;) and these are usually denied the joy and comfort which others abound withal.

Fourthly, The consolations of Christ are arbitrarily dispensed by the Spirit, who is the Comforter, and gives to every man in such proportions, and at such seasons, as pleases him: whence it comes to pass, that he who is rich in comfort to-day, may be poor tomorrow; and, contrarily, the heart that is quite full of sorrow one hour, is filled with peace and joy in believing in the next.

Things that are necessary to the rein of a Christian, are fixed and stable; but things belonging only to the well-being of a Christian, come and go, according to the good pleasure and appointment of the Spirit. The use of all follows.

Inference. 1. Hence it follows, That the state of unbelievers is the most sad and uncomfortable state in the world, having no interest in Christ, the consolation of Israel. It is true, they abound in creature comforts; they live in pleasure upon earth; joy displays its colors in their faces; but for all this, there is not the least drop of true consolation in any of their hearts; they have some comfort in the creature, but none in Christ: that little they gather from the creature now, is all their portion of joy, Luke 6:24. "You have received your consolation:" as this is all they have, so they shall enjoy it but a little while, Job 21:13; Job 21:17. And while they do enjoy it, it is mixed with many gripes of conscience, Job 14:13.

"Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness." Whatever consolation any unbeliever speaks of besides this, is but by rote; for when the day of his distress comes, and the terrors of conscience shall awake him out of his pleasant dreams, all his sensual joys will vanish from him, and the doors of true consolation will be shut against him. Let him go to Jesus Christ, knock at that door, and say, Lord Jesus, your name is consolation: my heart is really to burst within me; have you no consolation for me? O Lord, for one drop of spiritual comfort now; but alas there is none, no not in Christ himself, for any unbeliever. It is children’s bread, the saints privilege; comfort and grace are undivided. Let him return into himself, search his own conscience for comfort, and say, O conscience! you are more than a thousand witnesses, and thousands have been comforted by you; where you speak comfort, none can speak trouble; have you no consolation for me in my deepest distress? Alas, no; if God condemn you, wherewithal shall I comfort you? I can speak neither more nor less than the scriptures put into my mouth, and I find not one word in all the book of God warranting me to be your comforter. Believe it is an undoubted truth (though the sense of the bewitched world overrules it) that the state of unbelievers, even at the best, is a sad and dismal state.

Inference. 2. Let all believers fetch ad their comfort out of Christ, who is the Consolation of his people: "We rejoice (says the apostle) in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." That is the true temper of a believing soul: take heed you live not partly upon Christ and partly upon the creature for your comfort, much rather beware that you forsake not Christ, the fountain of living waters, and hew out cisterns for yourselves which can hold no water, Jeremiah 2:13. If you make any creature the spring and fountain of your comfort, assuredly God will dry up that spring. If your souls draw their comfort from any creature, you know they must outlive that creature, and what then will you do for comfort?

Besides, as your comforts are, so are you. The food of every creature is suitable to its nature. You see divers creatures feeding upon several parts of the same herb, the bee upon the flower, the bird upon the seeds, the sheep upon the stalk, and the swine upon the root, according to their nature so is their food. Sensual men feed upon sensual things; spiritual men upon spiritual things; as your food is, so are you. If carnal comforts can content your heart, sure your heart must then be a very carnal heart. Yes, and let Christians themselves take heed, that they fetch not their consolations out of themselves instead of Christ. Your graces and duties are excellent means and instruments, but not the ground work and foundation of your comfort, they are useful buckets to draw, but not the well itself in which the springs of consolation rise. If you put your duties in the room of Christ, Christ will put your comforts out of the reach of your duties.

Inference. 3. If Christ be the consolation of believers, what a comfortable life should all believers live in the world? Certainly, if the fault be not your own, you might live the happiest and comfortablest lives of all men in the world. If you would not be a discomfort to Christ, he would be a comfort to you every day, and in every condition, to the end of your lives. Your condition abounds with all the helps and advantages of consolation. You have the command of Christ to warrant your comforts, Php 4:4. You have the Spirit of Christ for a spring of comfort; you have the scriptures of Christ for the rules of comfort; you have the duties of religion for the means of comfort. Why is it then that you go comfortless? If your afflictions be many in the world, yet your encouragements are more in Christ. Your troubles in the world have been turned into joy, but your comforts in Christ can never be turned into trouble.

Why should troubles obstruct your comfort, when the blessing of Christ upon your troubles makes them subservient to promote your happiness? Romans 8:28. Shake off despondency then, and live up to the principles of religion. Your dejected life is uncomfortable to yourselves, and of very ill use to others.

Inference. 4. If Christ be the consolation of believers, then let all that desire comfort in this world, or in that to come, embrace Jesus Christ, and get real union with him. The same hour you shall be in Christ, you shall also be at the fountain head of all consolations: your soul shall be then a pardoned soul, and a pardoned soul has all reason in the world to be a joyful soul: in that day the conscience shall be sprinkled with the blood of Christ; and a sprinkled conscience has all the reason in the world to be a comforting conscience: in that day you become the children of your Father in heaven, and he who has a Father in heaven, has all reason to be the joyfullest man upon earth; in that day you are delivered from the sting and hurt of death; and he who is delivered from the sting of death, has the best reason to take in the comfort of life. O come to Christ! come to Christ! until you come to Christ, no true comfort can come to you.

05.11. The Forgiveness of Sins

The Forgiveness of Sins

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace." Ephesians 1:7

Six great motives have been presented already from the titles of Christ, to draw the hearts of sinners to him; more are now to be offered from the benefits redounding to believers by Christ; essaying, by all means, to win the hearts of men to Christ. To this end I shall in the first place, open that glorious privilege of gospel-remission, freely and fully conferred upon all that come to Christ by faith, "in whom we have redemption by faith," &c.

In which words we have, first, a singular benefit, or choice mercy bestowed, namely, redemption, interpreted by way of opposition, the remission of sins: this is a privilege of the first rank, a mercy by itself; none sweeter, none more desirable among all the benefits that come by Christ. And therefore,

Secondly, You have the price of this mercy, an account what it cost, even the brood of Christ, in whom we have redemption [through his blood:] precious things are of great price; the blood of Christ is the meritorious cause of remission.

Thirdly, You have here also the impulsive cause, moving God to grant pardons at this rate to sinners, and that is said to be the riches of his grace: where, by the way, you see that the freeness of the grace of God, and the fullness of the satisfaction of Christ, meet together without the least jar in the remission of sin, contrary to the vain cavil of the Socinian adversaries: "In whom we have redemption, even the remission of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

Fourthly, You have the qualified subjects of this blessed privilege, namely, Believers, in whose name he here speaks, [we] have remission, I. e. We the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus, Ephesians 1:1. We whom he has chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, and predestinated unto the adoption of children, Ephesians 1:4-5. We that are made accepted in the beloved, ver. 6. It is we, and we only, who have redemption through his blood. Hence observe,

Doctrine. That all believers, and none but believers, receive the remission of their sins through the riches of grace, by the blood of Jesus Christ.

In the explication of this point three things must be spoken to.

1. That all that are in Christ are in a pardoned state.

2. That their pardon is the purchase of the blood of Christ.

3. That the riches of grace are manifested in remission.

First, That all that are in Christ are in a pardoned state: where I will first show you what pardon or remission of sin is.

Secondly, That this is the privilege of none but believers.

First, Now remission of sin is the gracious act of God, in and through Christ, discharging a believing sinner from all the guilt and punishment of his sin, both temporal and eternal.

It is the act of God; he is the author of remission; none can forgive sins but God only, Mark 2:7. Against him only, that is principally and especially, the offence is committed, Psalms 51:4.

To his judgement guilt binds over the soul; and who can remit the debt but the creditor? Matthew 6:12.

It is an act of God, discharging the sinner; it is God's loosing of one that stood bound, the cancelling of his bond or obligation, called therefore remission or releasing in the text; the blotting out of our iniquities, or the removing of our sins from us, as it is called in other scriptures; see Psalms 103:11. Micah 7:1-20.

It is a gracious act of God, the effect of pure grace, done for his own name's sake, Isaiah 43:25. discharging us without any satisfaction at all by us: there is much grace in that; and providing a surety for us every way able to pay our debt, there is more grace in that.

It is the gracious act of God in and through Christ: the satisfaction of Christ is the procuring cause of our remission, and so God declares himself just in the remission of our sin, Romans 3:1-31. "Gracious is the Lord and righteous," Psalms 116:5. Justice and mercy meet here, and embrace each other; "in whom (says the text) we have remission:" no other price could purchase this privilege, Micah 6:6-7. not rivers of oil, or of human blood.

And this gracious act of God discharges the pardoned soul both from guilt and punishment. Guilt is nothing else but the force and power that is in sin, to oblige the sinner to undergo the penalty due to sin; therefore sinners are said to be guilty of hell-fire.

Matthew 5:22. Guilty of eternal judgment, Mark 3:29. To be under the judgment of God, Romans 3:19. Remission takes away both guilt and punishment together; it takes away all guilt, Acts 13:38-39. and all punishment. And so much of the first thing to be opened, namely, what the remission of sin is.

Secondly, Now that this remission of sin is the privilege of believers, is most apparent, for all the causes of remission are in conjunction to procure it for them; the love of God, which is the impulsive cause of pardon; the blood of Christ, which is the meritorious cause of pardon; and saving faith, which is the instrumental cause of pardon, do all co-operate for their remission, as is plain in the text. Besides, all the promises of pardon are made to them, Jeremiah 31:1-40. Micah 7:18. And, lastly, all the signs of pardon are found in them, and in them only, that love God, Luke 7:47. Mercifulness to others, Matthew 6:14. A blessed calmness and peace in the conscience, Romans 5:1. So that it is a truth beyond controversy, that all that are in Christ are in a pardoned state.

Secondly, Next I will show you, that the pardon of believers is the purchase of the blood of Christ: nothing but the blood of Christ is a price equivalent to the remission of sin, for this blood was innocent and untainted blood, 1 Peter 1:19. the blood of a Lamb without spot; this blood was precious blood, blood of infinite worth and value, the blood of God, Acts 20:28. It was prepared blood for this very purpose, Hebrews 10:5. Prepared by God's eternal appointment; prepared by Christ's miraculous and extraordinary production by the operation of the Spirit; prepared by his voluntary sequestration, or sanctification of himself to this very use and purpose.

The blood of Jesus is not only innocent, precious, and prepared blood, but it is also blood actually shed and sacrificed to the justice of God, for the expiation of guilt, and procurement of our discharge, Isaiah 53:5. O. To conclude, the severe justice of God could put in no exception against the blood of Christ, it is unexceptionable blood, being, (as before was noted,) untainted by sin, and dignified above all estimation by the person whose blood it was. Justice required no less, and could demand no more; and this is the price at which our pardons are purchased, and without which no sin could be pardoned; for "without shedding of blood, (such blood as this) there is no remission," Hebrews 9:22.

Thirdly, The last thing to be opened is, That God has manifested the riches of his grace, in the remission of our sins. So speaks the apostle, Romans 5:20. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: And, 1 Timothy 1:14. "The grace of our Lord (namely, in the pardon of sin) was exceeding abundant." Which will appear, if we bring our thoughts close to the matter, in several particulars.

First, From the nature of the mercy, which is the richest of all mercies, except Christ the purchaser of it: No mercy sweeter than a pardon to a condemned sinner; no pardon like God's pardon to a man condemned at his bar; all the goodness of God is made to pass before our eyes in his pardoning acts of grace, Exodus 33:19.

Secondly, The very riches of grace must needs be in the pardon of sin, if we consider the method in which pardons are dispensed, which is, as the text speaks, "through his blood." Herein "God commends his love to us," Romans 5:8. He commends it more than if he had pardoned sin without such a sacrifice, for then he had only displayed his mercy, but not caused mercy and justice to meet and triumph together.

Thirdly, The riches of his grace shine forth in the peculiarity of the mercy. Remission is no common favor; it is never extended to the fallen angels, nor to the greater part of the children of men, but only to a little flock, a small remnant of mankind, Luke 12:82. John 17:9.

Fourthly, The riches of grace are manifested in remission, if we consider the subjects of this privilege, who are not only equally plunged into sin and misery with others by nature, Ephesians 2:3. but many of the Lord's pardoned ones have been actually guilty of a deeper dyed abomination than many unpardoned ones, in the civilized world, are defiled with. "To me, (says Paul), the greatest of sinners, one that was before a blasphemer, a persecutor, &c. yet to me is this grace given; I obtained mercy," 1 Timothy 1:15. "And such were some of you, but you are justified," 1 Corinthians 6:11. Yes, God singles out the most base, despised, poor, and contemptible ones among men, to be the subjects of this glorious privilege, 2 Corinthians 1:1-24. "You see your calling, brethren," &c.

Fifthly, More of the riches of grace still appear, if we view the latitude and extent of this act of grace. O how innumerable are our transgressions! "Who can understand his errors;" Psalms 19:12.

"Yet the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin," 1 John 1:7.

Small and great sins, open and secret sins, old and new sins, all pardoned without exception. O the riches of grace! O the unsearchable goodness of God! "With the Lord there is mercy and with him there is plenteous redemption; and he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities," Psalms 130:7-8.

Sixthly, and lastly, The riches of grace shine forth in the irrevocableness and perpetuity of remission. As grace pardons all sins without exception, so the pardons it bestows are without revocation: The pardoned soul shall "never come into condemnation," John 5:24. "As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us," Psalms 103:10. The east and west are the two opposite points of heaven, which can never come together; neither shall the pardoned soul and its sins ever meet any more. "You have cast, (says Hezekiah) all my sins behind your back." The penitent believer sets his sins before his face, but the merciful God casts them all behind his back, never to behold them more, so as to charge them upon his pardoned people. And thus you see what the pardon of sin is, what the price that purchases pardon is, and what riches of grace God manifests in the remission of a believer's sins; which were the things to be explained and opened in the doctrinal part. The improvement of the whole you will have in the following uses.

Inference 1. If this be so, that all believers, and none but believers, receive the remission of their sins through the riches of grace, by the blood of Christ; What a happy condition then are believers in! Those that never felt the load of sin may make light of a pardon; but so cannot you, that have been in the deeps of trouble and fear about it; those that have been upon the rack of an accusing and condemning conscience, as David, Heman, and many of the saints have been, can never sufficiently value a pardon. "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered; blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity," Psalms 32:1-2 or, O the blessedness and felicities of the pardoned man! as in the Hebrew. Remission cannot but appear the wonder of mercies, if we consider through what difficulties the grace of God makes way for it to our souls; what strong bars the love of God breaks asunder, to open our way to this privilege; for there can be no pardon without a Mediator; no other Mediator but the Son of God: the Son of God cannot discharge our debts, but by taking them upon himself as our surety, and making full payment, by bearing the wrath of God for us; and when all this is done, there can be no actual pardon, except the Spirit of grace open our blind eyes, break our hard hearts, and draw them to Christ in the way of believing. And as the mercy of remission comes to us through wonderful difficulties, so it is in itself a complete and perfect mercy: God would not be at such vast expense of the riches of his grace, Christ would not lay out the invaluable treasures of his precious blood to procure a cheap and common blessing for us. Rejoice then, you pardoned souls, God has done great things for you, for which you have cause to be glad.

Inference. 2. Hence it follows, That interest in Christ by faith, brings the conscience of a believer into a state of rest and peace, Romans 5:1. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." I say not that every believer is presently brought into actual peace and tranquility of conscience;

there may be many fears, and much trouble even in a pardoned soul; but this is an undoubted truth, that faith brings the pardoned soul into that condition and state, where he may find perfect rest in his conscience, with respect to the guilt and danger of sin. The blood of Christ sprinkles us from an evil (that is, an accusing, condemning) conscience. We are apt to fear, that this or that special sin, which has most terrified and affrighted our conscience, is not forgiven: but if there be riches enough in the grace of God, and efficacy enough in the blood of Christ, then the sins of believers, all their sins, great as well as small, one as well as another, without limitation or exception, are pardoned.

For let us but consider, If Christ remits no sin to any man, but with respect to the blood of Christ, then all sins are pardoned, as well as any one sin; because the dignity and desert of that blood is infinite, and as much deserves an universal pardon for all sins, as the particular pardon of any, even the least sin: moreover, remission is an act of God's fatherly love in Christ; and if it be so, then certainly no sin of any believer can be retained or excluded from pardon; for then the same soul should be in the favor of God, so far as it is pardoned, and out of favor with God, so far as it is unpardoned, and all this at one and the same instant of time: which is a thing both repugnant to itself, and to the whole strain of the gospel.

To conclude: What is the design and end of remission, but the saving of the pardoned soul? But if any sin be retained or excluded from pardon, the retaining of that sin must needs make void the pardon of all other sins; and so the acts of God must cross and contradict each other, and the design and end of God miscarry and be lost; which can never be. So then we conclude, faith brings the believing soul into a state of rest and peace.

Inference. Hence it also follows, That no remission is to be expected by any soul, without an interest by faith in Jesus Christ: no Christ, no pardon; no faith, no Christ. Yet how apt are many poor deluded souls to expect pardon in that way, where never any soul yet did, or ever can meet it. Some look for pardon from the absolute mercy of God, without any regard to the blood of Christ, or their interest therein: we have sinned, but God is merciful! Some expect remission of sin by virtue of their own duties, not Christ's merits: I have sinned, but I will repent, restore, reform, and God will pardon! But little do such men know how they therein diminish the evil of sin, undervalue the justice of God, slight the blood of Christ, and put an undoing cheat upon their own souls forever. To expect pardon from absolute mercy, or our own duties, is to knock at the wrong door, which God has shut up to all the world, Romans 3:20.

While these two principles abide firm, that the price of pardon is only in the blood of Christ, and the benefit of pardon, only by the application of his blood to us; this must remain a sure conclusion, that no remission is to he expected by any soul, without an interest by faith in Jesus Christ. Repentance, restitution, and reformation are excellent duties in their kind, and in their proper places, but they were never meant for saviors, or satisfaction to God for sin.

Inference. 2 It the riches of grace be thus manifested in the pardon of sin, How vile an abuse is it of the grace of God, to take the more liberty to sin, because grace abounds in the pardon of it! "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid!" Romans 6:1-2. Will nothing cheaper than the grace of God serve to make a cloak for sin? O vile abuse of the most excellent thing in the whole world? Did Christ shed his blood to expiate our guilt, and dare we make that a plea to extenuate our guilt? God forbid!

If it be intolerable ingratitude among men, to requite good with evil, sure that sin must want a name bad enough to express it, which puts the greatest dishonor upon God for the greatest mercy that ever was given by God to the world. "There is mercy with you, (says the Psalmist,) that you may be feared;" not that you may be the more abused, Psalms 130:4. Nay, let me say, the devils never sinned at this rate; they cannot abuse the pardoning grace of God, because such grace was never offered unto them. And certainly, if the abuse of the common mercies of God, as meat and drink, by gluttony and drunkenness, be an heinous sin and highly provoking to God; then the abuse of the riches of his grace, and the precious blood of his Son, must be out of measure sinful, and the greatest affront we can put upon the God of mercy.

Inference. 5. To conclude: If this be so, as ever you expect pardon. and, mercy from God, come to Christ in the way of faith; receive and embrace him now in the offers of the gospel.

To drive home this great exhortation, I beseech you, as in the affections of Christ Jesus, and by all the regard and value you have for your souls, let these following considerations sink down in your hearts. First, That all Christless persons are actually under the condemnation of God, John 3:1-13. "He who believes not is condemned already:" and it must needs be so, for every soul is concluded under the curse of the law, until Christ make him free, John 8:36. Until we are in Christ, we are dead by law; and when we believe unto justification, then we pass from death to life. A blind mistaken conscience may possibly acquit you, but assure ourselves God condemns you.

Secondly, Consider what a terrible thing it is to lie under the condemnation of God; the most terrible things in nature cannot shadow forth the misery of such a state; put all sicknesses, all poverty, all reproaches, the torments invented by all tyrants into one scale, and the condemnation of God into the other, and they will be all found lighter than a feather. Condemnation is the sentence of God, the great and terrible God; it is a sentence shutting you up to everlasting wrath: it is a sentence never to be reversed, but by the application of Christ in the season thereof. O souls! you cannot bear the wrath of God; you do not understand it, if you think it tolerable: One drop of it upon your consciences now, is enough to distract you in the midst of all the pleasures and comforts of this world: yet all that are out of Christ, are sentenced to the fullness of God’s wrath forever.

Thirdly, There is yet a possibility of escaping the wrath to come; a door of hope opened to the worst of sinners; a day of grace is offered to the children of men, Hebrews 3:15. God declares himself unwilling that any should perish, 2 Peter 3:9. O what a mercy is this! Who, that is on this side heaven or hell, fully understands the worth of it?

Fourthly, The door of mercy will be shortly shut, Luke 12:25. God has many ways to shut it: he sometimes shuts it by withdrawing the means of grace, and removing the candlesticks; a judgment at this time to be greatly feared. Sometimes he shuts it by withdrawing the Spirit and blessing from the means, whereby all ordinances lose their efficacy, 1 Corinthians 3:7. But if he shut it not by removing the means of grace from you, certain it is, it will be shortly shut by your removal from all the means and opportunities of salvation by death.

Fifthly, When once the door of mercy is shut, you are gone beyond all the possibilities of pardon and salvation for evermore. The night is then come, in which no man can work, John 9:4. All the golden seasons you now enjoy, will be irrecoverably gone out of your reach.

Sixthly, Pardons are now daily granted to others: some (and they once as far from mercy as you now are,) are at this day reading their pardons with tears of joy dropping from them. The world is full of the examples and instances of the riches of pardoning grace.

And whatever is needful for you to do in the way of repentance and faith to obtain your pardon, how easily shall it be done, if once the day of God's power come upon you? Psalms 110:3. 0 therefore, lift up your cries to heaven, give the Lord no rest, take no denial until he open the blind eye, break the stony heart, open and bow the stubborn will, effectually draw your soul to Christ, and deliver your pardon signed in his blood.

05.12. The Liberty of Believers

The Liberty of Believers

"If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." John 8:36

From John 8:30 unto my text, you have an account of the different effects which the words of Christ had upon the hearts of his hearers: Some believed, John 8:30. These he encourages to continue in his word, John 8:31 giving them this encouragement, John 8:32. "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Hereat the unbelieving Jews take offence, and commence a quarrel with him, John 8:33. "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man." We are of no slavish extraction; the blood of Abraham runs in our veins. This scornful boast of the proud Jews, Christ confutes, John 8:34 where he distinguishes on a two fold bondage; one to men, another to sin; one civil, another spiritual: Whoever commits sin is the servant of sin, then tells them, John 8:36. "The servant abides not in the house forever, but the Son abides forever." Wherein he intimates two great truths, namely, That the servants and slaves of sin may for a time enjoy the external privileges of the house or church of God; but it would not be long before the master of the house would turn them out of doors: But if they were once the adopted children of God, then they should abide in the house forever. And this privilege is only to be had by their believing in, and union with the natural Son of God, Jesus Christ: which brings us fairly to the text; "If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." In which words we have two parts; namely,

1. A supposition.

2. A concession.

First, A supposition, "If the Son therefore shall make you free," q. d. The womb of nature cast you forth into the world in a state of bondage! in that state you have lived all your days; servants to sin; slaves to your lusts; yet freedom is to be obtained: And this freedom is the prerogative belonging to the Son of God to bestow: "If the Son shall make you free."

Secondly, Christ's concession upon this supposition, "Then shall you be free indeed," that is you shall have a real freedom, an excellent and everlasting freedom: No conceit only, as that which you now boast of is: If ever therefore you will be free men indeed, believe in me. Hence note,

Doctrine. That interest in Christ sets the soul at liberty from all that bondage whereunto it was subjected in its natural state.

Believers are the children of the new covenant, the denizens of Jerusalem which is above, which is free, and the mother of them all, Galatians 4:26. The glorious liberty, namely, that which is spiritual and eternal, is the liberty of the children of God, Romans 8:21. Christ, and none but Christ, delivers his people out of the hand of their enemies, Luke 1:74.

In the doctrinal part of this point, I must show you,

First, What believers are not freed from by Jesus Christ in this world.

Secondly, What that bondage is from which every believer is freed by Christ.

Thirdly, What kind of freedom that is which commences upon believing.

Fourthly, Open the excellency of this state of spiritual freedom.

First, what those things are from which believers are not made free in this world: We must not think that our spiritual liberty by Christ, presently brings us into an absolute liberty, in all respects, For,

First, Christ does not free believers from obedience to the moral law: It is true we are no more under it as a covenant for our justification; but we are, and must still be under it, as a rule for our direction. The matter of the moral law is unchangeable, as the nature of good and evil is, and cannot be abolished except that distinction could be destroyed, Matthew 5:17-18. The precepts of the law are still urged under the gospel to enforce duties upon us, Ephesians 6:12. It is therefore a vain distinction, invented by Libertines, to say it binds us as creatures, not as Christians: or that it binds the unregenerate part, but not the regenerate: but this is a sure truth, that they who are freed from its penalties are still under its precepts. Though believers are no more under its curse, yet they are still under its conduct: The law sends us to Christ to be justified, and Christ sends us to the law to be regulated. Let the heart of every Christian join therefore with David's in that holy wish, Psalms 119:4-5. "You have commanded us to keep your precepts diligently; O that my heart were directed to keep your statutes." It is excellent when Christians begin to obey the law from life, which others obey for life; because they are justified, not that they may be justified. It is also excellent when duties are done in the strength, and for the honor of Christ, which is evangelical; and not in our own strength, and for our own ends, which is servile and legal obedience: Had Christ freed us from obedience, such a liberty had been to our loss.

Secondly, Christ has not freed believers, in this world, from the temptations and assaults of Satan: even those that are freed from his dominion are not free from his molestation. It is said indeed, Romans 16:20. "God shall shortly bruise Satan under your feet:" But mean time he has power to bruise and buffet us by his injections, 2 Corinthians 12:7. He now bruises Christ's heel, Genesis 3:10.

I. e. bruises him in his tempted and afflicted members: Though he cannot kill them, yet he can and does afflict and fright them, by shooting his fiery darts of temptation among them, Ephesians 6:16. It is true, when the saints are got safe into heaven they are out of gunshot; there is perfect freedom from all temptation. A believer may then say, O you enemy, temptations are come to a perpetual end. I am now arrived there, where none of your fiery darts can reach me: But this freedom is not yet.

Thirdly, Christ has not yet freed believers, in this world, from the motions of indwelling sin; these are continually acting, and infesting the holiest of men, Romans 7:21-24. Corruptions, like Canaanites, are still left in the land to be thorns in your eyes, and goads in your sides. Those that boast most of freedom from the motions of sin, have most cause to suspect themselves still under the dominion of sin. All Christ's freemen are troubled with the same complaint: who among them complains not as the apostle did, Romans 7:24. "Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me

from the body of this death?"

Fourthly, Jesus Christ does not free believers, in this world, from inward troubles and exercises of soul, upon the account of sin.

God may let loose Satan, and conscience too, in the way of terrible accusations, which may greatly distress the soul of a believer, and woefully eclipse the light of God's countenance, and break the peace of their souls. Job, Heman, and David were all made free by Christ, yet each of them has left upon record his bitter complaint upon this account, Job 7:19-20. Psalms 88:14-16. Psalms 38:1-22 unto Psalms 38:11. Fifthly, Christ has not freed believers, in this world, from the rods of affliction. God, in giving us our liberty, does not abridge his own liberty, Psalms 89:32. All the children of God are made free, yet what son is there whom the father chastens not? Hebrews 12:8. Exemption from affliction is so far from being the mark of a free man, that the apostle there makes it the mark of a slave. Bastards, not sons, want the discipline and blessing of the rod: To be free from affliction would be no benefit to believers, who receive so many benefits by it.

Sixthly, No believer is freed by Christ from the stroke of death, though they are all freed from the sting of death, Romans 8:1-39. The bodies of believers are under the same law of mortality with other men, Hebrews 9:27. We must come to the grave as well as others; yes, we must come to it through the same agonies, pangs, and dolours that other men do: The foot of death treads as heavy upon the bodies of the redeemed, as of other men. Believers, indeed, are distinguished by mercy from others, but the distinguishing mercy lies not here. Thus you see what believers are not freed from in this world: If you shall now say, what advantage then has a believer, or what profit is there in regeneration? I answer,

Secondly, That believers are freed from many great and sad miseries and evils by Jesus Christ, notwithstanding all that has been said. For,

First, All believers are freed from the rigor and curse of the law: The rigorous yoke of the law is broken off from their necks, and the sweet and easy yoke of Jesus Christ put on, Matthew 9:28.

The law required perfect working, under the pain of a curse, Galatians 3:10 accepted of no short endeavors; admitted no repentance; gave no strength: It is not so now; proportionable strength is given, Php 4:13. Evangelical sincerity is reckoned perfection, Job 1:1. Transgression brings not under condemnation, Romans 8:1. 0 blessed freedom! when duty becomes light, and failings hinder not

acceptance! This is one part of the blessed freedom of believers.

Secondly, All believers are freed from the guilt of sin; it may trouble, but it cannot condemn them, Romans 8:33. The hand writing which was against us is cancelled by Christ, nailed to his cross, Colossians 2:14. When the seal and hand-writing are torn off from the bond, the debtor is made free thereby: Believers are totally freed, Acts 13:89. "Justified from all things:" And finally freed, John 5:1-47. "They shall never come into condemnation." O blessed freedom! How sweet is it to lie down in our beds, yes, in our graves, when guilt shall neither be our bed-fellow, nor grave-fellow!

Thirdly, Jesus Christ frees all believers from the dominion as well as the guilt of sin. "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace," Romans 6:14. "The law

of the Spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus, has made me free from the law of sin and death," Romans 8:2. Now, who can estimate such a liberty as this? What slavery, what an intolerable drudgery is the service of divers lusts, from all which believers are freed by Christ; not from the residence, but from the reign of sin. It is with sin in believers as it was with those beasts mentioned Daniel 7:1-28. "They had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time."

Fourthly, Jesus Christ sets all believers free from the power of Satan, in whose right they were by nature, Colossians 1:13. they are translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of Christ. Satan had the possession of them, as a man of his own goods; but Christ dispossesses that strong man armed, alters the property, and recovers them out of his hand, Luke 11:21-22. There are two ways by which Christ frees believers out of Satan's power and possession; namely,

1. By price.

2. By power.

First, By price. The blood of Christ purchases believers out of the hands of justice, by satisfying the law for them, which being done, Satan's authority over them falls of course, as the power of a gawler over the prisoner does, when he has a legal discharge, Hebrews 2:14. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood; he also himself took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."

The cruel tyrant beats and burdens the poor captive no more after the ransom is once paid, and he actually freed; and therefore Christ delivers his,

Secondly, By power. Satan is exceeding unwilling to let go his prey: He is a strong, and malicious enemy; every rescue and deliverance out of his hand is a glorious effect of the Almighty Power of Christ, Acts 26:18. 2 Corinthians 10:5. How did our Lord Jesus Christ grapple with Satan at his death, and triumph over him, Colossians 2:15. 0 glorious salvation! blessed liberty of the children of God!

Fifthly, Christ frees believers from the poisonous sting and hurt of death: Kill us it can, but hurt us it cannot, 1 Corinthians 15:55-56. "O death! where is your sting? O grave! where is your victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law: but thanks be to God which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." If there be no hurt, there should be no horror in death: It is guilt that arms death, both with its hurting and terrifying power. To die in our sins, John 8:24. To have our bones full of the sins of our youth, which shall lie down with us in the dust, Job 20:1-29. To have death, like a dragon, pulling a poor guilty creature as a prey into its dreadful den, Psalms 49:14. In this lies the danger and horror of death: But from death, as a curse, and from the grave, as a prison, Christ has set believers at liberty, by submitting to death in their room; and by his victorious resurrection from the grave, as the firstborn of the dead, death is disarmed of its hurting power. The death of believers is but a sleep in Jesus.

Thirdly, The nest thing to be briefly spoken to, is the kind and nature of that freedom and liberty purchased and procured by Christ for believers.

Now liberty may be considered two ways; namely,

1. As civil.

2. As sacred.

As to civil freedom, or liberty, it belongs not to our present business: Believers, as to their civil capacity, are not freed from, the duties they owe to their superiors. Servants, though believers, are still to be subject to their masters, according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, Ephesians 6:5. nor from obedience to lawful magistrates, whom we are to obey in the Lord, Romans 12:1; Romans 12:4. Religion dissolves not the bonds of civil relations; nor is it to be used as an occasion to the flesh, 1 Peter 2:16. It is not a carnal, but a spiritual freedom Christ has purchased for us: And this spiritual freedom is again to be considered, either as,

1. Inchoate.

2. Consummate.

The liberty believers have at present is but a beginning liberty; they are freed but in part from their spiritual enemies; but it is a growing liberty every day, and will be consummate and complete at last.

To conclude, Christian liberty is either;

1. Privative, or,

2. Positive.

The liberty believers are invested with is of both kinds: They are not only freed from many miseries, burdens and dangers, but also invested by Jesus Christ with many royal privileges and invaluable immunities.

Fourthly, And this brings us to the fourth and last thing, namely, the properties of this blessed freedom which the saints enjoy by Jesus Christ; and, if we consider it duly, it will be found to be,

First, A wonderful liberty, never enough to be admired. How could it be imagined that ever those who owed unto God more than ever they could pay by their own eternal sufferings; those that were under the dreadful curse and condemnation of the law, in the power and possession of Satan the strong man armed; those that were bound with so many chains in their spiritual prison; their understanding bound with ignorance, their wills with obstinacy, their hearts with impenetrable hardness, their affections with a thousand bewitching vanities, that slight their state of slavery so much, as industriously to oppose all instruments and means of deliverance; for such persons to be set at liberty, notwithstanding all this, is the wonder of wonders, and will be deservedly marvelous in the eyes of believers forever.

Secondly, The freedom of believers is a peculiar freedom; a liberty which few obtain; the generality abiding still in bondage to Satan, who, from the multitude of his subjects, is stiled the God of this world, 2 Corinthians 4:4. Believers in scripture are often called a remnant, which is but a small part of the whole piece: The more cause have the people of God to admire distinguishing mercy. How many nobles and great ones of the world are but royal slaves to Satan, and their own lusts! Thirdly, The liberty of believers is a liberty dearly purchased by the blood of Christ. What that captain said, Acts 22:28. "With a great sum obtained I this freedom," may be much more said of

the believers' freedom: It was not silver or gold, but the precious blood of Christ that purchased it, 1 Peter 1:1-25.

Fourthly, The freedom and liberty of believers is a growing and increasing liberty; they get more and more out of the power of sin, and nearer still to their complete salvation every day, Romans 13:11. The body of sin dies daily in them: they are said to be crucified with Christ: the strength of sin abates continually in them, after the manner of crucified persons, who die a slow, but sure death: And look in what degree the power of sin abates, proportionably their spiritual liberty increases upon them.

Fifthly, The freedom of believers is a comfortable freedom: the apostle comforts Christians of the lowest rank, poor servants, with this consideration, 1 Corinthians 7:25!. "He who is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman," q. d. Let not the baseness of your outward condition, which is a state of subjection and dependence, a state of poverty and contempt, at all trouble you: you are the Lord's freemen, of precious account in his eyes. O it is a comfortable liberty!

Sixthly, and Lastly, It is a perpetual and final freedom; they that are once freed by Christ, have their manumission and final discharge from that state of bondage they were in before: sin shall never have dominion over them any more: it may tempt them and trouble them, but shall never more rule and govern them, Acts 26:1-32: 18. And thus you see what a glorious liberty the liberty of believers is.

The improvement whereof will be in the following inferences.

Inference. 1. How rational is the joy of Christians, above the joy of all others in the world? Shall not the captive rejoice in his recovered liberty? the very birds of the air (as one observes) had rather be at liberty in the woods, though lean and hungry, than in a golden cage with the richest fare: every creature naturally prizes it; none more than believers, who have felt the burden and bondage of corruption, who in the days of their first illumination and conviction have poured out many groans and tears for this mercy.

What was said of the captive people of God in Babylon, excellently shadows forth the state of God's people under spiritual bondage, with the way and manner of their deliverance from it, Zechariah 9:11. "By the blood of the covenant I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit, wherein is no water." Believers are delivered by the blood of Christ, out of a worse pit than that of Babylon; and look, as the tribes in their return from thence were overwhelmed with joy and astonishment, Psalms 126:1-2. "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we are like them that dream: then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing."

They were overwhelmed with the sense of the mercy: So should it be with the people of God. It is said, Luke 15:24. when the prodigal son (there made the emblem of a returning, converting sinner) was returned again to his father's house, that there was heard music and dancing, mirth and feasting in that house. The angels in heaven rejoice when a soul is recovered out of the power of Satan: And shall not the recovered soul, immediately concerned in the mercy, greatly rejoice? Yes, let them rejoice in the Lord, and let no earthly trouble or affliction ever have power to interrupt their joy for a moment, after such a deliverance as this.

Inference. 2. How unreasonable and wholly inexcusable is the sin of apostasy from Jesus Christ? What is it but for a delivered captive to put his feet again into the shackles; his hands into the manacles; his neck into the iron yoke, from which he has been delivered? It is said, Matthew 12:44-45. "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walks through dry places, seeking rest and finds none: Then he says, I will return into mine house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he finds it empty, swept, and garnished; then goes he, and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there, and the last state of that man is worse than the first." Even as a prisoner that has escaped, and is again recovered, is loaded with double irons. Let the people of God be content to run any hazard, endure any difficulties in the way of religion, rather than return again into their former bondage, to sin and Satan. O Christian! if ever God gave you a sight and a sense of the misery and danger of your natural state, if ever you have felt the pangs of laboring and distressed conscience, and, after all this, tasted the unspeakable sweetness of the peace and rest that are in Christ, you will rather chuse to die ten thousand deaths, shall to forsake Christ, and go back again into that sad condition.

Inference. 3. How suitable and well-becoming is a free spirit in believers to their state of liberty and freedom? Christ has made your condition free, O let the temper and frame of your hearts be free also; do all that you do for God with a spirit of freedom; not by constraint, but willingly. Methinks, Christians, the new nature that is in you should stand for a command, and be instead of all arguments that use to work upon the hopes and fears of other men.

See how all creatures work according to the principle of their natures. You need not command a mother to draw forth her breasts to a sucking child; nature itself teaches and prompts to that. You need not bid the sea ebb and flow at the stated hours. O Christian! why should your heart need any other argument, than its own spiritual inclination, to keep its stated times and seasons of communion with God? Let none of God’s commandments be grievous to you: let not your heart need dragging and forcing to its own benefit and advantage. Whatever you do for God, do it cheerfully; and whatever you suffer for God suffer it cheerfully. It was a brave spirit which actuated holy Paul, "I am ready (says he) not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus," Acts 21:1-40.

Inference. 4. Let no man wonder at the enmity and opposition of Satan to the preaching of the gospel: for by the gospel it is that souls are recovered out of his power, Acts 26:18. It is the express work of ministers "to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." Satan (as one says) is a great and jealous prince: he will never endure to have liberty proclaimed by the ministers of Christ within his dominions. And, indeed, what is it less, when the gospel is preached in power, but as it were by beat of drum, and sound of trumpet, to proclaim liberty, spiritual, sweet, and everlasting liberty, to every soul sensible of the bondage of corruption and the cruel servitude of Satan, and will now come over to Jesus Christ? And O what numbers and multitudes of prisoners have broken loose from Satan at one proclamation of Christ, Acts 2:41. But Satan owes the servants of Christ a spite for this, and will be sure to pay them if ever they come within his reach; persecution is the evil genius of the gospel, and follows it as the shadow does the body.

Inference. 5. How careful should Christians be to maintain their spiritual liberty in all and every point thereof! "Stand fast (says Paul) in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not

gain entangled in the yoke of bondage," Galatians 5:1. And again, You are bought with a price, be not you the servants of men." It is Christ's prerogative to prescribe the rules of his own house; he has given no man dominion over your faith, 2 Corinthians 1:24. One man is no rule to another, but the word of Christ is a rule to all: follow not the holiest of men one step farther than they follow Christ, 1 Corinthians 11:4. Man is an ambitious creature, naturally affecting dominion; and dominion over the mind rather than over the body. To give law to others, feeds pride in himself; so far as any man brings the word of Christ to warrant his injunctions, so far we are to obey, and no farther; Christ is your Lord and Lawgiver.

Inference. 6. Lastly, Let this encourage and persuade sinners to come to Christ; for with him is sweet liberty to poor captives. Oh that you did but know what a blessed state Jesus Christ would bring you into! "Come unto me (says he) you that labor and are heavy laden:" and what encouragement does he give to comers? Why this, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." The devil persuades you, that the ways of obedience and strict godliness are a perfect bondage; but if ever God regenerate you, you will find his ways, "ways of pleasantness, and all his paths peace: you will rejoice in the way of his commandments as much as in all riches:" you will find the worst work Christ puts you about, even suffering work, sweeter than all the pleasures that ever you found in sin. O therefore open your hearts at the call of the gospel: Come unto Christ, then shall you be free indeed.

05.13. Reconciliation and Glorification

The Saints coming home to God by Reconciliation and Glorification, opened and applied.

"For Christ has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." 1 Peter 3:18

The scope of the apostle in this place is to prepare and fortify Christians for a day of suffering. In order to their cheerful sustaining whereof, he prescribes two excellent rules of mighty use for all suffering Christians.

First, To get a good conscience within them, 1 Peter 3:16-17.

Secondly, To set the example of Christ's sufferings before them, 1 Peter 3:18. "For Christ has once suffered for sinners;" the sufferings of Christ for us, is the great motive engaging Christians to suffer cheerfully for him.

In the words before us we have,

First, The sufficiency and fullness of Christ's sufferings intimated in that particle [once]; Christ needs to suffer no more, having finished and completed that whole work at once.

Secondly, The meritorious cause of the sufferings of Christ, and that is sin, Christ once suffered for sins; not his own sins, but ours; as it follows in the next clause, which is the third thing here observable, namely,

Thirdly, The admirable grace and unexampled love of Christ to us sinners, the just for the unjust; in which words the substitution of Christ in the room and place of sinners, the vicegerence of his death is plainly expressed. Christ died not only nostro bono, for our good, but also nostro loco, in our stead. Fourthly, Here is also the final cause or design and scope of the sufferings of Christ, which was to bring us to God.

Fifthly, Here is also the issue of the sufferings of Christ, which was the death of Christ in the flesh, and the quickening of Christ after death by the Spirit. Many excellent observations are lodged in the bosom of this scripture; all which I must pass over in silence at this time, and confine my discourse to the final cause of the sufferings of Christ, namely, that he might bring us to God: where the observation will be plainly and briefly this.

Doctrine. That the end of Christ's cursed death, and bitter sufferings, was to bring all those for whom he died unto God.

In the explication and preparation of this point for use, two things must be spoken unto, namely,

1. What Christ's bringing us to God imports?

2. What influence the death of Christ has upon this design of bringing us to God?

First, What Christ's bringing us to God imports? And certainly there be many great and excellent things contained in this expression: more generally it notes our state of reconciliation, and our state of glorification. By reconciliation we are brought near to God, Ephesians 2:18. "You are made near," that is reconciled, "by the blood of Christ," Hebrews 12:22-23. we are said "to come to God the Judge of all." By reconciliation we are brought near unto God now; by glorification we shall be brought home to God hereafter, 1 Thessalonians 5:17. "We shall be ever with the Lord." But more particularly this phrase, "that he might bring us to God," imports,

First, That the chief happiness of man consists in the enjoyment of God: that the creature has as necessary dependence upon God for happiness, as the stream has upon the fountain, or the image in the glass upon the face of him that looks into it. For as the sum of the creature's misery lies in this, depart from me; separation from God being the principal part of damnation, so, on the contrary, the chief happiness of the creature consists in the enjoyment and blessed vision of God, 1 John 3:2. Psalms 17:15. "I shall be satisfied when I awake with your likeness".

Secondly, It implies man's revolt and apostasy from God, Ephesians 2:12. "But now in Christ Jesus, you who were some time afar off; are made near by the blood of Christ." Those whom Christ brings unto God were before afar off from him, both in state and condition, and in temper and disposition: we were lost creatures, and had no desire to return to God. The prodigal was said to go into a far country, Luke 15:80.

Thirdly, Christ's bringing us to God, implies our inability to re turn to God of ourselves; we must be brought back by Christ, or perish forever in a state of separation from God: the lost sheep is made the emblem of the lost sinner, Luke 15:5. The sheep returns not to the fold of itself, but the shepherd seeks it, finds it, and carries it back upon his shoulders. And the apostle plainly tells us, Romans 5:6. That when we were without strength, that is any ability to recover, help, or save ourselves, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

Fourthly, Christ bringing us to God evidently implies this, that God's unsatisfied justice was once the great bar between him and man. Man can have no access to God but by Christ: Christ brings us to God by no other way but the way of satisfaction by his blood: "He has suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." Better ten thousand worlds should perish forever, than that God should lose the honor of his justice. This great obex, or bar to our enjoyment of God, is effectually removed by the death of Christ, whereby God's justice is not only fully satisfied, but highly honored and glorified, Romans 3:24. And so the way by which we are brought to God is again opened (to the wonder and joy of all believers) by the blood and sufferings of Christ.

Fifthly, and lastly, It shows us the peculiar happiness and privilege of believers above all people in the world: these only are they which shall be brought to God by Jesus Christ in a reconciled state: others, indeed, shall be brought to God as a Judge, to be condemned by him: believers only are brought to God in the Mediator's hand, as a reconciled Father, to be made blessed forever in the enjoyment of him: every believer is brought singly to God at his death, Luke 16:22. And all believers shall be jointly and solemnly presented to God in the great day, Colossians 1:22. Jude 1:24. They shall be all presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. Now the privilege of believers in that day will lie in divers things.

First, That they shall be all brought to God together. This will be the general assembly mentioned, Hebrews 12:22. There shall be a collection of all believers, in all ages of the world, into one blessed assembly; they shall come from the east, and west, and north, and south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God, Luke 13:1-35. 0 what a glorious train will be seen following the Redeemer in

that day!

Secondly, As all the saints shall be collected into one body; so they shall be all brought or presented unto God, faultless and with out blemish, Jude 1:24. "A glorious church, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing," Ephesians 5:27. For this is the general assembly of the spirits of just men that are made perfect, Hebrews 12:1-29. All sin was perfectly separated from them when death had separated their souls and bodies.

Thirdly, In this lies the privilege of believers, that as they shall be all brought together, and that in a state of absolute purity, and perfection, so they shall be all brought to God: they shall see his face, in the vision whereof is "fullness of joy, and at whose right-hand are pleasures for evermore," Psalms 16:11. The objective blessedness of the saints consists in their fruition of God, Psalm. 72:25. To see God in his word and works, is the happiness of the saints on earth; but to see him face to face, will be the fullness of their blessedness in heaven, 1 John 3:2. This is that intuitive, transforming, and sanctifying vision, of which the scriptures frequently speaks, Psalms 17:15. 1 Corinthians 15:28. Revelation 7:1-17.

Fourthly, To be brought unto God, must needs imply a state of perfect joy and highest delight. So speaks the apostle, Jude 1:14. Christ shall present, or bring them to God with exceeding joy. And more fully the joy of this day is expressed, Psalms 45:15 "With joy and rejoicing shall they be brought; they shall enter into the king’s palace." It will be a day of universal joy, when all the saints are brought home to God in a perfected state. For,

1. God the Father will rejoice when Christ brings home that precious number of his elect, whom he redeemed by his blood: he rejoices in them now, though imperfect, and under many distasteful corruptions and weaknesses, Zephaniah 3:17. How much more will he rejoice in them when Christ presents them without spot or wrinkle to him, Ephesians 5:27.

2. Jesus Christ will exceedingly rejoice; it will be the day of the gladness and satisfaction of his heart; for now, and not until now, he receives his mystical fullness, Colossians 1:24. beholds all the blessed issues of his death, which cannot but give him unspeakable contentment, Isaiah 53:11. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied."

3. The day in which believers are brought home to God, will be a day of unspeakable joy to the Holy Spirit of God himself. For unto this all his sanctifying designs in this world had respect: to this day he sealed them: towards this day he stirred up desires, and groanings in their hearts that cannot be uttered, Ephesians 4:30. Romans 8:28. Thus the great and blessed persons, Father, Son, and Spirit, will rejoice in the bringing home of the elect to God. For as it is the greatest joy to a man to see the designs which his heart has been long projecting, and intently set upon, by an orderly conduct, at last brought to the happy issue he first aimed at; much more will it be so here; the counsel and hand of each person being deeply concerned in this blessed design.

4. The angels of God will rejoice at the bringing home of believers to him: the spirits of just men made perfect, will be united in one general assembly, with an innumerable company of angels, Heb. 2:22 Great is the affection and love of angels to redeemed ones; they greatly rejoiced at the incarnation of Christ for them, Luke 2:13. They greatly delighted to pry into the mystery of their redemption, 1 Peter 1:12 They were marvelously delighted at their conversion, which was the day of their espousals to Christ, Luke 15:10. They have been tender and careful over them, and very serviceable to them in this world, Hebrews 1:14. and therefore cannot but rejoice exceedingly, to see them all brought home in safety to their father's house.

5. To conclude, Christ's bringing home all believers unto God, will be matter of unspeakable joy to themselves; for, whatever knowledge and acquaintance they had with God here, whatever sights of faith they had of heaven and the glory to come in this world, yet the sight of God and Christ the Redeemer will be an unspeakable surprise to them in that day. This will be the day of relieving all their wants, the day of satisfaction to all their desires; for now they are come where they would be, arrived at the very desires of their souls.

Secondly, In the last place, let it be considered, what influence the death of Christ has upon this design, and you shall find it much every way. In two things especially, the death of Christ has a blessed casualty and influence in this matter, namely,

1. It effectually removes all obstacles to it.

2. It purchases (as a price) their title to it.

First, The death of Christ removes all obstacles out of the way of this mercy: such were the bars hindering our access to God as nothing but the death of Christ could remove, and thereby open a way for believers to come to God. The guilt of sin barred us from his gracious presence, Romans 1:2-3. Hosea 14:2. The filth of sin excluded us from God, Hab. 1: 23. Hebrews 12:14. The enmity of our nature perfectly stopped up our way to God, Colossians 1:21. Romans 8:7. by reason hereof fallen man has no desire to come unto God, Job 21:1-34. The justice of God, like a flaming sword turning every way, kept all men from access to God. And Lastly, Satan, that malicious and armed adversary, lay as a lion in the way to God, 2 Pet. 5:8. 0, with what strong bars were the gates of heaven shut against our souls! The way of God was chained up with such difficulties, as none but Christ was able to remove; and he by death has effectually removed them all: The way is now open, even the new and the living way, consecrated for us by his blood. The death of Christ effectually removes the guilt of sin, 1 Peter 2:21. washes off the filth of sin, 1 John 5:6. takes away the enmity of nature, Colossians 1:1-29 satisfies all the demands of justice, Romans 3:25-26. has broken all the power of Satan, Colossians 2:15. Hebrews 2:14. and consequently the way to God is effectually and fully opened to believers by the blood of Jesus, Hebrews 10:20.

Secondly, The blood of Christ purchased for believers their right and title to this privilege, Galatians 4:4-5. "But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law; to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons," that is both the relation and inheritance of sons. There was value and worth enough in the precious blood of Christ, not only to pay all our debts to justice, but over and above the payment of our debts, to purchase for us this invaluable privilege. We must put this unspeakable mercy of being brought to God, as my text puts it, upon the account, and to the score

of the death of Christ: no believer had ever tasted the sweetness of such a mercy, if Christ had not tasted the bitterness of death for him. The use of all you will have in the following deductions of truth.

Deduction 1. Great is the preciousness and worth of souls, that the life of Christ should be given to redeem and recover them to God. As God laid out his thoughts and counsel from eternity, upon them, to project the way and method of their salvation, so the Lord Jesus, in pursuance of that blessed design, came from the bosom of the Father, and spilt his invaluable blood to bring them to God. No wise man expends vast sums to bring home trifling commodities: how cheap soever our souls are in our estimation, it is evident by this they are of precious esteem in the eyes of Christ.

Deduct. 2. Redeemed souls must expect no rest or satisfaction on this side heaven, and the full enjoyment of God. The life of a believer in this world, is a life of motion and expectation: they are now coming to God, 1 Peter 2:4. God, you see, is the center and rest of their souls, Hebrews 4:9. As the rivers cannot rest until they pour themselves into the bosom of the sea, so neither can renewed souls find rest until they come into the bosom of God. There are four things which do and will break the rest, and disturb the souls of believers in this world; afflictions, temptations, corruptions, and absence from God. If the three former causes of disquietness were totally removed, so that a believer were placed in such a condition upon earth, where no affliction could disturb him, no temptation trouble him, no corruption defile or grieve him, yet his very absence from God must still keep him restless and unsatisfied, 2 Corinthians 5:6. "While we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord."

Deduct. 3. What sweet and pleasant thoughts should all believers have of death! When they die, and never until they die, shall they be fully brought home to God. Death to the saints, is the door by which they enter into the enjoyment of God: the dying Christian is almost at home, yet a few pangs and agonies more, and then he is come to God, in whose presence is the fullness of joy. "I desire (says Paul) to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better," Php 1:23. It should not affright us to be brought to death, the king of terrors, so long as it is the office of death to bring us to God. That dreaming opinion of the soul sleeping after death, is as ungrounded, as it is uncomfortable: the same day we loose from this shore, we shall be landed upon the blessed shore; where we shall see and enjoy God forever. O, if the friends of dead believers did but understand where, and with whom their souls are, while they are mourning over their bodies, certainly a few believing thoughts of this would quickly dry up their tears. and fill the house of mourning with voices of praise and thanksgiving!

Deduct. 4. How comfortable and sweet should the converses and communication of Christians be one with another, in this world! Christ is bringing them all to God through this valley of tears: they are now in the way to him; all bound for heaven; going home to God, their everlasting rest in glory: every day, every hour, every duty brings them nearer and nearer to their journey’s end, Romans 13:11.

"Now (says the apostle) is our salvation nearer than when we believed." O, what manner of heavenly communications and ravishing discourses should believers have with each other as they walk by the way! O, what pleasant and delightful converse should they have with one another about the place and state where Christ is bringing them, and where they shall shortly be! What ravishing, transporting, transforming visions they shall have that day they are brought home to

God! How surprisingly glorious to them the sight of Jesus Christ will be, who died for them to bring them unto God! how should such discourses as these, shorten and sweeten their passage through this world, strengthen and encourage the dejected and feeble-minded, and exceedingly honor and adorn their profession? Thus lived the believers of old, Hebrews 11:9-10. "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." But, alas! most Christians are either so entangled in the cares and troubles, or so ensnared by the delights and pleasures which almost continually divert and take up their thoughts by the way, that there is but little room for any discourses of Christ and heaven, among many of them: but certainly this would be as much your interest as your duty. When the apostle had entertained the Thessalonians with a lovely discourse of their meeting the Lord in the air, and being ever with the Lord, he charges it upon them as their great duty, to comfort one another with these words, 1 Thessalonians 4:17-18.

Deduct. 5; How unreasonable are the dejections of believers upon the account of those troubles which they meet with in this world! It is true, afflictions of all kinds do attend believers in their way to God; through many tribulations we must enter into that kingdom. But what then? must we despond and droop under them as other men? Surely no; If afflictions be the way through which you must come to God, then never be discouraged at affliction; troubles and afflictions are of excellent use, under the blessings of the Spirit, to further Christ's great design in bringing you to God. How often would you turn out of that way which leads to God, if he did not hedge up your way with thorns, Hosea 2:6. Doubtless when you come home to God, you shall find you have been much beholden (it may be a great deal more) to your troubles than to your comforts, for bringing you there: however, the sweetness of the end will infinitely more then recompense the sorrows and troubles of the way: nor are they worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in you, Romans 8:18.

Deduct 6. How much are all believers obliged, in point of interest, to follow Jesus Christ whithersoever he goes! Thus are the saints described, Revelation 14:4. "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever be goes: these were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God, and to the Lamb." If it be the design of Christ to bring us to God, then certainly it is our duty to follow Christ in all the paths of active and passive obedience through which he now leads us, as ever we expect to be brought home to God at last: "We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end," Hebrews 3:14. If we have followed him through many sufferings and troubles, and shall turn away from him at last, we lose all that we have wrought and suffered in religion, and shall never reach home to God at last. The crown of life belongs only to them who are faithful to the death.

Deduct. 7. Let all that desire, or expect to come to God hereafter, come to Christ by faith now. There is no other way to the Father, but by Christ, no other way to Christ but faith. How vain therefore are the hopes and expectations of all unbelievers? Be assured of this great truth, Death shall bring you to God as an avenging Judge, if Christ do not bring you now to God as a reconciled Father: without holiness no man shall see God: the door of hope is shut against all christless persons, John 14:6. "No man comes unto the Father but by me." O what a sweet voice comes down from heaven to your souls this day, saying, As ever you expect or hope to come to God, and enjoy the blessing that is here, come unto Christ, obey his calls, give up yourselves to his conduct

and government, and you shall certainly be brought to God! As sure as you shall now be brought to Jesus Christ by spiritual union, so sure shall you be brought to God in full fruition.

Blessed be God for Jesus Christ, the new and living way to the Father.

And thus I have finished the motives drawn from the titles and benefits of Christ, serving to enforce and quicken the great gospel exhortation of coming to, and effectually applying the Lord Jesus Christ in the way of faith. O that the blessings of the Spirit might follow these calls, and fix these considerations as nails in sure places! But seeing the great hindrance and obstruction to faith is the false opinion and persuasion of most unregenerate men, that they are already in Christ; my next work therefore shall be, in a second use of conviction, to undeceive men in that matter; and that, by showing them the undoubted certainty of these two things:

First, That there is no coming ordinarily to Christ without the application of the law to our consciences, in a way of effectual conviction.

Secondly, Nor by that neither, without the teachings of God, in the way of spiritual illumination. The first of these will be fully confirmed and opened in the following sermon.

05.14. Necessity of Being Slain by the Law

Necessity of Being Slain by the Law

The great usefulness of the Law or Word of God, in order to the Application of Christ.

"For I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Romans 7:9

The scope of the apostle in this epistle, and more particularly in this chapter, is to state the due use and excellency of the law, which he does accordingly.

First, By denying to it a power to justify us, which is the peculiar honor of Christ.

Secondly, By ascribing to it a power to convince us, and so prepare us for Christ.

Neither attributing to it more honor than belongs to it, nor yet detracting from it that honor and usefulness which God has given it. It cannot make us righteous, but it can convince us that we are unrighteous; it cannot heal, but it can open and discover the wounds that sin has given us; which he proves in this place by an argument drawn from his own experience, confirmed also by the general experience of believers, in whose persons and names we must here understand him to speak; "For I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Wherein three particulars are very observable.

First, The opinion Paul had, and all unregenerate men have of themselves before conversion: I was alive once. By life, understand here liveliness, cheerfulness, and confidence of his good estate and condition: he was full of vain hope, false joy, and presumptuous confidence; a very brisk and jovial man.

Secondly, The sense and opinion he had, and all others will have of themselves, if ever they come under the regenerating work of the Spirit in his ordinary method of working: I died. The death he here speaks of, stands opposed to that life before mentioned; and signifies the sorrows, fears, and tremblings that seized upon his soul, when his state and temper were upon the change: the apprehensions he then had of his condition struck him home to the heart, and damped all his carnal mirth: I died.

Thirdly, The ground and reason of this wonderful alteration and change of his judgment, and apprehension of his own condition; the commandment came, and sin revived: The commandment came, that is it came home to my conscience, it was fixed with a divine and mighty efficacy upon my heart: the commandment was come before by way of promulgation, and the literal knowledge of it; but it never came until now in its spiritual sense and convincing power to his soul; though he had often read, and heard the law before, yet he never clearly understood the meaning and extent, he never felt the mighty efficacy thereof upon his heart before; it so came at this time, as it never came before. From hence the observations are,

Doctrine. 1. That unregenerate persons are generally full of groundless confidence and cheerfulness, though their condition be sad and miserable.

Doctrine. 2. That there is a mighty efficacy in the word or law of God, to kill vain confidence, and quench carnal mirth in the hearts of men, when God sets it home upon their consciences.

We shall take both these points under consideration, and improve them to the design in hand.

Doctrine. 1. That unregenerate persons are full of groundless confidence and cheerfulness, though their condition be sad and miserable; Revelation 3:17. Because you say I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; This is the very life that unregenerate men do live.

In opening whereof, I shall show you,

1. What is the life of the unregenerate.

2. What maintains that life.

3. How it appears that this is the life the generality of the world do live.

4. The danger of living such a life as this: and then apply it.

First, What is the life of the unregenerate, and wherein it consists? Now there being, among others, three things in which the life of the unregenerate does principally consist, namely,

Carnal security,

Presumptuous hope, and false joy,

Of these briefly in their order.

First, There is in unregenerate men a great deal of carnal security; they dread no danger; Luke 11:21. "When a strong man armed keeps his palace, his goods are at peace:" There is generally a great stillness and silence in the consciences of such men; when others, in a better condition, are watching and trembling, they sleep securely: so they live, and so ofttimes they die, Psalms 123:4. "They have no bonds in their death," [Hebrew, on knots], no difficulties that puzzle them. It is true, the consciences of few men are so perfectly stupefied, but that some time or other they twang and gird them; but it seldom works to that height, or continues with them so long as to give any considerable interruption

to their carnal peace and quietness.

Secondly, The life of the unregenerate consists in presumptuous hope: this is the very foundation of their carnal security. So Christ tells the Jews, John 8:54; John 8:53. "Of whom you say that he is your God, and yet you have not known him." The world is full of hope without a promise, which is but as a spider’s web, when a stress comes to be laid upon it, John 27:8. Unregenerate men are said indeed to be without hope, Ephesians 2:12. but the meaning is, they are without any solid, well-grounded hope; for in scripture- account, vain hope is no hope, except it be a lively hope, 1 Peter 1:1-25. A hope flowing from union with Christ, Colossians 1:27. A hope nourished by experience, Romans 5:4. A hope for which a man can give a reason, 1 Peter 3:15. a hope that

puts men upon heart-purifying endeavors, 1 John 3:5. It is in the account of God a cipher, a vanity, not deserving the name of hope; and yet such a groundless, dead, christless, irrational, idle hope is that which the unregenerate live upon.

Thirdly, The life of the unregenerate consists in false joy, the immediate offspring of ungrounded hope, Matthew 13:28. The stony ground receive the word with joy.

There are two sorts of joy upon which the unregenerate live, namely,

1. A sensitive joy in things carnal.

2. A delusive joy in things spiritual.

They rejoice in corn, wine, and oil, in their estates and children, in the pleasant fruitions of the creature; yes, and they rejoice also in Christ and the promises, in heaven and in glory: with all which they have just such a kind of communion as a man has in a dream with a full feast and curious music; and just so their joy will vanish when they awake. Now these three, security, hope, and joy, make up the livelihood of the carnal world.

Secondly, Next it concerns us to enquire what are the things that maintain and support this security, hope and joy in the hearts of unregenerate men; and if we consider duly, we shall find that church privileges, natural ignorance, false evidences of the love of God, slight workings of the gospel, self love, comparing themselves with the more profane, and Satan's policy managing all these in order to their eternal ruin, are so many springs to feed and maintain this life of delusion in the unregenerate.

1. First, Church privileges lay the foundation to this strong delusion. Thus the Jews deceived themselves, saying in their hearts, "We have Abraham for our father," Matthew 3:9. This props up the vain hopes that Abraham's blood ran in their veins, though Abraham's faith and obedience never wrought in their hearts.

2. Secondly, Natural ignorance; this keeps all in peace: they that see not, fear not. There are but two ways to quiet the hearts of men about their spiritual and eternal concernments, namely, the way of assurance and faith, or the way of ignorance and self-deceit; by the one we are put beyond danger, by the other beyond fear, though the danger be greater. Satan could never quiet men, if he did not first blind them.

3. Thirdly, False evidences of the love of God is another spring feeding this security, vain hope, and false joy in the hearts of men: see the power of it to hush and still the conscience, Mat. 7: 92. "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name?" &c. The things upon which they built their evidence and confidence, were external things in religion; yet they had a quieting power upon them, as if they had been the best evidences in the world.

4. Fourthly, Slight workings of the gospel; such are transient motions of the affections under the word, Hebrews 6:8. the working of their desires about spiritual objects. John 6:34. Matthew 12:43. the external change and reformation of their ways, Matthew 12:43. all which serve to nourish the vain hopes of the unregenerate.

5. Fifthly, Self-love is an apparent reason and ground of security and false hope, Matthew 7:3. It makes a man to overlook great evils in himself, while he is sharp-sighted to discover and censure lesser evils in others: self love takes away the sight of sin, by bringing it too near the eye.

6. Sixthly, Men's comparing themselves with those that are more profane and grossly wicked than themselves, serves notably to quiet and hush the conscience asleep; "God, I thank you, (said the Pharisee), I am not as other men, or as this publican." O what a saint did he seem to himself, when he stood by those that were externally more wicked.

7. Seventhly, and lastly, The policy of Satan to manage all these things to the blinding and ruining of the souls of men, is another great reason they live so securely and pleasantly as they do, in a state of so much danger and misery, 2 Corinthians 4:3-4. "The God of this world has blinded the minds of them that believe not.

Thirdly, You have seen what the life of the unregenerate is, and what maintains that life. In the next place, I shall give you evidence that this is the life the generality of the world do live; a life of carnal security, vain hope, and false joy; this will evidently appear, if we consider,

First, The activity and liveliness of men's spirits in pursuit of the world. O how lively and vigorous are their hearts in the management of earthly designs! Psalms 6:4. "Who will show us any good?" The world eats up their hearts, time, and strength. Now this could never be, if their eyes were but opened to see the danger and misery their souls are in. How few designs for the world run in the thoughts of a condemned man? O if God had ever made the light of conviction to shine into their consciences, certainly the temptations would lie the quite contrary way, even in too great a neglect of things of this life! But this briskness and liveliness plainly show the great security which is upon most men.

Secondly, The marvelous quietness and stillness that is in the thoughts and consciences of men, about their everlasting concernments, plainly shows this to be the life of the unregenerate: How few scruples, doubts, or fears shall you hear from them? How many years may a man live in carnal families, before he shall hear such a question as this seriously propounded, "What shall I do to be

saved?" There are no questions in their lips, because no fear or sense of danger in their hearts.

Thirdly, The general contentedness, and professed willingness of carnal men to die, give clear evidence that such a life of security and vain hope is the life they live; "Like sheep they are laid in the grave," Psalms 49:14. O how quiet and still are their consciences, when there are but a few breaths more between them and everlasting burnings! Had God opened their eyes to apprehend the consequences of death, and what follows the pale horse, Revelation 6:8. it were impossible but that every unregenerate man should make that bed on which he dies shake and tremble under him.

Fourthly, and lastly, The low esteem men have for Christ, and the total neglect of, at least the mere biding with, those duties in which he is to be found, plainly discover this stupid secure life to be the life that the generality of the world do live, for were men sensible of the disease of sin, there could be no quieting them without "Christ the physician," Php 3:8. All the business they have to do in this world could never keep them from their knees, or make them strangers to their closets; all

which, and much more that might be said of the like nature, gives too full and clear proof of this sad assertion, that this is the life the unregenerate world generally lives.

Fourthly, In the last place, I would speak a few words to discover the danger of such a life as has been described; to which purpose let the following brief hints be seriously minded.

First, By these things souls are inevitably betrayed into hell and eternal ruin; this blinding is in order to damning, 2 Corinthians 4:3-4. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, whose eyes the God of this world has blinded." Those that are turned over into eternal death are thus generally hoodwinked and blinded in order thereunto, Isaiah 6:9-10. "And he said go and tell this people, hear you indeed, but understand not: and see you indeed, but perceive not. Make the hearts of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and convert, and be healed.

Secondly, As damning is the event of blinding, so nothing makes hell a more terrible surprise to the soul than this does. By this means the wrath of God is felt before its danger be apprehended; a man is past all hope, before he begins to have any fear: his eternal ruin, like a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, comes suddenly at an instant, Isaiah 30:13. and as it damns surely and surprisingly, so,

Thirdly, Nothing more aggravates a man’s damnation than to sink suddenly into it, from amidst so many hopes, and high confidence of safety: For a man to find himself in hell, when he thought and concluded himself within a step of heaven O what a hell will it be to such men! The higher vain hopes lifted them up, the more dreadful must their fall be, Matthew 7:22. And as it damns surely, surprisingly, and with highest aggravations, so,

Fourthly, This life of security and vain hope frustrates all the means of recovery and salvation, in the only season wherein they can be useful and beneficial to us: By reason of these things the word has no power to convince men’s consciences, nothing can bring them to a sight and sense of their condition: Therefore Christ told the self-confident and blind Jews, Matthew 21:21. "That the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before them:" And the reason is, because their hearts lie more open and fair to the strokes of conviction and compunction for sin than those do, who are blinded by vain hopes and confidences.

Inference 1. Is this the life that the unregenerate world lives? Then it is not to be wondered at that the preaching of the gospel has so little success: "Who has believed our report? (says the prophet) and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Isaiah 53:1-12. Ministers study for truths apt to awaken and convince the consciences of them that hear them, but their words return again to them: They turn to God, and mourn over the matter; we have labored in vain, and spent our strength for nothing: And this security is the cause of all, vain hopes bar fast the doors of men’s hearts against all the convictions and persuasions of the word. The greater cause have they to admire the grace of God, who have found, or shall find the convictions of the word sharper than any two edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit; to whose hearts God brings home the commandment by an effectual application.

Inference. 2. If this be the life of the unregenerate world, what deadly enemies are they that nourish and strengthen the groundless confidences and vain hopes of salvation in men. This the scripture calls the healing of the hurt of souls slightly, by crying, "Peace, peace, when there is no

peace," Jeremiah 6:14. The sewing of pillows under their arm-holes, Ezekiel 13:18. That they may lie soft and easy under the ministry; and this is the doctrine which the people love: but oh, what will the end of these things be! And what an account have those men to give to God for the blood of those souls by them betrayed to the everlasting burnings! Such flattery is the greatest cruelty: Those whom you bless upon earth, will curse you in hell, and the day in which they trusted their souls to your conduct.

Inference. 3. How great a mercy is it to be awakened out of that general sleep and security which is fallen upon the world! You cannot estimate the value of that mercy, for it is a peculiar mercy. O that ever the Spirit of the Lord should touch your soul under the ministry of the word, startle and rouse your conscience, while others are left in the dead sleep of security round about you! When the Lord dealt with your soul much after the same manner he did with Paul in the way to Damascus, who not only saw a light shining from heaven, which those that traveled with him saw as well as he, but heard that voice from heaven which did the work upon his heart, though his companions heard it not. Besides, it is not only a peculiar mercy, but it is a leading introductive mercy, to all other spiritual mercies that follow it to all eternity. If God had not done this for you, you had never been brought to faith, to Christ, or heaven. From this act of the Spirit all other saving acts take their rise; so that you have cause forever to admire the goodness of God in such a favor as this is.

Inference. 4. Lastly, Hence it follows that the generality of the world are in the direct way to eternal ruin; and whatever their vain confidences are, that cannot be saved "Narrow is the way, and strait is the gate that leads unto life, and few there be that find it."

Hear me all you that live this dangerous life of carnal security and vain hope, whatever your persuasions and confidences are, except you give them up, and get better grounds for your hope, you cannot be saved. For,

First, Such hopes and confidences as yours are directly contradictory to the established order of the gospel, which requires repentance, Acts 5:31. faith, Acts 13:39. and regeneration, John 3:3. in all that shall be saved. And this order shall never be altered for any man’s sake.

Secondly, If such as you be saved, all the threatenings in scripture must be reversed, which lie in full opposition to your vain hopes, Mark 16:16. John 3:16. Romans 3:8-9. Either the truth of God, in these threatenings must fail, or your vain hopes must fail.

Thirdly, If ever such as you be saved, new conditions must be set to all the promises; for there is no condition of any special promise found in any unregenerate person. Compare your hearts with these scriptures, Matthew 5:3-6. Psalms 24:4. Psalms 84:11. Genesis 17:1-2.

Fourthly, If ever such a hope as yours bring you to heaven, then the saving hope of God’s elect is not rightly described to us in the scriptures. Scripture-hope is the effect of regeneration, 1 Peter 1:3. And purity of heart is the effect of that hope, 1 John 3:1-24. Nay.

Fourthly, The very nature of heaven is mistaken in scripture, if such as you be subjects qualified for its enjoyment: For assimilation, or the conformity of the soul to God in holiness, is, in the scripture account, a principal ingredient of that blessedness: By all which it manifestly appears that the hopes of most men are in vain, and will never bring them to heaven.

05.15. Necessity of Being Slain by the Law, Continued

Necessity of Being Slain by the Law, Continued

"For I was alive without the law once: But when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Romans 7:9

Doctrine. 2. That there is a mighty efficacy in the word or law of God, to kill vain confidence, and quench carnal mirth in the hearts of men, when God sets it home upon their consciences. "The weapons of the word are not carnal, but mighty through God; to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and everything that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ," 2 Corinthians 10:4-5.

In the opening of this point I shall,

1. Demonstrate the efficacy of the word or law of God.

2. Show wherein the efficacy thereof lies.

3. From whence it has all this mighty power and efficacy.

First, I shall give you some demonstrations of the mighty power and efficacy that there are in the word or law of God; which will appear with the fullest evidence,

First, From the various subjects upon whom it works: The hearts and consciences of men of all orders and qualities, have been reached and wounded to the quick by the two-edged sword of God's law. Some, among the great and honorable of the earth, (though indeed the fewest of that rank) have been made to stoop and tremble under the word, Acts 24:16. Mark 6:20. 1 Samuel 15:24. The wise and learned of the world have felt its power, and been brought over to embrace the humbling and self-denying ways of Christ, Acts 17:31.

Thus Origen, Hierom, Tertullian, Bradwardine, and many more, came into Canaan laden with the Egyptian gold, as one speaks, that is they came into the church of God abundantly enriched and furnished with the learned arts and sciences, devoting them all to the service of Christ. Yes, and which is as strange, the most simple, weak, and illiterate have been wonderfully changed, and wrought upon by the power of the word: "The testimonies of the Lord make wise the simple:" Men of weak understandings, in all other matters, have been made wise to salvation by the power of the word, Matthew 11:25. 1 Corinthians 1:1-31. Nay the most malicious and obstinate enemies of Christ have been wounded and converted by the word, 1 Timothy 1:13. Acts 16:25. Those that have been under the prejudice of the worst and most idolatrous education, have been the subjects of its mighty power, Acts 19:26. To conclude, men of the most profligate and debauched lives have been wonderfully changed and altered by the power of the word, 1 Corinthians 6:10-11.

Secondly, The mighty efficacy of the law of God appears in the manner of its operation; it works suddenly; strikes like a dart through the hearts and consciences of men, Acts 2:37. A wonderful change is made in a short time: And, as it works quickly and suddenly, so it works irresistibly, with

an uncontrolled power upon the spirits of men, 1 Thessalonians 1:5. Romans 1:16. Let the soul be armed against conviction with the thickest ignorance, strongest prejudice, or most obstinate resolution, the word of God will wound the bosom even of such a man, when God sends it forth in his authority and power.

Thirdly, The wonderful power of the law or word of God is evidently seen in the strange effects which are produced by it in the hearts and lives of men. For,

First, It changes and alters the frame and temper of the mind: It moulds a man into a quite contrary temper, Galatians 1:3. "He which persecuted us in times past, now preaches the faith, which once he destroyed:" Thus a tiger is transformed into a lamb, by the power of the word of God.

Secondly, It makes the soul, upon which it works, to forego and quit the dearest interests it has in this world for Jesus Christ, Php 3:7-9. Riches, honors, self-righteousness, dearest relations, are denied and forsaken. Reproach, poverty, and death itself, are willingly embraced for Christ's sake, when once the efficacy of the word has been upon the hearts of men, 1 Thessalonians 1:6.

Those that were their companions in sin, are declined, renounced, and cast of F with abhorrence, 1 Peter 4:8; 1 Peter 4:4. In such things as these the mighty power of the word discovers itself.

First, It has an awakening efficacy upon secure and sleepy sinners: It rouses the conscience, and brings a man to a sense and feeling apprehension, Ephesians 5:13-14. The first effectual touch of the word startles the drowsy conscience. A poor sinner lies in his sins, as Peter did in his chains, fast asleep, though a warrant was signed for his execution the next day: but the Spirit in the word awakens him as the angel did Peter: And this awakening power of the word is in order, both of time and nature, antecedent to all its operations and effects.

Secondly, The law of God has an enlightening efficacy upon the minds of men: It is eye-salve to the blinded eye, Revelation 3:18. A light shining in a dark place, 2 Peter 1:19. A light shining into the very heart of man, 2 Corinthians 4:6. When the word comes in power, all things appear with another face: The sins that were hid from our eyes, and the danger which was concealed by the policy of Satan from our souls, now lie clear and open before us, Ephesians 5:8.

Thirdly, The word of God has a convincing efficacy: It sets sin in order before the soul, Psalms 50:21. As an army is drawn up in an exact order, so are the sins of nature and practice, the sins of youth and age, even a great and terrible army is drawn up before the eye of the conscience; the convictions of the word are clear and full, 1 Corinthians 14:24-25. The very secrets of a sinner's heart are made manifest; his mouth is stopped; his pleas are silenced; his conscience yields to the charge of guilt, and to the equity of the sentence of the law, so that the soul stands mute, and self-condemned at the bar of conscience: It has got nothing to say why the wrath of God should not come upon it to the uttermost, Romans 3:1-31.

Fourthly, The law of God has a soul-wounding, an heart-cut tiny efficacy: It pierces into the very soul and spirit of man, Acts 2:1-47. "When they heard this, they were pricked at their hearts, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of tile apostles; men and brethren, what shall we do?" A dreadful sound is in the sinner's ears; his soul is in deep distress; he knows not which way to turn for ease; no plaster but the blood of Christ can heal these wounds which the word makes: No outward trouble, affliction, disgrace, or loss, ever touched the quick as the word of God does.

Fifthly, The word has a heart-turning, a soul converting efficacy in it: It is a regenerating, as well as a convincing word, 1 Peter 1:23. 1 Thessalonians 1:9. The law wounds, the gospel cures; the law discovers the evil that is in sin, and the misery that follows it; and the Spirit of God, working in fellowship with the word, effectually turns the heart from sin. And thus we see in what glorious acts the efficacy of the word discovers itself upon the hearts of men; and all these acts lie in order to each other: For, until the soul be awakened, it cannot be enlightened, Ephesians 5:14.

Until it be enlightened, it cannot be convinced, Ephesians 5:13. Conviction being nothing else but the application of the light that shines in the mind to the conscience of a sinner: Until it be convinced, it cannot be wounded for sin, Acts 2:37. And until it be wounded for sin, it will never be converted from sin, and brought effectually to Jesus Christ. And thus you see what the power of the word is.

Thirdly, In the last place, it will concern us to enquire whence the word of God has all this power? And it is most certain, that it is not a power inherent in itself, nor derived from the instrument by which it is managed, but from the Spirit of the Lord, who communicates to it all that power and efficacy which it has upon our souls.

1. Its power is not in, or from itself: It works not in a physical way, as natural agents do; for then the effect would always follow, except it were miraculously hindered: But this spiritual efficacy is in the word, as the healing virtue was in the waters of Bethesda, John 5:4. "An angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: Whoever then first, after the troubling of the water, steps in, was made whole of whatever disease he had." It is not a power naturally inherent in it at all times, but communicated to it at some special seasons. How often is the word preached, and no man awaked or convinced by it!

2. The power of the word is not communicated to it by the instrument that manages it, 1 Corinthians 3:7. "Neither is he that plants anything, neither be that waters." Ministers are nothing to such an effect and purpose as this is; he does not mean that they are useless and altogether unnecessary, but insufficient of themselves to produce such mighty effects: It works not as it is the word of man, 2 Thessalonians 2:13. Ministers may say of the ordinary, as Peter said of the extraordinary effects of the Spirit, Acts 3:12. "You men of Israel, why marvel you at this? or why look you so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?" If the effects of the word were in the power, and at the command of him that preaches it, then the blood of all the souls that perish under our ministry must lie at our door, as was formerly noted.

3. If you say, whence then has the word all this power? Our answer is, It derives it all from the Spirit of God, 1 Thessalonians 2:13, "For this cause thank we God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard of us, you received it not as the word of man, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually works also in you that believe." It is a successful instrument only when it is in the hand of the Spirit, with out whose influence it never did, nor can convince, convert, or save any soul.

Now, the Spirit of God has a sovereignty over three things in order to the conversion of sinners.

1. Over the word which works.

2. Over the soul wrought upon.

3. Over the time and season of working.

First, The Spirit has a glorious sovereignty over the word itself whose instrument it is to make it successful or not, as it pleases him, Isaiah 4:10, 11. "For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, &c. so shall my word be that goes out of my mouth:" as the clouds, so the word is carried and directed by divine pleasure. It is the Lord that makes them both give down their blessings, or to pass away fruitless and empty: yes, it is from the Spirit that this part of the word works, and not another. Those things upon which ministers bestow greatest labor in their preparation, and from which accordingly they have the greatest expectation; these do nothing, when, mean time, sometime, that dropped occasionally from them, like a chosen shaft, strikes the mark and does the work.

Secondly, The Spirit of the Lord has a glorious sovereignty over the souls wrought upon: it is his peculiar work "to take away the stony heart out of our flesh, and to give us an heart of flesh," Ezekiel 36:26. We may reason, exhort, and reprove, but no thing will abide until the Lord set it home. The Lord opened the heart of Lydia under Paul's ministry: he opens every heart that is effectually opened to receive Christ in the word: if the word can get no entrance, if your hearts remain dead under it still, we may say concerning such souls, as Martha did concerning her brother Lazarus: "Lord, if you had been here, my brother had not died." So, Lord, if you had been in this sermon, in this prayer, or in that counsel, these souls had not remained dead under them.

Thirdly, The Spirit has dominion over the times and seasons of conviction and conversion. Therefore the day in which souls are wrought upon is called "the day of his power," Psalms 110:3. That shall work at one time, which had no efficacy at all at another time; because this, and not that, was the time appointed. And thus you see whence the word derives that mighty power it has.

Now this word of God, when it is set home by the Spirit, is mighty to convince, humble, and break the hearts of sinners, John 16:1-33. "The Spirit when it comes shall convince the world of sin." The word signifies conviction by such clear demonstration as compels assent: it not only convinces men in general that they are sinners, but it convinces men particularly of their own sins, and the aggravations of them. So in the text, Sin revived, that is, the Lord revived his sins, the very circumstances and aggravations with which they were committed; and so it will be with us when the commandment comes; sins that we had forgotten, committed so far back as our youth or childhood; sins that lay slighted in our consciences, shall now be roused up as so many sleepy lions to affright and terrify us: for now the soul hears the voice of God in the word, as Adam heard it in the cool of the day and was afraid, and hides itself; but all will not do, for the Lord is come in the word; sin is held up before the eyes of the conscience in its dreadful aggravations and fearful consequences, as committed against the holy law, clear light, warnings of conscience, manifold mercies, God's long-suffering, Christ's precious blood, many warnings of judgement, the wages and demerit whereof, by the verdict of a man's own conscience, is death, eternal death, Romans 6:23. Romans 1:32. Romans 2:9. Thus the commandment comes, sin revives, and vain hope gives up the Spirit.

Inference. 1. Is there such a mighty power in the word? then certainly the word is of divine authority. There cannot be a more clear and satisfying proof that it is no human invention, than the

common sense that all believers have of the Almighty power in which it works upon their hearts. So speaks the apostle, 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

"When you received the word of God which you heard of us, you received it not as the word of man, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually works also in you that believe." Can the power of any creature, the word of a mere man, so convince the conscience, so terrify the heart, so discover the very secret thoughts of the soul, as to put a man into such tremblings? No, a greater than man must needs be here; none but a God can so open the eyes of the blind, so open the graves of the dead, so quicken and enliven the conscience that was seared, so bind over the soul of a sinner to the

judgement to come, so change and alter the frame and temper of a man's spirit, or so powerfully raise, refresh and comfort a drooping dying soul; certainly the power of God is in all this; and, If there were no more, yet this alone were sufficient to make full proof of the divine authority of the scriptures.

Inference. 2. Judge from hence what an invaluable mercy the preaching of the word is to the world: It is a blessing far above our estimation of it; little do we know what a treasure God commits to us in the ordinances, Acts 13:25. "To you is the word of this salvation sent." It is the very power of God to salvation, Romans 1:1-32. And salvation is ordinarily denied to whom the preaching of the word is denied, Romans 10:14. It is called the Word of life, Php 2:1-30. and deserves to be valued by everyone of us as our life. The eternal decree of God's election is executed by it upon our souls; as many as he ordained to eternal life shall believe by the preaching of it. Great is the ingratitude of this generation, which so slights and undervalues this invaluable treasure; which is a sad presage of the most terrible judgement, even in the removing our candlestick out of its place, except we repent.

Inference. 3. How sore and terrible a judgement lies upon the souls of those men to whom no word of God is made powerful enough to convince and awaken them! Yet so stands the case with thousands, who constantly sit under the preaching of the word; many arrows are shot at their consciences, but none goes home to the mark, all fall short of the end; the commandment has come unto them many thousand times, by way of promulgation and ministerial inculcation, but yet never came home to their souls by the Spirit's effectual application. O friends! you have often beard the voice of man, but you never yet heard the voice of God; your understandings have been instructed, but your consciences to this day were never thoroughly convinced.

"We have mourned unto you, but you have not lamented," Matthew 11:17. "Who has believed our report? And unto whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Alas! we have labored in vain, we have spent our strength for nothing; our word returns unto us empty; but O what a stupendous judgement is here! Hebrews 6:7-8. "The earth which drinks in the rain that comes oft upon it, and brings forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receives blessing from God; but that which bears thorns and briars is rejected, and is near unto cursing, whose end is to be burned." What a sore judgment and sign of God's displeasure would you account it, if your fields were cursed; if you should manure, dress, prow, and sow them, but never reap the fruit of your labor; the increase being still blasted? And yet this were nothing, compared with the blessing of the word to your souls: that which is a savor of life unto life unto some, becomes the savor of death unto death to others, 2 Corinthians 2:16. The Lord affect our hearts with the terrible strokes of God upon the

souls of men!

Use of Exhortation.

I shall conclude this point with a few words of exhortation to three sorts of men, namely,

1. To those that never felt the power of the word.

2. To those that have only felt some slight and common effects thereof.

3. To those unto whose very hearts the commandment is come, in its effectual and saving power.

First, You that never felt any power in the word at all, I beg you in the name of him that made you, and by all the regard and value you have for those precious souls within you, that now at last such considerations as these may find place in your souls, and that you will bethink yourselves.

Consideration 1.

Whose word is that which cannot gain entrance into your hearts? Is it not the word of God which you despise and slight? "You casts my word behind your back," Psalms 50:17. 0 what an affront and provocation to God is this! You despise not man, but God; the great and terrible God, in whose hand your breath and soul are: This contempt runs higher than you imagine.

Consideration 2.

Consider, that however the word has no power upon you, the commandment cannot come home to your hearts; yet it does work, and comes home with power to the hearts of others: While you are hardened, others are melted under it; while you sleep, others tremble; while your hearts are fast locked up, others are opened. How can you choose but reflect with fear and trembling upon these contrary effects of the word; especially when you consider that the eternal decrees, both of election and reprobation, are now executed upon the souls of men, by the preaching of the word; some believe, and others are hardened.

Consideration 3.

That no judgement of God, on this side hell, is greater than a hard heart and stupid conscience under the word; it were much better that the providence of God should blast your estate, take away your children, or destroy your health, than harden your heart, and sear your conscience under the word: So much as your soul is better than your body, so much as eternity is more valuable than time, so much is this spiritual judgement more dreadful than all temporal ones. God does not inflict a more terrible stroke than this upon any man in this world.

O therefore, as you love your own souls, and are loth to ruin them to all eternity, attend upon every opportunity that God affords you; for you know not in which of them the Lord may work upon your hearts. Lay aside your prejudices against the word or the weaknesses and infirmities of them that preach it; for the word works not as it is the word of man, as it is thus neat and elegant, but as it is the word of God. Pray for the blessing of God upon the word; for except his word of blessing go forth with it, it can never come home to your soul. Meditate upon what you hear; for, without meditation, it is not like to have any effectual operation upon you. Search your souls by it, and consider whether that be not your very case and state which it describes; your very danger

whereof it gives warning. Take heed, lest after you have heard it, the cares of the world choke what you have heard, and cause those budding convictions which begin to put forth, to blast and wither. Carefully attend to all those items and memorandums your consciences give you under the word, and conclude that the Lord is then come near unto you.

Secondly, Let this be matter of serious consideration and caution to all such; as have only felt some slight, transient, and ineffectual operations of the gospel upon their souls: The Lord has come near to some of our souls; we have felt a strange power in the ordinances, sometimes terrifying, and sometimes transporting our hearts; but, alas! it proves but a morning-dew, or an early cloud, Hosea 6:4. We rejoice in the word, but it is but for a season, John 3:25. Galatians 4:14-15. They are vanishing motions, and come to nothing. Look, as in nature there are many abortives, as well as perfect children, so it is in religion; yes, where the new creature is perfectly formed in one soul, there be many abortives and miscarriages in others; and there may be three reasons assigned for it, namely,

First, The subtlety and deep policy of Satan, who never more effectually deceives and destroys the souls of men, than in such a method, and by such an artifice as this; for when men have once felt their consciences terrified under the word, and their hearts at other times ravished with the joys and comforts of it, they now seem to have attained all that is necessary to conversion, and constitutive of the new creature; these things look so well like the regenerating effects of the Spirit, that many are easily deceived by them. The devil beguiles the hearts of the unwary by such false appearances: for it is not every man that can distinguish between the natural and spiritual motions of the affections under the word: It is very frequently seen that even carnal and unrenewed hearts have their meltings and transports, as well as spiritual hearts. The subject-matter upon which the word treats, are the weighty things of the world to come; heaven and hell are very awful and affecting things, and an unrenewed heart is apt to thaw and melt at them: Now here is the cheat of Satan, to persuade a man that these must needs be spiritual affections, because the objects about which they are conversant are spiritual; whereas it is certain the objects of the affections may be very spiritual and heavenly, and yet the workings of man's affections about them may be in a mere natural way.

Secondly, The dampening efficacy of the world is a true and proper cause of these abortions and miscarriages under the word, Luke 8:12; Luke 8:18; Luke 8:14. There are hopeful and promising beginnings and buddings of affections in some persons, especially in their youth; but when once they come to be engaged in the world, how soon are they damped and quenched! As the cares of a family grow on, so does the care of salvation wear off. It is not as it was accustomed to be, What shall I do to be saved? How shall I get interest in Christ? But what shall I eat, and drink, and wherewith shall I, and mine, be maintained? Thus earth jostles out heaven, and the present world drowns all thoughts of that to come. Good had it been for many men, they had never been engaged so deep in the world as they are; their life is but a constant hurry of business, and a perpetual diversion from Christ, and things that are eternal.

Thirdly, and lastly, The deceitfulness and treachery of the heart, which too easily gives way to the designs of Satan, suffers itself to be imposed upon by him, is not the least cause why so many hopeful beginnings come to nothing, and the effects of the word vanish. Pride and self-love are very apt to over-rule every little good, and slight or undervalue every ill that is in us; and so quickly

choke those convictions that begin to work in our souls. But oh! that such men would consider, that the dying away of their convictions is that which threatens the life of their souls forever; now is the bud withered, the blossom blasted: and what expectation is there of fruit after this, except the Lord revive them again? The Lord open men's eyes to discern the danger of such things as these are! Jude 1:12. Hebrews 10:5-8. Yet I deny not but there

are many stands and pauses in the work of conversion; it seems to die away, and then revives again; and revive it must, or we are lost. But how many are there who never recover it more! This is a sore judgement of a most terrible consequence to the souls of men!

Thirdly, In the last place, let it be a word of counsel and advice to them, upon whom the word works effectually and powerfully; to whose hearts the commandment is come home to revive sin, and kill their vain hopes; and these are of two sorts.

1. Embryos under the first workings of the Spirit.

2. Complete births of the Spirit, regenerated souls.

First, Embryos that are under the first workings of the Spirit in the word. O let it not seem a misery, or unhappiness to you, that the commandment is come, and sin revived, and your former hopes overthrown. It must be thus, if ever God intend mercy for you. Had you gone on in that dangerous security you were in before, you had certainly been lost forever: God has stopped you in that path that leads down to hell, and none that go in there do ever return again, or take hold of the paths of life. O! it is better to weep, tremble, and be distressed now, than to mourn without hope for ever. Let it not trouble you that sin has found you out; you could never have found out the remedy in Christ, if you had not found out the disease and danger, by the coming of the commandment. And I beseech you carefully to observe, whether the effects and operations of the word upon your hearts be deeper and more powerful than they are found to be in such souls as miscarry under it: the commandment comes to them, and shows them this or that more gross and startling sin. Does it come to you, and show you not only this or that particular sin, but all the evils of your heart and life; the corruption of your natures, as well as the transgressions of your lives? If so, it promises well, and looks hopefully and comfortably to you. The commandment comes to others, and startles them with the fears of damnation for their sin: it puts them into a grievous fright at hell, and the everlasting burnings: but does it come to you and discover the infinite evil that is in your sin, as it is committed against the great, holy, righteous, and good God, and so melts your heart into tears for the wrong that you have done him, as well as the danger into which you have brought yourself? This is a hopeful work, and may encourage you. It comes to others, and greatly shakes, but never destroys and razes the foundation of their vain hopes: if it so revive sin as to kill all vain hopes in you, and send you to Christ alone, as your only door of hope, fear not; these troubles will prove the greatest mercies that ever befell you in this world, if thus they work, and continue to work upon your soul.

Secondly, Others there are upon whom the word has had its full effect as to conversion. 0 bless God forever for this mercy; you cannot sufficiently value it! God has not only made it a convincing and wounding, but a converting and healing word to your souls; he has not only revived your sins, and killed your vain hopes, but begotten you again to a lively hope; see that you be thankful for this mercy. How many have sate under the same word, but never felt such effects of it? As Christ said

in another case, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, but unto none of them was the prophet sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, to a certain widow there, Luke 4:96. So I may say, in this case, there were many souls in the same congregation, at the same time, but unto none of them was the word sent with a commission to convince and save, but such a one as yourself; one as improbable to be wrought upon as any soul there. O let this beget thankfulness in your souls; and let it make you love the word as long as you live: "I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have quickened me," Psalms 119:98.

But above all, I beseech you make it appear that the commandment has come home to your hearts, with power to convince you of the evil of sin, by your tenderness and care to shun it as long as you live. If ever you have seen the face of sin, in the glass of the law of God; if your hearts have been humbled and broken for it in the days of your trouble and distress, certainly you will choose the worst affliction rather than sin: It would be the greatest folly in the world to return again to iniquity, Psalms 85:8. You that have seen so much of the evil that is in it, and the danger that follows it; you that have had such inward terrors and fears of spirit about it, when that terrible representation was made you, will he loth to feel those gripes and distresses of conscience again, for the best enjoyment in this world.

Blessed be God if any word has been brought home to our hearts, which has been instrumental to bring us to Christ!

05.16. Necessity of Being Taught of God

Necessity of Being Taught of God

"It is written in the Prophets--And they shall be all taught of God.

Every man therefore that has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto me." John 6:45

In the former sermon, you have been taught this great truth;

Doctrine. That the teachings of God are absolutely necessary to every soul that comes unto Christ, in the way of faith.

What the teachings of God import, has been formerly opened; and what those special lessons are, which all believers hear and learn of the Father, was the last thing discoursed: that which remains to he further cleared about this subject, before I come to the application of the whole, will be to show you,

1. What are the properties of divine teachings.

2. What influence they have in bringing souls to Christ.

3. Why it is impossible for any man to come to Christ without these teachings of the Father.

First, What are the properties of divine teachings? Concerning the teachings of God, we affirm in general, that, though they exclude not, yet they vastly differ from all human teachings: as the power of God in effecting transcends all human power, so the wisdom of God in teaching transcends all human wisdom. For,

1. God teaches powerfully; he speaks to the soul with a strong hand; when the word comes accompanied with the Spirit, it is "mighty through God, to cast down all imaginations," 2 Corinthians 10:4. Now the gospel "comes not in word only, (as it was accustomed to do,) but in power," 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5. a power that makes the soul fall down before it, and acknowledge that God is in that word, 1 Corinthians 14:25.

2. The teachings of God are sweet teachings. Men never relish the sweetness of a truth, until they learn it from God, Song of Solomon 1:8. "His name is as ointment poured forth." Song of Solomon 5:16. "His mouth is most sweet." O how powerfully and how sweetly does the voice of God slide into the hearts of poor melting sinners! how jejune, dry, and tasteless are the discourses of men, compared with the teachings of the Father!

3. God teaches plainly and clearly: He not only opens truths to the understanding, but he opens the understanding also to perceive them, 2 Corinthians 3:16 In that day the veil is taken away from the heart; a light shines into the soul; a clear beam from heaven is darted into the mind, Luke 24:45. Divine teachings are fully satisfying; the soul doubts no more, staggers and hesitates no more, but acquiesces in that which God teaches; it is so satisfied, that it can venture all upon the

truth of what it has learned from God; as that martyr said, I cannot dispute, but I can die for Christ. See Proverbs 8:8-9.

Fourthly, The teachings of God are infallible teachings. The wisest and holiest of men may mistake, and lead others into the same mistakes with themselves; but it is not so in the teachings of God. If we can be sure that God teaches us, we may be as sure of the truth of what he teaches; for his Spirit guides us into all truth, John 16:3. and into nothing but truth.

Fifthly, The teachings of God are abiding teachings; they make everlasting impressions upon the soul, Psalms 119:98. they are ever wish it: The words of men vanish from us; but the words of God abide by us: what God teaches, he writes upon the heart, Jeremiah 31:33. and that will abide; litera scripta manet. It is usual with souls, whose understandings have been opened by the Lord, many years afterward to say, I shall never forget such a scripture that once convinced, such a promise that once encouraged me.

Sixthly, The teachings of God are saving teachings; they make the soul wise unto salvation, 2 Timothy 3:15. There is a great deal of other knowledge that goes to hell with men: The pavement of hell (as one speaks) is pitched with the skulls of many great scholars, but eternal life is the teachings of God, John 17:3. "This is the eternal life, to know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom

you have sent." This is deservedly stiled the light of this life, John 8:12. "In this light we shall see light," Psalms 36:9.

Seventhly, The teachings of God make their own way into the dullest and weakest capacities, Isaiah 32:4. "The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly." Upon this account Christ said, Matthew 11:25. "I thank you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes." It is admirable to see what clear illuminations some poor illiterate Christians have in the mysteries of Christ and salvation, which others, of great abilities, deep and searching heads, can never discover with all their learning and study.

Eighthly, To conclude, The teachings of God are transforming teachings; 2 Corinthians 3:18. they change the soul into the same image; God casts them, whom he teaches, into the very mold of those truths which they learn of him, Romans 6:17. These are the teachings of God, and thus he instructs those that come to Christ.

Secondly, Next let us see what influence divine teachings have upon souls, in bringing them to Christ; and we shall find a threefold influence in them.

1. They have an influence upon the external means, by which they come to Christ.

2. They have an influence upon the mind, to remove what hindered it from Christ.

3. They have an influence upon the will, to allure and draw it to Christ.

First, They have an influence upon the means by which we come to Christ; the best ordinances are but a dead letter except the Spirit, the teaching and quickening Spirit of God, work in fellowship with them, 2 Corinthians 3:6. The best ministers, like the disciples, cast forth the net, but take

nothing, win not one soul to God, until God teach as well as they. Paul is nothing, and Apollos nothing, but God that gives the increase, 1 Corinthians 3:7. Let the most learned, eloquent, and powerful orator be in the pulpit, Yet no man's heart is persuaded until it hear the voice of God.

Secondly, They have influence upon the mind, to remove what hindered it from Christ. Except the minds of men be first untaught those errors, by which they are prejudiced against Christ, they will never be persuaded to come unto him; and nothing but the Father's teachings can unteach those errors, and cure those evils of the mind. The natural mind of man slights the truths of God, until God teach them; and then they tremble with an awful reverence of them.

Sin is but a trifle, until God shows us the face of it in the glass of the law, and then it appears exceeding sinful, Romans 7:13. We think God to be such a one as ourselves, Psalms 50:21. until he discover himself unto us in his infinite greatness, awful holiness, and severe justice; and then we cry, who can stand before this great and dreadful God! We thought it was time enough hereafter, to mind the concernments of another world, until the Lord open our eyes, to see in what danger we stand upon the very brink of eternity; and then nothing alarms us more, than the fears that our time will be finished before the great work of salvation be finished. We thought ourselves in a converted state before, until God made us to see the necessity of another manner of conversion, upon pain of eternal damnation. We readily caught hold upon the promises before, when we had no right to them; but the teachings of God make the presumptuous sinner let go his hold, that he may take a better and surer hold of them in Christ. We once thought that the death of Christ, in itself, had been enough to secure our salvation; but, under the teachings of God, we discern plainly the necessity of a change of heart and state; or else the blood of Christ can never profit us. Thus the teachings of God remove the errors of the mind, by which men are withheld from Christ.

Thirdly, The teachings of God powerfully attract and allure the will of a sinner to Christ, Hosea 2:14. But of these drawings of the Father I have largely spoken before, and therefore shall say no more of them in this place, but hasten to the last thing propounded, namely,

Thirdly, Why it is impossible for any man to come to Christ without the Father's teachings; and the impossibilities hereof will appear three ways.

1. From the power of sin.

2. From the indisposition of man.

3. From the nature of faith.

By all which, the last point designed to be spoken to from this scripture, will be fully cleared, and the whole prepared for application.

First, The impossibility of coming to Christ without the teachings of the Father, will appear from the power of sin, which has so strong an holdfast upon the hearts and affections of all unregenerate men, that no human arguments or persuasions whatever can divorce or separate them; for,

First, Sin is connatural with the soul, it is born and bred with a man; Psalms 2:4. Isaiah 48:8. It is as natural for fallen man to sin, as it is to breathe.

Secondly, The power of sin has been strengthening itself from the beginning, by long continued custom, which gives it the force of a second nature, and makes regeneration and mortification naturally impossible, Jer. 15:28. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may he also do good that is accustomed to do evil."

Thirdly, Sin is the delight of a sinner: "It is sport to a fool to do mischief," Proverbs 10:23. Carnal men have no other pleasure in this world, but what arises from their lusts; to cut off their corruptions by mortification, were at once to deprive them of all the pleasure of their lives.

Fourthly, Sin being connatural, customary, and delightful, does therefore bewitch their affections and enchant their hearts, to that degree of madness and fascination, that they rather choose damnation by God, than separation from sin: "Their hearts are fully set in them to do evil," Ecclesiastes 8:11. they rush into sin, as the horse rushes into the battle," Jeremiah 8:6. And now, what think you can separate a man from his beloved lust, except the powerful and effectual teachings of God? Nothing but a light from heaven can rectify and reduce the enchanted mind; no power, but that of God, can change and alter the sinful bent and inclination of the will; it is a task above all the power of the creature.

Secondly, The impossibility of coming to Christ, without the Father's teachings, evidently appears from the indisposedness of man, the subject of this change; "The natural man receives not the things which are of God," 1 Corinthians 2:14. Three things must be wrought upon man, before he can come to Christ: His blind understanding must be enlightened; his hard and rocky heart must be broken and melted; his stiff, fixed, and obstinate will must be conquered and subdued: but all these are effects of a supernatural power. The illumination of the mind is the peculiar work of God, 2 Corinthians 4:6. Revelation 3:17.

Ephesians 5:8. The breaking and melting of the heart is the Lord's own work; it is he who gives repentance, Acts 5:31. It is the Lord that "takes away the heart of stone, and gives an heart of flesh, Ezekiel 36:26. It is he who pours out the spirit of contrition upon man, Zechariah 12:10. The changing of the natural bent and inclination of the will, is the Lord's sole prerogative, Php 2:1-30. All these things are effectually done in the soul of man, when God teaches it, and never until then.

Thirdly, The nature of faith, by which we come to Christ, plainly shows the impossibility of coming without the Father's teaching. Everything in faith is supernatural; the implantation of the habit of faith is so, Ephesians 2:8. It is not of ourselves, but the gift of God; it is not an habit acquired by industry, but infused by grace, Php 1:29. The light of faith, by which spiritual things are discerned, is supernatural, Hebrews 11:1; Hebrews 11:27. It sees things that are invisible. The adventures of faith are supernatural; for "against hope, a man believes in hope, giving glory to God," Romans 4:18. By faith a man goes unto Christ, against all the dictates and discouragements of natural sense and reason. The self-denial of faith is supernatural; the cutting off the right hand, and plucking out of right eye sins, must needs be so, Matthew 5:29. The victories and conquests of faith do all speak it to be supernatural; it overcomes the strongest oppositions from without, Hebrews 11:33-34. It subdues and purges the most obstinate and deep rooted corruptions within, Acts 15:9. It overcomes all the blandishments and charming allurements of the bewitching world, 1 John 5:4. All which considered, how evident is the conclusion, that none can come to Christ without the Father's teachings? The uses follow.

First use for information.

Inference 1. How notoriously false and absurd is that doctrine which asserts the possibility of believing without the efficacy of supernatural grace, The desire of self-sufficiency was the ruin of Adam, and the conceit of self-sufficiency is the ruin of multitudes of his posterity. This doctrine is not only contradictory to the current stream of scripture, Php 2:13. 1 John 1: 13. with many other scriptures; but it is also contradictory to the common sense and experience of believers; yet the pride of nature will strive to maintain what scripture and experience plainly contradict and overthrow.

Inference. 2. Hence we may also inform ourselves, how it comes to pass that so many rational, wise and learned men miss Christ, while the simple and illiterate, even babes in natural knowledge, obtain interest in him, and salvation by him. The reason hereof is plainly given us by Christ, in Matthew 13:11. "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." It is the dropping and dews of divine teaching upon one, and not upon another, that dries up the green tree, and makes the dry tree to flourish. Many natural men have very fine brains, searching wits, solid judgments, nimble fancies, tenacious memories; they can search out the mysteries of nature, solve the phenomena, satisfy the enquiries of the most curious; they can measure the earth, discover the motions of the heavens; but after all take up their place in hell, when, in the mean time, the statutes of the Lord (by the help of his teachings) make wise the simple, Psalm 19: 17. It is no matter how dull and incapable the scholar be, if God undertake to be the teacher. I remember, Austin speaks of one who was commonly reputed a fool, and yet he could not but judge him to be truly godly, and that by two signs of grace which appeared in him; one was, his seriousness when he heard any discourses of Christ; the other was, his indignation manifested against sin. It was truly said by those two Cardinals, (who, riding to the council of Constance, overheard a poor shepherd in the fields with tears bewailing his sins) Surgent indocti et rapient coelum; The unlearned will rise and take heaven, while we with all our learning shall descend into hell.

Inference. 3. This also informs us of the true reason of the strange and various successes of the gospel upon the souls of men. Here we see why the ministry of one man becomes fruitful, and another’s barren; yes why the labors of the same poor man prosper exceedingly at one time, and not at another; these things are according as the teachings of God do accompany our teachings. We often see a weaker and plainer discourse blessed with success, while that which is more artificial, neat and labored, comes to nothing. St. Austin has a pretty similitude to illustrate this; Suppose, says he, two conduits, the one very plain, the other curiously carved and adorned with images of lions, eagles, &c. the water does not refresh and nourish as it comes from such a curious conduit, but as it is water. Where we find most of man, we frequently find least of God. I speak not this to encourage carelessness and laziness, but to provoke the dispensers of the gospel to more earnestness and frequent prayer for the assistance and blessing of the Spirit upon their labors, and to make men less fond of their own gifts and abilities; blear-eyed Leah may bear children, when beautiful Rachel proves barren.

Inference. 4. Learn hence the transcendent excellency of saving, spiritual knowledge, above that which is merely literal and natural.

One drop of knowledge taught by God, is more excellent than the whole ocean of human knowledge and acquired gifts, Php 3:8. John 17:3. 1 Corinthians 2:2. Let no man therefore be dejected at the want of those gifts with which unsanctified men are adorned. If God have taught you the evil of sin, the worth of Christ, the necessity of regeneration, the mystery of faith, the way of communion with God in duties; trouble not yourself because of your ignorance in natural or moral things: you have that, reader, which will bring you to heaven; and he is a truly wise man that knows the way of salvation, though he be ignorant and unskillful in other things: you know those things which all the learned doctors and libraries in the world could never teach you, but God has revealed them to you; others have more science, you have more savor and sweetness; bless God, and be not discouraged.

Second use for examination.

If there be no coming to Christ without the teachings of the Father: then it greatly concerns us to examine our own hearts, whether ever we have been under the saving teachings of God, during the many years we have sat under the preaching of the gospel. Let not the question be mistaken; I do not ask what books you have read, what ministers you have heard, what stock of natural or speculative knowledge you have acquired; but the question is, whether ever God spoke to your hearts, and has effectually taught you such lessons, as were mentioned in our last discourse? O there is a vast difference between that notional, speculative, and traditional knowledge which man learns from men, and that spiritual, operative, and transforming knowledge which a man learns from God.

If you ask how the teachings of God may be discerned from all other mere human teachings; I answer, they may be discerned, and distinguished by these six signs.

Sign 1. The teachings of God are very humbling to the soul that is taught. Human knowledge puffs up, 1 Corinthians 8:1. but the teachings of God do greatly abase the soul, Job 13:5. "I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye sees you; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes:" the same light which discovers to us the holiness, justice, greatness, and goodness of God, discovers also the vileness, baseness, emptiness, and total unworthiness of men; yes, of the best and holiest of men, Isaiah 6:5.

Sign 2. The teachings of God are deeply affecting and impressive teachings; they fully reach the heart of man, Hosea 2:14. "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her;" or, as it is in the Hebrew, I will speak to her heart. When God shows unto man the evil of sin, he so convinces the soul, that no creature-comforts have any pleasure or sweetness in them; and when he shows unto man his righteousness, pardon, and peace in Christ, he so comforts and refreshes the heart, that no outward afflictions have any weight or bitterness in them: one drop of consolation from heaven, sweetens a sea of trouble upon earth, Psalms 94:19. "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, your comforts delight my soul."

Sign 3. The teachings of God are sanctifying and renewing teachings; they reform and change the heart, Ephesians 4:21-23. "If so be that you have heard him, and been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus; that you put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts: and be renewed in the spirit of your mind," &c. See here what holiness and purity are the effect of divine teaching! Holiness, both external and internal, negative

and positive: holiness of every kind follows the Father's teachings: all the discoveries God makes to us of himself in Christ, have an assimilating quality, and change the soul into their own likeness, 2 Corinthians 3:18.

Sign 4. All God's teachings are practical, producing obedience. Idle notions and useless speculations are not learned from God. As God's creating words, so his teaching words are with effect: as when he said, "Let there be light, and there was light:" so when he says to the soul, Be comforted, be humbled; it is effectually comforted, Isaiah 66:18. it is humbled, Job 40:4-5. As God has in nature made no creature in vain, so he speaks no word in vain: every thing which men hear, or learn from the Father, is for use, practice, and benefit to the soul.

Sign 5. All teachings of God are agreeable with the written word: The Spirit of God, and the word of God do never jar, John 14:1-31. "He shall take of mine, and show it unto you." When God speaks unto the heart of man, whether in a way of conviction, consolation, or instruction in duty, he always either makes use of the express words of scripture, or speaks to the heart in language every way consentaneous and agreeable to scripture: So that the written word becomes the standard to weigh and try all divine teachings, Isaiah 8:1-22. "To the law, and to the testimony: If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light (or morning) in them." Whatever is disagreeing or jarring with the scripture must not pass for an inspiration of God, but a deluding sophism, and insinuation of Satan.

Sign 6. The teachings of God are very satisfying teachings to the soul of man: The understanding faculty, like a dial, is enlightened with the beams of divine truth shining upon it: this no man's teachings can do: Men can only teach objectively, by propounding truth to the understanding; but they cannot enlighten the faculty itself, as God does, 1 John 5:20. He gives man understanding as well as instructions, to be understood; he opens the eyes of the understanding, as well as propounds the object, Ephesians 1:18. And thus we may discern and distinguish the teachings of God from all other teachings.

Third use of exhortation.

The last use I shall make of this point, shall be a word of exhortation, both to them that never were yet effectually taught of God, and to them also that have heard his voice, and are come to Christ.

First, To those that never yet heard the voice of God speaking to their hearts; and truly this is the general case of most men and women, in the professing world: They have heard the sound of the gospel, but it has been a confused, empty, and ineffectual sound in their ears; they have heard the voice of man, but have never yet heard the voice of God. The gifts and abilities of preachers have, in a notional and mere human way, improved their understandings, and sometimes slightly touched their affections: All this is but the effect of man upon man. O that you would look for something which is beyond all this: satisfy not yourselves with what is merely natural and human in ordinances; come to the word with higher ends and more spiritual designs, than to get some notions of truth which you had not before, or to judge the gifts and abilities of the speaker: If God speak not to your hearts, all the ordinances in the world can do you no good, 1 Corinthians 3:7. O remember what a solemn and awful thing it is to come to those ordinances, and attend upon that ministration, in and by which the eternal decrees of heaven are to be executed upon your souls, which must be to you the "savor of life unto life, or of death unto death;" Wrestle with God by

prayer for a blessing upon the ordinances. Say, "Lord, speak yourself to my heart, let me hear your voice, and feel your power in this prayer, or in this sermon: Others have heard your voice, cause me to hear it: It had been much better for me if I had never heard the voice of preachers, except I hear your voice in them."

Secondly, Let all those that have heard the voice of God, and are come to Christ in the virtue of his teachings, admire the wonderful condescension of God to them. O that God should speak to your soul, and be silent to others! There be many thousands living at this day under ordinances, to whom the Lord has not given an ear to hear, nor an heart to obey, Deuteronomy 29:4. "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given," Matthew 13:11. And I beseech you, walk as men and women that have been taught of God. When Satan and your corruptions tempt you to sin, and to walk in the ways of the carnal and careless world; remember then that scripture, Ephesians 4:1-32. "But you have not so learned Christ, if so be that you have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus." To conclude, see that you be exceeding humble, and lowly in spirit. Humility qualifies you for divine teachings, Psalms 25:9. The meek he will teach; and the more you are taught of God, the more humble you will still be.

And thus you see, that no man can come to Christ without the application of the law, and the teachings of the Father; which being considered, may be very useful to convince us, (which indeed is the design of it) that among the multitudes of men and women, living under the ordinances of God, and the general profession of religion, there are but few, very few to be found, who have effectually received the Lord Jesus Christ by saving faith.

And now, reader, I suppose by this time you are desirous to know by what signs and evidences your union with Christ by faith may be cleared up, and made evident to you; and how that great question, whether you have yet effectually applied Christ to your soul or no, may be clearly decided; which brings me to the third general use of the whole, namely,

The examination of our interest in Christ, by

1. The donation of the Spirit, from 1 John 3:24.

2. The new creation, from 2 Corinthians 5:17.

S. The mortification of sin, from Galatians 5:24.

4. The imitation of Christ, from 1 John 2:6.

Of each of these trials of our interest in Christ I shall speak in their order.

05.17. The Mortification of Sin

The Mortification of Sin

"And they that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts." Galatians 5:24

From hence our observation was,

That a saving interest in Christ, may be regularly and strongly inferred and concluded from the mortification of the flesh, with its affections and lusts.

Having opened the nature and necessity of mortification in the former sermon, and shown how regularly a saving interest in Christ may be concluded from it; we now proceed to apply the whole, by way of

1. Information.

2. Exhortation.

3. Direction.

4. Examination.

5. Consolation.

First use, for information.

Inference 1. If they that be Christ's have crucified the flesh, Then the life of Christians is no idle or easy life: the corruptions of his heart continually fill his hands with work, with work of the most difficult nature; sin-crucifying work, which the scripture calls the cutting off the right hand, and plucking out of the right eye: sin crucifying work is hard work, and it is constant work throughout the life of a Christian; there is no time nor place freed from this conflict; every occasion stirs corruption, and every stirring of corruption calls for mortification: corruptions work in our very best duties, Romans 7:23. and put the Christian upon mortifying labors. The world and the devil are great enemies, and fountains of many temptations to believers, but not like the corruptions of their own hearts; they only tempt objectively and externally, but these tempt internally, and therefore are much more dangerous; they only tempt at times and seasons; these continually, at all times and seasons: besides, whatever Satan or the world attempts upon us, would be altogether ineffectual were it not for our own corruptions, John 14:30. So that the corruptions of our own hearts, as they create us most danger, so they must give us more labor; our life and this labor must end together; for sin is long a dying in the best heart: those that have been many years exercised in the study of mortification, may haply feel the same corruption tempting and troubling them now, which put them into tears, and many times brought them to their knees twenty or forty years ago. It may be said of sin as it was said of Hannibal, that active enemy, that it will never be quiet, whether conquering or conquered and until sin cease working, the Christian must not cease mortifying.

Inference. 2. If mortification be the great work of a Christian, then certainly those that give the corruptions of Christians an occasion to revive, must reeds do them a very ill office; they are not our best friends that stir the pride of our hearts by the flattery of their lips. The graces of God in others, I confess, are thankfully to be owned, and under discouragements, and contrary temptations, to be wisely and modestly spoken of; but the strongest Christians do scarcely show their own weakness in any one thing more than they do in hearing their own praises. Christian, you know you carry gun-powder about you, desire those that carry fire to keep at a distance from you; it is a dangerous crisis when a proud heart meets with flattering lips, &c. take away the fire, (said a holy divine of Germany, when his friend commended him upon his death bed) for I have yet combustible matter about me; faithful, seasonable, discreet reproofs are much more safe to us, and advantageous to our mortifying work: but alas, how few have the boldness or wisdom duly to administer them? It is said of Alexander, that he bid a philosopher (who had been long with him) to be gone; for, said he, so long you have been with me, and never reproved me; which must needs be your fault; for either you saw nothing in me worthy of reproof which argues your ignorance, or else you dared not reprove me, which argues your unfaithfulness. A wise and faithful reprover is of singular use to him that is heartily engaged in the design of mortification; such a faithful friend, or some malicious enemy, must be helpful to us in that work.

Inference. 3. Hence it follows, that manifold and successive afflictions are no more than what is necessary for the best of Christians: the mortification of our lusts require them all, be they never so many, 1 Peter 1:5. "If need be, you are in heaviness:" it is no more than need, that one loss should follow another, to mortify an earthly heart; for so intensely are our affections set upon the world, that it is not one, or two, or many checks of providence, that will suffice to wean and alienate them. Alas, the earthliness of our hearts will take all this, it may be much more than this, to purge them: the wise God sees it but necessary to permit frequent discoveries of our own weakness, and to let loose the tongues of many enemies upon us, and all little enough to pull down our pride, and the vanity that is in our hearts. Christian, how difficult soever it be for you to bear it; yet the pride of your heart requires all the scoffs and jeers, all the calumnies and reproaches, that ever the tongues or pens of your bitterest enemies, or mistaken friends, have at any time thrown upon you. Such rank weeds as grow in our hearts, will require hard frosts and very sharp weather to rot them; the straying bullock needs a heavy clog, and so does a Christian whom God will keep within the bounds and limits of his commandments, Psalms 119:67. Daniel 11:35.

Inference. 4. If they that be Christ's have crucified the flesh, then the number of real Christians is very small. It is true, if all that seem to be meek, humble, and heavenly, might pass for Christians, the number would be great; but if no more must be accounted Christians, than those who crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts, O how small is the number! For, O how many be there under the Christian name, that pamper and indulge their lusts, that secretly hate all who faithfully reprove them, and really affect none but such as feed their lusts, by praising and admiring them?

How many that make provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts, Who cannot endure to have their corruptions crossed? How many are there that seem very meek and humble, until an occasion be given them to stir up their passion, and then you shall see in what degree they are mortified: the flint is a cold stone, until it be struck, and then it is all fiery. I know the best of Christians are mortified but in part; and strong corruptions are oftentimes found in very eminent Christians; but they love them not so well as to purvey for them; to protect, defend, and countenance them; nor

dare they secretly hate such as faithfully reprove them; as many thousands that go under the name of Christians do. Upon the account of mortification it is said, Matthew 7:13. "Narrow is the way, and strait is the gate that leads unto life, and few there be that find it.

Inference. 5. If they that be Christ's have crucified the flesh, that is if mortification is their daily work and study; then how falsely are Christians charged as troublers of the world and disturbers of the civil peace and tranquility of the times and places they live in; Justly may they retort the charge, as Elijah did to Ahab, "It is not I that trouble Israel, but you and your father's house:" It is not holy, meek, and humble Christians that put the world into confusion, this is done by the profane and atheistical; or by the designing and hypocritical world, and laid at the door of innocent Christians: as all the public calamities which from the immediate hand of God, or by foreign or domestic enemies befell Rome, were constantly charged upon Christians; and they condemned and punished, for what the righteous hand of God inflicted on the working heads of the enemies of that state without their privily contrived. The apostle James propounds and answers a question very pertinent to this discourse, James 4:1. "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" O if men did but study mortification and self denial, and live as much at home in the constant work of their own hearts as some men do; what tranquility and peace, what blessed halcyon days should we quickly see! It is true, Christians are always fighting and quarreling, but it is with themselves and their own corrupt hearts and affections; they hate no enemy but sin; they thirst for the blood and ruin of none but of that enemy; they are ambitious of no victory, but what is over the corruptions of their own hearts; they carry no grudge except it be against this enemy, sin; and yet these are the men who are the most suspected and charged with disturbing the times they live in; just as the wolf accused the lamb, which was below him, for puddling and defiling the stream. But there will be a day when God will clear up the innocency and integrity of his mistaken and abused servants; and the world shall see, it was not preaching and praying, but drinking, profaneness, and enmity unto true godliness, which disturbed and broke the tranquility and quietness of the times: mean time let innocency commit itself unto God, who will protect, and in due time vindicate the same.

Inference. 6. If they that be Christ's have crucified the flesh, then whatever religion, opinion, or doctrine does in its own nature countenance and encourage sin, is not of Christ. The doctrine of hrist everywhere teaches mortification: the whole stream of the gospel runs against sin; the doctrine it teaches is holy, pure, and heavenly; it has no tendency to extol corrupt nature, and feed its pride, by magnifying its freedom and power, or by stamping the merit and dignity of the blood of Christ upon its works and performances; it never makes the death of Christ a cloak to cover sin, but an instrument to destroy it. And whatever doctrine it is which nourishes the pride of nature, to the disparagement of grace, or encourages licentiousness and fleshly lust, is not the doctrine of Christ, but a spurious offspring begotten by Satan upon the corrupt nature of man.

Inference. 7. If mortification be the great business and character of a Christian, Then that condition is most eligible and desirable by Christians, which is least of all exposed to temptation, Proverbs 30:1-33. "Give me neither poverty nor riches, but feed me with food convenient." That holy judicious man was well aware of the danger lurking in both extremes, and how near they border upon deadly temptations, and approach the very precipice of ruin that stand upon either ground: few Christians have an head strong and steady enough to stand upon the pinnacle of wealth and honor; nor is it everyone that can grapple with poverty and contempt. A mediocrity is the

Christian's best external security, and therefore most desirable: and yet how do the corruption, the pride and ignorance of our hearts grasp and covet that condition which only serves to warm and nourish our lusts, and make the work of mortification much more difficult?

It is well for us that our wise Father leaves us not to our own choice, that he frequently dashes our earthly projects, and disappoints our fond expectations. If children were left to carve for themselves, how often would they cut their own fingers?

Inference. 8. If mortification be the great business of a Christian, then Christian fellowship and society duly managed and improved, must needy be of singular use and special advantage to the people of God. For thereby we have the friendly help and assistance of many other hands to carry on our great design, and help us in our most difficult business; if corruption be too hard for us, others this way come in to our assistance, Galatians 6:1. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, you which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness." If temptations prevail, and overbear us that we fall under sin, it is a special mercy to have the reproofs and counsels of our brethren, who will not suffer sin to rest upon us, Leviticus 19:17. While we are sluggish and sleepy, others are vigilant and careful for our safety: The humility of another reproves and mortifies my pride: The activity and liveliness of another awakens and quickens my deadness: The prudence and gravity of another detects and cures my levity and vanity: The heavenliness and spirituality of another may be exceeding useful, both to reprove and heal the earthliness and sensuality of my heart. Two are better than one, but woe unto him that is alone. The devil is well aware of this great advantage, and therefore strikes with special malice against embodied Christians, who are as a well disciplined army, whom he therefore more especially endeavors to rout and scatter by persecutions, that thereby particular Christians may be deprived of the sweet advantages of mutual society.

Inference. 9. How deeply has sin fixed its roots in our corrupt nature, that it should be the constant work of a Christian's whole life, to mortify and destroy it? God has given us many excellent helps, his Spirit within us, variety of ordinances and duties are also appointed as instruments of mortification: And from the very day of regeneration unto the last moment of dissolution, the Christian is daily at work in the use of all sanctified means, external and internal, yet can never dig up and destroy corruption at the root all his life long. The most eminent Christians of longest standing in religion, who have shed millions of tears for sin, and poured out many thousand prayers for the mortification of it, do, after all, find the remains of their old disease, that there is still life and strength in those corruptions which they have given so many wounds unto in duty. O the depth and strength of sin! which nothing can separate from us, but that which separates our souls and bodies. And upon that account, the day of a believer's death is better than the day of his birth. Never until then do we put off our armor, sheath our sword, and cry, victory, victory.

Second use, for exhortation.

If they who are Christ's have crucified the flesh, &c. Then as ever we hope to make good our claim to Christ, let us give all diligence to mortify sin; in vain else are all our pretenses unto union with him. This is the great work and discriminating character of a believer. And seeing it is the main business of life, and great evidence for heaven, I shall therefore press you to it by the following motives and considerations.

1 Motive. And first, methinks the comfort and sweetness resulting from mortification should effectually persuade every believer to more diligence about it. There is a double sweetness in mortification, one in the nature of the work, as it is a duty, a sweet Christian duty; another as it has respect to Christ, and is evidential of our union with him. In the first consideration there is a wonderful sweetness in mortification, for do you not feel a blessed calmness, cheeriness, and tranquility in your conscience, when you have faithfully repelled temptations, successfully resisted and overcome your corruptions? Does not God smile upon you; conscience encourage and approve you? Have you not an heaven within you? while others feel a kind of hell in the deadly gripes and bitter accusations of their own consciences, are covered with shame, and filled with horrors. But then consider it also as an evidence of the soul's interest in Christ, as my text considers it; and what an heaven upon earth must then be found in mortification!

These endeavors of mine to subdue and mortify my corruptions, plainly speak the Spirit of God in me, and my being in (Christ! and O what is this! What heart has largeness and strength enough to receive and contain the joy and comfort which flow from a cleared interest in Jesus Christ! Certainly, Christians, the tranquility and comfort of your whole life depend upon it; and what is life without the comfort of life? Romans 8:13. "If you through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live, that is you shall live a serene, placid, comfortable life; for it is corruption unmortified which clouds the face of God, and breaks the peace of his people, and consequently embitters the life of a Christian.

2 Motive. As the comfort of your own lives, which is much, so your instrumental fitness for the service of God, which is much more, depends upon the mortification of your sins, 2 Timothy 2:21. "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor; sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work." Where is the mercy of life but in the usefulness and serviceableness of it unto God? It is not worth while to live sixty or seventy years in the world to eat and drink, to buy and sell, to laugh and cry, and then go down to the place of silence. So far as any man lives to God an useful, serviceable life to his praise and honor; so far only, and no farther, does he answer the end of his being. But it is the purged, mortified soul which is the vessel of honor, prepared, and meet for the Master's use. Let a proud, or an earthly heart be employed in any service for God, and you shall find that such an heart will both spoil the work, by managing it for a self-end as Jehu did; and then devour the praise of it by a proud boast: Come see my zeal. When the Lord would employ the prophet Isaiah in his work and service, his iniquity was first purged: and after that he was employed, Isaiah 6:6-8. Sin is the soul's sickness, a consumption upon the inner man; and we know that languishing consumptive persons are very unfit to be employed in difficult and strenuous labors. Mortification, so far as it prevails, cures the disease, recovers our strength, and enables us for service to God in our generations.

3 Motive. Your stability and safety in the hour of temptation, depend upon the success of your mortifying endeavors. Is it then a valuable mercy in your eyes to be kept upright and steadfast in the critical season of temptation, when Satan shall be wrestling with you for the crown, and the prize of eternal life! Then give diligence to mortify your corruptions. Temptation is a siege, Satan is the enemy without the walls, laboring to force an entrance; natural corruptions are the traitors within, that hold correspondence with the enemy without, and open the gate of the soul to receive him. It was the covetousness of Judas' heart which overthrew him in the hour of temptation. They are our fleshly lusts which go over unto Satan in the day of battle, and fight against our souls, 1

Peter 2:11. the corruptions (or infectious atoms which fly up and down the world in times of temptation, as that word "miasmata", 2 Peter 2:20. imports) are through lusts, 2 Peter 1:4.

It is the lust within, which gives a luster to the vanities of the world without, and thereby makes them strong temptations to us, 1 John 4:16. Mortify therefore your corruptions, as ever you expect to maintain your station in the day of trial: cut off those advantages of your enemy, lest by them he cut off your souls, and all your hopes from God.

4 Motive. As temptations will be irresistible, so afflictions will be unsupportable to you without mortification. My friends, you live in a mutable work, providence daily rings the chances in all the kingdoms, cities, and towns, all the world over. You that have husbands or wives to-day, may be left desolate tomorrow: You that have estates and children now, may be bereaved of both before you are aware. Sickness will tread upon the heel of health, and death will assuredly follow life as the night does the day. Consider with yourselves; are you able to bear the loss of your sweet enjoyments with patience? Can you think upon the parting hour without some tremblings? 0 set a heart mortified to all these things, and you will bless a taking as well as a giving God. It is the living world, not the crucified world, that raises such tumults in our souls in the day of affliction. How cheerful was holy Paul under all his sufferings! and what think you gave him that peace and cheerfulness, but his mortification to the world? Php 4:12. "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere, and in all things I am instructed, both to be full, and to be hungry, both to abound and suffer need." Job was the mirror of patience, in the greatest shock of calamity, and what made him so, but the mortifiedness of his heart, in the fullest enjoyment of all earthly things? Job 31:1-40.

5 Motive. The reputation and honor of religion are deeply concerned in the mortification of the professors of it: For unmortified professors will, first or last, be the scandals and reproaches of it. The profession of religion may give credit to you, but to be sure you will never bring credit to it. All the scandals and reproaches that fall upon the name of Christ in this world, flow from the fountain of unmortified corruption. Judas and Demas, Hymeneus, and Philetus, Ananias and Sapphira ruined themselves, and became rocks of offence to others by this means. If ever you will keep religion sweet, labor to keep your hearts mortified and pure.

6 Motive. To conclude, what hard work will you have in your dying hour, except you get a heart mortified to this world, and all that is in it? Your parting hour is like to be a dreadful hour, without the help of mortification. Your corruptions, like glue, fasten your affections to the world, and how hard will it be for such a man to be separated by death? O what a bitter and doleful parting have carnal hearts from carnal things! whereas the mortified soul can receive the messengers of death without trouble, and as cheerfully put off the body at death, as a man does his clothes at night: Death need not pull and hale; such a man goes half way to meet it, Php 1:23. "I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, which is far better." Christian, would you have your death-bed soft and easy; would you have an "euthanasia", as the philosopher desired for himself, an easy death, without pain or terror; then get a mortified heart: the Surgeon’s knife is scarce felt when it cuts off a mortified member.

Third use, for direction.

Are you convinced, and fully satisfied of the excellency and necessity of mortification, and inquisitive after the means, in the use whereof it may be attained; then, for your help and encouragement, I will in the next place, offer my best assistance in laying down the rules for this work.

Rule 1. If ever you will succeed and prosper in the work of mortification, then get, and daily exercise more faith. Faith is the great instrument of mortification; "This is the victory, (or sword by which the victory is won, the instrument) by which you overcome the world, even your faith," 1 John 5:4. By faith alone eternal things are discovered to your souls, in their reality and excelling glory, and these are the preponderating things, for the sake whereof, self-denial and mortification become easy to believers; by opposing things eternal to things temporal, we resist Satan, 1 Peter 5:8. This is the shield by which we quench the fiery darts of the wicked one, Ephesians 6:16.

Rule 2. Walk in daily communion with God, if ever you will mortify the corruptions of nature; that is the apostle's own prescription, Galatians 1:17. "This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh." Spiritual and frequent communion with God, gives manifold advantages for the mortification of sin, as it is a bright glass wherein the holiness of God and the exceeding sinfulness of sin, as it is opposite thereunto, are most clearly and sensibly discovered, than which, scarce any thing can set a keener edge of indignation upon the spirit of a man against sin. Besides, all communion with God is assimilating and transformative of the soul into his image; it leaves also a heavenly relish and savor upon the soul; it darkens the luster and glory of all earthly things, by presenting to the soul a glory which excels: it marvelously improves, and more deeply radicates sanctification in the soul; by all which means it becomes singularly useful and successful in the work of mortification.

Rule 3. Keep your consciences under the awe and in the fear of God continually, as ever you hope to be successful in the mortification of sin. The fear of God is the great preservative from sin, without which all the external rules and helps in the world signify nothing: "By the fear of the Lord, men depart from evil," Proverbs 16:6. Not only from external and more open evils, which the fear of men, as well as the fear of God, may prevent, but from the most secret and inward evils, which is a special part of mortification, Leviticus 19:14. It keeps men from those evils which no eye nor ear of man can possibly discover. The fear of the Lord breaks temptations, baited with pleasure, with profit, and with secrecy. In a word, if ever you be cleansed from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, it must be by the fear of God, 2 Corinthians 7:1.

Rule 4. Study the vanity of the creature, and labor to get true notions of the emptiness and transitoriness thereof, if ever you will attain to the mortification of your affections towards it. It is the false picture and image of the world, in our fancy, that crucifies us with so many cares, fears, and solicitudes about it: and it is the true picture and image of the world, represented to us in the glass of the word, which greatly helps to crucify our affections to the world. O if we did but know and believe three things about the world, we should never be so fond of it as we are, namely, the fading, defiling, and destroying nature of it. The best and sweetest enjoyments in the world, are but fading flowers and withered grass, Isaiah 14:6. James 1:10-11. yes, it is of a defiling, as well as a fading nature, 1 John 5:19. it lies in wickedness, it spreads universal infection among all mankind, 2 Peter 1:4. yes, it destroys as well as defiles multitudes of souls, drowning men in perdition, 1 Timothy 6:9. Millions of souls will wish, to eternity, they had never known the riches, pleasures, or

honors of it. Were this believed, how would men slacken their pace, and cool themselves in the violent and eager pursuit of the world? This greatly tends to promote mortification.

Rule 5. Be careful to cut off all the occasions of sin, and keep at the greatest distance from temptations, if ever you would mortify the deeds of the body. The success and prevalency of sin, mainly depend upon the wiles and stratagems it makes use of to ensnare the incautious soul; therefore the apostle bids us keep off, at the greatest distance. 1 Thessalonians 5:22. "Abstain from all appearance of evil. Proverbs 5:8. "Come not near unto the door of her house." He who dares venture to the very brink of sin, discovers but little light in his understanding, and less tenderness in his conscience, he neither knows sin nor fears it as he ought to do: And it is usual with God to chastise self-confidence by shameful lapses into sin.

Rule 6. If you will successfully mortify the corruptions of your nature, never engage against them in your own single strength, Ephesians 6:10. When the apostle draws forth Christians into the field, against sin, he bids them "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." O remember what a mere feather you are in the gusts of temptation; call to mind the height of Peters confidence, "though all men forsake you, yet will not I;" and the depth of his fall, shame and sorrow. A weak Christian, trembling in himself, depending by faith upon God, and graciously assisted by him, shall be able to stand against the shock of temptation, when the bold and confident resolutions of others (like Pendleton in our English story) shall melt away as wax before the flames.

Rule 7. Set in with the mortifying design of God, in the day of your affliction; sanctified afflictions are ordered and prescribed in heaven for the purging of our corruptions, Isaiah 27:9 "By this, therefore, shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin." It is a fair glass to represent the evil of sin, and the vanity of the creature, to embitter the world, and disgust your affections towards it: Fall in, therefore with the gracious design of God; follow every affliction will prayer, that God would follow it with his blessing. God kills your comforts, out of no other design but to kill your corruptions with them: wants are ordained to kill wantonness, poverty is appointed to kill pride, reproaches are permitted to pull down ambition: Happy is the man who understands, approves, and heartily sets in with the design of God, in such afflicting providences.

Rule 8. Bend the strength of your duties and endeavors against your proper and special sin; it is in vain to lop off branches, while this root of bitterness remains untouched: This was David’s practice, Psalms 18:23. "I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity." We observe, in natural men, that one faculty is more vigorous than another; we find in nature, that one soil suits with some sorts of seeds rather than another: And every believer may find his nature and constitution inclining him to one sin rather than another. As graces, so corruptions exceed one another, even in the regenerate. The power of special corruption arises from our constitutions, education, company, custom, callings, and such like occasions; but from whensoever it comes, this is the sin that most endangers us, most easily besets us; and, according to the progress of mortification in that sin, we may safely estimate the degrees of mortification in other sins; Strike, therefore, at the life and root of your own iniquity.

Rule 9. Study the nature and great importance of those things which are to be won or lost, according to the success and issue of this conflict. Your life is a race, eternal glory is the prize, grace and corruption are the antagonists, and accordingly as either finally prevails, eternal life is won or lost. 1 Corinthians 9:24. "Know you not that they which run a race, run all, but one receives

the prize? So run that you may obtain." This condition will make mortification appear the most rational and necessary thing to you in the whole world. Shall I lose heaven for indulging the flesh, and humoring a wanton appetite! God forbid. "I keep under my body, (says Paul) and bring it into subjection; lest if that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast away," 1 Cor. 9: 28.

Rule 10. Accustom your thoughts to such meditations as are proper to mortify sin in your affections, else all endeavors to mortify it will be but faint and languid: To this purpose, I shall recommend the following meditations, as proper means to destroy the interest of sin.

Meditation 1. Consider the evil that is in sin, and how terrible the appearances of God will one day be against those that obey it, in the lusts thereof. Romans 1:18. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," 1 Thessalonians 1:7-9. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." Let your thoughts dwell much upon the consideration of the fruits and consequences of sin; it shows its fairest side to you in the hour of temptation. O but consider how it will look upon you in the day of affliction, Numbers 22:23 in that day your sin will find you out: Think what its aspect will be in a dying flour. 1 Corinthians 15:56. "The sting of death is sin." Think what the frightful remembrances of it will be at the bar of judgement, when Satan shall accuse, conscience shall upbraid, God shall condemn, and everlasting burnings shall avenge the evil of it: such thoughts as these are mortifying thoughts.

Meditation 2. Think what it cost the Lord Jesus to expiate the guilt of sin by suffering the wrath of the great and terrible God for it in our room: the meditations of a crucified Christ are very crucifying meditations unto sin, Galatians 6:14. he suffered unspeakable things for sin; it was a divine wrath which lay upon his soul for it; that wrath of which the prophet says, Nahum 1:5-6. "The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt. Who can stand before his indignation? And who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him."

It was unmixed and unalloyed wrath, poured out in the fullness of it, even to the last drop: and shall we be so easily drawn to the commission of those sins which put Christ under such sufferings? O do but read such scriptures as these, Luke 22:44. Matthew 26:36-37. Mark 14:33. and see what a plight sin put the Lord of glory into; how the wrath of God put him into a sore amazement, a bloody sweat, and made his soul heavy unto death.

Meditation 3. Consider what a grief and wound the sins of believers are to the Spirit of God, Eph. 4: 80. Ezekiel 16:43. Isaiah 63:10. 0 how it grieves the Holy Spirit of God! Nothing is more contrary to his nature. "O do not that abominable thing which I hate," says the Lord, Jeremiah 44:4. Nothing obstructs and crosses the sanctifying design of the Spirit, as sin does; defacing and spoiling the most rare and admirable workmanship that ever God wrought in this world; violating all the engagements laid upon us by the love of the Father, by the death of his Son, by the operations of his Spirit in all his illuminations, convictions, compunctions, renovation, preservation, and manifold consolations.

Lay this meditation upon your heart, believer, and say, do you thus requite the Lord, O my ungrateful heart, for all his goodness? Is this the fruit of his temporal, spiritual, common, and peculiar mercies, which are without number?

Meditation 4. Consider with yourselves, that no real good, either of profit or pleasure can result from sin; you can have no pleasure in it, whatever others may have, it being against your new nature; and as for that brutish pleasure and sordid joy which others have in sin, it can be but for a moment, for either they must repent or not repent: if they do repent, the pleasure of sin will be turned into the gall of asps here; if they do not repent, it will terminate in everlasting howlings hereafter. That is a smart question, Romans 6:1-23. "What fruit had you in those things whereof you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death." You that are believers must never expect any pleasure in sin; for you can neither commit it without regret, nor reflect upon it without shame and confusion: expect no better consequents of sin than the woundings of conscience and the dismal cloudings of the face of God; that is all the profit of sin. O let these things sink into your heart.

Meditation 5. Consider what the damned suffer for those sins which the devil now tempts you to commit; it has deprived them of all good, all outward good, Luke 16:25. all spiritual good, Matthew 25:41 and of all hope of enjoying any good forever: and as it has deprived them of all good, so it has remedilessly plunged them into all positive misery: misery from without, the wrath of God being come upon them to the uttermost; and misery from within, for their worm dies not, Mark 9:44. The memory of things past, the sense of things present, and the fearful expectations of things to come, are the gnawings and bitings of the worm of conscience, at every bite whereof damned souls give a dreadful shriek; crying out, O the worm! the worm! Would any man that is not forsaken by reason, run the hazard of those eternal miseries for the brutish pleasures of a moment?

Meditation 6. Bethink yourselves what inexcusable hypocrisy it will be in you to indulge yourselves in the private satisfaction of your lusts, under a contrary profession of religion: you are a people that profess holiness, and professedly own yourselves to be under the government and dominion of Christ: and must the worthy name of Christ be only used to cloak and cover your lusts and corruptions, which are so hateful to him? God forbid. You daily pray against sin, you confess it to God, you bewail it, you pour out supplications for pardoning and preventing grace; are you in jest or earnest in these solemn duties of religion? Certainly, if all those duties produce no mortification, you do but flatter God with your lips, and put a dreadful cheat upon your own souls. Nay, do you not frequently censure and condemn those things in others, and dare you allow them in yourselves? What horrid hypocrisy is this? Christians are dead to sin, Romans 6:2. dead to it by profession, dead to it by

obligation, dead to it by relation to Christ, who died for them; and how shall they that are so many ways dead to sin, live any longer therein? O think not that God hates sin the less in you because you are his people, nay, that very consideration aggravates it the more, Amos 3:2.

Meditation 7. Consider with yourselves what hard things some Christians have chosen to endure and suffer rather than they would defile themselves with guilt; and shall every small temptation ensnare and take your souls? Read over Hebrews 11:1-40, and see what the saints have endured to escape sin; no torments were so terrible to them as the displeasure of God, and woundings of

conscience; and did God oblige them more by his grace and favor than he has obliged you? O Christians, how can you that have found such mercies, mercies as free, and pardons as full as ever any souls found, show less care, less fear, less tenderness of grieving the Spirit of God than others have done; certainly, if you did see sin with the saline eyes they saw it, you would hate it as deeply, watch against it as carefully, and resist it as vigorously as any of the saints have done before you.

Meditation 8. Consider with yourselves what sweet pleasure, rational and solid comfort is to be found in the mortification of sin. It is not the fulfilling of your lusts can give you the thousandth part of that comfort and contentment that the resistance of them, and victory over them will give you. Who can express the comfort that is to be found in the cheering testimony of an acquitting and absolving conscience? 2 Corinthians 1:12. Remember what satisfaction and peace it was to Hezekiah upon his supposed death- bed, when he turned to the wall, and said, "Remember now, O Lord, I beseech you, how I have walked before you in truth, and with a perfect heart; and have done that which is good in your sight," Isaiah 38:3.

Fourth use, for examination.

In the next place, this point naturally puts us upon the examination and trial of our own heard, whether we, who so confidently claim a special interest in Christ, have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts. And because two sorts of persons will be concerned in this trial, namely, the weaker and the stronger Christians; I shall therefore lay down two sorts of evidences of mortification, one respecting the sincerity and truth, the other respecting the strength and progress of that work in confirmed and grown Christians, and both excluding false pretenders.

First, There are some things that are evidential of the truth and sincerity of mortification, even in the weakest Christians: as,

First, True tenderness of conscience as to all known sins, one as well as another, is a good sign sin has lost its dominion in the soul. O it is a special mercy to have a heart that shall smite and reprove us for those things that others make nothings of: To check and admonish us for our secret sins, which can never turn to our reproach among men: this is a good sign that we hate sin, however, through the weakness of the flesh we may be ensnared by it. Romans 7:1-25. "What I hate, that I do."

Secondly, The sincere and earnest desires of our souls to God in prayer for heart-purging and sin-mortifying grace, is a good sign our souls have no love for sin. Can you say, poor believer, in the truth of your heart, that if God would give you your choice, it would please you better to have sin cast out, than to have the world cast in: that your heart is not so earnest with God for daily bread, as it is for heart-purging grace? This is a comfortable evidence that sin is nailed to the cross of Christ.

Thirdly, Do you make conscience of guarding against the occasions of sin? Do you keep a daily watch over your hearts and senses, according to 1 John 5:18. Job 31:1. This speaks a true design and purpose of mortification also.

Fourthly, Do you rejoice and bless God from your hearts, when the Providence of God orders any means for the prevention of sin? Thus did David, 1 Samuel 25:33. "And David said to Abigail,

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel which sent you this day to meet me, and blessed be your advice, and blessed be you which have kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with my own hand."

Fifthly, In a word, though the thoughts of death may be terrible in themselves, yet if the expectation and hope of your deliverance from sin thereby, do sweeten the thoughts of it to your souls, it will turn unto you for a testimony, that you are not the servants and friends of sin. And so much briefly of the first sort of evidences.

Secondly, There are other signs of a more deep and thorough mortification of sin, in more grown and confirmed believers, and such are these.

First, The more submissive and quiet any man is under the will of God, in smart and afflicting providences, the more that man's heart is mortified unto sin, Psalms 119:67; Psalms 119:71. Colossians 1:11.

Secondly, The more able any one is to bear reproaches and rebukes for his sin, the more mortification there is in that man, Psalms 141:5.

Thirdly, The more easily any man can resign and give up his dearest earthly comforts at the call and command of God, the more progress that man has made in the work of mortification, Hebrews 11:1-40. 2 Sam. 10: 25. Fourthly, The more power any man has to resist sin in the first motions of it, and stifle it in the birth; the greater degree of mortification that man has attained, Romans 7:23-24.

Fifthly, If great changes, upon our outward condition, make no change for the worse upon our spirits, but we can bear prosperous and adverse providences with an equal mind; then mortification is advanced far in our souls, Php 4:11-12.

Sixthly, The more fixed and steady our hearts are with God in duty, and the less they are infested with wandering thoughts, and earthly interpositions; the more mortification there is in that soul. And so much briefly of the evidences of mortification.

Fifth use, for consolation.

It only remains, that I shut up all with a few words of consolation unto all that are under the mortifying influence of the Spirit. Much might be said for the comfort of such. In brief, First, Mortified sin shall never be your ruin: It is only reigning sin that is ruining sin, Romans 8:13. Mortified sins and pardoned sins shall never lie down with us in the dust.

Secondly? If sin be dying, your souls are living; for dying unto sin, and living unto God, are inseparably connected, Romans 6:1-23.

Thirdly, If sin be dying in you, it is certain that Christ died for you, and you cannot desire a better evidence of it, Romans 6:5-6.

Fourthly, If sin be dying under the mortifying influences of the Spirit, and it be your daily labor to resist and overcome it, you are then in the direct way to heaven, and eternal salvation; which few, very few in the world shall find, Luke 13:24.

Fifthly, To shut up all, if you, through the Spirit, be daily mortifying the deeds of the body, then the death of Christ is effectually applied by the Spirit unto your souls, and your interest in him is unquestionable: for they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts; and they that have so crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts are Christ's.

Blessed be God for a crucified Christ!

05.18. The Imitation of Christ

The Imitation of Christ

Of the Imitation of Christ in holiness of life, and the necessity of it in Believers.

"He who says he abided in him, ought himself also to walk, even as he walked." 1 John 2:6

The express and principal design of the apostle, in this chapter, is to propound marks and signs, both negative and positive, for the trial and examination of men's claims to Christ; among which (not to spend time about the coherence) my text is a principal one; a trial of men's interest in Christ, by their imitation of Christ. It is supposed by some expositors, that the apostle, in laying down this mark, had a special design to overthrow the wicked doctrine of the Carpocratians, who taught (as Epiphanius relates it) that men might have as much communion with God in sin as in duty.

In full opposition to which the apostle lays down this proposition, wherein he asserts the necessity of a Christ-like conversation in all that claim union with him, or interest with him. The words resolve themselves into two parts, namely,

1. A claim to Christ supposed.

2. The only way to have our claim warranted.

First, We have here a claim to Christ supposed; "if any man say he abides in him." Abiding in Christ is an expression denoting proper and real interest in Christ, and communion with him; for it is put in opposition to those temporary, light, and transient effects of the gospel, which are called a morning dew, or an early cloud; such a receiving of Christ as that, Matthew 13:21. which is but a present flash, sudden and vanishing; abiding in Christ notes a solid, durable, and effectual work of the Spirit, thoroughly and everlastingly joining the soul to Christ. Now, if any man, whoever he be (for this indefinite is equivalent to an universal term) let him never think his claim to be good and valid, except he take this course to adjust it.

(2.) Secondly, The only way to have this claim warranted, and that must be by so walking even as he walked; which words carry in them the necessity of our imitation of Christ. But it is not to be understood indefinitely and universally of all the works or actions of Christ, some of which were extraordinary and miraculous, some purely mediatory, and not imitable by us: In these paths no Christian can follow Christ; nor may so much as attempt to walk as he walked. But the words point at the ordinary and imitable ways and works of Christ; therein it must be the care of all to follow him, that profess and claim interest in him; they must so walk as he walked, this [so] is a very bearing word in this place; the emphasis of the text seems to lie in it; however, certain it is that this so walking, does not imply an equality with Christ in holiness and obedience; for as he was filled with the Spirit without measure, and anointed with that oil of gladness above his fellows; so the purity, holiness, and obedience of his life are never to be matched, or equalized by any of the saints. But this so walking only notes a sincere intention, design, and endeavor to imitate and

follow him in all the paths of holiness and obedience, according to the different measures of grace received. The life of Christ is the believer's copy, and though the believer cannot draw one line or letter exact as his copy is, yet his eye is still upon it, he is looking unto Jesus, Hebrews 12:2. and laboring to draw all the lines

of his life, as agreeably as he is able, into Christ his pattern.

Hence the observation is,

Doctrine. That every man is bound to the imitation of Christ, under penalty of forfeiting his claim to Christ.

The saints imitation of Christ is solemnly enjoined by many great and express commands of the gospel; so you find it, 1 Peter 1:1-25. "But as he who has called you is holy, so be you holy in all anner of conversation:" So Ephesians 5:1-2. "Be you therefore followers of God as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also has loved us." "Christians (says Bernard) receive this name from Christ; and it is very meet that as they inherit his name, so they should also imitate his holiness." Now to state the method of this discourse, it will be needful to discuss and open three things in the doctrinal part.

1. What the saints imitation of Christ supposes and comprises.

2 In what particulars they are especially bound to imitate Christ.

3. Why no claim to Christ is valid without this imitation of him.

And then apply the whole in divers uses.

(1.) First, What the saints imitation of Christ supposes and comprises. Now there are divers great and weighty truths supposed and implied in this imitation of Christ, or walking as he walked, namely,

First, It supposes, that no Christian is, or may pretend to be a rule to himself, to act according to the dictates of his own will and pleasure; for as no man has wisdom enough to direct and govern himself, so if his own will were made the rule of his own actions, it would be the highest invasion of the divine prerogative that could be imagined: "I know, O Lord, (says Jeremiah) that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in him that walks to direct his own steps, Jer. 10: 28. We may as well pretend to be our own makers as our own guides. It is a pretty observation of Aquinas, that if the workman's hand were the rule of his work, it were impossible he should ever err in working: And if the will of man were the only law and guide of his way, we might then say no man would sin in his walking. The apostle, indeed, says of the Heathens, Romans 2:14. "That they are a law to themselves;" but it is not his meaning, that their will is their law, but the law of God engraved upon their hearts; the light and dictates of their own consciences did oblige and bind them as a law.

Secondly, This imitation of Christ implies, that as no man is, or may pretend to be his own guide, so no mere man, how wise or holy soever he be, may pretend to be a rule to other men; but Christ is the rule of every man's way and walking. It is true indeed, the apostle says, "We should be followers of them, who through faith and patience, inherit the promises," Hebrews 6:12. And again, James 5:1-20. "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an

example of suffering affliction, and of patience. But you must always remember, that there is a two-fold rule;

1. Regula regulans, the rule ruling.

2. Regula regulata, the rule ruled.

The wisest and holiest among men, may pretend no higher than a ruled rule. The great apostle, though filled with as great a measure of the Spirit of wisdom and holiness, as ever was possessed by any mere man, yet goes no higher than this, 1 Corinthians 11:1. "Be you followers of me, as I also am of Christ." The best of men are but men at best; they have their errors and defects, which they freely

acknowledge; and where they differ from Christ, it is our duty to differ from them. We may not pin our faith to any man's sleeve, for we know not where he will carry it. It was the commendation which Paul gave of the Thessalonians, 1 Thessalonians 1:6. "And you became followers of us and of the Lord." The noble Bereans were also commended for searching the scriptures, and examining the apostles' doctrine by it; and it was a good reply of the father to a clamorous disputant, crying, Hear me, hear me; "I will neither hear you, nor do you hear me; but let us both hear Christ."

Thirdly, The imitation of Christ implies the necessity of sanctification in all his followers; forasmuch as it is impossible there should be a practical conformity in point of obedience, where there is not a conformity in spirit and in principle; all external conformity to Christ's practice, depends upon an internal conformity to Christ in the principle and Spirit of holiness. It is very plain, from Ezekiel 11:19-20. that a new heart must be given us, and a new spirit put into us, before we can walk in God's statutes; we must first live in the Spirit, before we can walk in the Spirit, Galatians 5:1-26.

Fourthly, The imitation of Christ plainly holds forth this, that the Christian religion is a very precise and strict religion; no way countenancing licentiousness, or indulging men in their lusts: it allows no man to walk loosely and inordinately, but rejects every man's claim to Christ, who studies and labors not to tread exactly in the footsteps of his holy and heavenly example.

Profaneness and licentiousness, therefore, can find no shelter or protection under the wing of the gospel; this is the universal rule laid upon all the professors of the Christian religion, "Let every one that names the name of Christ, depart from iniquity," 2 Timothy 2:1-26 that is let him either put on the life of Christ, or put off the name of Christ; let him show the hand of a Christian, in works of holiness and obedience, or else the tongue and language of a Christian must gain no belief or credit.

Fifthly, The imitation of Christ necessarily implies the defectiveness and imperfection of the best of men in this life; for if the life of Christ be our pattern, the best and holiest of men must confess they come short in everything of the rule of their duty. Our pattern is still above us, the best of men are ashamed when they compare their lives with the life of Christ: It is true, a vain heart may swell with pride, when a man compares himself with other men: thus measuring ourselves by ourselves, and comparing ourselves among ourselves, we show our folly and nourish our pride; but if any man will compare his own lily with Christ's, he will find abundant cause at every time and in everything to be humbled. Paul was a great proficient in holiness and obedience, be had been long striving to

come up to the top of holiness, yet when he looks up and sees the life of Christ, and rule of duty, so far above him, hee reckons himself still but at the foot of the hill. Php 3:1. "Not as though I kind already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." q. d. Alas! I am not come up to my duty, I am a great way behind; but I am following after, if at last I may attain it: Perfection is in my expectation and hope, at last, not in my attainment here.

Sixthly, The imitation of Christ, as our general rule or pattern, necessarily implies the transcending holiness of the Lord Jesus; his holiness is greater than the holiness of all creatures "For only that which is first and best in every kind, is the rule and measure of all the rest." It is the height of saints' ambition to be made conformable to Christ, Php 3:10. Christ has a double perfection, a perfection of being, and a perfection of working. His life was a perfect rule, no blot or error could be found therein; for he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners:" And such an high-priest becomes us, as the apostle speaks, Hebrews 7:26.

The conformity of professors to Christ's example, is the test and measure of all their graces; the nearer any man comes to this pattern, the nearer he approaches towards perfection.

Seventhly, The Christian's imitation of Christ, under penalty of losing his claim to Christ, necessarily implies sanctification and obedience to be the evidences of our justification and interest in Christ: Assurance is unattainable without obedience; we can never be comfortable Christians except we be strict and regular Christians. Galatians 6:16. "As many as walk according to this rule, peace be unto them, and mercy; and upon the Israel of God." A loose and careless conversation can never be productive of true peace and consolation, 2 Corinthians 1:12. "This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." Let men talk what they will of the immediate sealings and comforts of the Spirit, without any regard to holiness, or respect to obedience; sure I am, whatever delusion they meet with in that way, true peace, and consolation is only to be expected and found here: "The fruit of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness, and assurance forever."

We have it not for our holiness, but we always have it in the way of holiness. And so much of the first particular, namely, what the imitation of Christ implies and comprises in it.

Secondly, In the next place we are to enquire, in what things all who profess Christ are obliged to the imitation of him; or what those excellent graces in the life of Christ were, which are propounded as patterns to the saints.

The life of Christ was a living law; all the graces and virtues of the Spirit were represented in their glory, and brightest luster in his conversation upon earth: Never man spoke as he spoke; never any lived as he lived. "We beheld his glory (says the evangelist) as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" John 1:14. But to descend to the particular, imitable excellencies in the life of Christ, which are high patterns and excellent rules for the conversation of his people, we shall, from among many others, single out the ten following particulars, which we are obliged to imitate.

Pattern 1. And first of all, the purity and holiness of the life of Christ is proposed as a glorious pattern for the saint's imitation. 1 Peter 1:15. "As he which has called you is holy, so be you holy in

all manner of conversation;" "en pasei anastrofei", in every point and turning of yourselves. There is a two-fold holiness in Christ, the holiness of his nature, and the holiness of his practice; his holy being and his holy working: This obliges all that profess interest in him to a two-fold holiness, namely, holiness in actu primo, in the principles of it in their hearts, and holiness in actu secondo, in the practice and exercise of it in their conversations. It is very true we cannot in all respects imitate the holiness of Christ, for he is essentially holy; proceeding, by nature, as a pure beam of holiness from the Father; and when he was incarnate, he came into the world immaculate, and pure from the least stain of pollution: There it was said, Luke 1:25. "That holy thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God."

In this we can never be like Christ, in the way of our production; for who can bring a clean thing out of that which is unclean? Not one." The Lord Jesus was also efficiently holy, that is he makes others holy; therefore his sufferings and blood are called a fountain opened "for sin and for uncleanness," that is to cleanse other men's souls, Zechariah 13:1. In this Christ also is inimitable; no man can make himself or others holy. That is a great truth, though it will hardly go down with proud nature--we may sooner make ourselves to be men, than to be saints. Beside Christ is infinitely holy, as he is God; and there are no measures set to his holiness, as Mediator. John 3:34. "For God gives not the Spirit by measure unto him."

But notwithstanding these excepted respects, the holiness of Christ is propounded as a pattern for our imitation six ways.

First, He was truly and sincerely holy, without fiction or simulation; and this appeared in the greatest trial of the truth of holiness that ever was made in this world. John 14: 80. "The prince of this world comes, and has nothing in me:" When he was agitated and shaken with the greatest temptations, no dregs appeared; he was like pure fountain-water in a crystal glass. The hypocrite makes show of more holiness than he has, but there was more holiness in Christ than ever appeared to the view of men. We may say of the way of Christ what the philosopher says of the milky way in the heavens; and those faint streams of light which we see there, are nothing else but the reflection of innumerable stars which shine there, though they are invisible to us. There was much inward beauty in him, and so there ought to be in all his followers; our holiness, like Christ's, must be sincere and real, Ephesians 4:24. shining with inward beauty towards God rather than towards men.

Secondly, Christ was uniformly holy at one time as well as an other; in one place and company as well as another: He was still like himself, an holy Christ; one and the same tenor of holiness ran throughout his whole life from first to last: So must it be with all his people, holy in all manner of conversation. Christians, look to your copy, and be sure to imitate Christ in this; write fair after your copy; let there not be here a word and there a blot: one part of your life heavenly and pure, and another earthly and dreggy; or (as one expresses it) now an heavenly rapture, and by and by a fleshly frolic.

Thirdly, Christ was exemplarily holy; a pattern of holiness to all that came near him and conversed with him: O imitate Christ in this. It was the commendation of the Thessalonians, that they "were examples to all that believed in Macedonia and Achaia; and that in every place their faith to God-ward was spread abroad," 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10. Let no man go out of your company without conviction or edification. So exemplary were the primitive Christians, Php 3:1-21.

Fourthly, Christ was strictly and precisely holy: "Which of you convinces me of sin?" The most envious and observing eyes of his greatest enemies could not pick a hole, or find a flaw in any of his words or actions: It is our duty to imitate Christ in this. Php 2:1-30. "That you may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom you shine (or, as the word may be rendered imperatively, 'faineste hos foseres', among whom shine you) as lights in the world." Thus it becomes the followers of Christ to walk circumspectly, or precisely; "for so is the will of God that with well doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men," 1 Peter 2:15.

Fifthly, Christ was perseveringly holy, holy to the last breath; as he began, so he finished his whole life in a constant course of holiness: in this also he is our great pattern. It becomes not any of his people to begin in the Spirit and end in the flesh; but on the contrary, their last works should be more than their first: "Let him that is holy, be holy still," Revelation 22:11.

Sixthly, In a word, the delight of Christ was only in holy things and holy persons: they were his chosen companions; even so it becomes his people to have all their delights in the saints, and in the excellent of the earth, Psalms 16:3. Thus, Christians, be you followers of Christ in his holiness; God has decreed this conformity to Christ in all that shall be saved, Romans 8:29. he banished all unholy ones from his gracious presence forever, 1 Corinthians 6:9. Hebrews 12:14. The design of Christ in dying for you was to make you pure and holy, Ephesians 5:25-26. 0 then, study holiness, eye your pattern, and as dear children, be you followers of your most holy Lord Jesus Christ.

Pattern 2. The obedience of Christ to his Father's will, is a pattern for the imitation of all Christians: it is said of Christ, Hebrews 5:8. that he "learned obedience by the things which he suffered;" a text which labors under some difficulties; Christ learned obedience, and yet was not ignorant before of what he learned afterward; he was perfect in knowledge, and yet the apostle speaks of him as a proficient in the school of wisdom. But we must consider there are two ways of learning, namely, by

1. The comprehension of the mind.

2. By the experience of the sense.

Christ, as God, was perfect in knowledge; nothing could be added to him: but when he became man, then he came to understand, or learn by sufferings, as the apostle here speaks; which, though it added nothing to his knowledge, yet it was a new method and way of knowing. Now the obedience of Christ is our pattern whereunto we are obliged (as ever we will warrant our claim of interest in him) to conform ourselves in the following properties of it.

First, Christ's obedience was free and voluntary, not forced or compulsory; it was so from the very first undertaking of the work of our redemption, Proverbs 8:30-31. "Then was I by him as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him: Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men." And when the fullness of time was come for executing that blessed design, which had been in prospect from all eternity, how cheerfully did the will of Christ echo to his Father's call, Psalms 40:7. "Then said I, lo I come, in the volume of your book it is written of me, I delight to do your will, O my God, yes, your law is within my heart." Nor was this a flourish before he came into the field and saw the enemy, for he laid down his life with the greatest cheerfulness and spontaneity that could be, John 10:17-18.

"Therefore does my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again; no man takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself:" and indeed the voluntariness of Christ, in his obedience unto death, gave his death the nature and formality of a sacrifice; for so all sacrifices ought to be offered, Leviticus 1:3. and so Christ's sacrifice was offered unto God, Ephesians 5:2. It was as grateful a work to Christ to die for us, as it was to Moses' mother to take him to nurse from the hand of Pharaoh's daughter. O Christians, tread in the steps of Christ's example, do nothing grudgingly for God, let not his commands be grievous, 1 John 5:3.

If you do anything for God willingly, you have a reward; if otherwise, a dispensation only is committed to you, 1 Corinthians 9:7. Obedience in Christ was an abasement to him, but in you a very great honor and advancement: you have reason therefore to obey with cheerfulness.

Secondly, The obedience of Christ was universal and complete, he was obedient to all the will of God, making no demur to the hardest service imposed by the will of God upon him, Php 2:8. "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;" and though it is true, the humanity of Christ recoiled and staggered when that bitter cup of the wrath of God was given him to drink; yet how soon was that innocent aversion overcome in him by a perfect submission?

Nevertheless, "not my will, but your be done," Matthew 26:39. Christians, here is your pattern: happy are you, reader, if you can say, when God calls you to suffering and self denying work, I am filled with the will of God. Such was Paul's obedience, Acts 21:1-40. "I am ready not only to be bound, but to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus".

Thirdly, The obedience of Christ was sincere and pure, without any base or by-end, purely aiming at the glory of God, John 17:4. "I have glorified you on earth, I have finished the work you gave me to do. He sought not honor of men. This was the great desire of his soul, John 12:28. "Father glorify your name:" And truly the choicest part of your obedience consists in the purity of your ends, and in this Christ is propounded as your pattern, Php 2:3-5.

Fourthly, The streams of Christ's obedience flowed from the spring and fountain of ardent love to God, John 14: 81. "But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do;" Thus let all your obedience to God turn upon the hinge of love; for "love is the fulfilling of the law."

Not as if no other duty but love were required in the law, but because no act of obedience is acceptable to God, but that which is performed in love.

Fifthly, In a word, The obedience of Christ was constant; he was obedient unto death, he was not weary of his work to the last.

Such a patient continuance in well doing is one part of your conformity to Christ, Romans 2:7. it is laid upon you by his own express command, and a command backed with the most encouraging promise, Revelation 2:10. "Be you faithful unto the death, and I will give you the crown of life."

Pattern 3. The self-denial of Christ is the pattern of believers, and their conformity unto it is their indispensable duty, Php 2:4-6. 2 Corinthians 8:9. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might be rich." Jesus Christ, for the glory of God, and the love he bare to the elect, denied himself all the delights and pleasures of this world, Matthew 20:28. "The Son of man came not to be

ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many;" he was all his life time in the world, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," Isaiah 53:5. more unprovided of comfortable accommodations than the birds of the air, or beasts of the earth, Luke 9:58. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has not where to lay his head." Yet this was the least part of Christ's self denial: What did he not deny when he left the bosom of his Father, with the ineffable delights and pleasures he there enjoyed from eternity, and instead thereof to drink the cup, the bitter cup of his Father's wrath, for our sakes? O Christians, look to your pattern, and imitate your self-denying Savior. There is a threefold self you are to deny for Christ.

First, Deny your natural self, for him, Luke 14:26. Hate your own life, in competition with his glory, as well as your natural lusts, Titus 2:12.

Secondly, Deny your civil self for Christ; whether they be gifts of the mind, Php 3:8. or your dearest relations in the world, Luke 14:26.

Thirdly, Deny your moral and religions self for Christ; your own righteousness, Php 3:10. Deny sinful self absolutely, Colossians 3:1-25. Deny natural self conditionally, that is be ready to forsake its interests at the call of God. Deny your religious self, even your own graces, comparatively, not in the notion of duties, but in the notion of righteousness: and to encourage you in this difficult work, consider,

First, What great things Christ denied for you, and what small matters you have to deny for him.

Secondly, How readily he denied all for your sakes, making no objections against the difficultest commands.

Thirdly, How incapable you are to put any obligation upon Christ, to deny himself in the least for you, and what strong obligations Christ has put you under, to deny yourselves in your greatest interests upon earth for him.

Fourthly, Remember that your self-denial is a condition consented to, and subscribed by yourselves, if ever you received Christ aright.

Fifthly, In a word, consider how much your self denial for Christ, makes for your advantage in both worlds, Luke 18:29. O therefore, look not every man upon his own things, but upon the things that are of Christ; let not that be justly charged upon you, which was charged upon them, Php 2:21. "All seek their own, not the things which are Christ's."

Pattern 4. The activity and diligence of Christ in finishing the work of God which was committed to him, was a pattern for all believers to imitate. It is said of him, Acts 10:38. "He went about doing good." O what a great and glorious work did Christ finish in a little time! A work to be celebrated to all eternity by the praises of the redeemed. Six things were very remarkable in the diligence of Christ about his Father's work.

First, That his heart was intently set upon it, Psalms 4:8. "Your law is in the midst of my heart," or affections.

Secondly, That he never fainted under the many great discouragements he frequently met withal in that work, Isaiah 43:4. "He shall not fail, nor be discouraged.

Thirdly, That the shortness of his time provoked him to the greatest diligence, John 9:4. "I must work the work of him that sent me, while it is day, for the night comes, when no man can work.

Fourthly, That he improved all opportunities, companies, and occurrences to further the great work which was under his hand, John 4:6, John 4:10.

Fifthly, Nothing more displeased him than when he met with dissuasions and discouragements in his work; upon that account it was that he gave Peter so sharp a check, Mat. 8: 83. "Get you behind me, Satan."

Sixthly, Nothing rejoiced his soul more, than the prosperity and success of his work, Luke 10:20-21. When the disciples made the report of the success of their ministry, it is said, "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in Spirit. And O what a triumphant shout was that upon the cross at the accomplishment of his work, John 19:30. It is finished!

Now, Christians, eye your parent, look unto Jesus; trifle not away your lives in vanity. Christ was diligent, be not you slothful.

And to encourage you in your imitation of Christ in labor and diligence, consider,

First, How great an honor God puts upon you in employing, you for his service: every vessel of service is a vessel of honor, 2 Timothy 2:21. The apostle was very ambitious of that honor, Romans 15:1-33. It was the glory of Eliakim to be fastened as a nail in a sure place, and to have many people hang upon him, Isaiah 22:23.

Secondly, Your diligence in the work of God will be your great security in the hour of temptation; for "the Lord is with you while you are with him," 2 Chronicles 15:2. The schoolmen put the question, How the saints in heaven became impeccable? and resolve it thus, that they are therefore freed from sin, because they are continually employed and swallowed up in the blessed visions of God.

Thirdly, Diligence in the work of God is an excellent help to the improvement of grace. For, though gracious habits are not acquired, yet they are greatly improved by frequent acts; "To him that has shall be given, Matthew 25:29. It is a good note of Luther, Faith improves by obedience.

Fourthly, Diligence in the work of God is the direct way to the assurance of the love of God, 2 Pet. 15: 10. This path leads you into a heaven upon earth.

Fifthly, Diligence in obedience is a great security against backsliding: small remissions in duty, and little neglects, increase by degrees unto great apostasies, you may see how that disease is bred by the method prescribed for its cure, Revelation 2:5. Do your first works.

Sixthly, In a word, laborious diligence, in the day of life, will be your singular comfort when the night of death overtakes you, 2 Peter 1:11. 2 Kings 20:3.

Pattern 5. Delight in God, and in his service, was eminently conspicuous in the life of Christ, and is a rare pattern for believers imitation, John 4:32; John 4:34. "But he said unto them, I have meat to

eat that you know not of, my meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work". The delights of Christ were all in heaven. The Son of man was in heaven, in respect of de light in God, while he conversed here among men. And if you be Christ's, heavenly things will be the delight of your souls also. Now spiritual delight is nothing else but the delight and well pleasedness of a renewed heart, in conversing with God, and the things of God, resulting from the agreeableness of them to the spiritual temper of his mind. Four things are considerable about spiritual delight.

First, The nature of it, which consists in the delight, rest, and satisfaction of the mind in God and spiritual things. The heart of a Christian is cantered, it is where it would be; it is gratified in the highest, in the actings forth of faith and love upon God; as the taste is gratified with a suitable delicious relish, Psalms 63:5-6. Psalms 119:14; Psalms 119:24. Psalm. 17: 18.

Secondly, The object of spiritual delight, which is God himself, and the things which relate to him. He is the blessed ocean into which all the streams of spiritual delight do pour themselves, Psalms 73:25. "Whom have I in heaven but you, and on earth there is none that I desire in comparison of you."

Thirdly, The subject of spiritual delight, which is a renewed heart, and that only so far as it is renewed, Romans 7:22, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man."

Fourthly, The principle and spring of this delight, which is the agreeableness of spiritual things to the temper and frame of a renewed mind. A sensitive pleasure arises from the suitableness of the faculty and object. So it is here, no delicious sweetness can be so pleasant to the taste, or beautiful colors to the eye, or melodious sounds to the ear, as spiritual things to renewed souls, because spiritual senses are delicate, and the objects more excellent.

But my business here is not so much to open its nature, as to press you to the practice thereof in conformity to your great pattern, whose life was a life of delight in God, and whose work was performed with the greatest delight in God. "I delight to do your will, O my God." O Christians, strive to imitate your pattern in this. And to encourage you, I will briefly hint a few things.

First, Scarce anything can be more evidential of sincerity than a heart delighting in God, and the will of God. Hypocrites go as far as others in the material parts of duties, but here they are defective; they have no delight in God and things spiritual; but do whatever they do in religion, from the compulsions of conscience, or accommodations of self-ends.

Secondly, delighting in God will be a choice help and means to perseverance. The reason why many so easily part with religion is, because their souls never tasted the sweetness of it; they never delighted in it; but the Christian who delights in the law of God will be meditating on it day and night, and shall be like a tree planted by a river of water, whose leaf fades not, Psalms 1:2-3.

Thirdly, This will represent religion very beautifully to such as are yet strangers to it; you will then be able to invite them to Christ by your example, the language whereof will be like that, Psalms 34:8. "O taste and see that God is good."

Fourthly, This will make all your services to God very pleasing and acceptable through Christ; you will now begin to do the will of God on earth, as it is done in heaven; your duties are so far angelical as they are performed in the strength of delight in God.

Object. But may not a sincere Christian act in duty without delight? Yes, may he not feel some kind of weariness in duties?

Solut. Yes, doubtless he may; but then we must distinguish between the temper and distemper of a renewed heart; the best hearts are not always in the right frame.

Pattern 6 The inoffensivenss of the life of Christ upon earth is an excellent pattern to all his people; he injured none, offended none, but was holy end harmless, as the apostle speaks, Hebrews 7:26. He denied his own liberty to avoid occasion of offence; as in the case of the tribute-money, Matthew 19:27. "The children are free, notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go," &c. So circumspect was Christ, and inoffensive among all men, that though his enemies sought occasion against him, yet could they find none, Luke 6:7. Look unto Jesus, O you professors of religion, imitate him in this gracious excellency of his life, according to his command, Php 2:1-30 "That you may be harmless and blameless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation." You are indeed allowed the exercise of your prudence, but not a jot farther than will consist with your innocence. "Be you wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." It is the rule of Christ that you offend none, 1 Corinthians 10:32. 2 Corinthians 6:3. And to engage you to the imitation of Christ in this, I must briefly press it with a few encouragements, which methinks should prevail with any heart that is truly gracious.

First, For the honor of Jesus Christ, be you inoffensive, his name is called upon you, his honor is concerned in your deportment; if your carriage in the world give just matter of offence, Christ's worthy name will be blasphemed thereby, James 2:7. Your inoffensive carriage is the only means to stop the mouths of detractors, 1 Peter 2:15.

Secondly, For the sake of souls, the precious and immortal souls of others, be wary that you give no offence: "Woe to the world, (says Christ,) because of offence," Matthew 13:7. Nothing was more commonly objected against Christ and religion by the Heathens in Cyprian's time, than the loose and scandalous lives of professors: "Behold, say they, these are the men who boast themselves to be redeemed from the tyranny of Satan, to be dead to the world; nevertheless, see how they are overcome by their own lusts." And much after the same rate Salvian brings in the wicked of his time, stumbling at the looseness of professors, and saying, Where is that catholic law which they believe? Where are the examples of piety and chastity which they have learned? &c. O Christians, draw not the guilt of other men's eternal ruin upon your souls.

Thirdly, In a word, answer the ends of God in your sanctification and providential dispose in the world this way; by the holiness and harmlessness of your lives, many may be won to Christ, 1 Peter 3:1. What the Heathens said of moral virtue, (which they called verticordia, turn-heart) that if it were but visible to mortal eyes, all men would be enamored with it, will be much more true of religion when you shall represent the beauty of it ill your conversation.

Pattern 7. The humility and lowliness of Christ is propounded by himself as a pattern for his people's imitation. Matthew 11:29. "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly." He could abase and empty himself of all his glory, Php 2:5-7. He could stoop to the meanest office, even to wash the disciples feet. We read but of one triumph in all the life of Christ upon earth, when he rode to Jerusalem, the people strewing branches in the way, and the very children in the streets of Jerusalem, crying, "Hosanna to the son of David, Hosanna in the highest;" and yet with what

lowliness and humility was it performed by Christ, Matthew 21:5. "Behold your King comes unto you meek and lowly." The humility of Christ appeared in everything he spoke or did. Humility discovered itself in his language, Psalms 22:6. "I am a worm, and no man." In his actions, not refusing the meanest office, John 3:14. In his condescensions to the worst of men, upon which ground they called him "a friend to publicans and sinners," Matthew 11:19. But especially, and above all, in stooping down from all his glory to a state of the deepest contempt, for the glory of God and our salvation. Christians! here is your pattern; look to your meek and humble Savior, and tread in his steps; be you "clothed with humility," 1 Peter 5:5. Whoever are ambitious to be the world's great ones, let it be enough for you to be Christ's little ones. Convince the world, that since you knew God and yourselves, your pride has been dying from that day. Show your humility in your habits, 1 Peter 3:3. 1 Timothy 2:9-10. In your company, not despising the meanest and poorest that fear the Lord, Psalms 15:4. Romans 12:16. In your language; that dialect befits your lips, Ephesians 3:8. Less than the least of all saints; but especially in the low value and humble thoughts you have of yourselves, 1 Timothy 1:15. And to press this, I beseech you to consider,

First, From how vile a root pride springs. Ignorance of God, and of yourselves, gives rise and being to this sin: They that know God will be humble, Isaiah 6:5. And they that know themselves cannot be proud, Romans 7:9.

Secondly, Consider the mischievous effects it produces; it estranges the soul from God, Psalms 138:6. It provokes God to lay you low, Job 40:11-12. It goes before destruction and a dreadful fall, Proverbs 10:18.

Thirdly, As it is a great sin, so it is a bad sign, Habakkuk 2:4. "Behold his heart which is lifted up, is not upright in him."

Fourthly, How unsuitable it is to the sense you have, and the complaints you make of your own corruptions and spiritual wants; and above all, how contrary it is to your pattern and example: Did Christ speak, act, or think as you do! O. learn humility from Jesus Christ, it will make you precious in the eyes of God, Isaiah 57:15.

Pattern 8. The contentment of Christ in a low and mean condition in the world, is an excellent pattern for his people's imitation. His lot in this world fell upon a condition of deepest poverty and contempt: Yet how well was he satisfied and contented with it! hear him expressing himself about it, Psalms 16:6. "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places: yes, I have a goodly heritage." The contentment of his heart with a suffering condition, evidenced itself in his silence under the greatest sufferings, Isaiah 53:7. "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." O that in this also the poorest Christians would imitate their Savior, and learn to manage an afflicted condition with a contented spirit: Let there be no murmurs, complaints, or foolish charges of God heard from you, whatever straits or troubles he brings you into: For, First, The meanest and most afflicted Christian is owner of many rich, invaluable mercies, Ephesians 1:3. 1 Cor. 3: 33. Is sin pardoned and God reconciled? then never open your mouths any more, Ezekiel 16:63.

Secondly, You have many precious promises that God will not forsake you in your straits, Hebrews 13:5. Isaiah 41:17. And your whole life has been a life of experiences of the faithfulness of God in

his promises. Which of you cannot say with the church, Lamentations 3:28. "His mercies are new every morning, and great is his faithfulness." Thirdly, How useful and beneficial are all your afflictions to you! they purge your sins, prevent your temptations, wean you from the world, and turn to your salvation: and how unreasonable then must your discontentedness at them be?

Fourthly, The time of your relief and full deliverance from all your troubles is at hand; the time is but short that you shall have any concernment about these things, 1 Corinthians 7:26. If the candle of your earthly comfort be blown out, yet remember it is but a little while to the break of day, and then there will be no need of candles. Besides,

Your earthly lot falls by divine direction upon you, and as bad as it is, it is much easier and sweeter than the condition of Christ in this world was: Yet he was contented, and why not you? O that we could learn contentment from Christ in every condition. And thus I have laid before you some excellent patterns in the life of Christ for your imitation.

05.19. The Imitation of Christ, Continued

The Imitation of Christ, Continued

"He who says he abides in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." 1 John 11:6

These words have been resolved into their parts, and their sense opened in the former sermon: The observation was this:

That every man is bound to the imitation of Christ, under penalty of forfeiting his claim to Christ.

In prosecution of this point, we have already shown what the imitation of Christ imports, and what the imitable excellencies in the life of Christ are: It now remains that I show you in the next place, why all that profess Christ are bound to imitate his example and then apply the whole. Now the necessity of this imitation of Christ will convincingly appear divers ways.

First, From the established order of salvation, which is fixed and unalterable: God that has appointed the end, has also established the means and order by which men shall attain the ultimate end. Now conformity to Christ is the established method in which God will bring souls to glory, Romans 8:29. "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his Son; that he might be the first born among many brethren." The same God who has predestinated men to salvation, has in order thereunto, predestinated them unto conformity to Christ, and this order of heaven is never to be reversed; we may as well hope to be saved without Christ, as to be saved without conformity to Christ.

Secondly, The nature of Christ-mystical requires this conformity, and renders it indispensably necessary. Otherwise, the body of Christ must be heterogeneous; of a nature different from the head, and how monstrous and uncomely would this be? This would represent Christ to the world in an image, or idea, much like that, Daniel 2:32-33. "The head of fine gold, the breasts and arms of silver, the thighs of brass, the legs of iron, the feet part of iron and part of clay." Christ, the head, is pure and holy, and therefore very unsuitable to sensual and earthly members. And therefore the apostle in his description of Christ-mystical, describes the members of Christ (as they ought to be) of the same nature and quality with the head, 1 Corinthians 15:48-49. "As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly; and as we have borne the image of the earthy, so we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." That image or resemblance of Christ, which shall be complete and perfect after the resurrection, must be begun in its first draught here by the work of regeneration.

Thirdly, This resemblance and conformity to Christ appears necessary from the communion which all believers have with Christ in the same spirit of grace and holiness. Believers are called Christ's fellows, or co-partners, Psalms 14:7. from their participation with him of the same spirit; as it is 1 Thessalonians 4:8. God gives the same Spirit unto us, which he more plentifully poured out upon Christ. Now where the same Spirit and principle is, there the same fruits and operations must be produced, according to the proportions and measures of the Spirit of grace communicated; and

this reason is farther enforced by the very design and end of God, in the infusion of the Spirit of grace: For it is plain, from Ezekiel 36:27. that practical holiness and obedience is the scope and design of that infusion of the Spirit. The very innate property of the Spirit of God in men, is to elevate their minds, and set their affections upon heavenly things, to purge their hearts from earthly dross, and fit them for a life of holiness and obedience. Its nature also is assimilating, and changes them in whom it is, into the same image with Jesus Christ their heavenly head, 2 Corinthians 3:18.

Fourthly, The necessity of this imitation of Christ may be argued, from the design and end of Christ's exhibition to the world in a body of flesh. For though we detest that doctrine of the Socinians, which makes the exemplary life of Christ to be the whole end of his incarnation; yet we must not run so far from an error, as to lose a precious truth. We say, the satisfaction of his blood was a main and principal end of his incarnation, according to Matthew 20:1-34. We affirm also, that it was a great design and end of the incarnation of Christ to set before us a pattern of holiness for our imitation; for so speaks the apostle, 1 Peter 2:21. "He has left us an example that we should follow his steps." And this example of Christ greatly obliges believers to his imitation, Php 2:5. "Let this mind be in you, which also was in Christ Jesus.

Fifthly, Our imitation of Christ, is one of those great articles which every man is to subscribe, whom Christ will admit into the number of his disciples, Luke 14:27. "Whoever does not come after me, cannot be my disciple." And again, John 12:26. "If any man serve me, let him follow me." To this condition we have submitted, if we be sincere believers; and therefore are strictly bound to the imitation of Christ, not only by God's command, but by our own consent. But if we profess interest in Christ, when our hearts never consented to follow, and imitate his example, then are we self-deceiving hypocrites, wholly disagreeing from the scripture character of believers, Romans 8:1. They that are Christ's being here described to be such as walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. And Galatians 5:25. "If we live in the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit."

Sixthly, The honor of Christ necessitates the conformity of Christians to his example, else what way is there left to stop detracting mouths, and vindicate the name of Christ from the reproaches of the world? How can wisdom be justified of her children, except it be this way? By what means shall we cut off occasion from such as desire occasion, but by regulating our lives by Christ's example? The world has eyes to see what we practice, as well as ears to hear what we profess. Therefore either show the consistency between your profession and practice, or you can never hope to vindicate the name and honor of the Lord Jesus. The uses follow; for

1. Information.

2. Exhortation.

3. Consolation.

First use, for information.

Inference 1. If all that profess interest in Christ, be strictly bound to imitate his holy example; then it follows, that religion is very unjustly charged by the world, with the scandals and evils of them that profess it. Nothing can be more unjust and irrational, if we consider,

First, That the Christian religion severely censures loose and scandalous actions in all professors, and therefore is not to be censured for them. It is absurd to condemn religion for what itself condemns: looseness no way flows from the principles of Christianity, but is most opposite and contrary to it, Titus 2:11. "For the grace of God that brings salvation, has appeared unto all men; teaching us, that denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

Secondly, It is an argument of the excellency of the Christian religion, and that even wicked men themselves covet the name and profession of it, though they only cloak and cover their evils under it. I confess it is a great abuse of such an excellent thing as religion is; but yet, if it had not an awful reverence paid it by the consciences of all men, it would never be abused to this purpose, by hypocrites, as it is.

Thirdly, According to this reasoning, there can be no religion in the world; for name me that religion which is not scandalized by the practices of some that profess it. So that this practice has a natural tendency to Atheism; and is, no doubt, encouraged by the devil for that end.

Inference. 2. If all men forfeit their claim to Christ, who endeavor not to imitate him in the holiness of his life, then how small a number of real Christians are there in the world? Indeed, if liberal talking, without accurate walking: if common profession without holy practices, were enough to constitute a Christian; then this quarter of the world would abound with Christians: But if Christ owns none for such but those that tread in the steps of his example; then the number of real Christians is very small. The generality of men that live under the Christian name, are such as walk after the flesh, Romans 8:2. according to the course of this world, they yield their members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, Romans 6:13. Strict godliness is a mere bondage to them; narrow is the way, and few there be that walk therein.

Inference. 3. What blessed times should we all see, if true religion did once generally obtain, and prevail in the world! How would it humble the proud, meeken the passionate, and spiritualize those that are carnal! The perverse world charges religion with all the tumults and disturbances that are in it; whereas nothing in the world but religion, advanced in the power of it, can heal and cure these epidemic evils. O if men were once brought under the power of religion indeed, to walk after Christ in holiness, obedience, meekness, and self denial; no such miseries as these would be heard of among us, Isaiah 11:8-9. "The sucking child shall play upon the hole of the asp, and a weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den; they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea".

Inference. 4. Hence it also follows, that real Christians are the sweetest companions. It is a comfortable thing to walk with them that walk after the example of Christ; the holiness, heavenliness, humility, self-denial, and diligence in obedience, which was in Christ, are, in some measure, to be found in all sincere Christians: They shed forth the virtues of him that calls them; the graces of the Spirit do more or less your forth in them: And O how endearing, sweet, and engaging are these things! Upon this very account the apostle invited others into the fellowship of the saints, 1 John 1:1-10. "That you might have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Christ Jesus." And is it not sweet to have fellowship with them who have fellowship with Christ?

O let all your delights be in the saints, and in the excellent of the earth, who excel in virtue, Psalms 16:3. Yet, mistake not, there is a great deal of difference between one Christian and another, and even the best of Christians are sanctified but in part. If there be something sweet and engaging, there is also something bitter and distasteful in the best of men. If there be something to draw forth your delight and love, there is also something to exercise your pity and patience. Yet this is most certain, that notwithstanding all their infirmities and corruptions, they are the best and sweetest company this world affords.

Inference. 5. In a word, if no men's claim to Christ be warranted but theirs that walk as he walked; how vain and groundless then are the hopes and expectations of all unsanctified men, who walk after their own lusts? None are snore forward to claim the privileges of religion than those that reject the duties of it; multitudes hope to be saved by Christ, who yet refuse to be governed by him: But such hopes have no scripture warrant to support them; yes, they have many scripture testimonies against them, 1 Corinthians 6:9. "Know you not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" Be not

deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind; nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God." O how many thousand vain hopes are laid in the dust, and how many thousand souls are sentenced to hell by this one scripture!

Second use, for exhortation.

If this be so, it naturally presses all the professors of Christianity to strict godliness in their conversations, as ever they expect benefit by Christ. O professors, be you not conformed unto this world, but be you transformed by the renewing of your minds: Set the example of Christ before you, and labor to tread in his steps. This is the great business of religion, the main scope of the gospel. Give me leave, therefore, closely to press it upon your hearts, by the following motives.

Motive 1. Christ has conformed himself to you by his abasing incarnation; how reasonable therefore is it that you conform yourselves to him in the way of obedience and sanctification? He came as near to you as it was possible for him to do, strive you therefore to come as near to Christ as it is possible for you to do: he has taken your nature upon him, Hebrews 2:14. yes, and with your nature he has taken your weaknesses and infirmities, Romans 8:3. and not only your natures and your infirmities, but your condition also, for he came under the law for your sakes, Galatians 4:4. He conformed himself to you, though he was infinitely above you; that was his abasement: do you conform yourselves to him who are infinitely beneath him: that will be your advancement: his conformity to you emptied him of his glory, your conformity to him will fill you with glory: he conformed himself to you, though you had no obligation upon him; will you not conform yourselves to him, who lie under infinite obligations so to do?

Motive 2. You shall be conformed to Christ in glory; how reasonable therefore is it you should now conform yourselves to him in holiness? The apostle says, 1 John 3:2. "We shall be like unto him, for we shall see him as he is:" Yes, not only your souls shall be like him, but your very bodies, even those vile bodies of yours shall be changed, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." How forcible a motive is this to bring men into conformity with Christ here! especially, seeing our conformity to him in holiness, is the evidence of our conformity to him in gory, Romans

6:1-23. 2 Peter 3:11. 0 professors, as ever you look to be with Christ in glory hereafter, see that you walk after Christ's example in holiness and obedience here.

Motive 3. The conformity of your lives to Christ, your pattern, is your highest excellency in this world: The measure of your grace is to be estimated by this rule. The excellency of every creature rises higher and higher, according as it approaches still nearer and nearer to its original; the more you resemble Christ in grace, the more illustrious and resplendent will your conversations be in true spiritual glory.

Motive 4. So far as you imitate Christ in your lives, and no farther, you will be beneficial in the world in which you live: so far as God helps you to follow Christ, you will be helpful to bring others to Christ, or build them up in Christ; for all men are forbidden by the gospel to follow you one step farther than you follow Christ, 1 Corinthians 11:1. and when you have finished your course in this world, the remembrance of your ways will be no further sweet to others, than they are ways of holiness and obedience to Christ, 1 Corinthians 4:17. If you walk according to the course of this world, the world will not be the better for your walking.

Motive 5. To walk as Christ walked, is a walk only worthy of a Christian; this is to "walk worthy of the Lord," 1 Thessalonians 2:12. Colossians 1:10. By worthiness the apostle does not mean meritoriousness, but loveliness, or that decorum which befits a Christian: as, when a man walks suitably to his place and calling in the world, we say he acts like himself; so, when you walk after Christ's pattern, you then act like yourselves, like men of your character and profession; this is consonant to your vocation, Ephesians 4:1. "I beseech you, that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called. This walking suits with your obligation, 2 Corinthians 5:15. for it is to live unto him who died for us. This walking only suits with your designation, Ephesians 2:1O. "For you are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained we should walk in them."

In a word, such walking as this, and such only becomes your expectation, 2 Peter 3:11. "Wherefore [beloved! seeing that you look for such things, be diligent, that you may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

Motive 6. How comfortable will the close of your life be at death, if you have walked after Christ's pattern and example in this world: A comfortable death is ordinarily the close of a holy life, Psalms 37:37. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace." A loose, careless life puts many terrible stings into death. As worms in the body are bred of the putrefaction there, so the worm of conscience is bred of the moral putrefaction or corruption that is in our natures and conversations. O then be prevailed with by all these considerations to imitate Christ in the whole course and compass of your conversations.

Third use, for consolation.

Lastly, I would leave a few words of support and comfort to such as sincerely study and endeavor, according to the tendency of their new nature to follow Christ's example, But being weak in grace, and meeting with strong temptations, are frequently carried aside from the holy purposes and designs of their honest, well- meaning hearts, to the great grief and discouragement of their souls. They heartily wish and aim at holiness, and say with David, Psalms 119:5. "O that my ways were directed to keep your statutes."

They follow after exactness in holiness as Paul did, Php 3:12. "If by any means they might attain it." But finding how short they come in all things of the rule and pattern, they mourn as he did, Romans 7:24. "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Well, if this be your case, be not discouraged, but hearken to a few words of support and comfort, with which I shall close this point.

Support I

Such defects in obedience make no flaw in your justification: for your justification is not built upon your obedience, but upon Christ's, Romans 3:24. and how complete and defective soever you be in yourselves, yet at the same instant, "you are complete in him which is the head of all principality and power", Colossians 2:10. Woe to Abraham, Moses, David, Paul, and the most eminent saints that ever lived, if their justification and acceptance with God had depended upon the perfection and completeness of their obedience.

Support II.

Your deep troubles for the defectiveness of your obedience, do not argue you to be less, but more sanctified than those who make no such complaints; for these prove you to be better acquainted with your own hearts than others are; to have a deeper hatred of sin than others have; and to love God with a more fervent love than others do; the most eminent saints have made the bitterest complaints upon this account, Psalms 65:3. Romans 7:23-24.

Support III.

The Lord makes excellent uses even of your infirmities and failings to do you good, and makes them turn to your unexpected advantage: for, by these defects he hides pride from your eyes; he beats you off from self dependence; he makes you to admire the riches of free grace: he makes you to long more ardently for heaven, and entertain the sweeter thoughts of death; and does not the Lord then make blessed fruits to spring up to you from such a bitter root? O the blessed chemistry of heaven, to extract such mercies out of such miseries!

Support IV.

Your bewailed infirmities do not break the bond of the everlasting covenant. The bond of the covenant holds firm, notwithstanding your defects and weaknesses, Jeremiah 32:40. "Iniquities prevail against me," says David, yet in the same breath he adds, "as for our transgressions you shall purge them away," Psalms 65:3. He is still your God, your Father for all this.

Support V.

Though the defects of your obedience are grievous to God, yet your deep sorrows for them are well-pleasing in his eyes, Psalms 51:1-19. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise." Ephraim was never a more pleasant child to his father, than when he bemoaned himself, and smote upon his thigh, as you do, Jeremiah 31:20. Your sins grieve him, but your sorrows please him.

Support VI.

Though God have left many defects to humble you, yet he has given many things to comfort you. This is a comfort that the desire of your soul is to God, and to the remembrance of his name. This is a comfort, that your sins are not your delight as once they were; but your shame and sorrow. This is a comfort, that your case is not singular; but more or less, the same complaints and sorrows are found in all gracious souls through the world; and to say all in one word, this is the comfort above all comforts, that the time is at hand, in which all these defects, infirmities, and failings shall be done away, 1 Corinthians 13:10. "When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away."

Forever blessed be God for Jews Christ.

And thus I have finished the third general use of examination, whereby every man is to try his interest in Christ, and discern whether ever Christ has been effectually applied to his soul. That which remains is

An use of Lamentation.

Wherein the miserable and most wretched state of all those to whom Jesus Christ is not effectually applied, will be yet more particularly discovered and bewailed.

05.20. Aggravation of the Sin, and Punishment of

Of the Aggravation of the Sin, and Punishment

of Unbelief under the light of the Gospel

"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." John 3:19

Out of the foregoing verse it was fully proved in our last sermon, that all Christless and unregenerate men are no better than dead men, being condemned already. Our Savior proceeds in this verse to aggravate the misery of those that refuse and despise him; yet farther, and to let them know, that those who remain in unbelief and the state of unregeneracy, must expect some greater and sorer wrath than other men; not only a simple condemnation, but an aggravated and peculiar condemnation, "This is the condemnation, that light is come," &c.

In the words we find these three parts.

1. The aggravation of sin by the abuse of gospel-light, "Light is come," &c.

2. The aggravation of misery, in proportion to that abuse of light, "This is the condemnation."

3. The cause and occasion, drawing men into this sin and misery

"Because their deeds were evil."

First, We have here the aggravation of sin by the abuse of gospel light, "Light is come." By light we are to understand the knowledge, discovery, and manifestation of Christ, and redemption by him in the gospel. He is the Sun of righteousness that arises in the gospel upon the nations, Malachi 4:1. When he came in the flesh, then did "the day spring from on high visit us," Luke 1:78. And the light may be said to come two ways; either,

First, In the means by which it is conveyed to us; or,

Secondly, in the efficacy of it upon our minds, when it actually shines in our souls. Light may come among a people in the means, and yet they actually remain in darkness all the while. As it is in nature; the sun may be up and a very glorious morning far advanced, while many thousands are drowning upon their beds with their curtains drawn about them. Light in the means, we may call potential light. Light in the mind, we may call actual light. It is but seldom that light comes in the means, and continues long among men, but some light must needs actually shine into their souls also; but this

actual light is twofold.

1. Common, and intellectual only, to conviction; or,

2. Special and efficacious light, bringing the soul to Christ by real conversion, called, in 1 Corinthians 4:6. - God "shining into the heart."

Wherever light comes, in this last sense, it is impossible that such men should prefer darkness before it: But it may come in the means, yes, it may actually shine into the consciences of men by those means, and convince them of their sins, and yet men may hate it, and chuse darkness rather than light. And this is the sense of this place, light was come in the gospel-dispensation among them, yes, it had shined into many of their consciences, galled and reproved them for sin, but they hated it, and had rather be without such a troublesome inmate. In a word, by the coming of light, we are here to understand a more clear and open manifestation of Christ by the gospel than ever was made to the world before: For we are not to think that there was no light in the world until Christ came, and the gospel was published in the world by the apostles' ministry. For Abraham saw Christ's day, John 8:56. and all the faithful before Christ saw the promises, that is their accomplishment in Christ, afar off, Hebrews 11:13. For it was with Christ, the Sun of righteousness, as it is with the natural sun, "which illuminates the hemisphere before it actually rises or shows its body above the horizon;" but when it rises and shows itself, the light is much clearer; so it was in this case. The greater therefore was their sin that rebelled against it, and preferred darkness to light; this was their sin, with its fearful aggravation.

Secondly, In a most just proportion to this sin, we have here the aggravated condemnation of them who sinned against such clear gospel-light: "This is the condemnation," this is the judgment of all judgements, the greatest sad most intolerable judgment; a severer sentence of condemnation than ever did pass against any others that sinned in the times of ignorance and darkness: they that live and die impenitent and unregenerate, however few the means of salvation have been which they have enjoyed, must be condemned: yes, the Pagan world, who have no more but natural light to help them, will be condemned by that light; but "this is the condemnation," that is such sinning as this is the cause of the greatest condemnation and sorest punishment, as it is called, Hebrews 10:19.

Thirdly, The cause and occasion, drawing men into this sin and misery, "because their deeds are evil," that is the convincing fight of truth put a great deal of vigor and activity into their consciences, which they could not endure. The accusations and condemnations of conscience are very irksome and troublesome things to men: To avoid this, They are willing to be ignorant. An enlightened conscience gives an interruption also unto men in their sinful courses and pleasures; they cannot sin at so easy a rate in the light as they did in darkness; and this made them hate the light as a very troublesome thing to them. Thus you see what was the sin, what the punishment, and what the cause of both.

Hence the Observation is,

Doctrine. That the greater and clearer the light is under which the impenitent and unregenerate do live in this world, by so much greater and heavier will their condemnation and misery be in the world to come.

Matthew 11:21-22. "Woe unto you Chorazin, woe unto you Bethsaida; for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes: But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of

judgment than for you". Two things require explication in the doctrinal part of this point, namely,

1. How light puts a deeper guilt and aggravation into sin.

2. Why sin so aggravated, makes men liable to greater condemnation.

First, We will enquire into the grounds and reasons why greater lights greatens and aggravates, proportionately, the sins that are committed under it, and it will appear that it does so, upon divers

accounts.

First, All light (especially evangelical light) is a great preservative from sin, and an excellent means to prevent it: It is the property of light to inform the judgement, and rectify the mistakes and errors of it; and thereby to give check to the affections in the pursuit of sinful designs and courses: It is a plain case, that many men would never do as they do, if their understandings were better informed. 1 Corinthians 2:8. "Which none of the princes of the world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." It was want of light and better information which drew them under that horrid and unparalleled guilt. Our Savior also supposes, in the place before cited, that if Tyre and Sidon had enjoyed the same light and means of grace that Chorazin and Bethsaida did, they would never have been so sinful as they were: light discovers danger, and thereby overawes and stops men from proceeding farther in those parts and courses that will run them into it.

Secondly, Sinning under and against the light, supposes and involves in it a greater contempt and despite of God’s authority, than sinning in ignorance and darkness does. Every man that breaks the law of God, does not in the same degree, despise and slight the authority of the law maker: But when a man has light to discover the evil and danger of what he does, and yet will dare to do it, what is this but the treading of God’s authority under foot? The casting of his word behind our backs? Wilful sinning is a despiteful sinning against God, Hebrews 10:26. it argues a low and vile esteem of the law of God, which is reverend and holy; and by so much the more it makes sin to be exceeding sinful.

Thirdly, Sinning under and against the light, admits not of those excuses and pleas to extenuate the offence, which sins of pure ignorance do. Those that live without the sound of the gospel may say, Lord, we never heard of Christ, and the great redemption wrought by him; if we had, we would never have lived and acted as we did: and therefore Christ says, John 15:22. "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin."

The meaning is, that if the gospel light had not shined among them, their sin had not been of that deep guilt that now it is: For now it is foul and heinous, by reason of the light under and against which it is committed, that they have no pretense or excuse to extenuate or mitigate it.

Fourthly, Evangelical light is a very rich favor and mercy of God to men; one of the choicest gifts bestowed upon the nations of the world; and therefore it is said, Psalms 147:19-20. "He shows his word unto Jacob, and his statutes and his judgements unto Israel: He has not dealt so with any nation; and as for his judgements they have not known them." Other nations have corn and wine, gold and silver, abundance of earthly delights and pleasures; but they have not a beam of heavenly light shining upon them. We may account this mercy small; but God who is best able to value the worth of it, accounts it great, Hosea 8:12. "I have written unto them the great things of

my law." Christ reckoned Capernaum to be exalted unto heaven by the ministry of the gospel in that place. Now the greater the mercy is which the light if truth brings with it, by so much the more horrid and heinous must the abusing and despising of it be.

Fifthly, Sinning against the light, argues a love to sin, as sin; to naked sin, without any disguise or cover. It is nothing near so bad for a man through a mistake of judgment, when he thinks that to be lawful, which is indeed sinful; he does not now close with sin, as sin, but he either closes with it as his duty, or at least his liberty. It is hard for Satan to persuade many men to embrace a naked sin; and therefore he clothes it in the habit of a duty, or liberty, and thereby deceives and draws men to the commission of it. But if a man have light shining into his conscience, and convincing him that the way he is in, is the way of sin, quite contrary to the revealed will of God, stripping the sin naked before the eye of his conscience, so that he has no cover or excuse, and yet will persist in it; this, I say, argues a soul to be in love with sin, as sin.

Now, as for a man to love grace as grace is a solid argument to prove the truth of his grace; so on the contrary for a man to love sin as sin, does not only argue him to be in the state of sin, but to be in the fore-front, and among the highest rank of sinners.

Sixthly, The greater and clearer the light is, under and against which men continue in sin, the more must the consciences of such sinners be supposed to be wasted and violated by such a way of sinning: For this is a sure rule, that "the greatest violation of conscience, is the greatest sin." Conscience is a noble and tender part of the soul of man: it is in the soul, as the eye in the body, very sensible of the least injury; and a wound in the conscience is like a blow in the eye: But nothing gives a greater blow to conscience, nothing so much wastes it and destroys it as sins against the light do. This puts a plain force upon the conscience, and gives a dreadful stab to that noble power, God’s viceregent in the soul. And thus you see the first thing made good, that light puts deep guilt and aggravation into sin.

Secondly, In the next place, let us examine why sin so aggravated by the light, makes men liable to the greater condemnation: For that it does so, is beyond all debate or question; else the apostle Peter would not have said of those sinners against light, as he does 2 Peter 2:21. "that it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness." Nor would Christ have told the inhabitants of Chorazin or Bethsaida, that it should be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for them. There is a twofold reason of this.

1. Ex parte Dei, on God’s part.

2. Ex parte peccatoris, on the sinner’s part.

First, Ex parte Dei, on God’s part, who is the righteous Judge of the whole earth; and will therefore render unto every man according as his work shall be; For shall not the Judge of the whole earth do right? He will judge the world in righteousness, and righteousness requires that difference be made in the punishment of sinners, according to the different degrees of their sins. Now that there are different degrees of sin, is abundantly clear from what we have lately discoursed under the former head; where we have showed, that the light under which men sin, puts extraordinary aggravations upon their sins, answerable whereunto will the degrees of punishment be awarded by the righteous Judge of heaven and earth. The Gentiles who had no other light but that dim light of nature, will be condemned for disobeying the law of God written upon their hearts: but yet, the

greater wrath is reserved for them who sin both against the light of nature, and the light of the gospel also: And therefore it is said, Romans 2:9. "Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that does evil; of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile."

Impenitent Jews and Gentiles will all be condemned at the bar of God; but with this difference, to the Jew first, that is principally and especially, because the light and mercies which he abused and violated were far greater than those bestowed upon the Gentiles, "because unto them were committed the oracles of God:" And God has not dealt with any nation as with that nation. Indeed, in the rewards of obedience, the same reason does not hold; he who came into the vineyard the last hour of the day, may be equal in reward with him that bare the heat and burden of the whole day; because the reward is of grace and bounty, not of debt and merit: But it is not so here, justice observes an exact proportion in distributing punishments, according to the degrees, deserts, and measures of sin: And therefore it is said Concerning Babylon, Revelation 18:7. "How much she has glorified herself, and lived deliciously; so much torment and sorrow give her."

Secondly, En parte peccatoris, upon the account of sinners; it must needs be, that the heaviest wrath and most intolerable torments should be the portion of them who have sinned against the clearest light and means of grace: For we find, in the scripture account, that a principal and special part of the torment of the damned, will arise from their own consciences. Mark 9:44. "Where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched." And nothing is more manifest than this, that if conscience be the tormentor of the damned, then sinners against light must needs have the greatest torment. For,

First, The more knowledge any man had in this world, the more was his conscience violated and abused here by sinning against it: And O what work will these violations and abuses make for a tormenting conscience in hell! With what rage and fury will it then avenge itself upon the most stout, daring, and impudent sinner! The more guilt now, the more rage and fury then.

Secondly, The more knowledge, or means of knowledge any man has enjoyed in this world, so much the more matter is prepared and laid up for conscience to upbraid him with in the place of torment? And the upbraidings of conscience are a special part of the torments of the damned. O what a peal will conscience ring in the ears of such sinners! "Did not I warn you of the issue of such sins, undone wretch? How often did I strive with you, if it had been possible to take you off from your course of sinning, and to escape this wrath?

Did not I often cry out in your bosom, Stop your course, sinner? Hearken to my counsel, turn and live; but you would not hearken to my voice! I forewarned you of this danger, but you slightest all my warnings; your lusts were too strong for my light, and now you see where your way tended, but, alas, too late".

Thirdly, The more knowledge, or means of knowledge any man has abused and neglected in this world, so many fair opportunities and great advantages he has lost for heaven; and the more opportunities and advantages he has had for heaven, the more intolerable will hell be to that man; as the mercy was great which was offered by them, so the torment will be unspeakable that will arise from the loss of them. Sinners, you have now a wide and open door, many blessed opportunities of salvation under the gospel; it has put you in a fair way for everlasting happiness: Many of you are not far from the kingdom of God: there will be time enough in hell to reflect upon

this loss. What think you, will it not be sad to think there: O how fair was I once for heaven, to have been with God, and among yonder saints! My conscience was once convinced, and my affections melted under the gospel. I was almost persuaded to be a Christian, indeed the treaty was almost concluded between Christ and my soul; there were but a few points in difference between us; but wretch that I was, at those points I stuck, and there the treaty ended to my eternal ruin: I could not deny my lusts, I could not live under the strict yoke of Christ's government; but now I must live under the insupportable wrath of the righteous and terrible God for ever: and this torment will be peculiar to such as perish under the gospel. The Heathen, who enjoyed no such means, can therefore have no such reflections; nay, the very devils themselves, who never had such a plank after their shipwreck, I mean, a mediator in their nature, or such terms of reconciliation, offered them, will not reflect upon their lost opportunities of recovery, as such sinners must and will. This, therefore, "is the condemnation, that light is come into the world; but men loved darkness rather than light.

Inference. 1. Hence it follows, that neither knowledge, nor the best means of knowledge, are in themselves sufficient to secure men from wrath to come. Light in itself is a choice mercy, and therefore the means that begat and increased it must be so too; but yet is a mercy liable to the greatest abuse, and the abuse of the best mercies brings forth the greatest miseries. Alas! Christians, your duty is but half learned when you know it; obedience to light makes light a blessing indeed. John 13:17. "If you know these things, happy are you if you do them." Happiness is not entailed upon simple knowing, but upon doing; upon obedience to our knowledge; otherwise he who increases knowledge, does but increase sorrow: "For that servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes", Luke 13:1-35 "And to him that knows to do good, and does it not, to him it is sin," James 4:17. We are bound with all thankfulness to acknowledge the bounty of heaven to this sinful generation, in furnishing us with so many excellent means of light, beyond many other nations and generations that are past, but yet we ought to rejoice with trembling when we consider the abuses of light in this wanton age, and what a dismal event is like to happen unto many thousands among us. I fear the time is coming when many among us will wish they had never set foot on English ground. God has blessed this nation with many famous, burning and shining lights. It was once said to the honor of this nation, that the English ministry was the world's responder; and when a man of another nation began to preach methodically and convincingly, they were accustomed to say, "We perceive this man has been in England": The greater will our account be for abusing such light and rebelling against it. The clearer our light is now, the thicker will the mists of darkness be hereafter, if we are thus wanton under it. The devils have more light than we, and therefore the more torment: Of them it is said, James 2:19. "The devils also believe, and tremble;" the horror of their consciences is answerable to their illumination, they tremble; "the word signifies the roar of the sea," or such a murmuring, dreadful noise as the tempestuous seas use to make when they break themselves against the rocks.

Inference. 2. If the abuse of light thus aggravate sin and misery, then times of great temptations are like to be times of great guilt. Woe to an enlightened, knowing generation, when strong temptations befall them. How do many, in such times, imprison the known truth to keep themselves out of prison? offer violence to their own consciences, to avoid violence from other hands?

Plato was convinced of the unity of God, but dared not own his convictions; but said, "It was a truth neither easy to find, nor safe to own." And even Seneca, the renowned moralist, was "forced by temptation to dissemble his convictions;" of whom Augustine says, "He worshiped what himself reprehended, and did what himself reproved." And even a great Papist of later times was heard to say, as he was going to mass, Let us go to the common error. O how hard is it to keep conscience pure and peaceable in days of temptation! Doubtless, it is a mercy to many weak and timorous Christians to be removed by a seasonable death out of harm's way; to be disbanded by a merciful providence before the heat of the battle. Christ and Antichrist seem at this day to be drawing into the field; a fiery trial threatens the professors of this age: but when it comes to a close engagement, indeed we may justly tremble, to think how many thousands will break their way through the convictions of their own consciences, to save their flesh.

Believe it, sirs, if Christ hold you to himself by no other tie than the slender thread of a single conviction; if he have not interest in your hearts and affections, as well as in your understandings and consciences; if you be men of great fight and strong unmortified lusts; if you profess Christ with your tongues, and worship the world with your hearts; a man may say, of you, without the gift of prophecy, what the prophet said of Hazael, I know what you will do in the day of temptation.

Inference. 3. If this be so, what a strong engagement lies upon an enlightened persons to turn heartily to God, and reduce their knowledge into practice and obedience, The more men know, the more violence they do their own consciences in rebelling against the light, this is to sin with an high hand, Numbers 15:30. Believe it, sirs, you cannot sin at so cheap a rate as others do; knowledge in a wicked man, like high metal in a blind horse, does but the sooner precipitate him into ruin. You may know much more than others, but if ever you come to heaven, it must be in the same way of faith and obedience, mortification, and self-denial, in which the weakest Christian comes there; whatever knowledge you have, to be sure you have no wisdom, if you expect salvation upon any other, or easier terms than the most illiterate Christian finds it. It was a sad observation of the father, Surgunt indocti, et rapiunt caelum; the unlearned rise, and take heaven. What a pity is it that men of such excellent parts should be enslaved to their lusts! that ever it should be said, Sapientis sapienter descendunt in Gehennam; their learning does but hang in their light, it does but blind them in spiritual things, and prepares them for greater misery.

Inference. 4. Hence also it follows, that the work of conversion is a very difficult work; He soul is scarcely half won to Christ, when Satan is cast out of the understanding by illumination. The devil has deeply entrenched himself and strongly fortified every faculty of the soul against Christ; the understanding, indeed, is the first entrance into the soul, and out of that faculty he is oftentimes cast by light and conviction, which seems to make a great change upon a man: now he becomes a professor, now he takes up the duties of religion, and passes up and down the world for a convert; but, alas, alas! all the while Satan keeps the fort-royal, the heart and will are in his own possession; and this is a work of more difficulty: the weapons of that warfare must indeed be mighty through God, which do not only cast down imaginations, but bring every thought of the heart into captivity to the obedience of Christ, 2 Corinthians 10:4-5. While the heart stands out, though the understanding be taken in, the soul remains in Satan's possession; it is a greater work, (and we daily find it so,) to win one heart than to convince twenty understandings.

Inference. 5. Hence also we may learn what strength and power there is in the lusts of men's hearts, which are able to bear down so strong convictions of the conscience before them. That is a great truth, though a very sad one, Ecclesiastes 8:11. "The heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." O how common is it every day, and in every place to see men hazarding their souls to satisfy their lusts! Every man, says the prophet, "turns to his course, as the horse rushes into the battle." The horse is a very fierce and warlike creature; and when his courage is roused by the sounds of drums and trumpets and shouts of armies, he breaks headlong into the ranks of armed men, though death is before him. Such boisterous and headlong lusts are found in many enlightened persons, though their consciences represent damnation before them; onward they will rush, though God be lost, and a precious soul undone forever.

Inference. 6. To conclude, As ever you will avoid the deepest guilt, and escape the heaviest condemnation, open your hearts to obey and practice whatever God has opened your understandings and consciences to receive of his revealed will; obey the light of the gospel, while you have opportunity to enjoy it: this was the great counsel given by Christ, John 12:35-36. "Yet a little while the light is with you, walk while you have the light, lest darkness come upon you." The manifestation of Christ in the gospel, is the light of the world; all the nations of the earth that want this light are benighted; and those upon whom this light is risen, have but a short time under it; "Yet a little while the light is with you:" and whatever patience God may exercise towards poor ignorant souls, yet commonly he makes short work with the despisers of this light. The light of the gospel is a shining lamp, fed with golden oil; God will not be at the expense for such a light for them that do but trifle with it. The night is coming when no man can work. There are many sad signs upon us of a setting sun, a night of darkness approaching; many burning and shining lights are extinguished, and many put under a bushel; your work is great, your time short, this is the only space you have for repentance, Revelation 2:21. If this opportunity of salvation be lost it will never come again, Ezekiel 24:13. How pathetical was that lamentation which Christ made over Jerusalem, Luke 19:41-42. "And when he was come near. he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If you had known, even you, at least in this your day, the things which belong unto your peace, but now they are hid from your eyes." Christ is threatening those nations with the removal of his gospel presence; he has found but cold entertainment among us: England has been unkind to Christ; many thousands there are that rebel against the light, that say unto God, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of your ways." Christ will not tarry where he is not welcome; who would, that has any where else to go? Obey the light therefore, lest God put it out in obscure darkness.

05.21. Satan’s Blinding—the Cause of Unbelief,

The blinding Policies of Satan opened, as the cause of Unbelief, and Forerunner of Destruction

"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." 2 Corinthians 4:3-4.

The aversions of men from Jesus Christ, their only remedy, is as much to be admired as lamented; one would think the news of deliverance should make the hearts of captives leap for joy, the tidings of a Savior should transport the heart of a lost sinner. A man would think a little rhetoric might persuade the naked soul of a sinner to put on the rich robes of Christ’s righteousness, which will cost him nothing but acceptance; or the perishing, starving sinner to accept the bread of God which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. This is the great design I have managed in this whole discourse; the center to which all these lines are drawn; many arguments have been used, and many ways attempted to prevail with men to apply and put on Christ, and I am afraid, all too little. I have but labored in vain, and spent my strength for nothing; all these discourses are but the beating of the air, and few, if any, will be persuaded to come unto Christ, who is clearly opened, and freely offered in the gospel to them. For alas! while I am reasoning, Satan is blinding their minds with false reasonings and contrary persuasions; the God of this world turns away the ears, and draws away the hearts of almost the whole world from Christ; "The God of this world "has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.* Satan is a great and jealous prince, and is well aware, that so many of his subjects as shall be brought to see the misery of their condition, will never endure to abide any longer in subjection to him: it is therefore his great policy to put out their eyes, that he may secure their souls; to darken their understandings, that he may keep his interest firm and entire in their wills and affections: and this makes the effectual application of Christ so great a difficulty, that, on the contrary, it is just matter of admiration that any soul is persuaded and prevailed with to quit the service of Satan, and come to Christ. And therefore in the last place, to discover the great difficulty of conversion, and show you where it is that all our endeavors are obstructed, so that we can move the design no further, with all our laboring and striving, reasoning and persuading; as also to mourn over and bewail the misery of Christless and unregenerate souls, with whom we must part, upon the saddest terms; I have chosen this scripture, which is of a most awakening nature, if haply the Lord, at last, may persuade any soul to come over to Christ thereby.

These words come into the apostle’s discourse, by way of prolepsis; he had been speaking in the former chapter, of the transcendent excellency of the gospel above the law, and, among other respects, he prefers it to the law in point of clearness. The law was an obscure and cloudy dispensation; there was a veil upon the face of Moses, and the hearts of the people, that they could not see to the end of that which is abolished, but under the gospel we all, with open face, behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord.

Against this discourse, the apostle foresaw, and obviated this objection; If your gospel be so clear, what is the reason that many, who live under the ministration of it, (and they none of the meanest, neither for wisdom nor understanding) do yet see no glory, nor excellency in it? To this he returns in the words I have read, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid from them that are lost, whose eyes the God of this world has blinded," &c. q. d. It is true, multitudes there are, who see no glory in Christ or the gospel, but the fault is not in either; but in the minds of them that believe not. The sun shines forth in its glory, but the blind see no glory in it; the fault is not in the sun, but in the eye. In the words themselves we have three parts to consider:

1. A dreadful, spiritual judgment inflicted.

2. The wicked instrument by whom it is inflicted.

3. The politic manner in which he does it.

First, We have here a very dreadful, spiritual judgment inflicted upon the souls of men, namely, the hiding of the gospel from them: if our gospel be hid; for these words, "Ei de kai esi", are a concession, that so it is; a very sad, but undeniable truth. Many are there who see no beauty in Christ, nor necessity of him; though both are so plainly and evidently revealed in our gospel, "if our gospel be hid." It is called our gospel, not as if St. Paul and other preachers of it, were the authors and inventors of it; but our gospel, because we are the preachers and dispensers of it. We are put in trust with the gospel, and though we preach it, in the demonstration of the Spirit, and of power, using all plainness of speech to make men understand it, yet it is hid from many under our ministry: it is hid from their understandings, they see no glory in it; and hid from their hearts, they see no power in it. Our gospel, notwithstanding all our endeavors, is a hidden gospel unto some, this is the sorest, and most dreadful judgment.

Secondly, We have here an account of that wicked instrument by whom this judgment is inflicted, namely, Satan, called here (by a mimesis) the God of this world; not simply and properly, but because he challenges to himself the honor of a God, rules over a vast empire, and has multitudes of souls, even the greater part of the world, in subjection and blind obedience to his government.

Thirdly, Here, also, we have an account of the politic manner of this government, how he maintains his dominion among men, and keeps the world in quiet subjection to him; namely, by blinding the minds of all them that believe not; putting out the eyes of all his subjects, darkening that noble faculty, the mind, or understanding; the thinking, considering, and reasoning power of the soul, which the philosophers truly call "the leading and directing faculty;"for it is to the soul, what eyes are to the body, and it is therefore called, "the eyes of the understanding," Ephesians 1:18.

These eyes Satan blinds, that is he darkens the mind and understanding with ignorance and error; so that when men come to see and consider spiritual things, "they see indeed, but perceive not," Isaiah 6:9-10. They have some general, confused notions, but no distinct, powerful, and effectual apprehensions of those things: and this is the way, indeed, none like it, to bar men effectually from Jesus Christ, and hinder the application of the benefit of redemption to their souls. It is true, the righteous God permits all this to be done by Satan, upon the souls of men; but wherever he finally prevails thus to blind them, it is as the text speaks, "en tois apongumenois", in them. that are lost, or appointed of God unto perdition. The elect of God are all blinded for a time, but Christ applies

unto them his eye-salve, effectually opens the eyes of their understandings, and recovers them thereby, out of Satan's power and dominion; but as for those who still continue thus blinded, the symptoms and characters of eternal death appear upon their souls; they are a company of lost men.

Doctrine. That the understandings of all unbelievers are blinded by Satan's policies, in order to their everlasting perdition.

Four things must be opened in the doctrinal part of this point.

First, What the blinding of the understanding, or hiding of the gospel from the understanding, is.

Secondly, I shall demonstrate, that the understandings of many are thus blinded, and the gospel hidden from them.

Thirdly, I shall show what policies Satan uses to blind the minds of men.

Fourthly. That this blindness is the sorest judgement, and in order to men's everlasting perdition.

Sixthly, And then apply the whole.

First, We shall enquire what the blinding of the mind, or hiding the gospel from it, is. Two sorts of men are thus blinded in the world.

1. Those that want the means of illumination.

2. Those that have the means, but ace denied the blessing and efficacy of them.

The former is the case of the Pagan world, who are in midnight darkness for want of the gospel. The latter is the case of the Christian world. The greatest part of them that live within the sound of the gospel, being blinded by the God of this world, Isaiah 7:1-25. "And he said, Go, and tell this people; hear you indeed, but understand not; and, see you indeed, but perceive not: Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy; and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed." Thus, when the Sun of righteousness actually arose on the world, it is said, John 1:5. "The light shined in darkness, but the darkness comprehended it not." So we may say of all that light which is in the understanding of all unbelievers, what Job speaks of the grave, Job 10:22. "That the light there is as darkness." But more

particularly, to open the nature of this spiritual blindness, I will show you,

1. What it is not opposed unto.

2. What it is opposed unto.

1. Let us examine what spiritual blindness, or the hiding the gospel from the minds of men is not opposed unto: and we shall find, First, That it is not opposed unto natural wisdom; a man may be of an acute and clear understanding; eagle-eyed, to discern the mysteries of nature, and yet the gospel may be hidden from him. Who were more sagacious and quick sighted in natural things than the Heathen Philosophers, renowned for wisdom in their generations; yet unto them the gospel was but foolishness, 1 Corinthians 1:20-21. Augustine confesses, that before his

conversion he was filled with offence and contempt of the simplicity of the gospel. Says he, I scorned to become a child again. And that great Bradwardine, the profound doctor, who was learned, even to a wonder, professed, that when he first read Paul's epistles, he despised them, because he found not in them, those metaphysical notions which he expected.

Upon this account it was, that Christ brake forth into the pathetical gratulation of his Father's love to the elect, Matthew 11:25. "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth; because you have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes.

Secondly, It is not opposed to all light and knowledge in spiritual truths. A man may have a true understanding of the scriptures, give an orthodox exposition of them, and enlighten the minds of others by them; and yet the gospel may be hidden from himself, Matthew 7:22. "Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name!" So Romans 2:19. "And are confident that you yourself are a guide of the blind, a light to them that sit in darkness," &c. A man may show others the way to Christ and salvation, while both are hid from himself.

Thirdly, It is not opposed to all kind of influences upon the affections; for, it is possible, the gospel may touch the affections themselves, and cause some sweet motions and raptures in them; and yet be an hidden gospel to the soul, Hebrews 6:5; Hebrews 6:9.

But if these three things may consist with spiritual blindness unto what then is it opposed? To which I answer, that spiritual blindness stands only opposed to that saving manifestation of Jesus Christ in the gospel by the Spirit, whereby the soul is regenerated, and effectually changed by a real conversion unto God: Where ever the gospel thus comes in the demonstration of the Spirit, and of power, producing such an effect as this in the soul, it is no longer an hidden gospel to that soul, though such persons do not see clearly all that glory which is revealed by the gospel; though they know but in part, and see darkly as through a glass; yet the eyes of their understandings are opened, and the things which belong to their peace are not hidden from them.

Secondly, But though this be the happiness of some men, yet it is demonstrable that the eyes of many are blinded by the God of this world, and the gospel is an hidden gospel from them; for,

First, Many that live under the gospel are so entirely swallowed up in the affairs of this world, that they allow themselves no time to ponder the great concernment of their souls in the world to come; and judge you, whatever the gifts and knowledge of these men are, whether the God of this world has not blinded their eyes. If it were not so, it were impossible that ever they should thus waste the most precious opportunities of salvation upon which their everlasting well being depends, and spend time at the door of eternity about trifles which so little concern them. Yet this is the case of the greatest number that go under the Christian name. The earth has opened her mouth and swallowed up their time, thoughts, studies, and strength, as it did the bodies of Corah and his accomplices. The first, the freest, yes, the whole of their time, is devoted to the service of the world, for even at that very time when they present their bodies before the Lord, in the duties of his worship, their hearts are wandering after vanities, and "going after their covetousness," Ezek. 43: 31. Judge whether the God of this world has blinded these men or no, who can see so much beauty in the world, but none in Christ, and put an absolute necessity upon the vanities of this world, but none upon their own salvation. If this be not spiritual blindness, what is?

Secondly, The great stillness and quietness of men's consciences, under the most rousing and awakening truths of the gospel, plainly prove that the God of this world has blinded their eyes. For did men see and apprehend the dangerous condition they are in as the word represents it; nothing in the world would quiet them but Christ. As soon as men's eyes come to be opened, the next enquiry they come to make is, "What shall we do to be saved?" It is not impossible that a man should hang over hell, see Christ and the hopes of salvation going, and the day of patience ending, and yet be quiet. 1O! it cannot be, that conscience should let them be quiet in such a case, if it were not blinded and stupified; but while the God of this world, "that strong man armed keeps the house, all his goods are in peace," Luke 11:21. If once your eyes were opened by conviction, a man may then say, be quiet if you can; sit still, and let the hopes and seasons of salvation pass quietly away if you can.

Suppose one should come into the congregation, and whisper but such a word as this in your ears, your child is fallen into the fire, and is a dying, since you came from home; will it be in the power of all friends you have to quiet you, and make you sit still after such an information? much less when a man apprehends his own soul in immediate danger of everlasting burnings.

Thirdly, The strong confidences and presumptuous hopes men have of salvation, while they remain in the state of nature and unregeneracy, plainly show their minds to be blinded by the policy of Satan. This presumption is one of those "paralogismoi", false reasonings, by which Satan deludes the understanding, as the apostle calls them, James 1:22. It is the cunning sophistry of the devil, fathered by self-love, Proverbs 21:2. "Every way of a man is right in their own eyes," and partly by self-ignorance, Revelation 3:17. "You said I am rich, and have need of nothing, and know not that you are poor." You have no fears, no doubts, no ease to propound that concerns your future state; and why so? but because you have no sight; your consciences are quieted, because your eyes are blinded.

Fourthly, The trifling of men with the duties of religion plainly discovers the blinding power of Satan upon their minds and understandings, else they would never play and dally with the serious and solemn ordinances of God at that rate they do; if their eyes were once opened, they would he in earnest in prayer, and apply themselves with the closest attention of mind to hearing the gospel.

There are two sorts of thoughts about any subject of meditation. Some think at a distance, and others think close to the subject. Never do thoughts of men come so close to Christ, to heaven, and to hell, as they do immediately upon their illumination. When John's ministry enlightened the people's minds, it is said, Matthew 11:12. "from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." Surely these men were more in good earnest who would receive no repulse, take no denial, but even force themselves through all difficulties into heaven; and so would it be with you. If the God of this world had not blinded your minds you would never pray with so much unconcernedness, nor hear with so much negligence and carelessness; pray as if you prayed not, and hear as if you heard not. It is with many of your hearts as it was with Aristotle, who after a quaint oration made before him, was asked how he liked it; truly, said he, I did not hear it; for I was thinking all the while of another matter.

Fifthly, This also is a plain evidence that the God of this world has blinded many men's eyes among us, for that they fear not to commit great sins to avoid small hazards and troubles, which all the world could never persuade them to do, if they were not hood- winked by the God of this world.

Those that have seen sin as sin, in the glass of God’s law, "will choose as Moses did, to suffer any affliction with the people of God, rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season," Hebrews 11:25. Those that have seen and felt the evil of sin in the deep troubles of their spirits for it, will account all reproaches, all losses, all sufferings from men, to be but as nothing to the burden of sin.

Sixthly, The pride and self-conceitedness of many thousands who profess Christianity, plainly show their minds to be blinded by the sophistry of Satan, and that they do not understand themselves, and the woeful state of their own souls. Those that see God in the clearest light, abhor themselves in the deepest humility, Isaiah 6:5. John 43: 5. If ever the Lord had effectually opened your eyes by a clear discovery of your state by nature, and the course of your life, under the efficacy and influence of continual temptations and corruptions, how would your plumes fall? None in the world would rate you lower than you yourselves would. By all which it appears that multitudes are blinded by the God of this world.

Thirdly, In the third place we are to consider what policies Satan uses to blind the minds of them that believe not, and we shall find there are three sorts of policies practiced by the God of this world upon the minds and understandings of men, which he darkens, by

1. Hindering the reception of gospel light.

2. Obstructing the efficacy of it when received.

3. Making misapplication of it to other purposes.

First, It is a great policy in Satan, to blind the understandings of men, by hindering and preventing the reception of gospel-light, which he does especially these five ways;

First, By tempting the dispensers of the gospel to darken the truths thereof, in the delivering of them, to shoot over the heads of their hearers, in lofty language and terms of are, so that common understandings can give no account, when the sermon is done, what the preacher would have; but, however, commend him for a good scholar, and an excellent orator. I make no doubt but the devil is very busy with ministers in their studies, tempting them, by the pride of their own hearts, to gratify his designs here in; he teaches them how to paint the glass, that he might keep out the light.

I acknowledge, a proper, grave, and lovely stile, befits the lips of Christ’s ambassadors; they should not be crude and careless in their language, or method. But this affectation of great swelling words of vanity, is but too like the proud Gnostics, whom the apostle is supposed to tax for this evil, Jude 1:16. "This is to darken counsel by words without knowledge, Job 31:2. To amuse and confuse poor ignorant souls, and nullify the design of preaching: for everything is accounted so far good, as it is good to the end it is ordained for. A sword that has an hilt of gold, set thick with diamonds, is no good sword, if it has no edge to cut, or want a good back to follow home the stroke. O that the ministers of Christ would chase rather sound, than great words, such as are apt to pierce the heart, rather than such as tickle the fancy; and let people beware of furthering the design of Satan against their own souls, in putting a temptation upon their ministers, by despising plain preaching. The more popular, plain, and intelligible our discourses are, so much the more probable they are to be successful; that is the most excellent oratory, that persuades

men to Christ.

Secondly, Satan hinders the access of light to the understandings of men, by employing their minds about impertinent things, while they are attending upon the ordinances of God; thus he tempted them, in Ezekiel 33:31-32. "And they come unto you as the people comes, and they sit before you, as my people; and they hear your words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goes after their covetousness. And lo! you are unto them as a very lovely song of one that has a pleasant voice." The modulation of the prophet's voice was very pleasing to their ears, but meanwhile their fancies and thoughts were wandering after their lusts; their hearts were full of earthly projects.

Thirdly, Satan hinders the access of light to the understandings of men, by raising objections, and picking quarrels with the word, on purpose to shake its authority, and hinder the assent of the understanding to it, and so the word makes no more impression than a fable, or a romance would do. And never did this design of Satan obtain more than in this atheistical age, wherein the main pillars and foundation of religion are shaken in the minds of multitudes. The devil has persuaded many, that the gospel is but a cunningly-devised fable; fabula Christi, as that blaspheming pope called it; that ministers must say something to get a living. That heaven and hell are but fancies, or at most things of great uncertainty, and doubtful credit. This being once obtained, the door of the soul is shut against truth. And this design of Satan has prospered the more in this generation, by the corrupt doctrines of seducing spirits, "Which have overthrown the faith of some," 2 Timothy 2:18. And partly from the scandalous lives of loose and vain professors, the gospel has been brought into contempt; but especially by Satan's artificial improvement of the corrupt natures of men in an age wherein conscience has been so much debauched, and Atheism thereby spread as a gangrene in the body politic.

Fourthly, Satan hinders the access of light, by helping erroneous minds to draw false conclusions and perverse inferences from the great and precious truths of the gospel; and thereby bringing them under prejudice and contempt: Thus he assists the errors of men's minds about the doctrine of election: when he either persuades them, that it is an unreasonable doctrine, and not worthy of credit, that God should chose some, and refuse others every way as good as those he has chosen; or, if there be any certainty in that doctrine, then men may throw the reins upon the neck of their lusts, and live at what rate they list; nor if God has chosen them to salvation, their wickedness shall not hinder it, and if he have appointed them unto wrath, their diligence and self-denial cannot prevent it.

Thus the doctrine of free grace is by the like sophistry of Satan turned into lasciviousness. If grace abound, men may sin the more freely; and the shortness of our time upon earth, which in its own nature awakens all men to diligence, is, by the subtlety of Satan, turned to a quite contrary purpose, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

Fifthly, Satan darkens the minds of men, and shuts them up against the light, by blowing them up with pride and self- conceitedness, persuading them that they know all these things already, and causing them to despise the most weighty and precious truths of God, as trite and vulgar notions. The word cannot be received without meekness and humility of mind, James 1:21. Psalms 25:8-9 and pride is the nurse of ignorance, 1 Timothy 6:4. 1 Corinthians 8:7. The devil is aware of this, and therefore blows up the pride and conceitedness of men's hearts all that he can: And this

temptation of his generally prevails wherever it meets with a knowing head, matched with a graceless and unsanctified heart. And thus we see by what wiles and policies Satan keeps out the light, and prevents the access of it to the minds of men. But if he miss his design here, and truth gets into the mind, Then

Secondly, He labors to obstruct the efficacy and operation of the light; and though it do shine into the understanding, yet it shall be imprisoned there, and send down no converting influences upon the will and affections: And this design he promotes and manages divers ways.

First, By hastening to quench convictions early, and nip them in the bud. Satan knows how dangerous a thing it is, and destructive to his interest, to suffer convictions to continue long; and therefore it is said of him, Matthew 13:19. When any "one hears the word of the kingdom, and understands it not, then comes the wicked one, and caches away that which was sown in his heart."

Satan is compared in this scripture to the fowls in the air, which pick up the seed before it take any root in the earth. The devil is very jealous of this, and therefore labors all he can to destroy the word before it comes to operate upon the heart; which he does sometimes by the cares of the world, and sometimes by vain companions, who prove mere quench coals unto the beginning convictions. One sinner destroys much good.

Secondly, No sooner does the God of this world observe the light of truth begin to operate upon the heart, but he obstructs that design by procrastinations and delays, which delude and baffle convinced souls; he persuades them if they will alter their course, it will be time enough hereafter, when such encumbrances and troubles in the world are over; if he prevail here, it is a thousand to one but the work miscarries. James 1:13-14. If the hearer of the word be not a doer, that is a present doer, while the impressions of it are fresh upon the soul, he does but deceive himself: For it is with the heart, as it is with melted wax; if the seal be clapped to it presently, it will receive a fair impression; but if it be let alone, but for a little while, you can make none at all; it was therefore David’s great care and wisdom to set about the work of religion under the first impetus, or vigorous motion of his heart and affections. Psalms 119:60. "I made haste, and delayed not to keep your commandments." Multitudes of souls have perished by these delays. It is a temptation incident to all that are under beginning convictions, especially young persons, whom the devil persuades that it were no better them madness in them to abridge and deny themselves so much delight and pleasure, and steep their youthful thoughts in such a melancholy subject as religion is.

Thirdly, If all this will not do, but convictions still continue to get ground in the conscience, then he endeavors to scare and fright them out of their convictions, by representing to them the inward terrors, troubles, and despairs into which they are about to plunge themselves, and that henceforth they must never expect a pleasant day, or comfortable hour. Thus does the God of this world blind the minds of them that believe not, both by hindering the access of light to the mind, and the influence of it upon the heart.

Thirdly, There is yet one policy of Satan to keep souls in darkness, and that is, by the misapplication of truth; persuading them, that whatever they read or hear of the misery and danger of christless and unregenerate persons, does not in the least touch or concern them, but the more notorious and profane part of the world; and by this policy he blinds the minds of all civil and moral

persons. Thus the "Pharisees trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. And so the Laodiceans thought themselves rich, and increased with goods; that is, in a very safe and good condition. Now there are divers things notably improved by Satan's policy, in order to these misapplications of truth. As,

First, The freedom of their lives from the most gross pollutions of the world, Matthew 19:20. "All these things have I kept from my youth up." A civil, sober course of life is a must effectual blind before the eyes of many n man's conscience.

Secondly, It is the policy of Satan to prevent convictions by conviction; I mean effectual convictions, by convictions that have been ineffectual, and are now vanished away. Thus the troubles that some persons have been under, must pass for their conversion, though the temper of their heart be the same it was: Their ineffectual troubles are made use of by the devil to blind them in the true knowledge and apprehension of their condition. For these men and women can speak of the troubles they have had for sin, and the many tears they have shed for it; whereby thorough conviction is effectually prevented.

Thirdly, Gifts and knowledge are improved by the policy of Satan against the true knowledge of Jesus Christ, and our own estate by nature. As conviction is improved by Satan's policy against conviction, so is knowledge against knowledge. This was the case of them in Romans 2:17-18. "You are called a Jew, and rest in the law, and make your boast of God, and know his will, and approves the things that are excellent; being instructed out of the law, and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind," &c. And this is the temptation and delusion of knowing persons, who are so far from being blind in their own account, that they account themselves the guides of the blind: Yet who blinder than such men?

Fourthly, External reformation is improved by the policy of Satan against true spiritual reformation, and passes current up and down the world for conversion; though it serve only to strengthen Satan's interest in the soul, Matthew 12:44. and for want of a real change of heart, does but increase their sin and misery, 2 Peter 2:1-22. This is the generation that is pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness. The cleanness of their hands blinds them in discovering the foulness of their hearts.

Fifthly, The policy of Satan improves diligence in some duties, against the convictions of neglect in other duties. The external duties of religion, as hearing, praying, fasting, against the great duties of repenting and believing. This was their case, Isaiah 58:2-3. "Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinances of their God.

They ask of me the ordinances of justice, they take delight in approaching to God. Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and you see not? Wherefore have we afflicted our souls, and you take no knowledge?" Thus duty is improved against duty, the externals against the internals of religion, and multitudes are blinded this way.

Sixthly, The policy of Satan improves zeal against zeal; and thereby blinds a great part of the world: he allows men to be zealous against a false religion, if thereby he may prevent them from being zealous in the true religion. He diverts their zeal against their own sins, by spending it against other men's. Thus Paul was once blinded by his own zeal for the law, Acts 22:3. And many men, at this day, satisfy themselves in their own zeal against the corruptions of God's worship, and

the superstitions of others, who never felt the power of true religion upon their own hearts; a dangerous blind of Satan.

Seventhly, The policy of Satan improves the esteem and respect men have for the people of God against their great duty and interest to become such themselves, Revelation 3:1. "You have a name that you live, but you are dead." It is enough to many men that they obtain acceptance among the saints, though they be none of that number; the good opinion of others begets and confirms their good opinion of themselves.

Eighthly, The policy of Satan improves soundness of judgment, against soundness of heart. An orthodox head against an orthodox heart and life; dogmatic faith, against justifying faith. This was the case of them before-mentioned, Romans 2:18-19. Men satisfy themselves, that they have a sound understanding, though, at the same time, they have a very rotten heart. It is enough for them that their heads are regular, though their hearts and lives be very irregular.

Ninthly, The policy of Satan improves the blessings of God against the blessings of God, blinding us by the blessings of providence, so as not to discern the want of spiritual blessings: persuading men that the smiles of providence in their prosperity, success, and thriving designs in the world, are good evidences of the love of God to their souls, not at all discerning how the prosperity of fools deceives them, and that riches are given often to the hurt of the owners thereof.

Tenthly, The policy of Satan improves comfort against comfort, false and ungrounded comforts under the word, against the real grounds of comfort lying in the soul's interest in Christ. Thus many men finding a great deal of comfort in the promises, are so blinded thereby, as never to look after union with Christ, the only solid ground of all true comfort, Hebrews 6:6; Hebrews 6:9.

And thus you see how the god of this world blinds the minds of them that believe not, and how the gospel is hid to those who are lost.

We have shown already what the blinding the mind, or hiding of the gospel from it is; it has also been demonstrated that the gospel is hid, and the minds of many blinded under it; you have also seen what policies Satan uses to blind the minds of men, even in the clearest light of the gospel. It remains now that I open to you the dreadful nature of this judgment of God upon the souls of men, and then make application of the whole.

There are many judgments of God inflicted upon the souls and bodies of men in this world; but none of them are so dreadful as those spiritual judgments are which God inflicts immediately upon the soul; and among spiritual judgments few or none are of a more dreadful nature and consequence than this of spiritual blindness; which will appear by considering,

First, The subject of this judgment, which is the soul, and the principal power of the soul, which is the mind and understandings faculty; the soul is the most precious and invaluable part of man, and the mind is the superior and most noble power of the soul; it is to the soul what the eye is to the body, the directive faculty. The bodily eye is a curious, tender, and most precious part of the body. When we would express the value of a thing, we say, we prize it as our eyes. The loss of the eyes is a sore loss, we lose a great part of the comfort of our souls by it.

Yet such an affliction (speaking comparatively) is but a trifle to this. If our bodily eyes be blinded, we cannot see the sun, but if our spiritual eye be blinded, we cannot see God, we wander in the

paths of sin, 1 John 2:11. We are led blindfold to hell by Satan, as the Syrians were in Samaria, 2 Kings 6:19-20. And then our eyes like theirs will be opened to see our misery when it is too late. "The light of the body is the eye, (says Christ). If therefore your eye be single, your whole body shall be full of light; but if your eye be evil, your whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness?" Matthew 6:22-23. By the eye he means the practical judgment, the understanding faculty, which is the seat for principles, the common treasury of the rules of practice, according unto which a man's life is formed, and his way directed. If therefore that power of the soul be darkened, how great must that darkness be; for now the blind lead the blind, and both fall into the ditch. The blind judgment misguides the blind-affections, and both fall into hell. O what a sad thing is it, that the devil should lead that that leads you! That he should sit at the helm, and steer your course to damnation! The blinding of this noble faculty precipitates the soul into the most dangerous course; persecution, by this means, seems to be true zeal for God, John 16:2. "They that persecute you shall think that they do God service. Paul once thought truly with himself, that he ought to do many "things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth," Acts 26:9. that is He thought he had pleased God, when he was imprisoning and persecuting his people, as many do at this day; it will make a man to sin conscientiously, which is a very dangerous way of sinning, and difficult to be reclaimed.

Secondly, It is a dreadful judgment, if we consider the object about which the understanding is blinded, which is Jesus Christ, and union with him; regeneration, and the nature and necessity thereof. For this blindness is not universal, but respective and particular. A man may have abundance of light and knowledge in things natural and moral; but spiritual things are hidden from his eyes. Yes, a man may know spiritual things in a natural way, which increases his blindness; but he cannot discern them spiritually; this is a sore judgement, and greatly to be bewailed. "You have hid these things (said Christ) from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes," Matthew 11:21. Learned and knowing men are ignorant of those things, which very babes in Christ understand. They are prudent in the management of earthly affairs; but to save their own souls they have no knowledge. They are able, with Berengarius, to dispute of everything investigable by the light of nature; yes, to open the scripture solidly, and defend the doctrines and truths of Christ against his adversaries successfully; and yet blinded in the great mystery of regeneration, Blindness in part, (says the apostle) is happened unto Israel? and that indeed was the principal part of knowledge, namely, the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and him crucified, we see farther than they. The literal knowledge of Jesus Christ shines clearly in our understanding. We are only blinded about those things which should give us saving interest in him, about the effectual application of Christ to our own souls.

Thirdly, The dreadful nature of this spiritual blindness farther appears from the consideration of the season in which it befalls men, which is the very time of God's patience, and the only opportunity they have for salvation; after these opportunities are over, their eyes will be opened to see their misery, but alas, too late. Upon this account, Christ shed those tears over Jerusalem, Luke 19:42. "O that you had known, at least in this your day, the things that belong to your peace; but now they are hid from your eyes." Now the season of grace is past and gone; opportunities are the golden spots of time, and there is much time in a short opportunity, as there are many pieces of silver in one piece of

gold. Time signifies nothing when opportunities are gone, to be blinded in the very season of salvation, is the judgment of all judgments, the greatest misery incident to man; to have our eyes opened when the seasons of salvation are past, is but an aggravation of misery: there is a twofold opening of men's eyes to see their danger, namely,

]. Graciously to prevent danger.

2. Judicially to aggravate misery.

They whose eves are not opened graciously in this world, to see their disease and remedy in Christ, shall have their eyes opened judicially in the world to come, to see their disease without any remedy. If God open them now, it is by way of prevention; if they be not opened until then, it will produce desperation.

Fourthly, The horrible nature of this judgement farther appears from the exceeding difficulty of curing it, especially in men of excellent natural endowments and accomplishments, John 9:40-41. "And some of the Pharisees which were with him, heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If you were blind, you should have no sin: but now you say, We see: therefore your sin remains," q. d. the pride and conceitedness of your heart and obstinacy and incurableness to your blindness; these are "the blind people that have eyes;" Isaiah 63:8. In seeing they see not. The conviction of such men is next to an impossibility.

Fifthly, The design and end of this blindness under the gospel is most dreadful; so says my text, "The God of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." Answerable whereunto are those words, Isaiah 6:10. "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and convert, and be healed. So that it is plain, this blinding is a prelude to damnation, as the covering of Haman's face was to his destruction. When the Lord has no purpose of grace and mercy to a man's soul, then, to bring about the damnation of that man by a righteous permission, many occasions of blindness befall him, which Satan improves effectually unto his eternal ruin; among which fatal occasions, blind guides and scandalous professors are none of the least; they shall be fitted with ministers suitably to their humours, which shall speak smooth things: If a man walk in the spirit and falsehood, (I. e. by an "en dia duoin", - the spirit of falsehood) do lie, sayings I will prophesy to you of wine and strong drink, he shall even be the prophet of this people: and the slips and falls of professors shall do the devil not a little service in this his fatal design; Matthew 18:1-35. "Woe to the world because of offences." This shall blind them, and harden them to purpose. Thus you see what a dreadful judgment this is, a stroke of God upon the soul, which cuts off all the present comforts of Christ and religion from it, takes away the bridle of restrains from sin, and makes way for the final ruin of the soul. A far greater judgment it is than the greatest calamity or affliction which can befall us in this world. If our names suffer by the greatest reproaches, our bodies by the most painful diseases, our estates by the greatest losses; if God strike every comfort we have in this world dead by affliction; all this is nothing, compared with this blinding judgment of God upon the soul; for they may come from the tender love of God to us, Hebrews 12:6. but this is the effect of his wrath; they may cleanse sin, Isaiah 28:9. but this increases it; they often prove occasions of conversion, Job 36:8-9. but this is the great obstruction to it. In a word, they only wound the flesh, and that with a curable wound; but this stabs the soul,

and that with a mortal wound.

First use, of information.

Inference 1. If this be the case of the unbelieving world, to be so blinded by the God of this world; How little should we value the censures and slanders of the blind world! Certainly they should move no other affection but pity in our soul: if their eyes were opened, their mouths would be shut; they would never traduce religion, and the sincere profession of it as they do, if Satan had not blinded their minds: they speak evil of the things they know not; their reproaches, which they let fly so freely, are but so many arrows shot by the blind man's bow, which only stick in our clothes, and can do us no hurt, except we thrust them onward by our own discontent to the wounding of our spirits. "I could almost be proud upon it, said Luther, that I have got an ill name among the worst of men." Beware, Christians that you give them no occasion to blaspheme the name of your God, and then never trouble yourselves, however they use your names. If they tread it in the dirt now, God (as one speaks) will take it up, wash off all the dirt, and deliver it to you again clear and shining. Should such men speak well of us, we might justly suspect ourselves of some iniquity which administers to them the occasions of it.

Inference. 2. How absurd and dangerous must it be for Christians to follow the examples of the blind world? Let the blind follow the blind, but let not those whom God has enlightened do so. Christians, never let those lead you, who are led blindfold by the devil themselves. The holiness and heavenliness of Christians was accustomed to set the world a wondering that they would not run with them into the same excess of riot, 1 Peter 4:4. But sure, since God has opened your eyes, and showed you the dangerous courses they walk in, it would be the greatest wonder of all, if you should be the companions of such men, and tread in the steps of their examples. Christian, as humble and lowly thoughts as you have of yourself, yet I would have you understand yourself to be too good to be the associate of such men. If they will walk with you in the way of duty and holiness, let them come and welcome; receive them with both arms, and be glad of their company; but beware you walk not in their paths, lest they be a snare unto you. Did they see the end of their way, they would never walk in it themselves; why then will you walk with them who do see it?

Inference. 3. If this be so, Let Christians be exact and circumspect in their walking, lest they lay a stumbling block before the blind. It is a great sin to do so in a proper sense, Leviticus 19:14. "You shall not put a stumbling-block before the blind." And a far greater to do it in a metaphorical sense, Romans 14:18. It is the express will of God, "that no man put a stumbling block, or an occasion to fall in his brother's way." It is an argument of little regard to the honor of Christ, or the souls of men, so to do. O professors, look to your steps; the devil desires to make use of you for such purposes. The sins of thousands of others, who make no profession of godliness, will never so fit his purpose for the blinding of those men's eyes, as the least slip or failing of yours will do. It is the living bird that makes the best stale to draw others into the net: the grossest wickedness of profane sinners passes away in silence, but all the neighborhood shall ring with your miscarriages. "A righteous man falling, down before the wicked, is as a troubled fountain and a corrupt spring," Proverbs 25:26. The scandalous falls of good men are like a bag of poison cast by Satan into the spring from whence the whole town is supplied with water. You little know what mischief you do, and how many blind sinners may fall into hell by your occasion.

Inference. 4. How dangerous a thing is zeal in a wicked man? It is like a sharp sword in a blind man's hand, or like a high mettle in a blind horse. How much has the church of God suffered upon this account, and does suffer at this day: The world has ever been full of such blind and blustering zeal, which, like a hurricane, overturns all that stands in its way: yes, as we noted before, it makes a man a kind of conscientious persecutor. I confess it is better for the persecutor himself to do it ignorantly, because ignorance leaves him in a capacity for mercy, and sets him a degree lower than the malicious, enlightened persecutor, 1 Timothy 1:13. else it were the dreadful case described in Hebrews 10:1-39. But yet, as it is, John 16:2 these are the fierce and dreadful enemies of the church of God. Such a man was Paul, a devout persecutor, and such persecution God afterward suffered to befall himself, Acts 13:50. "But the Jews stirred up the devout and honorable women, and the chief men of that city; and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts." An erroneous conscience binds, as well as an informed conscience, and wherever God gives such men opportunity to vent the spleen and rage of their hearts upon his people, they will be sure to do it to purpose. With

other men Gamaliel's counsel may have some influence, and they may be afraid lest they be found fighters against God; but blind zeal spurs on, and says, as Jehu did, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord of Hosts." O blind sinners, be sure of your mark before you discharge your arrows. If you shoot at a wicked man, as you suppose him, and God finds one of his dear children wounded or destroyed, what account will you give of that fact to God when you shall come before his judgment-seat?

Second use, of exortation.

This point is very improveable by way of exhortation. Both,

1. Unto those who are blinded by the God of this world.

2. To those that are enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, by the true God.

First, To those who are still blinded by the God of this world, to whom the Lord has not given unto this day eyes to see their misery in themselves, or their remedy in Christ, so as to make an effectual application of him to their own souls. To all such my counsel is,

1. To get a sense of your own blindness.

2. To seek out for a cure, while yet it may be had.

First, Labor to get a deep sense of the misery of such a condition; for until you be awakened by conviction, you can never be healed. O that you did but know the true difference between common and saving light; the want of this keeps you in darkness: You think because you know the same things that the most unsanctified men does, that therefore there is no difference between his knowledge and yours; and are therefore ready to say to them, as Job to his friends, "Lo, mine eye has seen all this, mine ear has heard and understood it: what you know, the same do I know also; I am not inferior unto you," Job 13:1-2. But O that you would be convinced that your knowledge vastly differs from the knowledge of believers.

Though you know the same things that they do, it is a knowledge of another kind and nature. You know spiritual things in another way, merely by the light of reason, assisted and improved by the

common light of the gospel; they know the same things by spiritual illumination, and in an experimental way. 1 John 2:20. "You have an unction from the holy One, and you know all things." Their knowledge is practical, yours is idle. They are working out their salvation, by that light which God has given them, Psalms 111:10. Their knowledge of God and Christ produces the fruits of faith, obedience, and mortification, and heavenly-mindedness in them: it has no such fruits in you; whatever light there be in your understandings, it makes no alteration at all upon your hearts. The light brings them to heaven, John 17:3. Yours shall be blown out by death, 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 and yourselves left in the mists of eternal darkness, except your eyes be opened seasonably by the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Conviction is a great part of your cure.

Secondly, Labor to act a remedy for this dangerous disease of your minds: "Awake to righteousness, and sin not, for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame," 1 Corinthians 15:34. These things speak encouragement to you, though it be a sore judgement that lies upon you, and very difficult to be removed: yet remember Jesus Christ is commissioned by God the Father to open the blind eyes, Isaiah 13:6-7. and this excellent physician be speaks you for his patients, Revelation 3:18. "Anoint your eyes, (says he) with eye-salve that you may see. Yes, the most enlightened Christians were once as dark and blind in spiritual things as you are, and Christ has cured them, Ephesians 5:8. "Once were you darkness, now are you light in the Lord." Attend therefore upon the ordinances of the gospel diligently; that is God’s enlightening instrument by which he couches those cataracts which blind the eyes of men’s understandings, Acts 26:28. And if ever you will have your eyes opened, allow yourselves time to ponder and consider what you hear.

The duty of meditation is a very enlightening duty: above all, cry to the Lord Jesus Christ, as that poor man did, "Lord, that mine eyes may be opened, that I may receive my sight. Say, Lord, this is my disease and danger, that in seeing I see not. Others see natural things in a Spiritual way, while I see spiritual things only in a natural way. Their light is operative upon their hearts, mine is but an idle impractical notion of religion, which brings forth no fruit of holiness. Their knowledge sets their hands a work in duties of obedience; mine only sets my tongue a work in discourses of those things which my heart never felt. Lord, open mine eyes, and make me to see out of this obscurity: All the light that is in me is but darkness. O Lord, enlighten my darkness, enlighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.

Secondly, Let it be a word of counsel and exhortation to such as once were blind, but do now see.

First, I beseech you, bless God for the least degree of spiritual illumination. "Truly light is sweet, and it is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the sun," Ecclesiastes 11:7. But O how sweet is spiritual light! and what a pleasant thing to behold the Sun of righteousness! Blessed are your eyes, for they see God has

brought you out of darkness into marvelous light. And marvelous indeed it must needs be, when you consider how many wise and prudent men are under the power of spiritual darkness, while such babes as you are enlightened, Matthew 11:21;. It greatly affected the heart of Christ; O let it affect yours also.

Secondly, Labor to get a clearer sight of spiritual things every day. For all spiritual light is increasing light, "which shines more and more unto the perfect day, Proverbs 4:18. O! if a little spiritual light be so comfortable, what would more be? The wisdom of God is a manifold wisdom, Ephesians 3:10. The best of us see but little of it. Labor therefore to know spiritual things more extensively, and more experimentally, Php 2:8-9. Be still increasing in the knowledge of God.

Thirdly, Walk as men whose eyes are opened. "Once you were in darkness, now are you light in the Lord; walk as children of the light," Ephesians 5:8. else your light will but aggravate your sin.

Remember how it displeased God, that Solomon's heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel who appeared to him twice, 1 Kings 11:9. Remember how angry God was with the Heathens for abusing the dim common light of nature, Romans 1:21. How much more evil is it in you to abuse the most precious light that shines in this world? and what mischievous effects the abuse of your light will have upon this blind world? It was a smart rebuke given once by an Atheist to a good man, who being asked by him how he could satisfy his conscience to live as he did? Nay rather, said the Atheist, I wonder how you can satisfy yourself to live as you do; for did I believe as you do, that there is such a Christ, and such a glory as you believe there are, I would pray and live at another rate than you do.

Chapter 84

06.00. The Mystery of Providence

The Mystery of Providence by John Flavel

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06.000. Author's Introduction

Author's Introduction I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me (Psalms 57:2) The greatness of God is a glorious and unsearchable mystery. 'For the LORD most high is terrible; he is a great king over all the earth' (Psalms 47:2). The condescension of the most high God to men is also a profound mystery. 'Though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly' (Psalms 138:6). But when both these meet together, as they do in this Scripture, they make up a matchless mystery. Here we find the most high God performing all things for a poor distressed creature.

It is the great support and solace of the saints in all the distresses that befall them here, that there is a wise Spirit sitting in all the wheels of motion, and governing the most eccentric creatures and their most pernicious designs to blessed and happy issues. And, indeed, it were not worth while to live in a world devoid of God and Providence.

How deeply we are concerned in this matter will appear by that great instance which Psalms 57:1-11 presents us with. It was composed, as the title notes, by David when he hid himself from Saul in the cave. It is inscribed with a double title: 'Al-taschith, Michtam of David.' 'Altaschith' refers to the scope and 'Michtam' to the dignity of the subject-matter. The former signifies 'destroy not,' or 'let there be no slaughter.' and may either refer to Saul concerning whom he gave charge to his servants not to destroy him, or rather, it has reference to God, to whom in this great exigency he poured out his soul in this passionate ejaculation: 'Altaschith,' 'destroy not.' The latter title 'Michtam' signifies 'a golden ornament,' and so is suited to the choice and excellent matter of the Psalm, which much more deserves such a title than do Pythagoras' Golden Verses.

Three things are remarkable in the former part of the Psalm: his extreme danger; his earnest address to God in that extremity; and the arguments he pleads with God in that address. His extreme danger is expressed in both the title and the body of the psalm. The title tells us this psalm was composed by him when he hid himself from Saul in the cave. This cave was in the wilderness of Engedi among the broken rocks where the wild goats lived, an obscure and desolate hole; yet even there the envy of Saul pursued him (1 Samuel 24:1-2). And now he that had been so long hunted as a partridge upon the mountains seems to be enclosed in the net. His enemies were outside the cave, from which there was no other outlet. Then Saul himself entered the mouth of this cave, in the sides and creeks of which David and his men lay hidden, and they actually saw him. Judge to how great an extremity and to what a desperate state things were now brought. Well might he say: 'My soul is among lions, and I lie even among them that are set on fire' (1 Samuel 24:4). What hope now remained? What but immediate destruction could be expected?

Yet this does not frighten him out of his faith and duty, but between the jaws of death he prays, and earnestly addresses himself to God for mercy: 'Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me' (1 Samuel 24:1). This excellent psalm was composed by him when there was enough to discompose the best man in the world. The repetition notes both the extremity of the danger and the ardency of the supplicant. Mercy, mercy, nothing but mercy, and that exerting itself in an

extraordinary way, can now save him from ruin. The arguments he pleads for obtaining mercy in this distress are very considerable. First, he pleads his reliance upon God as an argument to move mercy. ‘Be merciful unto me O God, be merciful unto me, for my soul trusteth in thee; yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast’ (1 Samuel 24:1). This his trust and dependence on God though it is not an argument in respect of the dignity of the act, yet it is so in respect of the nature of the object, a compassionate God, who will not expose any that take shelter under His wings; also in respect of the promise by which protection is assured to them that fly to Him for sanctuary: ‘Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee’ (Isaiah 26:3). Thus he encourages himself from the consideration of that God in whom he trusts.

He pleads former experiences of His help in past distresses as an argument encouraging hope under the present strait: ‘I will cry unto God most high, unto God that performeth all things for me’ (Psalms 57:2). In these words I shall consider two things: the duty resolved upon, and the encouragement to that resolution. The duty resolved upon: ‘I will cry unto God.’ Crying unto God is an expression that denotes not only prayer, but intense and fervent prayer. To cry is to pray in a holy passion; and such are usually speeding prayers (Psalms 18:6, Hebrews 5:7). The encouragements to this resolution are taken from the sovereignty of God and from the experience he had of His Providence. The sovereignty of God: ‘I will cry unto God most high.’ Upon this he acts his faith in extremity of danger. Saul is high, but God is the most high, and without His permission he is assured Saul cannot touch him. He had none to help, and if he had, he knew God must first help the helpers or they cannot help him. He had no means of defence or escape before him, but the Most High is not limited by means. This is a singular prop to faith (Psalms 59:9). The experience of His Providence hitherto: ‘Unto God that performeth all things for me.’ The word which we translate ‘performeth’ comes from a root that signifies both to perfect, and to desist or cease. For when a business is performed and perfected, the agent then ceases and desists from working. To such a happy issue the Lord has brought all his doubtful and difficult matters before; and this gives him encouragement that He will still be gracious, and perfect that which concerns him now, as he speaks: ‘The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me’ (Psalms 138:8). The Septuagint renders Psalms 57:2: ‘The well-doer saving me,’ ‘who profits or benefits me.’ And it is a certain truth that all the results and issues of Providence are profitable and beneficial to the saints. But the supplement in our translation well conveys the sense of the text: ‘Who performeth all things.’ And it involves the most strict and proper notion of Providence, which is nothing else but the performance of God’s gracious purposes and promises to His people. And therefore Vatabulus and Muis supply and fill up the room left by the conciseness of the original with ‘which he hath promised,’ thus: ‘I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth the things which he hath promised.’ Payment is the performance of promises. Grace makes the promise, and Providence the payment.

Piscator fills it thus: ‘unto God that performeth his kindness and mercy.’ But still it supposes the mercy performed to be contained in the promise. Mercy is sweet in the promise, and much more so in the providential performance of it to us.

Castalio’s supplement comes nearer to ours: ‘I will cry unto God most high, unto God, the transactor of my affairs.’ But our English, making out the sense by a universal particle, is most agreeable to the scope of the text. For it cannot but be a great encouragement to his faith, that

God had transacted all things, or performed all things for him. This Providence that never failed him in any of the straits that ever he met with (and his life was a life of many straits) he might well hope would not fail him now, though this were an extraordinary and matchless one.

Let us then bring our thoughts a little closer to this Scripture, and it will give us a fair and lovely prospect of Providence in its universal, effectual, beneficial and encouraging influence upon the affairs and concerns of the saints. The expression imports the universal interest and influence of Providence in and upon all the concerns and interests of the saints. It not only has its hand in this or that, but in all that concerns them. It has its eye upon every thing that relates to them throughout their lives, from first to last. Not only the great and more important, but the most minute and ordinary affairs of our lives are transacted and managed by it. It touches all things that touch us, whether more nearly or remotely. The text displays the efficacy of providential influences. Providence not only undertakes but perfects what concerns us. It goes through with its designs, and accomplishes what it begins. No difficulty so clogs it, no cross accident falls in its way, but it carries its design through it. Its motions arc irresistible and uncontrollable; He performs it for us. And (which is sweet to consider) all its products and issues are exceedingly beneficial to the saints. It performs all things for them. 'Tis true we often prejudge its works, and unjustly censure its designs, and in many of our straits and troubles we say: 'All these things are against us'; but indeed Providence neither does nor can do any thing that is really against the true interest and good of the saints. For what are the works of Providence but the execution of God's decree and the fulfilling of His Word? And there can be no more in Providence than is in them. Now there is nothing but good to the saints in God's purposes and promises; and, therefore, whatever Providence does concerning them, it must be (as the text speaks) 'the performance of all things for them.'

And if so, how cheering, supporting and encouraging must the consideration of these things be in a day of distress and trouble! What life and hope will it inspire our hearts and prayers with when great pressures lie upon us! It had such a cheering influence upon the Psalmist at this time, when the state of his affairs was, to the eye of sense and reason, forlorn and desperate; there was but a hair's breadth (as we say) between him and ruin. A powerful, enraged and implacable enemy had driven him into the hole of a rock, and was come after him into that hole. Yet now while his soul is among lions, while he lies in a cranny of the rock, expecting every moment to be drawn out to death, the reflections he had upon the gracious performances of the Most High for him, from the beginning to that moment, support his soul and inspire hope and life into his prayers: 'I will cry unto God most high, unto God that performeth all things for me.

From the text then you have this doctrine : ---

It is the duty of the saints, especially in times of straits, to reflect upon the performances of Providence for them in all the states and through all the stages of their lives.

The Church, in all the works of mercy, owns the hand of God: 'LORD, thou also hast wrought all our works in (or for) us' (Isaiah 26:12). And still it has been the pious and constant practice of the saints in all generations to preserve the memory of the more famous and remarkable providences that have befallen them in their times as a precious treasure. 'If thou be a Christian indeed, I know thou hast, if not in thy book, yet certainly in thy heart, a great many precious favours upon record; the very remembrance and rehearsal of them is sweet; how much more sweet was the actual

enjoyment?'. Thus Moses, by divine direction, wrote a memorial of that victory obtained over Amalek as the fruit and return of prayer, and built there an altar with this inscription, Jehovah-nissi 'The LORD my banner' (Exodus 17:14-15). Thus Mordecai and Esther took all care to perpetuate the memory of that signal deliverance from the plot of Haman, by ordaining the feast of Purim as an anniversary 'throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city; that these days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the memorial of them perish from their seed' (Esther 9:28). For this end you find Psalms indited, 'to bring to remembrance' (Psalms 70:1, title). You find parents giving suitable names to their children, that every time they looked upon them they might refresh the memory of God's mercies (1 Samuel 1:20). You find the very places where eminent providences have appeared, given a new name, for no other reason but to perpetuate the memorial of those sweet providences which so refreshed them there. Thus Bethel received its name (Genesis 28:19). And that well of water where Hagar was seasonably refreshed by the angel in her distress, was called Beer-laha-roi: 'the well of him that liveth and looketh on me' (Genesis 16:14). Yea, the saints have given, and God has assumed to Himself new titles upon this very score and account; Abraham's Jehovah-jireh and Gideon's Jehovah-shalom were ascribed to Him for this reason. And sometimes you find the Lord styles Himself 'The God that brought Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees' or 'The LORD God that brought them out of Egypt' or again 'The LORD that gathered them out of the north country'; reminding them of the gracious providences which in all those places He had wrought for them.

Now there is a twofold reflection upon the providential works of God.

One is entire and full, in its whole complex and perfect system. This blessed sight is reserved for the perfect state. It is in that mount of God where we shall see both the wilderness and Canaan, the glorious kingdom into which we are come, and the way through which we were led into it. There the saints shall have a ravishing view of it in its entirety, and every part shall be distinctly discerned, as it had its particular use, and as it was connected with the other parts, and how effectually and orderly they all wrought to bring about that blessed design of their salvation, according to the promise: 'And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose' (Romans 8:28). For it is certain, no ship at sea keeps more exactly by the compass which directs its course, than Providence keeps by that promise which is its cynosure and polestar. [footnote] The other sight is partial and imperfect which we have on the way to glory, during which we only view it in its single acts, or at most, in some branches and more observable series of actions.

Between these two is the same difference as between the sight of the disjointed wheels and scattered pins of a watch, and the sight of the whole united in one frame and working in one orderly motion; or between an ignorant spectator who views some more observable vessel or joint of a dissected body, and the accurate anatomist who discerns the course of all the veins and arteries of the body as he follows the various branches of them through the whole, and plainly sees the proper place, figure and use of each, with their mutual respect to one another.

O how ravishing and delectable a sight will it be to behold at one view the whole design of Providence, and the proper place and use of every single act, which we could not understand in this world! What Christ said to Peter is as applicable to some providences in which we are now concerned as it was to that particular action: 'What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt

know hereafter' (John 13:7). All the dark, intricate, puzzling providences at which we were sometimes so offended, and sometimes amazed, which we could neither reconcile with the promise nor with each other, nay, which we so unjustly censured and bitterly bewailed, as if they had fallen out quite against our happiness, we shall then see to be to us, as the difficult passage through the wilderness was to Israel, 'the right way to a city of habitation' (Psalms 107:7). And yet, though our present views and reflections upon Providence are so short and imperfect in comparison to that in heaven, yet such as it is under all its present disadvantages, it has so much excellence and sweetness in it that I may call it a little heaven, or as Jacob called his Bethel, 'the gate of heaven.' It is certainly a highway of walking with God in this world, and a soul may enjoy as sweet communion with Him in His providences as in any of His ordinances. How often have the hearts of its observers been melted into tears of joy at the beholding of its wise and unexpected productions! How often has it convinced them, upon a sober recollection of the events of their lives, that if the Lord had left them to their own counsels they had as often been their own tormenters, if not executioners! Into what and how many fatal mischiefs had they precipitated themselves if Providence had been as shortsighted as they! They have given it their hearty thanks for considering their interest more than their importunity, and not allowing them to perish by their own desires.

06.01. The Work of Providence for the Saints

Chapter 1

The Work of Providence for the Saints

First, I shall undertake the proof and defense of the great truth that the affairs of the saints in this world are certainly conducted by the wisdom and care of special Providence. And in doing so I address myself with cheerfulness to perform, as I am able, a service for that Providence which has throughout my life ‘performed all things for me,’ as the text speaks.

There is a twofold consideration of Providence, according to its twofold object and manner of dispensation; the one in general, exercised about all creatures, rational and irrational, animate and inanimate; the other special and peculiar. Christ has a universal empire over all things (Ephesians 1:22); He is the head of the whole world by way of dominion, but a head to the Church by way of union and special influence (John 17:2). He is ‘the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe’ (1 Timothy 4:10). The Church is His special care and charge. He rules the world for its good, as a head consulting the welfare of the body.

Heathens generally denied Providence, and no wonder, since they denied a God; for the same arguments that prove one will prove the other. Aristotle, the prince of heathen philosophers, could not by the utmost search of reason find out how the world originated, and therefore concludes it was from eternity. The Epicureans did, in a way, acknowledge a God, but yet denied a Providence, and wholly excluded Him from any interest or concern in the affairs of the world, as being inconsistent with the felicity and tranquillity of the divine Being, to be diverted and cumbered with the care and labour of government. This assertion is so repugnant to reason that it is a wonder they did not blush at its absurdity; but I guess the reason, and one of them (according to Cicero) speaks it out in broad language: Itaque imposuistis cervicibus nostris sempiternum dominum, quem dies & noctes timeremus. Quis enim non timeat omnia providentem, & cogitantem, & animadvertentem, & omnia ad se pertinere putantem, curiosum & plenum negotii Deum? (If this is so you have yoked us to an eternal master, such as we would fear day and night. For who would not be frightened of a prying busybody of a God who provides, plans and observes everything and who considers that everything is his concern?) They foresaw that the concession of a Providence would impose an eternal yoke upon their necks, by making them accountable for all they did to a higher tribunal, so that they must necessarily ‘pass the time of their sojourning here in fear,’ while all their thoughts, words and ways were strictly noted and recorded, for the purpose of an account by an all-seeing and righteous God. They therefore laboured to persuade themselves that what they had no mind for did not exist. But these atheistical and foolish conceits fall flat before the undeniable evidence of this so great and clear a truth.

Now my business here is not so much to deal with professed atheists who deny the existence of God and consequently deride all evidences brought from Scripture of the extraordinary events that fall out in favour of that people that are called His, but rather to convince those that professedly

own all this, yet, never having tasted religion by experience, suspect, at least, that all these things which we call special providences to the saints, are but natural events or mere contingencies. Thus, while they profess to own a God and a Providence (which profession is but the effect of their education) they do in the meantime live like atheists, and both think and act as if there were no such things; and really, I fear this is the case with the greater part of the men of this generation. But if it were indeed so, that the affairs of the world in general, and more especially those of the saints, were not conducted by divine Providence, but, as they would persuade us, by the steady course of natural causes, beside which, if at any time we observe any event to fall out, it is merely casual and contingent, or proceeds from some hidden and secret cause in nature - if this indeed were so, let them that are tempted to believe it, give a rational answer to the following questions:

How comes it to pass that so many signal mercies and deliverances have befallen the people of God, above the power and against the course of natural causes, to make way for which there has been an obvious suspension and stop put to the course of nature?

It is most evident that no natural effect can exceed the power of its natural cause. Nothing can give to another more than it has in itself, and it is as clear that whatsoever acts naturally, acts necessarily. Fire burns to the uttermost of its power; while waters overflow and drown all that they can. Lions and other rapacious and cruel beasts, especially when hungry, tear and devour their prey; and arbitrary and rational agents also act according to the principles and laws of their natures. A wicked man when his heart is fully set in him, and his will stands in a full bent of resolution, will certainly, if he has power in his hand and opportunity to execute his conceived mischief, give it vent, and perpetrate the wicked devices of his heart. Having once conceived mischief, and 'travailing in pain with it,' according to the course of nature, he must 'bring it forth' (Psalms 7:14). But if any of these inanimate, brute, or rational agents, when there is no natural obstacle or hindrance, have their power suspended, and that when the effect is near the birth and the design at the very point of execution, so that though they would, yet cannot hurt; to what, do you think, is this to be assigned and referred? Yet so it has often been seen, where God's interest has been immediately concerned in the danger and evil of the event. The sea divided itself in its own channel, and made a wall of water on each side, to give God's distressed Israel a safe passage, and that not in a calm, but when its waves roared (Isaiah 51:15). The fire, when blown up to the most intense and vehement flame, had no power to singe one hair of God's faithful witnesses, when at the same instant it had power to destroy their intended executioners at a greater distance (Daniel 3:22). Yea, we find it has sometimes been sufficient to consume, but not to torment the body, as in that known instance of blessed Bainham, who told his enemies: 'The flames were to him as a bed of roses.' The hungry lions put off their natural fierceness and became gentle and harmless when Daniel was cast among them for a prey. The like account we are given of Polycarp, and Dionysius the Areopagite, whom the fire would not touch, but stood after the manner of a shipman's sail filled with the wind about them. Are these things according to the course and law of nature? To what secret natural cause can they be ascribed? In like manner we find the vilest and fiercest of wicked men have been withheld by an invisible hand of restraint from injuring the Lord's people. By what secret cause in nature was Jeroboam's hand dried up and made inflexible at the same instant it was stretched out against the man of God (1 Kings 13:4)? No wild beasts rend and devour their prey more greedily than wicked men would destroy the people of God that dwell among them, were it not for this providential restraint upon them. So the Psalmist

expresses his case in the words following my text: ‘My soul is among lions, and I lie among them that are set on fire.’ The disciples were sent forth ‘as sheep into the midst of wolves’ (Matthew 10:16). It will not avail in this case to object that those miraculous events depend only upon Scripture testimony, which the atheist is not convinced by, for beside all that may be alleged for the authority of that testimony (which is needless to produce to men that own it), what is it less that every eye sees or may see at this day? Do we not behold a weak, defenseless handful of men wonderfully and otherwise unaccountably preserved from ruin in the midst of potent, enraged and turbulent enemies that fain would, but cannot, destroy them; when as yet no natural impediment can be assigned why they cannot? And if this puzzle us, what shall we say when we see events produced in the world for the good of God’s chosen, by those very hands and means which were intentionally employed for their ruin? These things are as much beside the intentions of their enemies as they are above their own expectations; yet such things are no rarities in the world. Was not the envy of Joseph’s brethren, the cursed plot of Haman, and the decree procured by the envy of the princes against Daniel, with many more of the same kind, all turned by a secret and strange hand of Providence to their greater advancement and benefit? Their enemies lifted them up to all that honour and preferment they had.

How is it, if the saints’ affairs are not ordered by a special divine Providence, that natural causes unite and associate themselves for their relief and benefit in so strange a manner as they are found to do?

It is undeniably evident that there are marvelous coincidences of Providence, confederating and agreeing, as it were, to meet and unite themselves to bring about the good of God’s chosen. There is a similar face of things showing itself in several places at the same time, whenever any work for the good of the Church is come upon the stage of the world. As when the Messiah, the capital mercy, came to the temple, then Simeon and Anna were brought there by Providence as witnesses to it. So in Reformation work, when the images were pulled down in Holland, one and the same spirit of zeal possessed them in every city and town, that the work was done in a night. He that carefully reads the history of Joseph’s advancement to be the lord of Egypt may number in that story twelve remarkable acts or steps of Providence by which he ascended to that honour and authority. If but one of them had failed, in all likelihood the event had done so too; but every one occurred in its order, exactly keeping its own time and place. So in the Church’s deliverance from the plot of Haman, we find no less than seven acts of Providence concurring strangely to produce it, as if they had all met by appointment and consent to break that snare for them, one thing so aptly suiting with and making way for another that every careful observer must needs conclude that this cannot be the result of accident but wise counsel. Even as in viewing the accurate structure of the body of a man, the figure, position, and mutual relationships of the several members and vessels has convinced some, and is sufficient to convince all, that it is the work of divine wisdom and power; in like manner if the admirable adaptation of the means and instruments employed for mercy to the people of God are carefully considered, who can but confess that as there are tools of all sorts and sizes in the shop of Providence, so there is a most skillful hand that uses them, and that they could no more produce such effects of themselves than the axe, saw, or chisel can cut or carve a rough log into a beautiful figure without the hand of a skillful artificer?

We find, by manifold instances, that there certainly are strong combinations and predispositions of persons and things to bring about some issue and design for the benefit of the Church, which they

themselves never thought of. They hold no conference, they do not communicate their counsels to each other yet meet together and work together as if they did, which is as if ten men should all meet together at one place, and in one hour, about one and the same business, and that without any previous appointment between themselves. Can any question that such a meeting of means and instruments is certainly, though secretly, overruled by some wise invisible agent?

If the concerns of God's people are not governed by a special Providence, how is it that the most apt and powerful means employed to destroy them are rendered ineffectual, while weak, contemptible means employed for their defence and comfort are crowned with success? This could never be if things were wholly swayed by the course of nature. If we judge by that rule, we must conclude that the more apt and powerful the means are, the more successful and prosperous they must needs be; and where they are inept, weak, and contemptible, nothing can be expected of them. Thus reason lays it, according to the rules of nature, but Providence crosses its hands, as Jacob did in blessing the sons of Joseph, and orders quite contrary issues and events. Such was the mighty power and deep policy used by Pharaoh to destroy God's Israel, that to the eye of reason it was as impossible to survive it as for crackling thorns to abide unconsumed amidst devouring flames. By this emblem their miraculous preservation is expressed; the bush was all in a flame, but not consumed (Exodus 3:2). The heathen Roman emperors, who made the world tremble and subdued the nations under them, employed all their power and policy against the poor, naked, defenseless Church, to ruin it, yet could not accomplish it (Revelation 12:3-4). O the seas of blood that heathen Rome shed in the ten persecutions! yet the Church lives. And when 'the dragon gave his power to the beast', (Revelation 13:2) that is, the state of Rome became antichristian, O what slaughters were made by the beast in all his dominions, so that the Holy Ghost represents him as drunken with the blood of the saints (Revelation 17:6). And yet all will not do; the gates, that is, the powers and policies of hell, cannot prevail against it. How manifest is the care and power of Providence herein! Had half that power been employed against any other people, it had certainly swallowed them up immediately, or, in the hundredth part of the time, worn them out. How soon was the Persian monarchy swallowed up by the Grecian, and that again by the Roman! Diocletian and Maximinus, in the height of their persecutions, found themselves so baffled by Providence that they both resigned the government and lived as private men. But in this wonderful preservation God makes good that promise: 'Though I make a full end of all nations, yet will I not make a full end of thee' (Jeremiah 30:11), and 'No weapon formed against thee shall prosper' (Isaiah 54:17). On the contrary, how successful have weak and contemptible means been made for the good of the Church! Thus in the first planting of Christianity in the world, by what weak and improbable instruments was it done! Christ did not choose the eloquent orators, or men of authority in the courts of kings and emperors, but twelve poor artisans and fishermen; and these not sent together in a troop, but some to take one country to conquer it, and some another. The most ridiculous course, in appearance, for such a design as could be imagined, and yet in how short a time was the Gospel spread and the Churches planted by them in the several kingdoms of the world! This the Psalmist foresaw by the Spirit of prophecy when he said: 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength, to still the enemy and the avenger' (Psalms 8:2). At the sound of rams' horns Jericho is delivered into the hands of Israel ((Joshua 6:20). By three hundred men, with their pitchers and lamps, the huge host of Midian is discomfited (Judges 7:19). The Protestants besieged in Beziers in France are delivered by a drunken drummer who, going to his quarters at midnight, rang the alarm-bell of the town, not knowing what he did; and just then

their enemies were making their assault. And as weak and improbable means have been blessed with success to the Church in general, so to the preservation of its particular members also. A spider by weaving her web over the mouth of an oven, shall hide a servant of Christ, Du Moulin, from his enemies, who took refuge there in that bloody Parisian massacre. A hen shall sustain another many days at the same time by lodging her egg every day in the place where he had hid himself from the cut-throats. Examples might be easily multiplied, but the truth is too plain and obvious to the observation of all ages to need them. And can we but acknowledge a divine and special Providence overruling these matters, when we see the most apt and potent means for the Church's ruin frustrated, and the most silly and contemptible means granted success and prospered for its good?

If all things are governed by the course of nature and force of natural causes, how then comes it to pass that, like a bowl when it strikes another, men are turned out of the way of evil, along which they were driving at full speed?

Good men have been going along the way to their own ruin, and did not know it; but Providence has met them in the way and preserved them by strange diversions, the meaning of which they did not understand till the event revealed it. When Paul lay bound at Caesarea, the high priest and chief of the Jews request Festus that he might he brought bound to Jerusalem, having laid wait in the way to kill him; but Festus, though ignorant of the plot, utterly refuses it, and chooses rather to go with them to Caesarea and judge him there. By this diversion their bloody design is frustrated (Acts 25:3-4).

Possidonius, in the life of Augustine, tells us that the good father, going to teach the people of a certain town, took a guide with him to show him the way. The guide mistook the usual road and unwittingly took a by-path, by which means Augustine escaped ruin by the hands of the bloody Donatists who, knowing his intention, waylaid him to kill him on the road. And as memorable and wonderful are those rubs and diversions wicked men have met with in the way of perpetrating the evils conceived and intended in their own hearts. Laban and Esau came against Jacob with mischievous purposes, but no sooner are they come near him but the shackles of restraint are immediately clapped upon them both, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprises. Balaam runs greedily, for reward, to curse Israel, but meets with an unexpected check at his very outset; and though that did not stop him, he tried every way to do them mischief, yet he still finds himself fettered by an effectual bond of restraint that he can in no way shake off (Numbers 22:25, Numbers 22:38). Saul, the high priest's bloodhound, breathes out threatenings against the Church, and goes with a bloody commission towards Damascus, to hale the poor flock of Christ to the slaughter; but when he comes near the place he meets an unexpected stop on the way, by which the mischief is not only diverted, but he himself is converted to Christ (Acts 9:1-4). Who can fail to see the finger of God in these things!

If there is not an over-ruling Providence ordering all things for the good of God's people, how comes it to pass that the good and evil which is done to them in this world is accordingly repaid into the bosoms of them that are instrumental therein?

How clear is it to every man's observation, that the kindnesses and benefits any have done to the Lord's people have been rewarded with full measure into their bosoms! The Egyptian midwives refused to obey Pharaoh's inhuman command, and saved the male children of Israel; for this the

Lord dealt well with them and built them houses (Exodus 1:21). The Shunammite was hospitable and careful for Elisha, and God recompensed it with the desirable enjoyment of a son (2 Kings 4:9, 2 Kings 4:17). Rahab hid the spies, and was exempted from the destruction of Jericho (Hebrews 11:31). Publius, the chief man of the island of Melita, courteously received and lodged Paul after his shipwreck; the Lord speedily repaid him for that kindness, and healed his father, who lay sick at that time of a bloody flux and fever (Acts 28:7-8). In like manner, we find the evils done to God's people have been repaid by a just retribution to their enemies. Pharaoh and the Egyptians were cruel enemies to God's Israel, and designed the ruin of their poor innocent babes; and God repaid it in smiting all the first-born of Egypt in one night (Exodus 12:29). Haman erected a gallows fifty cubits high for good Mordecai, and God so ordered it that he himself and his ten sons were hanged on it. And indeed it was but meet that he should eat the fruit of that tree which he himself had planted (Esther 7:10). Ahithophel plots against David, and gives counsel like an oracle how to procure his fall; and that very counsel, like an overcharged gun, recoils upon himself and procures his ruin. Seeing his good counsel rejected (good politically, not morally), it was now easy for him to guess the outcome, and so his own fate (2 Samuel 17:23).

Charles the 9th most inhumanly made the very canals of Paris flow with Protestant blood, and soon after he died miserably, his blood flowing from all parts of his body. Stephen Gardiner, who burnt so many of God's dear servants to ashes, was himself so scorched up by a terrible inflammation that his very tongue was black and hung out of his mouth, and in dreadful torments he ended his wretched days. Maximinus, that cruel emperor, who set forth his proclamation engraven in brass for the utter abolishing of the Christian religion, was speedily smitten like Herod with a dreadful judgment, swarms of lice preying upon his entrails, and causing such a stench that his physicians could not endure to come near him, and for refusing to do so were slain. Hundreds of like instances might easily be produced to confirm this observation. And who can but see by these things that 'verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth!'

Yea, so exact have been the retributions of Providence to the enemies of the Church, that not only the same persons, but the same members, that have been the instruments of mischief, have been made the subjects of wrath. The same arm which Jeroboam stretched out to smite the prophet, God smites. The emperor Aurelian, when he was ready to subscribe the edict for the persecution of the Christians, was suddenly cramped in his knuckles that he could not write. Greenhill, in his exposition upon Ezekiel 11:13, tells his hearers that there was one then present in the congregation who was an eye-witness of a woman scoffing at another for purity and holy walking, who had her tongue stricken immediately with the palsy, and died of it within two days. Henry the 2nd of France, in a great rage against a Protestant counselor, committed him to the hands of one of his nobles to be imprisoned, and that with these words, that 'he would see him burned with his own eyes.' But, mark the righteous providence of God, within a few days after, the same nobleman, with a lance put into his hands by the king, did at a tilting match run the said king into one of his eyes, from which he died.

Yea, Providence has made the very place of sinning the place of punishment: 'In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy blood' (1 Kings 21:19); and it was exactly fulfilled (2 Kings 9:26). Thus Tophet is made a burying-place for the Jews, till there was no room to bury; and that was the place where they had offered up their sons to Moloch (Jeremiah 7:31-32). The story of Nightingale is generally known, which Foxe relates, how he fell out of the pulpit and

broke his neck, while he was abusing that Scripture (1 John 1:10). And thus the Scriptures are made good by Providence. 'Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein; and he that rolleth a stone, it shall return upon him' (Proverbs 26:27), and 'with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again' (Matthew 7:2).

If any shall still say that these things may fall out accidentally, and that many thousands of the Church's enemies have died in peace, and their end been like other men, we answer with Augustine: 'If no sin were punished here, no Providence would be believed; and if every sin should be punished here, no judgment would be expected. But, that none may think these events to be merely casual and accidental, we shall enquire yet further.

If these things are merely accidental, how is it that they square and agree so exactly with the Scriptures in all particulars?

We read: 'Can two walk together except they be agreed?' (Amos 3:3). If two men travel along one road, it is likely they are agreed to go to the same place. Providences and Scriptures go all one way, and if they seem at any time to go different or opposite ways, be sure they will meet at the journey's end. There is an agreement between them so to do. Does God miraculously suspend the power of natural causes? Why, this is no accidental thing, but what harmonizes with the Word 'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee' (Isaiah 43:2). Do natural causes unite and associate themselves for the good of God's people? Why, this is no more than what is contained in the promises, and is but the fulfilling of that Scripture: 'All is yours, for ye are Christ's' (1 Corinthians 3:22); that is, the use, benefit and service of all the creatures is for you, as your need shall require. Are the most apt and powerful means employed for their ruin frustrated? Who can but see the Scriptures fulfilled in, and expounded by such providences (see Isaiah 8:8-10; Isaiah 54:15-17; expounded by 2 Kings 18:17, etc.)! Do you see at any time a rub of Providence diverting the course of good men from falling into evil, or wicked men from committing evil? How loudly do such Providences proclaim the truth and certainty of the Scriptures, which tell us that 'the way of man is not in himself, neither is it in him that walketh to direct his steps' (Jeremiah 10:23), and that 'a man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps' (Proverbs 16:9)! Do you see adequate retributions made to those that injure or befriend the people of God? Why, when you see all the kindness and love they have shown the saints returned with interest into their bosoms, how is it possible but you must see the accomplishment of these Scriptures in such providences! 'But the liberal soul deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things he shall stand' (Isaiah 32:8; 2 Corinthians 9:6). And when you see the evils men have done, or intended to do to the Lord's people, recoiling upon themselves, he is perfectly blind that does not see the harmony such providences bear with such Scriptures as Psalms 7:14-16; Psalms 9:16; and Psalms 140:11-12.

O what exact proportions do providences and Scriptures hold! Little do men take notice of it. Why did Cyrus, contrary to all rules of state policy, freely dismiss the captives, except to fulfill the Scripture (Isaiah 45:13)? So that it was well observed by one that, 'as God hath stretched out the expansum or firmament over the natural; so he hath stretched out his Word over the rational world.' And as the creatures on earth are influenced by those heavenly bodies, so are all creatures in the world influenced by the Word, and do infallibly fulfill it, when they design to thwart it.

If these things are contingent, how is it that they fall out so remarkably in the nick of time, which makes them so greatly observable to all that consider them?

We find a multitude of providences so timed to a minute, that had they occurred just a little sooner or later, they had mattered little in comparison with what now they do. Certainly, it cannot be chance, but counsel, that so exactly works in time. Contingencies keep to no rules.

How remarkable to this purpose were the tidings brought to Saul, that 'the Philistines have invaded the land' (1 Samuel 23:27), just as he was ready to grasp the prey! The angel calls to Abraham, and shows him another sacrifice just when his hand was giving the fatal stroke to Isaac (Genesis 22:10-11). A well of water is shown to Hagar just when she had left the child, as not able to see its death (Genesis 21:16, Genesis 21:19). Rabshakeh meets with a blasting providence, hears a rumour that frustrated his design, just when ready to make an assault upon Jerusalem (Isaiah 37:7-8). So when Haman's plot against the Jews was ripe, and all things ready for execution, 'on that night could not the king sleep' (Esther 6:1). When the horns are ready to gore Judah, immediately carpenters are prepared to fray them away (Zechariah 1:18-21).

How remarkable was the relief of La Rochelle by a shoal of fish that came into the harbour when they were ready to perish with famine, such as they never observed before, nor after that time! Mr Dod could not go to bed one night, but has a strong impulse to visit, though unseasonably, a neighbour gentleman, and just as he came there he meets him at his door, with a halter in his pocket, just going to hang himself. Dr Tate and his wife in the Irish rebellion, were flying through the woods with a sucking-child, which was just ready to expire. The mother going to rest it upon a rock, puts her hand upon a bottle of warm milk, by which it was preserved. A good woman, from whose mouth I received it, being driven to a great extremity, all supplies failing, was exceedingly plunged into unbelieving doubts and fears, not seeing where supplies should come from; when, lo! in the nick of time, turning over some things in a chest, unexpectedly she lights upon a piece of gold, which supplied her present needs till God opened another door of supply. If these things fall out by accident, how is it they come in the very nick of time so exactly, as that it is become proverbial in Scripture, 'In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen' (Genesis 22:14)?

Lastly, were these things accidental and contingent, how can it be that they should fall out so immediately upon and consonantly to the prayers of the saints? So that in many providences they are able to discern a very clear answer to their prayers, and are sure they have the petitions they asked (1 John 5:15).

Thus the sea divided itself just at the time of Israel's cry to heaven (Exodus 14:10). So signal a victory is given to Asa immediately at the time of that passionate cry to heaven: 'Help us, O LORD our God' (2 Chronicles 14:11-12). Ahithophel goes and hangs himself, just at the time of that prayer of distressed David (2 Samuel 15:31). Haman falls and his plot is broken, just at the time of the fast kept by Mordecai and Esther (Esther 4:16). Our own Speed, in his History of Britain, tells us that Richard the 1st besieged a castle with his army; they offered to surrender if he would save their lives; he refuses, and threatens to hang them all. Upon this an arbalester charged his bow with a square arrow, making first his prayer to God that he would direct the shot and deliver the innocent from oppression; it struck the king himself, from which he died, and they were delivered. Abraham's servant prayed for success; and see how it was answered (Genesis 24:45). Peter was cast into prison, and prayer was made for him by the Church, and see the event (Acts 12:5-7, Acts

12:12). I could easily add to these the wonderful examples of the return of prayers which was observed in Luther, and Dr Winter in Ireland, and many more; but I judge it needless because most Christians have a stock of experience of their own, and are well assured that many of the providences that befall them are, and can be no other than the return of their prayers. And now who can be dissatisfied in this point that wisely considers these things? Must we not conclude that ‘he withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous’ (Job 36:7) and that ‘The eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him’ (2 Chronicles 16:9). His providences proclaim Him to be a God who hears prayer.

06.02. Our Birth and Upbringing

Chapter 2

Our Birth and Upbringing

Having proved that the affairs of the saints in this world are certainly conducted by the wisdom and care of a special Providence, my next work is to show you in what affairs and concerns of theirs the Providence of God more especially appears, or what are the most remarkable performances of Providence for them in this world. And here I am not led directly by my text to speak of the most internal and spiritual performances of Providence immediately relating to the souls of His people, though they all relate to their souls mediately and eventually, but of the more visible and external performances of Providence for them. It is not to be supposed that I should touch all these - they are more than the sands - but what I aim at is to discourse to you on some more special and more observable performances of Providence for you. To start with, let us consider how well Providence has performed the first work that ever it did for us: in our formation and protection in the womb. Certainly this is a very glorious and admirable performance; it is that which the Psalmist admires: ‘My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth’ (Psalms 139:15). The womb is so called for this reason, that as skillful artists, when they have some choice piece in hand, perfect it in private, and then bring it into the light for all to gaze at; so it was here. Two things are admirable in this performance of Providence for us.

First the rare structure and excellent composition of the body. ‘I am wonderfully made’; that word ruchampti is very full. The vulgate renders it, ‘painted as with a needle,’ i.e., richly embroidered with nerves and veins. O, the skillful workmanship that is in that one part, the eye! How has it forced some to acknowledge a God upon the examination of it! Providence, when it went about this work, had its model or pattern before it, according to which it molded every part, ‘In thy book all my members were written’ (Psalms 139:16). Have you an integral perfection and fullness of members? It is because He wrote them all in His book, or painted your body according to that exact model which He drew of you in His own gracious purpose before you had a being. Had an eye, an ear, a hand, a foot been wanting in the plan, you had now been sadly aware of the defect. This world had been but a dungeon to you without those windows, and you had lived, as many do, an object of pity to others. If you have low thoughts of this mercy, ask the blind, the deaf, the lame and the dumb the value and worth of those mercies, and they will tell you. There is a world of cost bestowed upon your very body. You might have been cast into another mold, and created a worm or a toad. I remember Luther tells us of two cardinals riding in great pomp to the Council of Constance, and by the way they heard a man in the fields bitterly weeping and wailing. When they came to him they found him intently viewing an ugly toad; and asking him why he wept so bitterly, he told them his heart was melted with this consideration, that God had not made him such a loathsome and deformed creature. ‘This is what I love to weep at,’ said he; whereupon one of them cries out: well said the father, ‘The unlearned will rise and take heaven, and we with all our

learning shall be cast into hell.' No part of the common lump was so figured and polished as man is. Galen gave Epicurus a hundred years to imagine a more commodious situation, configuration or composition of any one member of a human body. And if all the angels had studied to this day, they could not have cast the body of man into a better mold. And yet all this is but the enameling of the case, or polishing the casket in which the rare jewel lies. Providence has not only built the house, but brought the inhabitant (I mean the soul) into the possession of it. A glorious piece it is, that bears the very image of God upon it, being all in all, and all in every part. How noble are its faculties and affections! How nimble, various and indefatigable are its motions! How comprehensive is its capacity! It is a companion for angels, nay, capable of espousal to Christ and eternal communion with God. It is the wonder of earth, and the envy of hell.

Suppose now (and why should you not suppose what you so frequently behold in the world?) that Providence had so permitted and ordered it, that your soul had entered into your body with one or two of its faculties wounded and defective. Suppose its understanding had been cracked; what a miserable life you would have lived in this world, being capable of neither service nor comfort. And truly, when I have considered those works of Providence, in bringing into the world in all countries and ages some such spectacles of pity; some deprived of the use of reason and differing from beasts in little more than shape and figure; and others, though sound in their understandings, yet deformed or defective in their bodies, monstrous, misshapen and loathsome creatures; I can resolve the design of this Providence into nothing else but a demonstration of His sovereign power unless they are designed as foils to set off the beauty of other rare and exquisite pieces, and intended to stand before your eyes as monitors of God's mercy to you, that your hearts, as often as you behold them, might be melted into thankfulness for distinguishing favour to you.

Look then, but not proudly, upon your outside and inside. See and admire what Providence has done for you, and how well it has performed the first service that ever it did for you in this world. And yet, this was not all it did for you. Before you saw this world, it preserved you, as well as formed you in the womb, else you had been as those embryos Job speaks of 'which never saw light' (Job 3:16). Abortives go for nothing in the world, and there are multitudes of them. Some never had a reasonable soul breathed into them, but only the rudiments and rough draft of a body; these come not into the account of men, but perish as the beast does. Others die in, or shortly after they come out of the womb, and though their life was but a moment, yet that moment entails an eternity upon them. Had this been your case, as it is the case of millions, then, supposing your salvation, yet you had been utterly unserviceable to God in the world; none had been the better for you, nor you the better for any in the world. You had been utterly incapable of all that good which throughout your life you have either done to others or received from others. And if we consider the nature of that obscure life we lived in the womb, how small an accident, had it been permitted by Providence, could have extinguished our life, like a bird in the shell? We cannot therefore but admire the tender care of Providence over us, and say with the Psalmist: 'Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb' (Psalms 139:13): and not only so, 'But thou art he that took me out of the womb' (Psalms 22:9). He preserved you there to the fullness of time and, when that time was come, brought you safely through manifold hazards into that place in the world which He from eternity prepared for you.

Another great performance of Providence for the people of God respects the place and time of their birth. And truly, this is no small concern to every one of us, but of vast consequence, either to

our good or evil, though it is little considered by most men. I am persuaded the thoughts of few Christians penetrate deep enough into this Providence, but slide too slightly and superficially over an abyss of much mercy, rich and manifold mercy wrapped up in this gracious performance of Providence for them.

Ah friends! can you think it an indifferent thing into what part of the world the womb of nature has cast you out? Does nothing depend upon what spot of the creation, or in what age of the world, your lot has fallen? It may be you have not seriously thought about this matter. And because this point is so seldom touched, I will therefore dive a little more particularly and distinctly into it, and endeavour to warm your affections with a representation of the many and rich benefits you owe to this one performance of Providence for you.

We will consider it under a double respect or relation, as it respects your present comfort in this world, and as it relates to your eternal happiness in the world to come. This performance of Providence for you very much concerns your present comfort in this world. All the rooms in this great house are not alike pleasant and commodious for the inhabitants of it. You read of 'the dark places of the earth,' which 'are full of the habitations of cruelty' (Psalms 74:20); and many such dismal places are found in the habitable earth. What a vast tract of the world lies as a waste wilderness!

Suppose your mothers had brought you forth in America, among the savage Indians, who herd together as brute beasts, are scorched with heat, and starved with cold, being naked, destitute and defenseless. How poor, miserable, and unprovided with earthly comfort and accommodations are many millions of the inhabitants of this world! What mercies do you enjoy in respect of the amenity, fertility, temperature, and civility of the place of your habitation? What is it but a garden enclosed out of a wilderness? I may without partiality or vanity say, God has, even upon temporal accounts, provided you with one of the healthiest, pleasantest, and in all respects the best furnished room in all the great house of this world. Hear what our own chronicler says of it: 'It is the fortunate island, the paradise of pleasure, the garden of God; whose valleys are like Eden, whose hills are as Lebanon, whose springs are as Pisgah, whose rivers are as Jordan, whose wall is the ocean, and whose defense is the Lord Jehovah.'

You are here provided with necessary and comfortable accommodations for your bodies, that a great part of the world are unacquainted with. It is not with the poorest among us, as it is said to be with the poor Russians, whose poverty pinches and bites with such sharp teeth that their poor cry at the doors: 'Give me and cut me! give me and kill me!' Do not say that the barbarous nations excel you in that they possess the mines of silver and gold, which it may be you think enough to make up for all other inconveniences of life. Alas, poor creatures! better had it been for them if their country had brought forth briars and thorns, instead of gold, silver, and precious stones; for this has been the occasion of ruining all their other comforts in this world, this has invited their cruel avaricious enemies among them, under whose servitude they groan and die without mercy, and thousands of them have chosen death rather than life on the terms they enjoyed it. And why might not your lot have fallen there as well as where it is? Are not they made of the same clay and endowed with as good a nature as yourselves? O what a distinction has divine mercy made, where nature made none! Consider, ungrateful man, you might have fallen into some of those regions where a tainted air frequently cloys the jaws of death, where the inhabitants differ very little

from the beasts in the manner of their living; but God has provided for you, and given the poorest among us far better accommodations of life than the greatest among them are ordinarily provided with. O what Providence has done for you! But all that I have said is very inconsiderable in comparison with the spiritual mercies and advantages you here enjoy for your souls. O this is such an advantageous cast of Providence for you as obliges you to a thankful acknowledgment of it to all eternity. For let us here make but a few suppositions in the case before us, and the glory of Providence will shine like a sunbeam full in your faces.

Suppose it had been your lot to have fallen in any of those vast continents possessed by pagans and heathens at this day, who bow down to the stock of a tree, and worship the host of heaven. This is the case of millions, and millions of millions, for pagan idolaters, as that searching scholar, Brerewood, informs us, do not only fill the circumference of nine hundred miles in Europe, but almost the one half of Africa, more than the half of Asia, and almost the whole of America.

O how deplorable had your case been if a pagan idolatress had brought you forth, and idolatry had been sucked in with your mother's milk! Then, in all probability, you had been at this day worshipping devils, and racing at full speed in the direct road to damnation, for these are the people of God's wrath: 'Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not upon thy name' (Jeremiah 10:25). How dreadful is that imprecation against them, which takes hold of them and all that is theirs! 'Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols' (Psalms 97:7). Or suppose your lot had fallen among Mahometans, who next to pagans spread over the greatest tract of the earth, for though Arabia bred that unclean bird, yet that cage could not long contain him; for not only the Arabians, but the Persians, Turks, and Tartars, do all bow down their backs under that grand impostor. This poison has dispersed itself through the veins of Asia, over a great part of Africa, even the circumference of seven thousand miles, and does not stop there, but has tainted a considerable part of Europe also. Had your lot fallen here, O what unhappy men and women had you been, notwithstanding the natural amenity and pleasantness of your native soil! You had then adored a grand impostor, and died in a fool's paradise. Instead of God's living oracles, you had been, as they now are, deceived to your eternal ruin with such fond, mad and wild dreams, as whoso considers would think the authors had more need of manacles and fetters than arguments or sober answers. Or if neither of these had been your lot, suppose you had been emptied by the womb of nature into this little spot of the earth which is Christianized by profession, but nevertheless for the most part overrun by popish idolatry and anti-christian delusions. What unhappy men and women had you been had you sucked a Popish breast! for his people are to be the subjects of the vials of God's wrath to be poured out successively upon them (Revelation 16:1-21), and the Scriptures in round and plain language tell us what their fate must be: 'And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness' (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12).

Nay, you might have fallen into the same land in which your habitation now is, and yet have had no advantage by it as to salvation, if He that chose the bounds of your habitation had not also graciously 'determined the times' for you (Acts 17:26).

Suppose your lot had fallen where it is, during the pagan state of England, where for many hundred years were gross and vile idolaters. Thick darkness overspread the people of this island

and, as in other countries, the devil was worshipped, and his lying oracles zealously believed. The shaking of the top of Jupiter's oak in Dodona, the cauldron smitten with the rod in the hand of Jupiter's image, the laurel and fountain in Daphne: these were the ordinances on which the poor deluded wretches waited. So in this nation they worshipped idols also. The sun and moon were adored for gods, together with many abominable idols which our ancestors worshipped and whose memorials are not to this day quite obliterated among us. Or suppose our lot had fallen in those later miserable days in which Queen Mary sent so many hundreds to heaven in a fiery chariot, when the poor Protestants skulked up and down in holes and woods to preserve themselves from popish inquisitors, who, like bloodhounds, hunted up and down through all the cities, towns and villages of the nation, to seek out the poor sheep of Christ for a prey. But such has been the special care of Providence towards us, that our turn to be brought upon the stage of this world was graciously reserved for better days, so that if we had had our own option, we could not have chosen for ourselves as Providence has done. We are not only furnished with the best room in this great house, but before we were put into it, it was swept with the broom of national Reformation from idolatry, yea, and washed by the blood of martyrs from popish filthiness, and adorned with Gospel lights, shining in as great lustre in our days, as ever they did since the apostles' days. You might have been born in England for many ages, and not have found a Christian in it; yea, and since Christianity was here owned, and not have met a Protestant in it. O what an obligation has Providence laid you under, by such a merciful performance as this for you!

If you say: 'All this indeed is true, but what is this to eternal salvation? Do not multitudes that enjoy these privileges eternally perish notwithstanding them; yea, and perish with an aggravation of sin and misery beyond other sinners?'

True, they do so, and it is very sad that it should be so; but yet we cannot deny this to be a very choice and singular mercy, to be born in such a land, and at such a time. For let us consider what helps for salvation men here enjoy, beyond what they could enjoy had their lot fallen according to the forementioned suppositions.

Here we enjoy the ordinary means of salvation, which elsewhere men are denied and cut off from. So that if any among the heathen are saved and brought to Christ, it must be in some miraculous or extraordinary way, for 'how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher?' (Romans 10:14). Alas! were there a desire awakened in any of their hearts after a Gospel-discovery of salvation, which ordinarily is not nor can be rationally supposed, yet, poor creatures, they might travel from sea to sea to hear the Word, and not find it; whereas you can hardly miss the opportunities of hearing the Gospel. Sermons meet you frequently, so that you can scarcely shun or avoid the ordinances and instruments of your salvation. And is this nothing? Christ even forces Himself upon us.

Here, in this age of the world, the common prejudices against Christianity are removed by the advantage it has of a public profession among the people, and protection by the laws of the country. Whereas were your habitation among Jews, Mahometans, or heathen idolaters, you would find Christ and Christianity the common odium of the country, every one defying and deriding both name and thing, and such yourselves likely had been, if your birth and education had been among them. For you may observe that whatever is traditionally delivered down from father to son, every one is fond of and zealous [for] in its defense. The Jews, heathens and Mahometans

are at this day so tenacious of their errors that, with spitting, hissing, and clapping of hands, and all other signs of indignation and abhorrence, they chase away all others from among them. Is it not then a special mercy to you to be cast into such a country and age, where, as a learned divine observes, the true religion has the same advantages over every false one, as in other countries they have over it? Here you have the presence of precious means, and the absence of soul-destroying prejudices -- two signal mercies.

Here, in this age of the world, Christianity confronts you as soon as you are capable of any sense or impressions of religion upon you; and so, by an happy anticipation, blocks up the passages by which a false religion would else certainly enter. Here you suck in the first notions and principles of Christianity, even with the mother's milk, and certainly such a prepossession is a choice advantage. Quo semel est imbuta, recens servabit odorem testa diu. (For many a day the pot will keep the scent of that which first it held, when freshly baked.) 'Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it' (Proverbs 22:6).

Here you have, or may have, the help and assistance of Christians to direct your way, resolve your doubts, support your burdens and help you through those difficulties that attend the new birth. Alas! if a poor soul had any beginnings or faint workings and stirrings after Christ and true religion in many other countries, the hand of every man would presently he against him, and none would be found to relieve, assist or encourage, as you may see in that example of Galeacius. The nearest relations would, in that case, prove the greatest enemies, the country would quickly hoot at him as a monster and cry: 'Away with the heretic to the prison or stake.'

Whether these eventually prove blessings to your souls or not, certain I am that in themselves they are singular mercies, and helps to salvation that are denied to millions besides you. So that if Plato when he was near his death could bless God for three things, viz., that he was a man and not a beast, that he was born in Greece, and that he was brought up in the time of Socrates, much more cause have you to admire Providence, that you are men and not beasts; that you were born in England, and that you are brought up in Gospel days. This is a land the Lord has espied for you, as the expression is (Ezekiel 20:6), and concerning it you have abundant cause to say, as in another case the Psalmist does: 'The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage' (Psalms 16:6).

Another performance of Providence which must be carefully noticed and weighed is the designation of the stock and family out of which we should spring and rise. And truly this is of special consideration, both as to our temporal and eternal good. For whether the families in which we grew up were great or small in Israel, whether our parents were of the higher or lower class and rank among men, yet if they were such as feared God and wrought righteousness, if they took any care to educate you religiously and train you up 'in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,' you are bound to reckon it among your chief mercies, that you sprang from the loins of such parents, for from this spring a double stream of mercy rises to you.

First, temporal and external mercies to your outward man. You cannot but know that as godliness entails a blessing, so wickedness and unrighteousness a curse upon posterity. An instance of the former you have in Genesis 17:18-20; on the contrary you have the threatening, Zechariah 5:4, and both together in this passage 'The curse of the LORD is in the house of the wicked; but he blesseth the habitation of the just' (Proverbs 3:33). True it is that both these imply the children's

treading in the steps of their parents (Ezekiel 18:1-32), but how frequently is it seen that wicked men breed their children vainly and wickedly; so that as it is said of Abijam: ‘and he walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him’ (1 Kings 15:3); and so the curse is entailed from generation to generation. To escape this curse is a choice providence. But especially take notice what a stream of spiritual blessings and mercies flows from this Providence to the inner man. O, it is no common mercy to descend from pious parents. Some of us do not only owe our natural life to them, as instruments of our beings, but our spiritual and eternal life also. It was no small mercy to Timothy to be descended from such progenitors (2 Timothy 1:5), nor to Augustine that he had such a mother as Monica, who planted in his mind the precepts of life with her words, watered them with her tears, and nourished them with her example. We will a little more particularly inspect this mercy, and in so doing we shall find manifold mercies contained in it.

What a mercy was it to us to have parents that prayed for us before they had us, as well as in our infancy, when we could not pray for ourselves? Thus did Abraham (Genesis 15:2) and Hannah (1 Samuel 1:10-11), and probably some here are the fruits and returns of their parents’ prayers. This was that holy course they continued all their days for you, carrying all your concerns, especially your eternal ones, before the Lord with their own; and pouring out their souls to God so affectionately for you, when their eye-strings and heart-strings were breaking. O put a value upon such mercies, for they are precious. It is a greater mercy to descend from praying parents than from the loins of nobles. See Job’s pious practice (Job 1:5).

What a special mercy was it to us to have the excrescences of corruption nipped in the bud by their pious and careful discipline! We now understand what a critical and dangerous season youth is, the wonderful proclivity of that age to every thing that is evil. Why else are they called youthful lusts (2 Timothy 2:22)? When David asks: ‘Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?’ it is plainly enough implied in the very question that the way he takes lies through the pollutions of the world in his youth (Psalms 119:9). When you find a David praying that God would ‘not remember the sins of my youth’ (Psalms 25:7), and a Job bitterly complaining that God ‘made me to possess the iniquities of my youth’ (Job 13:26), surely you cannot but reflect with a very thankful heart upon those happy means by which the corruption of your nature was happily prevented, or restrained in your youth. And how great a mercy was it that we had parents who carefully instilled the good knowledge of God into our souls in our tender years? How diligent was Abraham in this duty (Genesis 18:19), and David (1 Chronicles 28:9)! We have some of us had parents who might say to us, as the apostle: ‘My little children of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you’ (Galatians 4:19). As they longed for us before they had us and rejoiced in us when they had us, so they could not endure to think that when they could have us no more, the devil should. As they thought no pains, care or cost too much for our bodies, to feed them, clothe and heal them; so did they think no prayers, counsels, or tears, too much for our souls, that they might be saved. They knew a parting time would come between them and us, and did strive to make it as easy and comfortable to them as they could, by leaving us in Christ and within the blessed bond of His covenant.

They were not glad that we had health and indifferent whether we had grace. They felt the miseries of our souls as much as of our bodies; and nothing was more desirable to them than that they might say in the great day: Lord, here am I and the children which thou hast given me. And was it not a special favour to us to have parents that went before us as patterns of holiness, and

beat the path to heaven for us by their examples? They could say to us: ‘those things ye have heard and seen in me, do’ (Php 4:9); and ‘be ye followers of me, as also I am of Christ’ (1 Corinthians 11:1). The parents’ life is the child’s copy. O, it is no common mercy to have a fair copy set before us, especially in the molding age; we saw what they did, as well as heard what they said. It was Abraham’s commendation, ‘that he commanded his children, and his household after him, to keep the way of the LORD.’ And such mercies some of us have had also.

Ah, my friends, let me beg you that you will take special notice of this Providence which so graciously wrought for you; and that your hearts may be more thoroughly warmed in the sense of it, compare your condition with others, and seriously consider the following.

How many children there are among us that are drawn headlong to hell by their cruel and ungodly parents, who teach them to curse and swear as soon as they can speak! Many families there are in which little other language is heard but what is the dialect of hell. These, like the old logs and small spray, are preparing for the fire of hell, where they must burn together. Of such children that Scripture will one day be verified, except they repent: ‘He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light’ (Psalms 49:19). And how many families there are, though not so profane, who yet breed up their children vainly and sensually, and take no care what becomes of their souls, if they can but provide for their bodies (Job 21:11)! If they can but teach them to carry their bodies, no matter if the devil actuate their souls. If they can but leave them lands or monies, they think they have very fully discharged their duties. O, what will the language be with which such parents and children shall greet each other at the judgment-seat, and in hell for ever! And how many there are who are more sober and yet hate the least appearances of godliness in their children. Instead of cherishing, they do all that they can to break bruised reeds and quench smoking flax, to stifle and strangle the first appearances and offers they make towards Christ! They would rather accompany them to their graves than to Christ, doing all that in them lies, Herod-like, to kill Christ in the cradle! Ah, sirs, you little know what a mercy you enjoy or have enjoyed in godly parents and what a good lot Providence cast for you in this affair of your bodies and souls.

If any shall say this was not their case, they had little help heavenward from their parents, to such I reply as follows.

If you had little furtherance, yet own it as a special providence that you had no hindrance; or if you had opposition, yet admire the grace of God in plucking you out by a wonderful distinguishing hand of mercy from among them and keeping alive the languishing sparks of grace amidst the floods of opposition. And learn from hence, if God give you a posterity of your own, to be so much the more strict and careful of family duties, by how much you have acutely felt the want of it in yourselves. But seeing such a train of blessings, both as to this life and that to come, follow upon an holy education of children, I will not dismiss the point till I have discharged my duty in exhorting parents and children to their duties. And first for you that are parents, or to whom the education of children is committed, I beseech you mind the duty which lies on you. That I may effectually press it, consider how near the relation is between you and your children, and therefore how much you are concerned in their happiness or misery. Consider but the Scripture account of the dearness of such relations, expressed by longings for them (Genesis 15:2; Genesis 30:1), by our joy when we have them, as Christ expresses it (John 16:21), the high value set on them (Genesis 42:38), the

sympathy with them in all their troubles (Mark 9:22) and by our sorrow at parting (Genesis 37:35). Now shall all this be to no purpose? For to what purpose do we desire them before we have them, rejoice in them when we have them, value them so highly, sympathize with them so tenderly, grieve for their death so excessively, if in the meantime no care be taken what shall become of them to eternity?

Consider how God has charged you with their souls, as well as bodies, and this appears by precepts directly laid upon you (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Ephesians 6:4) and by precepts laid on them to obey you (Ephesians 6:1), which plainly implies your duty as well as expresses theirs.

What shall comfort you at the parting time, if they die through your neglect in a Christless condition? O this is the cutting consideration: My child is in hell, and I did nothing to prevent it! I helped him there. Duty discharged is the only root of comfort in that day.

If you neglect to instruct them in the way of holiness, will the devil neglect to instruct them in the way of wickedness? No, no, if you will not teach them to pray, he will teach them to curse, swear and lie. If ground be uncultivated, weeds will spring up.

If the season of their youth is neglected, how little probability is there of any good fruit afterwards? Youth is the molding age (Proverbs 22:6). How few are converted in old age? A twig is brought to any form, but grown limbs will not bend.

You are instrumental causes of all their spiritual misery, and that by generation and imitation. They lie spiritually dead of the plague which you brought home among them: ‘Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive [or warm] me’ (Psalms 51:5)

There is none in the world so likely as you to be instruments of their eternal good. You have peculiar advantages that no one else has; such as the interest you have in their affections; your opportunities to instill the knowledge of Christ into them, being daily with them (Deuteronomy 6:7); your knowledge of their character. If therefore you neglect, who shall help them?

Again, the consideration of the great day should move your bowels of pity for them. O remember that text: ‘And I saw the dead small and great stand before God’ (Revelation 20:12). What a sad thing will it be, to see your dear children at Christ’s left hand? O friends, do your utmost to prevent this misery. ‘Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.’

And you, children, especially you that sprang from religious parents. I beseech you, obey their counsels, and tread in the steps of their pious examples. To press this, I offer the following considerations: Your disobedience to them is a resisting of God’s authority: ‘Children, obey your parents in the Lord’ (Ephesians 6:1). There is the command; your rebellion therefore runs higher than you think. It is not man, but God that you disobey; and for your disobedience God will punish you. It may be their tenderness will not suffer them, or you are grown beyond their correction. All they can do is to complain to God, and if so, He will handle you more severely than they could do. Your sin is greater than the sin of young heathens and infidels; and so will your account be also. O better, if a wicked child, that you had been the offspring of savage Indians, nay, of beasts, than of such parents. So many counsels disobeyed, hopes and prayers frustrated, will turn to sad aggravations.

It is usual with God to retaliate men's disobedience to their parents in kind; commonly our own children shall pay us home for it. I have read in a grave author of a wicked wretch that dragged his father along the house. The father begged him not to drag him beyond such a place, for, said he, I dragged my father no further. Oh, the sad, but just retributions of God! And for you in whose hearts grace has been planted by the blessing of education, I beseech you to admire God's goodness to you in this providence. O what a happy lot has God cast for you! How few children are partakers of your mercies!

See that you honour such parents; the tie is double upon you so to do. Be you the joy of their hearts, and comfort of their lives, if they are alive. If not, yet still remember the mercy while you live, and tread in their pious path, that you and they may both rejoice together in the great day, and bless God for each other to all eternity.

06.03. The Work of Conversion

Chapter 3

The Work of Conversion

In nothing does Providence shine forth more gloriously in this world than in ordering the occasions, instruments and means of conversion of the people of God. However skillfully its hand had moulded your bodies, however tenderly it had preserved them and however bountifully it had provided for them; if it had not also ordered some means or other for your conversion, all the former favours and benefits it had done for you had meant little. This, O this, is the most excellent benefit you ever received from its hand. You are more indebted to it for this, than for all your other mercies. And in explaining this performance of Providence, I cannot but think your hearts must be deeply affected. This is a subject which every gracious heart loves to steep its thoughts in. It is certainty the sweetest history that ever they repeated; they love to think and talk of it. The places where, and instruments by whom this work was wrought are exceedingly endeared to them for the work's sake, yea, endeared to that degree, that, for many years after, their hearts have melted when they have but passed occasionally by those places or but seen the faces of those persons that were used as instruments in the hand of Providence for their good. As no doubt but Jacob's Bethel was ever after that night sweet to his thoughts (Genesis 48:3), so other saints have had their Bethels as well as he. O blessed places, times, and instruments! O the deep, the sweet impressions, never to be erased out of the memory or heart, that this Providence has made upon those on whom it wrought this blessed effect at years of discretion, and in a more perceptible way! But lest any poor soul should be discouraged by the display of this Providence because he cannot remember the time, place, instruments and manner when and by which conversion work was wrought, I will therefore premise this necessary distinction, to prevent injury to some, while I design benefit to others.

Conversion, as to the subjects of it, may be considered two ways; either as it is more clearly wrought in persons of riper years, who in their youthful days were more profane and vile; or upon persons in their tender years, into whose hearts grace was more imperceptibly and indiscernibly instilled by God's blessing upon pious education. In the former sort, the distinct acts of the Spirit, illuminating, convincing, humbling, drawing them to Christ and sealing them are more evident and discernible. In the latter, these are more obscure and confused. They can remember that God gave them an esteem and liking of godly persons, care of duty and conscience of sin; but as to the time, place, instruments and manner of the work, they can give but a slender account of them. However, if the work is savingly wrought in them, there is no reason they should be troubled because the circumstances of it are not so evident to them as they are to others. Let the substance and reality of the work appear, and there is no reason to afflict yourselves because of the lack of evidence of such circumstances. But where the circumstances as well as substance are clear to a man, when we can call to remembrance the time when, the place where, the instrument by whom that work was wrought, it must needs be exceedingly sweet, and they cannot but yield a

fresh delight to the soul every time they are reflected upon.

There are many of the following occasions which, it may be, we took for stragglers when they first befell us, but they proved scouts sent out from the main body of Providence, which they make way for.

Now there are various things in those providences that respect this work, which are exceedingly sweet and taking, as namely: The wonderful strangeness and unaccountableness of the work of Providence in casting us into the way and ordering the occasions, yea, the minutest circumstances about this work. Thus you find that the Eunuch, at that very instant when he was reading the prophet Esaias, had an interpreter, one among a thousand, that joins his chariot just as his mind was by a fit occasion prepared to receive the first light of the knowledge of Christ (Acts 8:26-30). And how strange was that change, however far it went, upon Naaman the Syrian (2 Kings 5:1-4)! that the Syrians in their incursion should bring away this girl - likely her beauty was the inducement - and she must be presented to Naaman's wife, and relate to her the power of God that accompanied the prophet; though you find in that particular case there had never been an instance given before (Luke 4:27). Doubtless the whole of this affair was guided by the signal direction of Providence. So for the conversion of the Samaritans, it is observed that Christ must needs go that way (John 4:4) - it lay just in the road between Judea and Galilee - and at the sixth hour, i.e., high noon, he rests himself upon Jacob's well, still seeming to have no other design but his own refreshment by sitting and drinking there. But O what a train of blessed providences follow this which seemed but an accidental thing! First the woman of Samaria and then many more in that city are brought to believe in Christ (John 4:29 and John 4:41).

It is noted by Melchior Adams in the Life of Junius how much of an atheist he was in his younger years; but in order to bring about his conversion to God, first, a wonderful preservation of his life in a public tumult at Lyons in France must take place, which forces from him the acknowledgment of a Deity. Then his father sends for him home and with much gentleness persuades him to read the Scriptures. He lights upon the first of John, and with it he feels a divine supernatural majesty and power seizing his soul, which brought him over by a complete conversion to Jesus Christ. Thus, as the woman of Tekoa told David, does God devise means to bring back His banished (2 Samuel 14:14).

Lavater tells us that many Spanish soldiers, going into the wars of Germany, were there converted to Christ, by going into the cities and towns where godly ministers and Christians were.

Robert Bolton, though an excellent scholar, yet in his younger years he was a very irreligious person and a jeerer of holy men; but being cast into the company of godly Mr Peacock was by him brought to repentance and proved a famous instrument in the Church of Christ. A scrap of paper, accidentally coming to view, has been used as an occasion of conversion. This was the case of a minister in Wales, who had two livings, but took little care of either. Being at a fair he bought something at a pedlar's stall, and tore off a leaf of Mr Perkins' Catechism to wrap it in, and reading a line or two in it, God sent it home so as it did the work. The marriage of a godly man into a carnal family has been ordered by Providence for the conversion and salvation of many therein. Thus we read in the life of that renowned English worthy, John Bruen, that in his second match it was agreed that he should have one year's diet in his mother-in-laws house. During his abode there that year the Lord was pleased by this means graciously to work upon her soul, as also upon his

wife's sister and half-sister, their brothers William and Thomas Fox, with one or two of the servants in that family. The reading of a good book has been the means of bringing others to Christ. And thus we find many of the German divines converted by reading Luther's books; yea, and it is more strange, Sleyden, in his Commentary, tells us that Vergerius, though he were an eye and ear witness to that doleful case of Spira, which one would think should move a stone, yet still continued so firm to the pope's interest that when he fell into some suspicion among the cardinals he resolved to purge himself by writing a book against the German apostates. But while he read the Protestant books, out of no other design but to confute them, while he is weighing the arguments, he is himself convinced and brought to Christ. He, finding himself thus overcome by the truth, imparts his conviction to his brother, also a zealous papist. This brother deplores the misery of his case and seeks to reclaim him; but Vergerius entreating him to weigh well the Protestant arguments, he also yields, and so both immediately gave themselves to preaching justification by the free grace of God through the blood of Christ.

Yea, not only the reading of a book or hearing a minister, but, which is most remarkable, the very mistake or forgetfulness of a minister has been improved by Providence for this end and purpose. Augustine, once preaching to his congregation, forgot the argument which first he proposed, and attacked the error of the Manichees beside his first intention. By this discourse he converted one Firmus, his hearer, who fell down at his feet weeping and confessing he had lived a Manichee many years.

Another I knew who, going to preach, took up another Bible than that he designed, in which, not only missing his notes but the chapter also in which his text lay, was put to some loss thereby. But after a short pause he resolved to speak on any other Scripture that might be presented to him and accordingly read that text: 'The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness' (2 Peter 3:9). And though he had nothing prepared, yet the Lord helped him to speak both methodically and pertinently from it, by which discourse a gracious change was wrought upon one in the congregation who has since given good evidence of a sound conversion and acknowledged this sermon to be the first and only means thereof. The accompanying of others in a neighbourly civil visit has been overruled to the same end. Thus many of the Jews accompanied Mary unto Bethany, designing only to manifest their civil respect, but there they met Christ, saw the things which He did, and believed on Him (John 11:45).

Firmin tells us of one who had lived many years in a town where Christ had been as clearly preached as in any town in England. This man, when he was about seventy-six years of age, went to visit a sick neighbor. 'A Christian friend of mine,' says my author, 'came to see him also, and finding this old man there, whom he judged to be one that lived upon his own stock, civility, good works, etc., he purposely fell into that discourse, to shew how many persons lived upon their duties, but never came to Christ. The old man sitting by the bedside heard him, and God was pleased to convince him that he was such a person, who had lived upon himself without Christ to that day; and would say afterwards, 'had I died before threescore and sixteen, I had perished, for I knew not Christ.'

The committing of a godly man to prison has been the method of Providence to save the soul of a poor keeper. So Paul was made a prisoner to make his keeper a spiritual freeman (Acts 16:27-34). The like success had Dr. Barnes in Queen Mary's days, who afterwards celebrated the Lord's

Supper in prison with his converted keeper. The scattering of ministers and Christians by persecution from cities and towns into the ignorant and barbarous parts of the country, has been the way of Providence to find out and bring home some lost sheep that were found there to Jesus Christ (Acts 8:1, Acts 8:4). The like signal event has since followed upon the like scattering of godly ministers, of which there are many outstanding instances at this day. A servant running away from his master, probably out of no other design but to live an idle life, yet falling into such places and companies as Providence ordered, in a design to him unknown, has thereby been brought to be the servant of Christ. This was the very case of Onesimus who ran away from his master Philemon to Rome, where by a strange Providence, possibly a mere curiosity to see the prisoners, he there falls into Paul's hands, who begat him to Christ in his bonds (Philemon 1:10-16).

Going to hear a sermon in jest has proved some men's conversion in earnest. The above named Mr. Firmin tells us of a notorious drunkard whom the drunkards called 'father' that one day would needs go to hear what Wilson said, out of no other design, it seems, but to scoff at that holy man. But in the prayer before the sermon his heart began to thaw, and when he read his text: 'Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee' (John 5:14), he could not contain, and in that sermon the Lord changed his heart, though so bitter an enemy that the minister on lecture-days was afraid to go to church before his shop door. 'Lo, these are parts of his ways, but how small a portion is known of him?'

The dropping of some grave and weighty word accidentally in the presence of vain carnal persons, the death of a husband, wife or child, a fit of sickness, with a thousand other such like occasions, have been thus improved by Providence to the conversion of souls. And no less remarkable and wonderful are the designs of Providence in ordering the removals and governing the movements of ministers from place to place, for the conversion of souls. Thus often it carries them to places where they did not intend to go, God having, unknown to them, some elect vessels there who must be called by the Gospel.

Thus Paul and Timothy, a sweet and lovely pair, when they were traveling through Phrygia and Galatia, were forbidden to preach the Word in Asia, to which probably their minds inclined (Acts 16:6), and when 'they essayed to go into Bithynia, the Spirit suffered them not' (Acts 16:7). But a man of Macedonia, i.e., an angel in the shape or habit of a man of that country, appeared to Paul in a vision and prayed him saying: 'Come over into Macedonia, and help us' (Acts 16:9), and there did God open the heart of Lydia.

I knew a pious minister, now with God, who, falling in his study upon a very rousing subject, intended for his own congregation, was strongly moved, when he had finished it, to go to a rude, vile, profane people about five miles off and first preach it to them. After many wrestlings with himself, not being willing to quench any motion that might be supposed to come from the Spirit of God, he obeyed and went to this people, who had then no minister of their own and few durst come among them. And there did the Lord, beyond all expectation, open a door, and several profane ones received Christ in that place and engaged this minister to a weekly lecture among them, in which many souls were won to God. The same holy man at another time, being upon a journey, passed by a company of vain persons, who were wrestling upon a green near the road. Just as he came near the place one of them had thrown his antagonist and stood triumphing in his

strength and activity. This good man rode up to them, and turning his speech to this person, told him: ‘Friend, I see that you are a strong man, but let not the strong man glory in his strength: you must know that you are not to wrestle with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, and spiritual wickednesses. How sad will it be that Satan should at last trip up the heels of your hope, and give you an eternal overthrow!’ After about a quarter of an hour’s serious discourse upon this subject, he left them and went on his journey, but this discourse made such an impression, that the person had no rest till he confided his trouble to a godly minister, who wisely following the work upon his soul, saw at last the blessed issue thereof in the gracious change of the person, of which he afterwards gave the minister a joyful account. O how unsearchable are the methods of Providence in this matter!

Nay, what is yet more wonderful, the Providence of God has sometimes ordered the very malice of Satan and wickedness of men as an occasion of eternal good to their souls. A very memorable example of this I shall here give the reader, faithfully relating what, not many years past, occurred in my own observation in this place, to the astonishment of many spectators. In the year 1673, there came into this port a ship of Poole, in her return from Virginia. In this ship was one of that place, a lusty young man of twenty-three years of age, who was surgeon in the ship. This person in the voyage fell into a deep melancholy, which the devil greatly improved to serve his own design for the ruin of this poor man. However, it pleased the Lord to restrain him from any attempts upon his own life until he arrived here. But shortly after his arrival, upon the Lord’s day, early in the morning, being in bed with his brother, he took a knife prepared for that purpose and cut his own throat, and then leapt out of the bed, and though the wound was deep and large, yet thinking it might not soon enough dispatch his wretched life, desperately thrust it into his stomach and so lay wallowing in his own blood till his brother awakening made a cry for help. Hereupon a physician and a surgeon coming in, found the wound in his throat mortal, and all they could do at present was only to stitch it and apply a plaster with the design rather to enable him to speak for a little while than with any expectation of cure; for before that, he breathed through the wound and his voice was inarticulate. In this condition I found him that morning, and apprehending him to be within a few minutes of eternity, I laboured to work upon his heart the sense of his condition, telling him I had but little time to do anything for him, and therefore I desired him to let me know what his own apprehensions of his present condition were. He told me he hoped in God for eternal life. I replied that I feared his hopes were ill-grounded, for the Scripture tells us: ‘No murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.’ But this was self-murder, the grossest of all murders, and insisting upon the aggravation and heinousness of the fact, I perceived his vain confidence began to fall and some meltings of heart appeared in him. He then began to lament with many tears his sin and misery and asked me if there might yet be hope for one that had destroyed himself and shed his own blood. I replied, the sin indeed is great but not unpardonable, and if the Lord gave him repentance unto life, and faith to apply to Jesus Christ, it should be certainly pardoned to him. Finding him unacquainted with these things, I explained to him the nature and necessity of faith and repentance, which he greedily sucked in and with great vehemence cried to God that He would work them upon his soul, and intreated me also to pray with him and for him that it might be so. I prayed with him and the Lord thawed his heart exceedingly in that duty. Loathe he was to part with me, but the duties of the day necessitating me to leave him, I briefly summed up what was most necessary in my parting counsel to him and took my leave, never expecting to see him more in this world. But beyond my own and all men’s expectation, he continued all that day and panted

most ardently after Jesus Christ. No discourses pleased him but Christ and faith, and in this frame I found him in the evening. He rejoiced greatly to see me again and intreated me to continue my discourses upon these subjects; and after all told me: ‘Sir, the Lord has given me repentance for this sin; yea, and for every other sin. I see the evil of sin now, so as I never saw it before. O, I loathe myself; I am a vile creature in my own eyes! I do also believe; Lord, help my unbelief. I am heartily willing to take Christ upon His own terms. One thing only troubles me. I doubt this bloody sin will not be pardoned. Will Jesus Christ apply His blood to me, that have shed my own blood?’ I told him Christ shed His blood even for them that with wicked hands had shed the blood of Christ, and that was a sin of deeper guilt than his. ‘Well,’ said he, ‘I will cast myself upon Christ. Let him do by me what he will.’ And so I parted with him that night.

Next morning the wounds were to be opened, and then the opinion of the surgeons was that he would immediately expire. Accordingly, at his desire, I came that morning and found him in a most serious frame. I prayed with him, and then the wound in his stomach was opened, and by this time the ventricle itself was swollen out of the orifice of the wound and lay like a livid discoloured tripe upon his body and was also cut through; so that all concluded it was impossible for him to live. However they stitched the wound in the stomach, enlarged the orifice and fomented it, and wrought it again into his body, and so stitching up the skin, left him to the disposal of Providence. But so it was that both the deep wound in his throat and this in his stomach healed, and the more dangerous wound sin had made upon his soul, was, I trust, effectually healed also. I spent many hours with him in that sickness, and, after his return home, received this account from Mr Samuel Hardy, a minister in that town, part of which I shall transcribe.

Dear Sir,

I was much troubled at the sad providence in your town, but did much rejoice that he fell into such hands for his body and soul. You have taken much pains with him, and I hope to good purpose. I think, if ever a great and thorough work were done such a way, it is now, and if never the like, I am persuaded now it is. Never grow weary of such good works. One such instance is, methinks, enough to make you to abound in the work of the Lord all your days...

O how unsearchable are the ways of Providence in leading men to Christ! Let none be encouraged by this to sin that grace may abound. These are rare and singular instances of the mercy of God, and such as no presumptuous sinner can expect to find. It is only recited here to the honour of Providence, which works for the recovery of sinners in ways that we do not understand. As providence orders very strange occasions to awaken and arouse souls at first, so it works no less wonderfully in carrying on the work to perfection. This it does in two ways.

First, by quickening and reviving dying convictions and troubles for sin. Souls, after their first awakening, are apt to lose the sense and impression of their first troubles for sin, but Providence is vigilant to prevent it, and effectually prevents it. Sometimes Providence directs the minister to some discourse or passage that shall fall as pat as if the case of such a person had been studied by him and designedly spoken to. How often have I found this in the cases of many souls who have professed they have stood amazed to hear the very thoughts of their hearts revealed by the preacher, who knew nothing of them! Sometimes Providence directs them to some proper rousing Scripture that suits their present case, and sometimes it permits them to fall into some new sin which awakens all their former troubles again and puts a new efficacy and activity into the

conscience. The world is full of instances of all these cases, and because most Christians have experience of these things in themselves, it will be needless to recite them here. Search but a few years back, and you may remember that, according to this account, at least in some particulars, Providence ordered the matter with you. Have you not found some rod or other prepared by Providence to rouse you out of your security? Why, this is so common a thing with Christians that they many times presage an affliction coming from the frames they find their own hearts in.

Secondly, Providence gives great assistance to the work of the Spirit upon the soul, by ordering, supporting, relieving and cheering means, to prop up and comfort the soul when it is over-burdened and ready to sink in the depths of troubles. I remember Mr Bolton gives us one instance which fits both these cases, the reviving of convictions, and seasonable supports in the depths of troubles. It is of a person that by convictions had been fetched off from his wicked companions and entered into a reformed course of life. But after this, through the enticement of his old companions, the subtlety of Satan and corruption of his own heart, he again relapsed into the ways of sin. Then was providentially brought to his view that Scripture, Proverbs 1:24-26. This renewed his trouble, yea, aggravated it to a greater height than ever, insomuch that he could scarcely think, as it seems by the relation, his sin could be pardoned. But in this condition that text, Luke 17:4, was presented to him, which sweetly settled him in a sure and glorious peace. Nor can we here forget that miraculous work of Providence, in a time of great extremity, which was wrought for that good gentlewoman Mrs Honeywood, who under a deep and sad desertion, refused and put off all comfort, seeming to despair utterly of the grace and mercy of God. A worthy minister being one day with her and reasoning against her desperate conclusions, she took a Venice-glass from the table and said: ‘Sir, I am as sure to be damned as this glass is to be broken’, and therewith threw it forcibly to the ground. But to the astonishment of both, the glass remained whole and sound, which the minister taking up with admiration, rebuked her presumption and showed her what a wonder Providence had wrought for her satisfaction, and it greatly altered the attitude of her mind. ‘How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!’ (Romans 11:33). ‘Lo, these are parts of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him!’ (Job 26:14). And now let me expostulate a little with your soul, reader. Have you been duly aware of your obligation to Providence for this inestimable favour? O what it has done for you! There are various kinds of mercies conveyed to men by the hand of Providence, but none like this; in all the treasury of its benefits none is found like this. Did it cast you into the way of conversion, and order the means and occasions of it for you, when you little thought of any such thing? How dear and sweet should the remembrance of it be to your soul! methinks it should astonish and melt you every time you reflect upon it. Such mercies should never grow stale or look like common things to you, for do but seriously consider the following particulars.

How surprising was the mercy which Providence performed for you in that day! Providence had a design upon you for your eternal good, which you did not understand. The time of mercy was now fully come; the decree was now ready to bring forth that mercy, with which it had gone big from eternity, and its gracious design must be executed by the hand of Providence, so far as concerned the external means and instruments. How aptly did it cause all things to fall in with that design, though you did not know the meaning of it? Look over all the before-mentioned examples, and you will see the blessed work of conversion begun upon those souls, when they minded it no more than Saul did a kingdom that morning he went out ‘to seek his father’s asses’ (1 Samuel 9:3, 1

Samuel 9:20). Providence might truly have said to you in that day, as Christ said to Peter: 'What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know it hereafter' (John 13:7). God's thoughts are not as our thoughts; but as the heavens are higher than the earth so are His thoughts higher than ours, and His ways than our ways. Little did Zacchaeus think when he climbed up into the sycamore tree to see Christ as He passed that way what a design of mercy Christ had upon him, who took thence the occasion of becoming both his Guest and Saviour (Luke 19:5-8). And as little did some of you think what the aim of Providence was when you went, some out of custom, others out of curiosity, if not worse motives, to hear such a sermon. O how stupendous are the ways of God!

What a distinguishing and seasonable mercy was ushered in by Providence in that day! It brought you to the means of salvation in a good hour. In the very nick of time, when the angel troubled the waters, you were brought to the pool (John 5:4). Now the accepted day was come, the Spirit was in the ordinance or providence that converted you, and you were set in the way of it. It may be you had heard many hundred sermons before, but nothing would stick till now, because the hour was not come. The Lord did, as it were, call in the word for such a man, such a woman, and Providence said: 'Lord, here he is, I have brought him before thee.' There were many others under that sermon that received no such mercy. You yourselves had heard many before, but not to that advantage, as it is said: 'And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian' (Luke 4:27). So there were many poor, unconverted souls beside you under the Word that day, and it may be, to none of them was salvation sent that day but to you. O blessed Providence that set you in the way of mercy at that time!

What a weighty and important mercy was providentially directed to your souls that day. There are mercies of all sizes and kinds in the hands of Providence to dispense to the sons of men. Its left hand is full of blessings as well as its right. It has health and riches, honours and pleasures, as well as Christ and salvation to dispense. The world is full of its left hand favours, but the blessings of its right hand are invaluably precious and few there be that receive them. It performs thousands of kind offices for men; but among them all, this is the chiefest, to lead and direct them to Christ. For consider, of all mercies, this comes through most and greatest difficulties (Ephesians 1:19-20). This is a spiritual mercy, excelling in dignity of nature all others, more than gold excels the dirt under your feet (Revelation 3:18). One such gift is worth thousands of other mercies. This is a mercy immediately flowing out of the fountain of God's electing love, a mercy never dropped into any but an elect vessel (1 Thessalonians 1:4-5). This is a mercy that infallibly secures salvation; for as we may argue from conversion to election, looking back, so from conversion to salvation, looking forward (Hebrews 6:9).

Lastly, this is an eternal mercy, one which will stick by you when father, mother, wife, children, estate, honours, health and life shall fail you (John 4:14).

O, therefore, set a special mark upon that Providence that set you in the way of this mercy. It has performed that for you which all the ministers on earth and angels in heaven could never have performed. This is a mercy that puts weight and value into the smallest circumstance that relates to it.

06.04. Our Employment

Chapter 4

Our Employment

Another excellent performance of providence, respecting the good of both your bodies and souls, concerns that employment and calling it has ordered for you in this world. It has not only an eye upon your well-being in the world to come, but upon your well-being in this world also, and that very much depends upon the station and vocation to which it calls you.

Now the providence of God with respect to our civil callings may be displayed very takingly in the following particulars. In directing you to a calling in your youth, and not permitting you to live an idle, useless and sinful life, as many do who are but burdens to the earth, the wens of the body politic, serving only to disfigure and drain it, to eat what others earn. Sin brought in sweat (Genesis 3:19), but now, not to sweat increases sin. He that lives idly cannot live honestly, as is plainly enough intimated (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12). But when God puts men into a lawful calling, in which the labour of their hands or heads is sufficient for them, it is a very valuable mercy; for in so doing they ‘eat their own bread’ (2 Thessalonians 3:12). Many a sad temptation is happily prevented and they are ordinarily funished by it for works of mercy to others, and surely ‘it is more blessed to give than to receive.’

In ordering you to such callings and employments in the world as are not only lawful in themselves but most suitable to you. There are many persons employed in sinful trades and arts, merely to furnish other men’s lusts. They do not only sin in their employments, but their very employments are sinful. They trade for hell, and are factors for the devil. Demetrius and the craftsmen at Ephesus got their estates by making shrines for Diana (Acts 19:24-25), i.e., little cases or boxes with folding leaves, within which the image of that idol sat enshrined. These were carried about by the people in procession in honour of their idol. And at this day, how many wicked arts and employments are there invented, and multitudes of persons maintained by them, merely to gratify the pride and wantonness of a debauched age!

Now to have an honest and lawful employment, in which you do not dishonour God in benefiting yourselves, is no small mercy. But if it is not only lawful in itself, but suited to your genius and strength, there is a double mercy in it. Some poor creatures are engaged in callings that eat up their time and strength, and make their lives very uncomfortable to them. They have not only consuming and wasting employments in the world, but such as allow them little or no time for their general calling, and yet all this does but keep them and theirs alive. Therefore, if God has fitted you with an honest employment in which you have less toil than others, and more time for heavenly exercises, ascribe this benefit to the special care of Providence for you. In settling you in such an employment and calling in the world, as possibly neither yourselves nor parents could ever expect you should attain to. There are among us such persons as, on this account, are signally obliged to divine Providence. God has put them into such a way as neither they nor their

parents ever planned. For look how the needle in the compass turns now this way, then that way, and never ceases moving till it settles to the north point; just so it is in our settlement in the world. A child is now designed for this, then for that, but at last settles in that way of employment to which Providence designed him. How strangely are things wheeled about by Providence! Not what we or our parents, but what God designed shall take place. Amos was very meanly employed at first, but God designed him for a more honourable and comfortable calling (Amos 7:14-15). David followed the ewes, and probably never raised his thoughts to higher things in the days of his youth; but God made him the royal shepherd of a better flock (Psalms 78:70-71. Peter and Andrew were employed as fishermen, but Christ calls them from that to a higher calling, to be 'fishers of men' (Matthew 4:18-19). Pareus, when he was fourteen years old, was by the instigation of his stepmother placed with an apothecary; but Providence so wrought that he was taken off from that and fitted for the ministry, in which he became a fruitful and eminent instrument to the Church. James Andreas was, by reason of his father's inability to keep him at school, designed for a carpenter, but was afterwards, by the persuasion of friends and assistance of the church- flock, sent to Stuttgart, and thence to the University, and so attained to a very eminent station of service to the Church. A master builder Cecolampadius was by his father designed for a merchant; but his mother, by urgent entreaties, prevailed to keep him at school, and this man was a blessed instrument in the reformation of religion. I might easily cite multitudes of such, but a taste may suffice. In securing your estates from ruin. 'Hast thou not made an hedge about him, and all that he hath?' (Job 1:10). This is the enclosure of Providence, which secures to us what by its favour we acquire in the way of honest industry. In making your calling sufficient for you. It was the prayer of Moses for the tribe of Judah: 'Let his hands be sufficient for him' (Deuteronomy 33:7), and it is no small mercy if yours be so to you. Some there are that have work, but not strength to go through with it; others have strength, but no employment for it. Some have hands, and work for them; but it is not sufficient for them and theirs. If God bless your labours, so as to give you and yours necessary supports and comfort in the world by it, it is a choice providence, and with all thankfulness to be acknowledged.

If any that fear God shall complain that, although they have a calling, yet it is a hard and laborious one, which takes up too much of their time which they would gladly employ in other and better work, I answer that it is likely that the wisdom of Providence foresaw this to be the most suitable and proper employment for you; and if you had more ease and rest, you might have more temptations than now you have. The strength and time which is now taken up in your daily labours, in which you serve God, might otherwise have been spent upon such lusts in which you might have served the devil.

Moreover, hereby it may be your health is the better preserved, and natural refreshments made the sweeter to you. 'The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep' (Ecclesiastes 5:12). And as to the service of God, if your hearts are spiritual, you may enjoy much communion with God in your very employments, and you have some intervals and respites for that purpose. Have you not more spare hours than you employ to that end?

'But all my labours will scarcely suffice to procure me and mine the necessaries of life. I am kept short and low to what others are, and this is a sad affliction.'

Though the wisdom of Providence has ordered you a lower and poorer condition than others, yet consider how many there are that are lower than you in the world. You have but little of the world, yet others have less. Read the description of those persons (Job 30:4, etc.). If God has given you but a small portion of the world, yet if you are godly He has promised never to forsake you (Hebrews 13:5). Providence has ordered that condition for you which is really best for your eternal good. If you had more of the world than you have, your heads and hearts might not be able to manage it to your advantage. A small boat must have but a narrow sail. You have not lacked hitherto the necessities of life, and are commanded 'having food and raiment (though none of the finest) to be therewith content.' 'A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked' (Psalms 37:16): better in the acquisition, sweeter in the fruition, and more comfortable in the account.

Well then, if Providence has so disposed of you all, that you can eat your own bread, and so advantageously directed some of you to employments that afford, not only necessities for yourselves and families, but a surplus for works of mercy to others, and all this brought about for you in a way you did not plan; let God be owned and honoured in this providence. Will you not henceforth call Him: 'My Father, the guide of my youth' (Jeremiah 3:4)? Surely it was the Lord that guided you to settle as you did in those days of your youth; you reap at this day, and may to your last day, the fruits of those early providences in your youth.

Now see that you walk answerably to the obligations of Providence in this particular; and see to it in the fear of God that you do not abuse any of those things to His dishonour which He has wrought for your comfort. To prevent this, I will here drop a few needful cautions, and conclude this particular point. Do not be slothful and idle in your vocations. It is said that Augustus built an Apragapolis, a city void of business; but I am sure God never erected any city, town or family to that end. The command to Adam (Genesis 3:19) no doubt reaches all his posterity, and Gospel-commands bind it upon Christians (Romans 12:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:11). If you are negligent, you cannot be innocent. And yet do not be so intent upon your particular callings as to make them interfere with your general calling. Beware you do not lose your God in the crowd and hurry of earthly business. Mind that solemn warning: 'But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition' (1 Timothy 6:9). The inhabitants of Oenoe, a dry island near Athens, bestowed much labour to draw in a river to water it and make it fruitful. But when the sluices were opened, the waters flowed so abundantly that it overflowed the island and drowned the inhabitants. The application is obvious. It was an excellent saying of Seneca: 'I do not give, but lend myself to business.'

Remember always the success of your callings and earthly employments is by divine blessing, not human diligence alone. 'But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God; for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth' (Deuteronomy 8:18). The devil himself was so far orthodox as to acknowledge it: 'Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands' (Job 1:10). Recommend therefore your affairs to God in prayer. 'Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass' (Psalms 37:4-5). And do not meddle with that which you cannot recommend to God in prayer for a blessing. Be well satisfied in that station and employment in which Providence has placed you, and do not so much as wish yourself in another. 'Let every man abide in the same calling

wherein he was called' (1 Corinthians 7:20). Providence is wiser than you, and you may be confident it has suited all things better to your eternal good than you could do had you been left to your own option.

06.05. Family Affairs

Chapter 5

Family Affairs

That Providence has a special hand in our marriage is evident both from Scripture assertions and the acknowledgments of holy men, who in that great event of their lives have still owned and acknowledged the directing hand of Providence. Take an instance of both. The Scripture plainly asserts the dominion of Providence over this affair: ‘A prudent wife is from the LORD’ (Proverbs 19:14). ‘Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD’ (Proverbs 18:22). So for children: ‘Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD; and the fruit of the womb is his reward’ (Psalms 127:3). And it has ever been the practice of holy men to seek the Lord for direction and counsel, when they have been changing their condition. No doubt but Abraham’s encouragement in that case was the fruit of prayer. His pious servant also, who was employed in that affair, did both earnestly seek counsel of God, and thankfully acknowledge His gracious providence in guiding it (Genesis 24:7, Genesis 24:12, Genesis 24:26-27). The same we may observe in children, the fruit of marriage (1 Samuel 1:20; Luke 1:13-14). Now the Providence of God may be in various ways displayed for the engaging of our hearts in love to the God of our mercies.

There is very much of Providence seen in appointing the parties for each other. In this the Lord often goes beyond our thoughts and plans; yea, and often crosses men’s desires and designs to their great advantage. Not what they expect, but what His infinite wisdom judges best and most beneficial for them takes place. Hence it is that probabilities are so often dashed, and things remote and utterly improbable are brought about, in very strange and unaccountable methods of Providence.

There is much of Providence seen in the harmony and agreeableness of temperaments and dispositions, from which a very great part of the tranquillity and comforts of our lives results. Or at least, though natural temperament and education did not so much harmonize before, yet they do so after they come under the ordinance of God: ‘And they shall be one flesh’ (Genesis 2:24). Not one only in respect of God’s institution, but one in respect of love and affection, that those who so lately were mere strangers to each other are now endeared to a degree beyond the nearest relations in blood: ‘Therefore shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be one flesh.’ But Providence is especially remarkable in making one instrumental to the eternal good of the other: ‘What knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?’ (1 Corinthians 7:16). Hence is that grave exhortation to the wives of unbelieving husbands to win them by their conversation, which should be to them instead of an ordinance (1 Peter 3:1). Or if both are gracious, then what singular assistance and mutual help is hereby gained to the furtherance of their eternal good whilst they live together ‘as heirs together of the grace of life’ (1 Peter 3:7). O blessed Providence that directed such into so intimate relation on earth, who shall inherit together the common salvation of

heaven!

How much of Providence is seen in children, the fruit of marriage! To have any posterity in the earth, and not be left altogether as a dry tree; to have comfort and joy in them is a special providence, importing a special mercy to us. To have the breaches made upon our families repaired, is a providence to be owned with a thankful heart. When God shall say to a man, as he speaks in another case to the Church: ‘The children which thou shalt have after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears: The place is too strait for me’ (Isaiah 49:20). And these providences will appear more affectingly sweet and lovely to you, if you but compare God’s allotments to you with what He has allotted to many others in the world. For do but look around and you will find multitudes unequally yoked, to the embittering of their lives, whose relations are clogs and hindrances both in things temporal and spiritual. Yea, we find an account in Scripture of gracious persons, a great part of whose comfort in this world has been split upon this rock. Abigail was a discreet and virtuous woman, but very unsuitably matched to a churlish Nabal (1 Samuel 25:25). What a temptation to the neglect of a known duty prevailed upon the renowned Moses by the means of Zipporah his wife (Exodus 4:24-25). David had his scoffing Michal (2 Samuel 6:20), and patient Job no small addition to all his other afflictions from the wife of his bosom, who should have been a support to him in the day of his troubles (Job 2:9-10; Job 19:17). No doubt but God sanctifies such rods to His people’s good. If Socrates knew how to improve his affliction in his Xanthippe to the increase of his patience, much more will they who converse with God under all providences, whether sweet or bitter. Nevertheless this must be acknowledged to be a sad stroke upon any person, and such as maims them upon the working hand, by unfitting them for duty (1 Peter 3:7) and cuts off much of the comfort of life also.

How many there are who never enjoy the comfortable fruits of marriage, but are denied the sight, or at least the enjoyment of children! ‘Thus saith the LORD: Write this man childless’ (Jeremiah 22:30), or if they have children, yet cannot enjoy them: ‘Though they bring up their children, yet will I bereave them that there shall not be a man left’ (Hosea 9:12), who only bear for the grave, and have their expectations raised for a greater affliction to themselves. And it is no rare or unusual thing to see children and near relations the greatest instruments of affliction to their parents and friends, so that after all their other sorrows and troubles in the world, nearest relations bring up the rear of sorrows and prove greater griefs than any other. O how many parents have complained with the tree in the fable, that their very hearts have been riven asunder with those wedges that were cut out of their own bodies! What a grief was Esau to Isaac and Rebecca (Genesis 26:34-35)! what scourges were Absalom and Amnon to David!

Well then, if God has set ‘the solitary in families’ (Psalms 68:6), built a house for the desolate, given you comfortable relations, which are springs of daily comfort and refreshment to you, you are upon many accounts engaged to walk answerably to these gracious providences. And that you may understand wherein that decorum and agreeable comportment with these providences consists, take up the sense of your duty in these brief hints:

Ascribe to God the glory of all those providential works which yield you comfort. You see a wise, directing, governing Providence, which has disposed and ordered all things beyond your own plans and designs: ‘The way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps’ (Jeremiah 10:23). Not what you planned, but what a higher counsel than yours determined

is come to pass. Good Jacob, when God had made him the father of a family, admired God in the mercy. ‘For with my staff,’ said he, ‘I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands’ (Genesis 32:10). And how this mercy humbles and melts him! ‘I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant.

’ Be exact in discharging the duties of those relations which so gracious a Providence has led you into. Do not abuse the effects of so much mercy and love to you. The Lord expects praise wherever you have comfort. This aggravated David’s sin, that he should dare to abuse so great love and mercy as God had shown him in his family relations (2 Samuel 12:7-9).

Use relations to the end Providence designed them. Walk together as co-heirs of the grace of life; study to be mutual blessings to each other; so walk in your relations that the parting day may be sweet. Death will shortly break up the family; and then nothing but the sense of duty discharged, or the neglects pardoned, will give comfort.

Another gracious performance of Providence for us is seen in making provision from time to time for us and our families. I the rather put these providences together in this place because I find the Scripture does so. ‘Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction, and maketh him families like a flock’ (Psalms 107:41).

You know the promises God has made to His people: ‘The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing’ (Psalms 34:10). And have you not also seen the constant performance of it? Cannot you give the same answer, if the same question were propounded to you, which the disciples did: ‘When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? and they said, Nothing’ (Luke 22:35)? Can you not with Jacob call him ‘the God which fed me all my life long’? (Genesis 48:15). Surely ‘he hath given meat unto them that fear him; he will ever be mindful of his covenant’ (Psalms 111:5). To display this Providence we will consider it in the following particulars: The assiduity and constancy of the care of Providence for the saints. His mercies ‘are new every morning’ (Lamentations 3:23). It is not just the supply of one or two pressing needs, but all your wants, as they grow from day to day through all your days. ‘The God which fed me all my life long’ (Genesis 48:15). The care of Providence runs parallel with the line of life: ‘Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb: and even to your old age I am he, and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear, even I will carry, and will deliver you’ (Isaiah 46:3-4). So that as God bade Israel to remember ‘from Shittim unto Gilgal that ye may know the righteousness of the LORD’ (Micah 6:5), so would I persuade you, reader, to record the ways of Providence, from first to last, throughout your whole course to this day, that you may see what a God He has been to you. The seasonableness and opportuneness of its provisions for them, for so runs the promise: ‘When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them’ (Isaiah 41:17), and so has the performance of it been. And this has been made good to distressed saints sometimes in a more ordinary way, God secretly blessing a little, and making it sufficient for us and ours. Job tells us of ‘when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle’ (Job 29:4), i.e., his secret blessing is in their tabernacles. It is by reason of this that they subsist, but it is in an unaccountable way that they do so. And sometimes in an extraordinary way it breaks forth for their supply. So you find the cruse and barrel fail not (1 Kings 17:9-14).

Samuel Clarke, in the life of that painstaking and humble servant of Christ, John Foxe, records a memorable instance of Providence, and it is this. Towards the end of King Henry VIII's reign he went to London, where he quickly spent what little his friends had given him, or he had acquired by his own diligence, and began to be in great want. As one day he sat in Paul's Church, spent with long fasting, his countenance thin and his eyes hollow, after the ghastly manner of dying men, every one shunning a spectacle of so much horror, there came to him one whom he had never seen before, who thrust an untold sum of money into his hand, bidding him be of good cheer and accept that small gift in good part from his countryman; and that he should make much of himself, for that within a few days new hopes were at hand, and a more certain condition of livelihood. Three days after, the duchess of Richmond sent for him to live in her house and be tutor to the earl of Surrey's children, then under her care.

Isaac Ambrose, a worthy divine, whose labours have made him acceptable to his generation, in his epistle to the Earl of Bedford, prefixed to his Last Things, gives a pregnant instance in his own experience. His words are these: 'For mine own part, however, the Lord has seen cause to give me but a poor pittance of outward things, for which I bless His name; yet in the income thereof, I have many times observed so much of His peculiar providence, that thereby they have been very much sweetened, and my heart has been raised to admire His grace. When of late, under a hard dispensation, which I judge not meet to mention, in which I suffered conscientiously, all streams of wonted supplies being stopped, the waters of relief for myself and family did run low. I went to bed with some staggerings and doubtings of the fountain's letting out itself for our refreshing; but ere I did awake in the morning, a letter was brought to my bedside, which was signed by a choice friend, Mr Antony Ash, which reported some unexpected breakings out of God's goodness for my comfort.' These are some of his lines: 'Your God, who has given you a heart thankfully to record your experiences of His goodness, does renew experiences for your encouragement. Now I shall report one which will raise your spirit toward the God of your mercies.' Whereupon he sweetly concludes: 'One morsel of God's provision, especially when it comes in unexpected, and upon prayer, when wants are most, will be more sweet to a spiritual relish than all former enjoyments were.' The wisdom of Providence in our provisions. And this is seen in proportioning the quantity, not satisfying our extravagant wishes, but answering our real needs; consulting our wants, not our wantonness. 'But my God shall supply all your need' (Php 4:19), and this has exactly suited the wishes of the best and wisest men, who desired no more at His hand. So Jacob (Genesis 28:20) and Agur (Proverbs 30:8-9). Wise Providence considers our condition as pilgrims and strangers, and so allots the provision that is needful for our passage home. It knows the mischievous influence of fullness and excess upon most men, though sanctified, and how apt it is to make them remiss and forgetful of God (Deuteronomy 6:12) so that their heart, like the moon, suffers an eclipse when it is at the full; and so suits and orders all to their best advantage. The wisdom of Providence is also greatly revealed in the manner of dispensing our portion to us. It many times allows our wants to pinch hard, and many fears to arise, with a design to magnify the care and love of God in the supply (Deuteronomy 8:3). Providence so orders the case, that faith and prayer come between our wants and supplies, and the goodness of God may be the more magnified in our eyes thereby. And now let me beg you to consider the good hand of Providence that has provided for, and suitably supplied you and yours all your days, and never failed you hitherto. And labour to walk suitably to your experience of such mercies. That you may do this, let me press a few suitable cautions upon you.

Beware that you do not forget the care and kindness of Providence which your eyes have seen in so many fruits and experiences. It was God's charge against Israel 'that they soon forgat his works' (Psalms 106:13). A bad heart and a slippery memory deprive men of the comfort of many mercies, and defraud God of the glory due for them. Do not distrust Providence in future exigencies. Thus they did: 'Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people?' (Psalms 78:20). How unreasonable and absurd are these queries of unbelief, especially after their eyes had seen the power of God in such extraordinary works. Do not murmur and complain under new straits. This is a vile temper, and yet how natural to us when wants press hard upon us! Ah, did we but rightly understand what the demerit of sin is, we would rather admire the bounty of God than complain of the straighthandedness of Providence. And if we did but consider that there lies upon God no obligation of justice or gratitude to reward any of our duties, it would cure our murmurs (Genesis 32:10). Do not show the least discontent at the lot and portion Providence carves out for you. O that you would be well pleased and satisfied with all its appointments! Say: 'The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage' (Psalms 16:6). Surely that is best for you which Providence has appointed, and one day you yourselves will judge it so to be. Do not neglect prayer when straits befall you. You see it is Providence dispenses all, you live upon it; therefore apply yourselves to God in the times of need. This is evidently included in the promise (Isaiah 41:17) as well as expressed in the command (Php 4:6). Remember God, and He will not forget you. Do not worry your hearts with sinful cares. 'Behold the fowls of the air' (Matthew 6:26), says Christ; not the fowls at the door that are daily fed by hand, but those of the air, that do not know where the next meal is coming from; and yet God provides for them. Remember your relation to Christ, and His engagements by promise to you, and by these things work your hearts to satisfaction and contentment with all the allotments of Providence.

06.06. Preservation of the Saints from Evil

Chapter 6

Preservation of the Saints from Evil

A further great advantage and mercy the saints receive from the hand of Providence is in their preservation from the snares and temptations of sin, by its preventing care over them. That Providence wards off many a deadly stroke of temptation and many a mortal thrust which Satan makes at our souls is a truth as manifest as the light that shines. This is included in that promise: God ‘will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it’ (1 Corinthians 10:13). Providence gives an outlet for the soul’s escape when it is shut up in the dangerous straits of temptation. There are two eminent ways by which the force and efficacy of temptation is broken in believers. One is by the operation of internal grace. ‘The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would’ (Galatians 5:17), i.e., sanctification gives sin a miscarrying womb after it has conceived in the soul. The other way is by the external working of Providence; and of this I intend to speak here. The Providence of God is the great barrier and hindrance to a world of sin, which otherwise would break forth like an overflowing flood from our corrupt natures. It prevents abundance of sin, which otherwise wicked men would commit (Genesis 19:11). The Sodomites were greedily pursuing their lusts; God providentially hinders it by smiting them blind. Jeroboam intends to smite the prophet; Providence interposed and withered his arm (1 Kings 13:4). Thus you see, when wicked men have contrived and are ready to execute their wickedness, Providence claps on its manacles ‘so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise’ (Job 5:12). And so much corruption there remains in good men that they would certainly plunge themselves under much more guilt than they do if Providence did not take greater care of them than they do of themselves. For though they make conscience of keeping themselves, and daily watch their hearts and ways, yet such is the deceitfulness of sin that if Providence did not lay blocks in their way, it would, more frequently than it does, entangle and defile them. And this it does in several ways.

Sometimes by stirring up others to interpose with seasonable counsels, which effectually dissuade them from prosecuting an evil design. Thus Abigail meets David in the nick of time, and dissuades him from his evil purpose (1 Samuel 25:34). And I find it recorded, as on another account was noted before, of that holy man Mr. Dod, that being late at night in his study, he was strongly moved, though at an unseasonable hour, to visit a gentleman of his acquaintance. Not knowing what might be the design of Providence in this, he obeyed and went. When he came to the house, after a few knocks on the door, the gentleman himself came to him and asked him whether he had any business with him. Mr. Dod answered, No; but that he could not be quiet till he had seen him. O, Sir, replied the gentleman, you are sent of God at this hour, for just now (and with that takes the halter out of his pocket) I was going to destroy myself. And thus was the mischief prevented.

Sometimes by hindering the means and instruments, whereby the evil itself is prevented. Thus, when good Jehoshaphat had joined himself with that wicked King Ahaziah to build ships at

Ezion-gaber to go to Tarshish, God prevents the design by breaking the ships with a storm (2 Chronicles 20:35-37). We find also in the life of Mr. Bolton, written by Mr. Bagshaw, that while he was in Oxford he had familiar acquaintance with Mr. Anderton, a good scholar, but a strong papist, who knowing Mr. Bolton's natural gifts, and perceiving that he was in some outward need, took this advantage and used many arguments to persuade him to be reconciled to the Church of Rome, and to go over with him to the English seminary, assuring him he should be furnished with all necessities and have gold enough. Mr. Bolton being at that time poor in mind and purse, accepted the invitation, and a day and place was appointed in Lancashire, where they should meet and take shipping and be gone. But Mr. Anderton did not come, and so he escaped the snare.

Sometimes by laying some strong affliction upon the body, to prevent a worse evil. And this is the meaning of: 'I will hedge up thy way with thorns' (Hosea 2:6). Thus Basil was a long time exercised with a violent headache which he observed was used by Providence to prevent lust. Paul had a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him; and this affliction, whatever it was, was ordained to prevent pride in him (2 Corinthians 12:7).

Sometimes sin is prevented in the saints by the better information of their minds at the sacred oracles of God. Thus, when sinful motions began to rise in Asaph's mind, from the prosperity of the wicked and his own afflicted state, and grew to such a height that he began to think all he had done in the way of religion was little better than lost labour, he is set right again, and the temptation dissolved, by going into the sanctuary, where God showed him how to take new measures of persons and things, to judge them by their ends and issues, not their present appearances (Psalms 73:12-13, Psalms 73:17). And sometimes the Providence of God prevents the sins of His people by removing them out of the way of temptations by death. In this sense we may understand that text: 'The righteous is taken away from the evil to come' (Isaiah 57:1); the evil of sin as well as sufferings. When the Lord sees His people low-spirited and not able to grapple with strong trials and temptations which are drawing on, it is for them a merciful Providence to be released by death and set out of harm's way.

Now consider and admire the Providence of God, O ye saints, who has had more care of your souls than ever you had of them. Had not the Providence of God thus wrought for you in a way of prevention, it may be you had this day been so many Magor Missabibs (See Jeremiah 20:3-4). How was the heart of David melted under that preventing providence aforementioned (1 Samuel 25:32-34). He blesses the Lord, the instrument and that counsel by which his soul was preserved from sin. Do but seriously think of a few particulars about this case.

Think how your corrupt natures have often impetuously hurried you on towards sin, so that all the inherent grace you had could not withstand its force, if Providence had not prevented it in some such way as you have heard. 'But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed' (James 1:14). You found yourselves but feathers in the wind of temptation.

How near you have been brought to the brink of sin, and yet saved by a merciful hand of Providence. May you not say with one: 'I was almost in all evil' (Proverbs 5:14), and 'My feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped' (Psalms 73:2). O merciful Providence that stepped in so opportunely to your relief!

How many have been allowed to fall by the hand of temptations, to the reproach of religion and wounding of their own consciences, so far that they have never recovered their former peace again, but lived in the world devoid of comfort to their dying day!

How woeful your case had been if the Lord had not mercifully saved you from many thousand temptations that have assaulted you! I tell you, you cannot estimate the mercies you possess by means of such providences. Are your names sweet, and your consciences peaceful, two mercies as dear to you as your two eyes? Why surely you owe them, if not wholly yet in great measure, to the aids and assistances Providence has given you all along the way you have passed through the dangerous tempting world to this day.

Walk therefore suitably to this obligation of Providence also. And see that you thankfully own it. Do not impute your escapes from sin to accidents, or to your own watchfulness or wisdom.

See also that you do not tempt Providence on the other hand, by an irregular reliance upon its care over you, without taking all due care of yourselves. ‘Keep yourselves in the love of God’ (Jude 1:21); ‘Keep thy heart with all diligence’ (Proverbs 4:23). Though Providence keep you, yet it is in the way of your duty.

Thus you see what care Providence has had over your souls in preventing the spiritual dangers and miseries that otherwise would have befallen you in the way of temptations. In the next place I will show you that it has been no less concerned about your bodies, and with great tenderness it has carried them in its arms through innumerable hazards and dangers also. ‘He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep’ (Psalms 121:4); ‘He is the preserver of men’ (Job 7:20). To display the glory of this Providence before you, let us take into consideration the perils into which the best of men sometimes fall, and the ways and means by which Providence preserves them in those dangers.

There are many hazards into which we are often cast in this world. The Apostle Paul gives us a general account of his dangers (2 Corinthians 11:26), and how great a wonder is it that our life has not been extinguished in some of those dangers we have been in! Have not some of us fallen, and that often, into very dangerous sicknesses and diseases, in which we have approached to the very brink of the grave (Job 33:18, Job 33:21, Job 33:28), and have or might have said with Hezekiah: ‘I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave: I am deprived of the residue of my years’ (Isaiah 38:10)? Have we not often had the sentence of death in ourselves? and our bodies at that time been like a leaky ship in a storm, as one aptly resembles it (Thomas Goodwin in his Aggravation of Sin Against Mercy), that has taken in water on every side, till it was ready to sink? Yet has God preserved, repaired and launched us out again as well as ever. O what a wonder is it that such a crazy body should be preserved so many years, and survive so many dangers! Surely it is not more wonderful to see a Venice-glass pass from hand to hand in continual use for forty or fifty years, and still to remain whole, notwithstanding the many knocks and falls it has had. If you enjoy health, or recover from sicknesses, it is because he puts ‘none of these diseases upon thee,’ or because he is ‘the LORD that healeth thee’ (Exodus 15:26).

How many deadly dangers has His hand rescued some of you from, in those years of confusion and public calamity when the sword was bathed in blood and made horrid slaughter, when, it may be, your lives were often given you for a prey! This David put a special remark upon: ‘O GOD the

Lord, the strength of my salvation: thou hast covered my head in the day of battle' (Psalms 140:7).

Beza, being in France in the first Civil War and there tossed up and down for two and twenty months, recorded six hundred deliverances from dangers in that space, for which he solemnly gave God thanks in his last testament. If the sword did not destroy you, it was because God did not give it a commission to do so.

Many of you have seen wonders of salvation upon the deeps, where the hand of God has been signally stretched forth for your rescue and deliverance. This is elegantly expressed in Psalms 107:23-27 (which I have elsewhere expounded at large), concerning which you may say in a proper sense what the Psalmist says metaphorically: 'If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul' (Psalms 124:1, Psalms 124:4). To see men that have spent so many years upon the seas, where your lives have continually hung in suspense before you, attain to your years, when you could neither be reckoned among the living or the dead, as seamen are not, O what cause have you to adore your great Preserver! Many thousands of your companions are gone down, and you are yet here to praise the Lord among the living. You have bordered nearer to eternity all your days than others, and often been in eminent perils upon the seas. Surely these and so many salvations call aloud to you for most thankful acknowledgments.

What innumerable hazards and accidents, the least of which have cut off others, has God carried us all through! I think I may safely say your privative and positive mercies of this kind are more in number than the hairs of your heads. Many thousands of these dangers we never saw, nor were made particularly aware of, but though we did not see them, our God did, and brought us out of danger before He brought us into fear. Some have been evident to us, and those so remarkable that we cannot think or speak of them to this day, but our souls are freshly affected with those mercies.

It is recorded of our famous Jewel, that about the beginning of Queen Mary's reign, the inquisition taking hold of him in Oxford, he fled to London by night; but providentially losing the road, he escaped the inquisitors who pursued him. However, he fell that night into another imminent hazard of life, for wandering up and down in the snow, he fainted and lay starving in the way, panting and labouring for life, at which time Latimer's servant found and saved him.

It would be easy to multiply examples of this kind; histories abound with them. But I think there are few of us but are furnished out of our own experience abundantly; so that I shall rather choose to press home the sense of these providences upon you, in order that you may make a suitable return to the God of your mercies for them, than add more instances of this kind. To this purpose I desire you seriously to weigh the following particulars.

Consider what you owe to Providence for your protection, by which your life has been protracted unto this day, with the usefulness and comfort thereof. Look around in the world, and you may daily see some in every place who are objects of pity, bereaved by sad accidents of all the comforts of life, while in the meantime Providence has tenderly preserved you. 'He keepeth all his bones, not one of them is broken' (Psalms 34:20). Is the elegant and comely structure of your body unspoiled, your members not deformed, or made so many seats of torment, neither the usefulness of any part deprived? Why, this is because Providence never left its hold of you since

you came out of the womb, but with a watchful eye and tender hand has guarded you in every place, and kept you as its charge.

Consider how every member which has been so tenderly kept, has nevertheless been an instrument of sin against the Lord; and that not only in the days of your unregeneracy, when you yielded ‘your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin’ (Romans 6:13), but even since you gave them up in covenant unto the Lord as dedicated instruments to His service; and yet how tender has Providence been over them! You have often provoked Him to afflict you in every part, and lay penal evil upon every member that has been instrumental in moral evil. But O, how great have His compassions been towards you, and His patience how wonderful!

Consider what is the aim of Providence in all the tender care it has manifested for you. Why does it protect you so assiduously, and suffer no evil to befall you? Is it not that you should employ your bodies for God, and cheerfully apply yourselves to that service He has called you to? Doubtless this is the end and goal of these mercies; or else to what purpose are they afforded you? Your bodies are a part of Christ’s purchase, as well as your souls (1 Corinthians 6:19). They are committed to the charge and tutelage of angels (Hebrews 1:14), who have performed many services for them. They are dedicated by yourselves to the Lord, and that upon the highest account (Romans 12:1). They have already been the subjects of many mercies in this world (Psalms 35:10), and shall partake of singular glory and happiness in the world to come (Php 3:21). And shall they not then be employed, yea, cheerfully worn out, in His service? How reasonable it is they should be so! Why are they so tenderly preserved by God, if they must not be used for God?

06.07. The Work of Sanctification

Chapter 7

The Work of Sanctification

There is an eminent favour Providence bestows on the saints, which has not yet been considered, and indeed is too little minded by us, and that is the aid and assistance it gives the people of God in the great work of mortification.

Mortification of our sinful affections and passions is one half of our sanctification: ‘dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God’ (Romans 6:11). It is the great evidence of our interest in Christ (Romans 6:5-9; Galatians 5:24). It is our safety in the hour of temptation. The corruptions in the world are through lust (2 Peter 1:4). Our instrumental fitness for service depends much upon it (John 15:2; 2 Timothy 2:21). How great a service to our souls therefore must that be, by which this blessed work is carried on in them!

Now there are two means or instruments employed in this work. The Spirit, who effects it internally (Romans 8:13), and Providence, which assists it externally. The Spirit indeed is the principal agent, upon whose operation the success of this work depends, and all the providences in the world can never effect it without Him. But they are secondary and subordinate means, which, by the blessing of the Spirit upon them, have a great part in the work. How they are so serviceable to this end and purpose, I shall now explain. The most wise God orders the dispensations of Providence in a blessed subordination to the work of His Spirit. There is a sweet harmony between them in their distinct workings. They all meet in that one blessed issue to which God has by the counsel of His will directed them (Romans 8:28; Ephesians 1:11). Hence it is that the Spirit is said to be in, and to order the motions of the wheels of Providence (Ezekiel 1:20), and so they move together by consent. Now one great part of the Spirit’s internal work being to destroy sin in the people of God, see how conformable to His design external providences are steered and ordered in the following particulars.

There is in all the regenerate a strong propensity and inclination to sin, and in that lies a principal part of the power of sin. Of this Paul sadly complains: ‘But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members, (Romans 7:23): and every believer daily finds it to his grief. O, it is hard to forbear those things that grieve God. God has made a hedge about us, and fenced us against sin by His laws; but there is a proneness in nature to break over the hedge, and that against the very opposition of the Spirit of God in us. Now see in this case the concurrence and assistance of Providence for the prevention of sin. As the Spirit internally resists those sinful inclinations, so Providence externally lays bars and blocks in our way to hinder and prevent sin (Job 33:17-19; Hosea 2:6; 2 Corinthians 12:7). There is many a bodily ailment inflicted on this very score, to be a clog to prevent sin. O bear them patiently upon this consideration. Basil was sorely grieved with an inveterate headache; he earnestly prayed it might be removed; God removed it. No sooner was he freed of this clog, but

he felt the inordinate motions of lust, which made him pray for his headache again. So it might be with many of us, if our clogs were off. At this point it may be asked whether it is proper for a gracious spirit to forbear sin because of the rod of affliction? He has surely higher motives and nobler principles than these. This is the attitude of a carnal and slavish spirit!

Indeed it is so when this is the sole or principal restraint from sin, when a man does not abhor sin because of the intrinsic filth, but only because of the troublesome consequences and effects. But this is vastly different from the case of the saints under sanctified afflictions; for as they have higher motives and nobler principles, so they have lower and natural feelings too; and these are, in their kind and place, very useful to them.

Besides, you must know that afflictions work in another way upon gracious hearts to restrain them from sin, or warn them against sin, than they do upon others. It is not so much the smart of the rod which they feel, as the token of God's displeasure, which frightens and scares them. 'Thou renewest thy witnesses against me' (Job 10:17), and this is that which principally affects them. 'O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure' (Psalms 6:1). 'O LORD, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing' (Jeremiah 10:24): and surely this is no low and common argument.

Notwithstanding this double fence of God's command and preventive afflictions, yet sin is too hard for the best of men; their corruptions carry them through all to sin. And when it is so, not only does the Spirit work internally, but Providence also works externally in order to subdue them. The ways of sin are not only made bitter to them by the remorse of conscience, but by those afflictive rods upon the outward man, with which God also follows it; and in both these respects I find that text expounded: 'Whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him' (Ecclesiastes 10:8). If, as some expound it, the hedge is the law of God, then the serpent is the remorse of conscience, and the sharp teeth of affliction, which he shall quickly feel, if he is one that belongs to God. The design and aim of these afflictive providences is to purge and cleanse believers from that pollution into which temptations have plunged them. 'By this, therefore, shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin' (Isaiah 27:9). To the same purpose is that place: 'Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word' (Psalms 119:67). These afflictions have the same use and end to our souls that frosty weather has upon those clothes that are laid out to be bleached; they alter the hue and make them whiter, which seems to be the allusion in those words: 'And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white' (Daniel 11:35). And here it may be queried upon what account afflictions are said to purge away the iniquities of the saints? Is it not unwarrantable and very dishonourable to Christ, to attribute to affliction that which is the peculiar honour of His blood?

It is confessed that the blood of Christ is the only fountain opened for sin, and that no afflictions, however many or strong or continual they are, can in themselves purge away the pollution of sin, as we see in wicked men who are afflicted, and afflicted, and again afflicted; and yet nevertheless sinful. And the torments of hell, however extreme, universal and continual they are, yet shall never fetch out the stain of one sin. But it is still true that a sanctified affliction may, in the efficacy and virtue of Christ's blood, produce such blessed effects upon the soul. Though a cross without a Christ never did any man any good, yet thousands have been indebted to the cross, as it has wrought in the virtue of His death for their good. And this is the case with those souls that this

discourse is concerned about.

We find the best hearts, if God bestow any comfortable enjoyment upon them, too apt to be overheated in their affections towards it, and to be too much taken up with these outward comforts. This also shows the great power and strength of corruption in the people of God, and must by some means or other be mortified in them. This was the case of Hezekiah whose heart was too much set upon his treasures; so that he could not hide a vainglorious disposition (Isaiah 39:2). Likewise good David (Psalms 30:7) thought his mountain, that is, his kingdom and the splendour and glory of his present state, had stood so fast that it should never be moved.

How the same good man set his heart and affections upon his beautiful son Absalom appears by the doleful lamentation he made at his death, prizing him above his own life, which was a thousand times more worth than he. So Jonah, when God raised up a gourd for him to shelter him from the sun, how excessively was he taken with it, and was exceedingly glad of it! But will God allow things to lie thus? Shall the creature purloin and draw away our affections from Him? No, this is our corruption, and God will purge it. And to this end He sends forth Providence to smite those creatures on which our affections are either inordinately or excessively set, or else to turn them into rods, and smite us with them. Is Hezekiah too much puffed up with his full exchequer? Why, those very Babylonians to whom he boasted of it, shall empty it and make a prey of it (Isaiah 39:6). Is David hugging himself in a fond conceit of the stability of his earthly splendour? Lo! how soon God beclouds all (Psalms 30:7). Is Absalom doted on, and crept too far into his good father's heart? This shall be the son of his sorrow, that shall seek after his father's life. Is Jonah so carried away with his gourd? God will prepare a worm to smite it (Jonah 4:6-7).

How many husbands, wives and children has Providence smitten for this very reason! It might have spared them longer, if they had been loved more regularly and moderately. This has blasted many an estate and hopeful project; and it is a merciful dispensation for our good. The strength of our unmortified corruption shows itself in our pride and the swelling vanity of our hearts when we have a name and esteem among men. When we are applauded and honoured, when we are admired for any gift or excellence that is in us, this draws forth the pride of the heart and shows the vanity that is in it. 'As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise' (Proverbs 27:21); i.e., as the furnace will reveal what dross is in the metal when it is melted, so will praise and commendations reveal what pride is in the heart of him that receives them. This made a good man say: 'He that praises me, wounds me.' And, which is more strange, this corruption may be felt in the heart, even when the last breath is ready to expire. It was the saying of one of the German divines, when those about him recounted for his encouragement the many services he had done for God, 'Take away the fire, for there is still the chaff of pride in me.' To crucify this corruption Providence takes off the bridle of restraint from ungodly men, and sometimes permits them to traduce the names of God's servants, as Shimei did David's. Yea, they shall fall into disesteem among their friends, as Paul did among the Corinthians; and all this to keep down the swelling of their spirits at the realization of those excellences that are in them. The design of these providences is nothing else but to hide pride from man. Yea, it deserves a special remark, that when some good men have been engaged in a public and eminent work, and have therein, it may be, too much sought their own applause, God has withheld His usual assistance at such times from them, and caused them so to falter in their work, that they have come off with shame and pity at such times, however ready and prepared they have been at other times. It would be easy to

give various remarkable examples to confirm this observation, but I pass on. The corruption of the heart shows itself in raising up great expectations to ourselves from the creature, and planning abundance of felicity and contentment from some promising and hopeful enjoyments we have in the world. This we find to have been the case of holy Job in the days of his prosperity: ‘Then I said, I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply my days as the sand’ (Job 29:18). But how soon were all these expectations dashed by a gloomy Providence, that benighted him in the noontide of his prosperity. And all this was for his good, to take off his heart more fully from creature expectations. We often find the best men overreckon themselves in worldly things, and overact their confidences about them. They that have great and well-grounded expectations from heaven, may have too great and ungrounded expectations from the earth. But when it is so, it is very usual for Providence to undermine their earthly hopes, and convince them by experience how vain they are. Thus, in Haggai 1:9, the people’s hearts were intently set upon prosperous providences, full harvests and great increase; while in the meantime no regard was had to the worship of God and the things of His house; therefore Providence blasts their hopes and brings them to little.

Corruption shows itself in dependence upon creature-comforts and tangible props. O how apt are the best of men to lean upon these things, and stay themselves upon them! Thus did Israel stay themselves upon Egypt, as a feeble man would lean upon his staff; but God allowed it both to fail them and wound them (Ezekiel 29:6-7). So for individuals, how apt are they to depend upon their tangible supports! Thus we lean on our relations, and the inward thoughts of our hearts are that they shall be to us so many springs of comfort to refresh us throughout our lives; but God will show us by His Providence our mistake and error in these things. Thus a husband is smitten, to draw the soul of a wife nearer to God in dependence upon Him (1 Timothy 5:5). So for children, we are apt to say of this or that child, as Lamech of Noah, ‘This same shall comfort us’ (Genesis 5:29); but the wind passes over these flowers and they are withered, to teach us that our happiness is not bound up in these enjoyments. So for our estates, when the world smiles upon us, and we have got a warm nest, how do we prophesy of rest and peace in those acquisitions, thinking, with good Baruch, great things for ourselves; but Providence by a particular or general calamity overturns our plans (Jeremiah 45:4-5), and all this to turn our hearts from the creature to God, who is our only rest.

Corruption shows its strength in good men by their adherence to things below and their reluctance to go hence. This often proceeds from the engaging enjoyments and pleasant experiences we have here below. Providence mortifies this inclination in the saints by killing those ensnaring comforts beforehand, making all or most of our pleasant things to die before us. Or it embitters this world to us, by the troubles of it, making life undesirable, through the pains and infirmities we feel in the body, and so loosing our root for our more easy fall by the fatal stroke. Before I pass from this, I cannot but make a pause, and desire you with me to stand in holy amazement and wonder at the dealings of God with such poor worms as we are. Surely God deals familiarly with men; His condescensions to His own clay are astonishing. All that I shall note at present about it shall be under these three heads, in which I find the matter of my present meditations summed up by the Psalmist: ‘LORD, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him, or the son of man that thou makest account of him!’ (Psalms 144:3). In this Scripture you have represented the immense and transcendent greatness of God, who is infinitely above us and all our thoughts. ‘Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven;

what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea' (Job 11:7-9). 'The heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain him' (2 Chronicles 2:6). He is 'glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders' (Exodus 15:11). When the Scripture speaks of Him comparatively, see how it expresses His greatness: 'Behold, the nations are as the drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are accounted to him less than nothing, and vanity' (Isaiah 40:15-17). When the holiest men have addressed Him, see with what humility and deep adoration they have spoken of Him and to Him! 'Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts' (Isaiah 6:5). Nay, what respects the very angels of heaven have of that glorious Majesty: 'Each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said: Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory' (Isaiah 6:2-3).

Secondly, you have the baseness, vileness and utter unworthiness of man, yea, the holiest and best of men, before God: 'Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity' (Psalms 39:5). 'Every man,' take where you will; and every man 'in his best state,' or 'standing in his freshest glory,' is not only 'vanity,' but 'altogether vanity,' literally 'every man is very vanity.' For do but consider the best of men in their extraction. 'By nature the children of wrath even as others' (Ephesians 2:3). The blood that runs in our veins is as much tainted as theirs in hell.

Consider them in their constitution and natural disposition, and it is no better, yea, in many there is worse disposition than in reprobates. And though grace depose sin in them from the throne, yet, O what offensive and God-provoking corruptions daily breakout of the best hearts.

Consider them in their outward condition, and they are inferior, for the most part to others. 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes' (Matthew 11:25; cf. 1 Corinthians 1:26-28). And now let us consider and marvel that ever this great and blessed God should be so much concerned, as you have heard He is in all His providences, about such vile, despicable worms as we are! He does not need us, but is perfectly blessed and happy in Himself without us. We can add nothing to Him: 'Can a man be profitable unto God?' (Job 22:2). No, the holiest of men add nothing to Him; yet, see how great account He makes of us. For does not His eternal electing love show the dear account He made of us (Ephesians 1:4-5)? How ancient, how free, and how astonishing is this act of grace! This is that design which all providences are in pursuit of, and will not rest till they have executed. Does not the gift of His only Son out of His bosom show this, that God makes great account of this vile thing, man? Never was man so magnified before. If David could say: 'When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; what is man?' (Psalms 8:3-4), how much more may we say, 'When we consider Thy Son, that lay in Thy bosom, His infinite excellence and unspeakable dearness to Thee, Lord, what is man, that such a Christ should be delivered to death for him! for him, and not for fallen angels (Hebrews 2:16), for him when in a state of enmity with God' (Romans 5:8). Does not the assiduity of His providential care for us show His esteem of us? 'Lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day' (Isaiah 27:3). 'He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous' (Job 36:7), no, not a moment all their days;

for if He did, a thousand mischiefs in that moment would rush in upon them and ruin them. Does not the tenderness of His providence show His esteem of us? ‘As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you’ (Isaiah 66:13). He comforts His own by refreshing providences, as an indulgent mother her tender child. ‘As birds flying’ (Isaiah 31:5), viz., to their nests when their young are in danger, so He defends His. No parental tenderness in the creature can shadow forth the tender affection of the Creator. Does not the variety of the fruits of His providence show it? Our mercies are ‘new every morning’ (cf. Psalms 40:5; Lamentations 3:23). It is a fountain from which do stream forth spiritual and temporal, ordinary and extraordinary, public and personal mercies, mercies without number. Does not the ministry of angels in the providential kingdom show it? ‘Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?’ (Hebrews 1:14). Does not the providence of which this day calls us to celebrate the memory, show the great regard God has for His people? O if not so, why were we not given up ‘as a prey to their teeth?’ ‘If it had not been the LORD who was on our side,’ then wicked men, compared to fire, water, wild beasts, ‘had swallowed us up quick’ (Psalms 124:1-8). O blessed be God for that teeming providence that has already brought forth more than seventy years liberty and peace to the Church of God. I suggest concerning this providence that you do by it as the Jews by their Purim (Esther 9:27-28), and the rather, because we seem now to be as near danger by the same enemy as ever since that time. If such a mercy as this is forgotten God may say: ‘I will deliver you no more’ (Judges 10:13).

06.08. The Duty of Meditation on Providence

Chapter 8

The Duty of Meditation on Providence

Having proved the affairs of the people of God to be conducted by the care of special Providence, and given instances of what influence Providence has upon those interests and concerns of theirs, we come in the next place to prove it to be the duty of the people of God to meditate upon these performances of Providence for them, at all times, but especially in times of difficulty and trouble. This is our duty because God has expressly commanded it, and called His people to make the most serious reflections upon His works, whether of mercy or judgment. So when that most dreadful of all judgments was executed upon His professing people for their apostasy from God, and God had removed the symbols of His presence from among them, the rest are bidden to go, that is, by their meditations, to send at least their thoughts to Shiloh, and see what God did to it (Jeremiah 7:12). So for mercies, God calls us to consider and review them. ‘O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the LORD’ (Micah 6:5). As much as to say, if you do not reflect upon that signal providence, my righteousness will be covered, and your unrighteousness uncovered. So for God’s works of providence concerning the creatures we are called to consider them, that we may prop up our faith by those considerations for our own supplies (Matthew 6:28).

It is plain that this is our duty because the neglect of it is everywhere in Scripture condemned as a sin. To be careless and unobservant is very displeasing to God, and so much appears by that Scripture: ‘LORD, when thy hand is lifted up they will not see’ (Isaiah 26:11). Nay, it is a sin which God threatens and denounces woe against in His Word (Psalms 28:4-5; Isaiah 5:12-13). Yea, God not only threatens, but smites men with visible judgments for this sin (Job 34:26-27). And for this end and purpose it is that the Holy Ghost has affixed notes of attention such as ‘behold’ to the narratives of the works of providence in Scripture. All these invite and call men to a due and deep observation of them. For example, in that great and celebrated work of Providence in delivering Israel out of Egyptian bondage, you find a note of attention twice affixed to it (Exodus 3:2, Exodus 3:9). Again, when that daring enemy Rabshakeh that put Hezekiah and all the people into such a consternation was defeated by Providence, there is a note of attention prefixed to that providence, ‘Behold, I will send a blast upon him’ (2 Kings 19:7). When God glorifies His wisdom and power in delivering His people from their enemies, and ensnaring the latter in the works of their own hands, a double note of attention is affixed to that double work of Providence: ‘Higgaion selah’ (Psalms 9:16). Also at the opening of every seal which contains a remarkable series or branch of Providence, how particularly is attention commanded to every one of them: ‘Come and see, come and see’ (Revelation 6:1-7). All these are very useless and superfluous additions in Scripture if no such duty lies upon us (see Psalms 66:5).

Without due observation of the works of Providence no praise can be rendered to God for any of them. Praise and thanksgiving for mercies depend upon this act of observation of them, and cannot be performed without it. Psalms 107:1-43 is spent in narrating God's providential care of men: to His people in difficulties (Psalms 107:4-6); to prisoners in their bonds (Psalms 107:10-12); to men that lie languishing upon beds of sickness (Psalms 107:17-19); to seamen upon the stormy ocean (Psalms 107:23); to men in times of famine (Psalms 107:33-34). Yea, His providence is displayed in all those changes that occur in the world, debasing the high, and exalting the low (Psalms 107:40-41), and at every paragraph men are called upon to praise God for each of these providences. Psalms 107:43 shows you what a necessary ingredient to that duty observation is: 'Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the LORD.' So that of necessity God must be defrauded of His praise if this duty is neglected.

Without this we lose the usefulness and benefit of all the works of God for us or others, which would be an unspeakable loss indeed to us. This is the food our faith lives upon in days of distress: 'Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness' (Psalms 74:14), i.e., food to their faith. From providences past saints argue to fresh and new ones to come. So David: 'The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine' (1 Samuel 17:37). So Paul: 'Who hath delivered, and in whom also we trust that he will yet deliver' (2 Corinthians 1:10). If these are forgotten or not considered, the hands of faith hang down. 'How is it that ye do not remember, neither consider?' (Matthew 16:9). This is a topic from which the saints have often drawn their arguments in prayer for new mercies. As when Moses prays for continued or new pardons for the people, he argues from what was past: 'As thou hast forgiven them from Egypt until now' (Numbers 14:19); so the Church argues for new providences upon the same ground Moses pleaded for new pardons (Isaiah 51:9-10).

It is a vile slighting of God not to observe what He manifests of Himself in His providences. For in all providences, especially in some, He comes near to us. He does so in His judgments: 'I will come near to you in judgment' (Malachi 3:5). He comes near in mercies also: 'The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him' (Psalms 145:18). Yea, He is said to visit us by His providence when He corrects (Hosea 9:7), and when He saves and delivers (Psalms 106:4). These visitations of God preserve our spirits (Job 10:12), and it is a wonderful condescension in the great God to visit us so often, 'every morning and...every moment' (Job 7:18). But not to take notice of it is a vile and brutish contempt of God (Isaiah 1:3; Zephaniah 3:2). You would not do so to a man for whom you have any respect. It is the character of the wicked not to regard God's favours (Isaiah 26:10) or frowns (Jeremiah 5:3). In a word, men can never order their addresses to God in prayer, suitable to their conditions, without due observation of His providences. Your prayers are to be suitable to your conditions: sometimes we are called to praise, sometimes to humiliation. In the way of His judgments you are to wait for Him (Isaiah 26:8), to prepare to meet him (Zephaniah 2:1-12; Amos 4:12). Sometimes your business is to turn away His anger which you see approaching, and sometimes you are called to praise Him for mercies received (Isaiah 12:1-2), but then you must first observe them.

Thus you find the matter of David's psalms still varied, according to the providences that befell him: but one who is unobservant and careless can never do it. And thus you have the grounds of the duty briefly presented.

06.09. How to Meditate on the Providence

Chapter 9

How to Meditate on the Providence of God

Next we proceed to show in what manner we are to reflect upon the performances of Providence for us. And certainly, it is not every slight and transient glance, nor every cold, historical, unaffecting rehearsal or recognition of His providences towards you that will pass with God for a discharge of this great duty. No, no, it is another kind of work than what most men understand it to be. O that we were but acquainted with this heavenly spiritual exercise, how sweet it would make our lives, how light it would make our burdens! Ah, sirs, you live estranged from the pleasure of the Christian life, while you live in the ignorance or neglect of this duty. Now to lead you up to this heavenly, sweet and profitable exercise, I will beg your attention to the following directions:

Labour to get as full and thorough a recognition as you are able of the providences of God concerning you from first to last.

O fill your hearts with the thoughts of Him and His ways. If a single act of Providence is so ravishing and transporting, what would many such be, if they were presented together to the view of the soul! If one star is so beautiful to behold, what is a constellation! Let your reflections therefore upon the acts and workings of Providence for you be full, extensively and intensively.

Let them be as extensively full as may be. Search backward into all the performances of Providence throughout your lives. So did Asaph: ‘I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings’ (Psalms 77:11-12). He laboured to recover and revive the ancient providences of God’s mercies many years past, and suck a fresh sweetness out of them by new reviews of them. Ah, sirs, let me tell you, there is not such a pleasant history for you to read in all the world as the history of your own lives, if you would but sit down and record from the beginning hitherto what God has been to you, and done for you; what signal manifestations and outbreakings of His mercy, faithfulness and love there have been in all the conditions you have passed through. If your hearts do not melt before you have gone half through that history, they are hard hearts indeed. ‘My Father, thou art the guide of my youth’ (Jeremiah 3:4).

Let your meditation be as intensively full as may be. Do not let your thoughts swim like feathers upon the surface of the waters, but sink like lead to the bottom. ‘The works of the LORD are great, sought out of them that have pleasure therein’ (Psalms 111:2). Not that I think it feasible to sound the depth of Providence by our short line: ‘Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known’ (Psalms 77:19), but it is our duty to dive as far as we can; and to admire the depth, when we cannot touch the bottom. It is in our viewing providences as it was with Elijah’s servant, when he looked out for rain (1 Kings 18:44); he went out once and viewed the heavens, and saw nothing, but the prophet bids him go again and again, and look upon the face of heaven seven times; and when he had done so, what now, says the prophet? ‘O now’, says he: ‘I

see a cloud rising like a man's hand'; and then, keeping his eye intently upon it, he sees the whole face of heaven covered with clouds. So you may look upon some providences once and again, and see little or nothing in them; but look 'seven times', that is, meditate often upon them, and you will see their increasing glory, like that increasing cloud.

There are several things to be distinctly pondered, and valued in one single providence, before you can judge the amount and worth of it. First, the seasonableness of mercy may give it a very great value. That it is timed so opportunely, and occurs just when needed, makes it a thousandfold more considerable to you than the same mercy would have been at another time. Thus when our needs are permitted to grow to an extremity, and all visible hopes fail, then to have relief given wonderfully enhances the price of such a mercy (Isaiah 41:17-18). The peculiar care and kindness of Providence to us is a consideration which exceedingly heightens the mercy in itself, and endears it to us. So when, in general calamities upon the world, we are exempted by the favour of Providence, covered under its wings; when God shall call to us in evil days: 'Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers' (Isaiah 26:20); when such promises shall be fulfilled to us in times of want or famine (Psalms 33:18-19); when others are abandoned and exposed to misery who have every way as much, it may be much more, visible security against it, and yet they are delivered up and we saved - O how endearing are such providences! (Psalms 91:7-8).

What a providence introduces is of special regard and consideration, and by no means to be neglected by us. There are leading providences which, however slight and trivial they may seem in themselves, yet in this respect justly challenge the first rank among providential favours to us because they usher in a multitude of other mercies, and draw a blessed train of happy consequences after them. Such a providence was that of Jesse's sending David with provisions to his brethren that lay encamped in the army (1 Samuel 17:17). And thus every Christian may furnish himself out of his own stock of experience, if he will but reflect and consider the place where he is, the relations that he has, and the way by which he was led into them. The instruments employed by Providence for you are of special consideration, and the finger of God is clearly seen by us when we pursue that meditation. For sometimes great mercies are conveyed to us by very improbable means, and more probable ones laid aside. A stranger is stirred up to do that for you which your near relations in nature had no power or will to do for you. Jonathan, a mere stranger to David, clave closer to him, and was more friendly and useful to him than his own brethren, who despised and slighted him. Ministers have found more kindness and respect from strangers than from their own people that are more obliged to them. 'A prophet,' said Christ, 'is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house' (Mark 6:4).

Sometimes help has come from the hands of enemies, as well as strangers: 'The earth helped the woman' (Revelation 12:16). God has bowed the hearts of many wicked men to show great kindness to His people (Acts 28:2).

Sometimes God makes use of instruments for good to His people, who designed nothing but evil and mischief to them. Thus Joseph's brethren were instrumental to his advancement in that very thing in which they designed his ruin (Genesis 50:20). The design and scope of Providence must not escape our thorough consideration, what the aim and goal of Providence is. And truly this, of all others, is the most warming and melting consideration. You have the general account of the aim of all providences: 'And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God,

to them who are the called according to his purpose' (Romans 8:28). A thousand friendly hands are at work for them, to promote and bring about their happiness. O this is enough to sweeten the bitterest providence to us, that we know it shall turn to our salvation (Php 1:19). The respect and relation Providence bears to our prayers is of singular consideration, and a most taking and sweet meditation. Prayer honours Providence, and Providence honours prayer. Great notice is taken of this in Scripture (Genesis 24:45; Daniel 9:20; Acts 12:12). You have had the very petitions you asked of Him. Providences have borne the very signatures of your prayers upon them. O how affectingly sweet are such mercies!

In all your observations of Providence have special respect to that Word of God which is fulfilled and made good to you by them. This is a clear truth that all providences have relation to the written Word. Thus Solomon in his prayer acknowledges that the promises and providences of God went along step by step with his father David all his days; and that His hand (put there for his Providence) had fulfilled whatever His mouth had spoken (1 Kings 8:24). So Joshua in like manner acknowledges that 'not one good thing had failed of all the good things of which the LORD had spoken' (Joshua 23:14). He had carefully observed what relation the works of God had to His Word. He compared them together, and found an exact harmony. And so may you too, if you will compare them as he did. This I shall the more insist upon because it is by some interpreters supposed to be the very scope of the text. For (as was noted in the explanation) they supply and fill the sense with 'the things which He has promised,' and so read the text thus: 'I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth the things He has promised for me' (Psalms 57:2).

Now, though I see no reason to limit the sense so narrowly, yet it cannot be denied that this is an especial part of its meaning. Let us therefore in all our reviews of Providence consider what Word of God, whether it be of threatening, caution, counsel or promise, is at any time made good to us by His providences.

Doing this will greatly confirm to us the truth of the Scripture, when we see its truth so manifest in the events. Had Scripture no other seal or attestation, this alone would be an unanswerable argument of its divinity when men shall find in all ages the works of God wrought so exactly according to this model that we may say: 'As we have read or heard, so have we seen.' O how great a confirmation is here before our eyes!

Again, doing this will abundantly direct and instruct us in our present duties under all providences. We shall know what we have to do, and how to behave under all changes of conditions. You can learn the voice and errand of the rod only from the Word (Psalms 94:12) which interprets the works of God. Providences in themselves are not a perfect guide. They often puzzle and entangle our thoughts; but bring them to the Word, and your duty will be quickly manifested. 'Until I went into the sanctuary of God, then understood I their end' (Psalms 73:17). And not only their end, but his own duty, to be quiet in an afflicted condition and not envy their prosperity.

Well then, bring those providences you have passed through, or are now under, to the Word, and you will find yourselves surrounded with a marvelous light, and see the verification of the Scriptures in them. I shall therefore here appeal to your consciences whether you have not found these events of Providence occurring agreeably in all respects with the Word. The Word tells you that it is your wisdom and interest to keep close to its rules and the duties it prescribes. It tells that the way of holiness and obedience is the wisest way. 'This is your wisdom' (Deuteronomy 4:5-6).

Now, let the events of Providence speak, whether this is true or not. Certainly it will appear to be so, whether we respect our present comfort or future happiness, both which we may see daily exposed by departure from duty, and secured by keeping close to it. Let the question be asked of the drunkard, adulterer or profane swearer, when by sin they have ruined body, soul, estate and name, whether it be their wisdom to walk in those forbidden paths after their own lusts; whether they had not better consulted their own interest and comfort in keeping within the bounds and limits of God's commands? and they cannot but confess that 'this their way is their folly.' 'What fruit,' says the Apostle, 'had ye in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death' (Romans 6:21). Does not the Providence of God verify upon them those threatenings that are written in the experience of all ages? (Job 31:12; Proverbs 5:9-10; Proverbs 23:21, Proverbs 23:29) all which woes and miseries they escape that walk in God's statutes. Look upon the ruined estates and bodies you may everywhere see, and behold the truth of the Scriptures evidently made good in those sad providences. The Word tells you that your departure from the way of integrity and simplicity, to make use of sinful policies, shall never profit you (1 Samuel 12:21; Proverbs 3:5).

Let the events of Providence speak regarding this also. Ask your own experience, and you shall have a full confirmation of this truth. Did you ever leave the way of simplicity and integrity, and use sinful shifts to bring about your own designs, and prosper in that way? Certainly God has cursed all the ways of sin; and whoever find they thrive with them, His people shall not. Israel would not rely upon the Lord, but trust in the shadow of Egypt, and what advantage had they by this sinful policy (Isaiah 30:1-5)? David used a great deal of sinful policy to cover his wicked deed, but did it prosper (2 Samuel 12:12)? It is an excellent observation of Livy, 'Sinful policies in their first appearances are pleasant and promising, in their management difficult, in their event sad.' Some by sinful ways have obtained wealth, but that Scripture has been verified in their experience, 'Treasures of wickedness profit nothing' (Proverbs 10:2). Either God has blown upon it by a secret curse that it has done them no good, or given them such disquietness in their consciences that they have been forced to vomit it up ere they could find peace (Job 11:13-15). That which David gave as a charge to Solomon has been found experimentally true by thousands (1 Chronicles 22:12-13), that the true way to prosperity is to keep close to the rule of the Word, and that the true reason why men cannot prosper is their forsaking that rule (2 Chronicles 24:20).

It is true, if God has a purpose to destroy a man, he may for a time permit him to succeed and prosper in his sin, for his greater hardening (Job 12:6). But it is not so with those whom the Lord loves. Their sinful shifts shall never thrive with them. The Word prohibits your trust and confidence in the creature, even the greatest and most powerful among creatures (Psalms 146:3). It tells us that it is better to trust in the LORD than in them (Psalms 118:8). It forbids our confidence in those creatures that are most nearly allied and related in the bonds of nature to us (Micah 7:5). It curses the man that gives to the creature that reliance which is due to God (Jeremiah 17:5).

Consult the events of Providence in this case, and see whether the Word is not verified in it. Did you ever lean upon an Egyptian reed, and it did not break under you and pierce as well as deceive you? O, how often has this been evident in our experience! Whatsoever we have over-loved, idolized, and leaned upon, God has from time to time broken it, and made us to see the vanity of it; so that we find the readiest course to be rid of our comforts is to set our hearts inordinately or immoderately upon them. For our God is a jealous God, and will not part with His glory to another.

The world is full of examples of persons deprived of their comforts, husbands, wives, children and estates for this reason, and by this means. If Jonah is overjoyed in his gourd, a worm is at once prepared to smite it. Hence it is that so many graves are opened for the burying of our idols out of our sight. If David says: ‘My mountain shall stand strong, I shall not be moved,’ the next news he shall hear is of darkness and trouble (Psalms 30:6-7). O how true and faithful do we find these sayings of God to be! Who cannot put to his seal and say: ‘Thy Word is truth’ (John 17:17)? The Word assures us that sin is the cause and inlet of affliction and sorrow, and that there is an inseparable conection between them. ‘Be sure your sin will find you out’ (Numbers 32:23); that is, the sad effects and afflictions that follow it shall find you out. ‘If his children forsake my law and walk not in my judgments: if they break my statutes and keep not my commandments: then will I visit their transgression with the rod and their iniquities with stripes’ (Psalms 89:30-32).

Enquire now at the mouth of Providence whether this is indeed so, according to the reports of the Word. Ask but your own experiences, and you will find that just so Providence has ordered it all along your way. When did you grow into a secure, vain, carnal frame, but you found some rousing, startling providence sent to awaken you? When did you wound your consciences with guilt, and God did not wound you for it in some or other of your beloved enjoyments? Nay, so ordinary is this with God that from the observations of their own frames and ways many Christians have foreboded and presaged troubles at hand.

I do not say that God never afflicts His people but for their sin; for He may do it for their trial (1 Peter 4:12). Nor do I say that God follows every sin with a rod; for who then could stand before Him (Psalms 130:3)? But this I say, that it is God’s usual way to visit the sins of His people with rods of affliction, and this in mercy to their souls. For this reason it was that the rod of God was upon David in a long succession of troubles upon his kingdom and family, after that great prevarication of his (2 Samuel 12:10). And if we would carefully search out the seeds and principles of those miseries under which we or ours do groan, we should find them to be our own turnings aside from the Lord (Jeremiah 2:19; Jeremiah 4:18). Have not all these cautions and threatenings of the Word been exactly fulfilled by Providence in your own experience? Who can but see the infallible truth of God in all that he has threatened! And no less evident is the truth of the promises to all that will observe how Providence makes them good every day to us; for consider how great security God has given to His people in the promises, that no man shall lose anything by self-denial for His sake. He has told us, ‘Verily, I say unto you: There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel’s; but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions, and in the world to come, eternal life’ (Mark 10:29-30).

Though that vile apostate Julian derided this promise, yet thousands and ten thousands have experienced it, and do at this day stand ready to set their seal to it. God has made it good to His people, not only in spiritual things, inward joy and peace, but even in temporal things also. Instead of natural relations, who took care for them before, hundreds of Christians shall stand ready to assist and help them, so that though they have left all for Christ, yet they may say with the apostle: ‘As having nothing, and yet possessing all things’ (2 Corinthians 6:10). O the admirable care and tenderness of Providence over those that for conscience sake have left all and cast themselves upon its immediate care! Are there not at this day to be found many so provided for, even to the

envy of their enemies and their own admiration? Who does not see the faithfulness of God in the promises that has but a heart to trust God in them! The Word of promise assures us that whatever wants or straits the saints fall into, their God will never leave them nor forsake them (Hebrews 13:5), that He 'will be with them in trouble' (Psalms 91:15).

Consult the various providences of your life in this point, and I doubt not but you will find the truth of these promises as often confirmed as you have been in trouble. Ask your own hearts, where or when was it that your God forsook you, and left you to sink and perish under your burdens? I doubt not but most of you have been at one time or other plunged in difficulties, difficulties out of which you could see no way of escape by the eye of reason; yea, such as it may be staggered your faith in the promise, as David's was when he said, 'I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul' (1 Samuel 27:1). 'All men are liars' (Psalms 116:11), even Samuel himself! And yet notwithstanding all we see him emerge out of that sea of trouble, and the promises made good in every tittle to him. The like, doubtless, you may observe in your own case. Ask your own souls the question, and they will satisfy it. Did God abandon and cast you off in the day of trouble? Certainly you must belie your own experience if you should say so. It is true, there have been some plunges and difficulties you have met with, in which you could see no way of escape, but concluded you must perish in them. There have been difficulties that have staggered your faith in the promises, and made you doubt whether the fountain of all-sufficiency would let out itself for your relief; yea, such difficulties as have provoked you to murmuring and impatience, and thereby provoked the Lord to forsake you in your trouble; but yet you see He did not. He has either strengthened your back to bear, or lightened your burden, or else opened an unexpected door of escape, according to promise (1 Corinthians 10:13), so that the evil which you feared did not come upon you.

You read that the Word of God is the only support and relief to a gracious soul in the dark day of affliction (Psalms 119:50, Psalms 119:92; 2 Samuel 23:5), and that for this purpose it was written (Romans 15:4). No rules of moral prudence, no natural remedies can perform for us that which the Word can do. And is not this a sealed truth attested by a thousand undeniable experiences? From this source have the saints fetched their cordials when fainting under the rod. One word of God can do more than ten thousand words of men to relieve a distressed soul. If Providence has at any time directed you to such promises as either assure you that the Lord will be with you in trouble (Psalms 91:15), or that encourage you from inward peace to bear cheerfully outward burdens (John 16:33), or satisfy you of God's tenderness and moderation in His dealings with you (Isaiah 27:8), or that you shall reap blessed fruits from them (Romans 8:28), or that make clear your interest in God and His love under your afflictions (2 Samuel 7:14), O what ease and relief ensues and how light is your burden compared with what it was before! The Word tells us that there is no better way to improve our estates than to lay them out with a cheerful liberality for God, and that our withholding our hands when God and duty calls to distribute will not be for our advantage (Proverbs 11:24-25; Proverbs 19:17; Isaiah 32:8).

Consult Providence now, and you will find it in all respects according to the report of the Word. O how true is the Scripture testimony in this respect! There are many thousand witnesses now living that can set their seals to both parts of this proposition. What men save (as they count saving) with one hand, Providence scatters by another hand; and what they scatter abroad with a liberal hand and single eye for God is surely repaid to them or theirs. Never did any man lose by distributing for God. He that lends to the poor lends to the LORD, or as some expound that text, puts his money

to interest to the LORD. Some have observed how Providence has doubled all they have laid out for God, in ways unexpected to them. The Word assures us that the best expedient for a man to settle his own interest in the consciences and affections of men is to direct his ways so as to please the Lord (Proverbs 16:7), and does not Providence confirm it? This the three Jews found by experience (Daniel 3:28-29) and so did Daniel (Daniel 6:20-22). This kept up John's reputation in the conscience of Herod (Mark 6:20). So it proved when Constantius made that exploratory decree; those that were conscientious were preferred, and those that changed their religion expelled. Never did any man lose at last by his fidelity. The written Word tells us that the best way to gain inward peace and tranquillity of mind under puzzling and disturbing troubles is to commit ourselves and our case to the Lord (Psalms 37:5-7; Proverbs 16:3). As you have read in the Word, so you have found it in your own experience. O what a burden is off your shoulders when you have resigned the case to God! Then Providence concludes your affairs comfortably for you. The difficulty is soon over when the heart is brought to this.

Thus you see how Scriptures are fulfilled by Providence in these few instances I have given. Compare them in all other cases and you will find the same, for all the lines of Providence lead from the Scripture, and return there again, and do most visibly begin and end there.

In all your reviews and observations of Providence, be sure that you eye God as the author or orderer of them all (Proverbs 3:6). In all the comfortable providences of your lives, eye God as the author or donor of them. Remember He is 'the Father of mercies' that begets every mercy for you, 'The God of all comfort' (2 Corinthians 1:3) without whose order no mercy or comfort can come to your hands. And do not think it enough thus to acknowledge Him in a general way, but when you receive mercies, take special notice of the following particulars:

Eye the care of God for you. 'He careth for you' (1 Peter 5:7). Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things (Matthew 6:32). You have but to acquaint Him what you need, and your needs are supplied. Be careful about nothing. (Php 4:6); do not torture yourselves about it, you have a Father that cares for you.

Eye the wisdom of God in the way of dispensing His mercies to you, how suitably they are ordered to your condition, and how seasonably. When one comfort is cut off and removed, another is raised up in its room. Thus Isaac was comforted in Rebecca after his mother's death (Genesis 24:67).

Eye the free grace of God in them, yea, see riches of grace in every bequest of comfort to so vile and unworthy creatures as you are. See yourselves surpassed by the least of all your mercies: 'I am not worthy of the least,' said Jacob (Genesis 32:10).

Eye the condescension of God to your requests for those mercies (Psalms 34:6). This is the sweetest bit in any enjoyment, in which a man can consciously relish the return and answer of his prayers, and it greatly inflames the soul's love to God (Psalms 116:1).

Eye the design and end of God in all your comforts. Know that it is not sent to satisfy the cravings of your sensual appetite, but to quicken and enable you for a more cheerful discharge of your duty (Deuteronomy 28:47).

Eye the way and method in which your mercies are conveyed to you. They all flow to you through the blood of Christ and the covenant of grace (1 Corinthians 3:22-23). Mercies derive their sweetness from the channel through which they run to us.

Eye the distinguishing goodness of God in all the comfortable enjoyments of your lives. How many thousands better than you are denied these comforts (Hebrews 11:37)!

Eye them all as comforts appointed to refresh you in your way to far better and greater mercies than themselves. The best mercies are still reserved till last, and all these are introductive to better. In all the sad and afflictive providences that befall you, eye God as the author and orderer of them also. So He represents Himself to us: ‘Behold, I create evil, and devise a device against you’ (Jeremiah 18:11). ‘Is there evil in the city, and the LORD hath not done it?’ (Amos 3:6).

Set before you the sovereignty of God. Eye Him as a Being infinitely superior to you, at whose pleasure you and all you have subsist (Psalms 115:3), which is the most conclusive reason and argument for submission (Psalms 46:10). For if we, and all we have proceeded from His will, how right it is that we be resigned up to it! It is not many years ago since we were not, and when it pleased Him to bring us upon the stage of action, we had no liberty of contracting with Him on what terms we would come into the world, or refuse to be, except we might have our being on such terms as we desired. His sovereignty is gloriously displayed in His eternal decrees and temporal providences. He might have put you into what rank of creatures He pleased. He might have made you the most despicable creatures, worms or toads: or, if men, the most vile, abject and miserable among men; and when you had run through all the miseries of this life, have damned you to eternity, made you miserable for ever, and all this without any wrong to you. And shall not this quieten us under the common afflictions of this life?

Set the grace and goodness of God before you in all afflictive providences. O see Him passing by you in the cloudy and dark day, proclaiming His name, ‘The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious’ (Exodus 34:6). There are two sorts of mercies that are seldom eclipsed by the darkest affliction that befalls the saints in their temporal concerns, that is, sparing mercy in this world, and saving mercy in that to come. It is not so bad now as it might be, and we deserved it should be, and it will be better hereafter. This the Church observed, and reasoned herself quiet from it (Lamentations 3:22). Has He taken some? He might have taken all. Are we afflicted? It is a mercy we are not destroyed. O if we consider what temporal mercies are yet spared, and what spiritual mercies are bestowed and still continued to us, we shall find cause to admire mercy rather than complain of severity.

Eye the wisdom of God in all your afflictions. Behold it in the choice of the kind of your affliction, this, and not another; the time, now and not at another season; the degree, in this measure only, and not in a greater; the supports offered you under it, not left altogether helpless; the issue to which it is overruled, it is to your good, not ruin. Look upon these and then ask your heart that question God asked Jonah, ‘Doest thou well to be angry?’ (Lamentations 4:9). Surely, when you consider all - what need you had of these rods, that your corruptions will require all this, it may be much more, to mortify them; that without the perishing of these things you might have perished for ever - you will see great reason to be quiet and well satisfied under the hand of God.

Set the faithfulness of the Lord before you under the saddest providences. So did David (Psalms 119:75). This is according to His covenant faithfulness (Psalms 89:32). Hence it is that the Lord will not withhold a rod when need requires it (1 Peter 1:6). Nor will He forsake His people under the rod when He inflicts it (2 Corinthians 4:9).

O what quietness will this breed! I see my God will not lose my heart, if a rod can prevent it. He would rather hear me groan here than howl hereafter. His love is judicious, not fond. He consults my good rather than my ease.

Eye the all-sufficiency of God in the day of affliction. See enough in Him still, whatever is gone. Here is the fountain still as full as ever, though this or that pipe is cut off, which was wont to convey somewhat of it to me. O Christians, cannot you make up any loss this way? Cannot you see more in God than in any or all the creature-comforts you have lost? With what eyes then do you look upon God?

Lastly, eye the immutability of God. Look on Him as the Rock of ages, 'The Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning' (James 1:17). Eye Jesus Christ as 'the same yesterday, today and for ever' (Hebrews 13:8). O how quietly will you then behave yourselves under the changes of providence! It may be, two or three days have made a sad change in your condition. The death of a dear relation has turned all things upside down; that place is empty where lately he was, as it is: 'neither shall his place know him any more' (Job 7:10). Well, God is what He was, and where He was; time shall make no change upon Him. 'The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand for ever' (Isaiah 40:6-8). O how composing are those views of God to our spirits under dark providences!

Lastly, work up your hearts to those frames, and exercise those affections which the particular providences of God that concern you call for (Ecclesiastes 7:14). As there are various affections planted in your souls, so there are various graces planted in those affections, and various providences appointed to draw forth and exercise these graces. When the providences of God are sad and afflictive, either upon the Church in general, or your families and persons in particular, then it is seasonable for you to exercise godly sorrow and humility of spirit. For in that day and by those providences, God calls to it (Isaiah 22:12; Micah 6:9). Now, sensual pleasure and natural joy is out of season: 'Should we then make mirth?' (Ezekiel 21:10). If there is a filial spirit in us, we cannot be light and vain when our Father is angry. If there is any real sense of the evil of sin which provokes God's anger, we must be heavy-hearted when God is smiting for it. If there is any sense and compassion for the miseries that sin brings upon the world, it will make us say with David: 'I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved' (Psalms 119:158). It is sad to consider the miseries that they pull down upon themselves in this world and that to come. If there is any care in us to prevent utter ruin, and stop God in the way of His anger, we know this is the means to do it (Amos 4:12).

However sad and dismal the face of Providence is, yet still maintain spiritual joy and comfort in God under all. 'Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation' (Habakkuk 3:17-18).

There are two sorts of comforts, natural and sensual, divine and spiritual. There is a time when it becomes Christians to exercise both (Esther 9:22). And there is a time when the former is to be suspended and laid by (Psalms 137:2), but there is no season wherein spiritual joy and comfort in God is unseasonable (1 Thessalonians 5:16; Php 4:4). This spiritual joy or comfort is nothing else but the cheerfulness of our heart in God, and the sense of our interest in Him and in His promises. And it is sure that no providence can render this unseasonable to a Christian.

Let us suppose the most afflicted and calamitous state a Christian can be in, yet why should sad providences make him lay aside his comforts in God, when those are but for a moment, and these eternal (2 Corinthians 4:17)?

Why should we give up our joy in God on account of sad providences without, when at the very worst and lowest ebb the saints have infinitely more cause to rejoice than to be cast down? There is more in one of their mercies to comfort them than in all their troubles to deject them. All your losses are but as the loss of a farthing to a prince (Romans 8:18).

Why should they be sad, as long as their God is with them in all their troubles? As Christ said: ‘Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them?’ (Matthew 9:15). So say I: Can the soul be sad while God is with it? O I think that one promise, ‘I will be with him in trouble’ (Psalms 91:15) should bear you up under all burdens. Let them be cast down that have no God to turn to in trouble.

Why should we be sad as long as no outward dispensation of Providence, however sad, can be interpreted as a mark or sign of God’s hatred or enmity. ‘There is one event to the righteous and wicked’ (Ecclesiastes 9:2-3). Indeed, if it were a sign of the Lord’s wrath against a man, it would justify our dejection; but this cannot be so, His heart is full of love while the face of Providence is full of frowns.

Why should we be cast down under sad providences while we have so great security that even by the hands of these providences God will do us good, and all these things shall turn to our salvation (Romans 8:28)? By these God is but killing your lusts, weaning your hearts from a vain world, preventing temptations and exciting your desires after heaven. This is all the hurt they shall do you, and shall that sadden us?

Why should we give up our joy in God, when the change of our condition is so near? It is but a little while, and sorrows shall flee away. You shall never suffer again: ‘God will wipe away all tears’ (Revelation 7:17). Well then, you see there is no reason on account of Providence to give up your joy and comfort in God. But if you will maintain it under all providences, then be careful to make sure of your interest in, and title to God. Faith may be separated from comfort, but assurance cannot.

Mortify your inordinate affections to earthly things. This makes providences that deprive and cross us so heavy. Mortify your opinion and affection, and you will lighten your affliction. It is strong affection that makes strong affliction (2 Samuel 18:33).

Dwell much upon the meditation of the Lord’s near approach; and then all these things will seem but trifles to you. ‘Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand’ (Php 4:5).

Exercise heavenly-mindedness, and keep your hearts upon things eternal under all the providences with which the Lord exercises you in this world. ‘Noah walked with God’ (Genesis 6:9), yet met with as sad providences in his day as any man that ever lived since his time. But alas! we find most providences rather stops than steps in our walk with God. If we are under comfortable providences, how sensual, wanton and worldly do our hearts grow! And if sad providences befall us, how cast down or disturbed we are! And this comes to pass partly through the narrowness, but mostly through the deceitfulness of our spirits. Our hearts are narrow and know not how to manage two businesses of such different natures, as earthly and heavenly matters are, without detriment to one of them. But certainly such a frame of spirit is attainable that will enable us to keep on in an even and steady course with God, whatever befall us. Others have attained it, and why not we? Prosperous providences are for the most part a dangerous state to the soul. The moon never suffers an eclipse but at full; yet Jehoshaphat’s grace suffered no eclipse from the fullness of his outward condition, who ‘had riches and honour in abundance. And his heart was lifted up in the ways of the LORD’ (2 Chronicles 17:5-6). David’s life was as full of cares, turmoils, and encumbrances as most men we read of; yet how spiritual the attitude of his heart was, that excellent Book of Psalms, which was mostly composed amidst those turmoils, will acquaint us. The apostles were cast into as great necessities and suffered as hard things as ever men did; yet how raised and heavenly their spirits were amidst all! And certainly, if it were not possible to maintain heavenly-mindedness in such a state and posture of affairs, God would never exercise any of His people with such providences. He would never give you so much of the world to lose your hearts in the love of it, or so little to distract you with the care of it. If therefore we were more deeply sanctified, and the tendencies of our hearts heavenward more ardent and vigorous, if we were more mortified to earthly things and could but keep our due distance from them, our outward conditions would not at this rate draw forth and exercise our inward corruptions, nor would we hazard the loss of so sweet an enjoyment as our fellowship with God for the sake of any concern our bodies have on earth.

Under all providences maintain a contented heart with what the Lord allots you, be it more or less of the things of this world. This grace must run parallel with all providences. Learn how to be full, and how to suffer want, and in every state to be content (Php 4:11-12). In this duty all men are concerned at all times and in every state, not only the people of God, but even the unregenerate also. I will therefore address some considerations proper to both. And first to the unregenerate, to stop their mouths from complaining and charging God foolishly when providence crosses them. Let them seriously consider these four things:

First, that hell and eternal damnation are the portion of their cup, according to the tenor of law and Gospel threatenings. Whatsoever therefore is short of this is to be admired as the fruit of God’s stupendous patience and forbearance toward them. Ah, poor souls! Do you not know that you are men and women condemned to wrath by the plain sentence of the Law (Mark 16:16; John 3:36; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-7)? And if so, surely there are other matters to exercise your thoughts, desires, fears and cares about than these. Alas! if you cannot bear a frown of Providence, a light cross in these things, how will you bear the everlasting burnings? A man that is to lose his head tomorrow is not very concerned about what bed he lies on or how his table is furnished the night before.

Consider, though you are condemned persons and have no promise to entitle you to any mercy, yet there are very many mercies in your possession at this day. Be your condition as afflictive as it

will, is life nothing? especially considering where you must sink to when that thread is cut. Are the necessary supports of life nothing? Does not Providence minister to you these things, though you daily disoblige it and provoke God to send you to your own place? But above all, are the Gospel and precious means of salvation nothing, by which you yet are in a capacity of escaping the damnation of hell? O what would the damned say if they were but put into your condition once more! What! and yet fret against God because everything else does not suit your desires!

Consider, that if ever you are rescued out of that miserable condition you are in, such cross providences as these you complain of are the most probable means to do it. Alas! prosperity and success is not the way to save but to destroy you (Proverbs 1:32). You must be bound in fetters and held in cords of affliction if ever your ear is to be opened to instruction (Job 36:8-10). Woe to you if you go on smoothly in the way in which you are and meet with no crosses.

Lastly, consider that all your troubles, under which you complain, are pulled down upon your heads by your own sins. You turn God's mercies into sin and then fret against God because He turns your sins into sorrow. Your ways and doings procure these things to you. Lay your hand therefore upon your mouth and say, 'Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?' (Lamentations 3:39). But now I must turn to the Lord's people, who have least pretenses of all men to be dissatisfied with any of God's providences and yet are but too frequently found in that attitude. And to them I shall offer the following considerations:

Consider your spiritual mercies and privileges with which the Lord Jesus has invested you, and complain at your providential lot if you can. One of these mercies alone has enough in it to sweeten all your troubles in this world. When the apostle considered them, his heart was overwhelmed with astonishment, so that he could not forbear in the midst of all his outward troubles to cry out, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings' (Ephesians 1:3). Oh, who that sees such an inheritance settled upon him in Christ, can ever open his mouth again to complain at his providential lot!

Consider your sins, and that will make you contented with your lot. Yea, consider two things in sin: what it deserves from God, and what it requires to mortify and purge it in you. It deserves from God eternal ruin. The merit of hell is in the least vain thought. Every sin forfeits all the mercies you have; and if so, rather wonder your mercies are so many, than that you have no more. Besides, you cannot doubt but your corruptions require all the crosses, wants and troubles that are upon you, and it may be a great deal more, to mortify and subdue them. Do you not find, after all the rods that have been upon you, a proud heart still, a vain and earthly heart still? O how many bitter potions are necessary to purge out this tough malignant disease!

Consider how near you are to the change of your condition. Have but a little patience, and all will be as well with you as your hearts can desire. It is no small comfort to the saints that this world is the worst place that they shall ever be in; things will get better every day with them. If the traveler has spent all his money, yet it does not much trouble him if he knows himself to be within a few miles of his own home. If there are no candles in the house, we do not much trouble over it if we are sure it is almost break of day; for then there will be no use for them. This is the case with us; 'for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed' (Romans 13:11).

I have done with the directive part of this discourse, but before I proceed farther, I judge it necessary to leave a few cautions, to prevent the abuse of Providence.

If Providence delays the performance of any mercy to you that you have long waited and prayed for, yet see that you do not despond, nor grow weary of waiting upon God for that reason.

It pleases the Lord often to try and exercise His people this way, and make them cry: ‘How long, LORD, how long?’ (Psalms 13:1-2). These delays, both for spiritual and temporal reasons, are frequent, and when they befall us we are too apt to interpret them as denials, and fall into a sinful despondency of mind, though there is no cause at all for it (Psalms 31:12; Lamentations 3:8, Lamentations 3:44). It is not always that the returns of prayer are dispatched to us in the same hour they are asked of God; yet sometimes it falls out so (Isaiah 65:24; Daniel 9:23). But though the Lord means to perform for us the mercies we desire, yet He will ordinarily exercise our patience to wait for them, and that for these reasons:

One is that our time is not the proper season for us to receive our mercies in. Now the season of mercy is a very great circumstance that adds much to the value of it. God does not judge as we do; we are all in haste and will have it now (Numbers 12:13). ‘For the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him’ (Isaiah 30:18).

Another reason is that afflictive providences have not accomplished that design upon our hearts they were sent for when we are so earnest and impatient for a change of them; and then the rod must not be taken off (Isaiah 10:12).

Again, the more prayers and searchings of heart come between our needs and supplies, our afflictions and reliefs, the sweeter are our reliefs and supplies thereby made to us, ‘Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD, we have waited for him, we will rejoice and be glad in his salvation’ (Isaiah 25:9). This recompenses the delay, and pays us for all the expenses of our patience. But though there are such weighty reasons for the stop and delay of refreshing comfortable providences, yet we cannot bear it, our hands hang down and we faint. ‘I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God’ (Psalms 69:3). For alas! we judge by sense and appearance, and do not consider that God’s heart may be towards us while the hand of His providence seems to be against us. If things continue as they are, we think our prayers are lost and our hopes perished from the LORD. Much more when things grow worse and worse and our darkness and trouble increase, as usually they do just before the break of day and change of our condition, then we conclude God is angry with our prayers. See Gideon’s reply (Judges 6:13). This even staggered a Moses’ faith (Exodus 5:22-23). O what groundless jealousies and suspicions of God are found at such times in the hearts of His own children (Job 9:16-17; Psalms 77:7-9)! But this is our great evil, and to prevent it in future trials, I offer a few proper considerations in the case.

First, the delay of your mercies is really for your advantage. You read, ‘and therefore will the LORD wait that he may be gracious’ (Isaiah 30:18). What is that? Why, it is nothing else but the time of His preparation of mercies for you, and your hearts for mercy, that so you may have it with the greatest advantage of comfort. The foolish child would pluck the apple while it is green; but when it is ripe, it drops of its own accord and is more pleasant and wholesome.

Secondly, it is a greater mercy to have a heart willing to refer all to God and be at His disposal than to enjoy immediately the mercy we are most eager and impatient for. In that, God pleases you; in this, you please God. A mercy may be given you as the fruit of common Providence; but such an attitude of heart is the fruit of special grace. So much as the glorifying of God is better than the satisfaction and pleasure of the creature, so much is such a frame better than such a fruition.

Thirdly, expected mercies are never nearer than when the hearts and hopes of God's people are lowest. Thus in their deliverance out of Egypt and Babylon (Ezekiel 37:11). So we have found it in our own personal concerns: 'At evening time it shall be light' (Zechariah 14:7). When we look for increasing darkness, light arises.

Fourthly, our unfitness for mercies is the reason why they are delayed so long. We put the blocks into the way of mercies and then repine that they make no more haste to us. 'Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened that it cannot save: neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear' (Isaiah 59:1-2).

Fifthly, consider that the mercies you wait for are the fruits of pure grace. You do not deserve them, nor can claim them upon any title of desert; and therefore have reason to wait for them in a patient and thankful frame.

Lastly, consider how many millions of men as good as you by nature are cut off from all hope and expectation of mercy for ever, and there remains to them nothing but 'a fearful expectation of wrath.' This might have been your case; and therefore do not be of an impatient spirit under the expectations of mercy.

Do not pry too curiously into the secrets of Providence, nor allow your shallow reason arrogantly to judge and censure its designs.

There are hard texts in the works as well as in the Word of God. It becomes us modestly and humbly to reverence, but not to dogmatize too boldly and positively upon them. A man may easily get a strain by over-reaching. 'When I thought to know this,' said Asaph, 'it was too painful for me' (Psalms 73:16). 'I thought to know this' - there was the arrogant attempt of reason, there he pried into the arcana of Providence - 'but it was too wonderful for me,' it was 'useless labour,' as Calvin expounds it. He pried so far into that puzzling mystery of the afflictions of the righteous and prosperity of the wicked, till it begat envy towards them and despondency in himself (Psalms 73:3, Psalms 73:13), and this was all he got by summoning Providence to the bar of reason. Holy Job was guilty of this evil, and frankly ashamed of it (Job 42:3).

I know there is nothing in the Word or in the works of God that is repugnant to sound reason, but there are some things in both which are opposite to carnal reason, as well as above right reason; and therefore our reason never shows itself more unreasonable than in summoning those things to its bar which transcend its sphere and capacity. Many are the mischiefs which ensue upon this practice. By this we are drawn into an unworthy suspicion and distrust of the faithfulness of God in the promises. Sarah laughed at the tidings of the son of promise, because reason contradicted and told her it was naturally impossible (Genesis 18:13-14).

Hence comes despondency of mind and faintness of heart under afflictive providences. Reason can discern no good fruits in them, nor deliverance from them, and so our hands hang down in a sinful discouragement, saying all these things are against us (1 Samuel 27:1).

Hence flow temptations to deliver ourselves by indirect and sinful means (Isaiah 30:15-16). When our own reason fills us with a distrust of Providence, it naturally prompts us to sinful expedients, and there leaves us entangled in the snares of our own making.

Beware therefore you do not lean too much to your own reasonings and understandings. Nothing is more plausible, nothing more dangerous.

06.10. The Advantages of Meditating

Chapter 10

The Advantages of Meditating on Providence

Having given direction for the due management of this great and important duty, what remains but that we now set our hearts to it, and make it the constant work of every day throughout our lives. O what peace, what pleasure, what stability, what holy courage and confidence would result from such an observation of Providence as has been recommended! But alas we may say with reference to the voices of divine Providence, as it is written: 'For God speaketh once, yea, twice, yet man perceiveth it not' (Job 33:14). Many a time Providence has spoken instruction in duty, conviction for iniquity, encouragement under despondency, but we do not regard it. How greatly are we all wanting in our duty and comfort by this neglect! It will be needful therefore to spread before you the loveliness and excellence of walking with God in a due and daily observation of His providences, that our souls may be fully engaged to it.

First let me offer this as a moving argument to all gracious souls that by this means you may maintain sweet and conscious communion with God from day to day. And what is there desirable in this world in comparison with that! 'For thou, LORD, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands' (Psalms 92:4). Your hearts may be as sweetly refreshed by the works of God's hands as by the words of his mouth. Psalm 104 is all spent in the consideration of the works of Providence which so filled the Psalmist's heart that, by way of ejaculation, he expresses the effect of it: 'My meditation of him shall be sweet' (Psalms 104:34).

Communion with God, properly and strictly taken, consists in two things, viz., God's manifestation of Himself to the soul, and the soul's answerable returns to God. This is that koinonia (fellowship) we have here with God. Now God manifests Himself to His people by providences as well as ordinances; neither is there any grace in a sanctified soul hid from the gracious influences of His providential manifestations. Sometimes the Lord manifests His displeasure and anger against the sins of His people in correcting and rebuking providences. His rods have a chiding voice: 'Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it' (Micah 6:9). This manifestation of God's anger kindly melts and thaws a gracious soul, and produces a double sweet effect upon it, namely, repentance for sins past, and due caution against future sins.

It thaws and melts the heart for sins committed. Thus David's heart was melted for his sin when the hand of God was heavy upon him in affliction (Psalms 32:4-5). Thus the captive Church, upon whom fell the saddest and most dismal providence that ever befell any of God's people in any age of the world, see how their hearts are broken for sin under this severe rebuke (Lamentations 2:17-19). And then it produces caution against sin for the time to come. It is plain that the rebukes of Providence leave this effect upon gracious hearts (Ezra 9:13-14; Psalms 85:8).

Sometimes God cheers and comforts the hearts of His people with smiling and reviving providences. both public and personal. There are times of lifting up as well as casting down by the

hand of Providence. The scene changes, the aspects of Providence are very cheerful and encouraging, their winter seems to be over. They put off their garments of mourning, and then, ah, what sweet returns are made to heaven by gracious souls! Does God lift them up by prosperity? they also will lift up their God by praises (Psalms 18:1, title, and Psalms 18:1-3). So Moses and the people with him (Exodus 15:1-27) when God had delivered them from Pharaoh, how they exalt Him in a song of thanksgiving which, for the elegance and spirituality of it, is made an emblem of the doxologies given to God in glory by the saints (Revelation 15:3). On the whole, whatever effects our communion with God in any of His ordinances is wont to produce upon our hearts, the same we may observe to follow our conversing with Him in His providences.

It is usually found in the experience of all the saints that in whatever ordinance or duty they have any conscious communion with God, it naturally produces in their spirits a deep abasement and humiliation from the sense of divine condescension to such vile poor worms as we are. Thus Abraham, 'which am but dust and ashes' (Genesis 18:27). The same effect follows our converse with God in His providences. Thus when God had in the way of His providence prospered Jacob, how does he lay himself at the feet of God, as a man overwhelmed with the sense of mercy! 'I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast shown thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands' (Genesis 32:10). Thus also it was with David: 'Who am I, O Lord GOD, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?' (2 Samuel 7:18). And I doubt not but some of you have found the same frame of heart upon you that these holy men here expressed. Can you not remember when God lifted you up by providence, how you cast down yourselves before Him and have been viler in your own eyes than ever! Why, thus do all gracious hearts. What am I, that the Lord should do thus and thus for me! O that ever so great and holy a God should thus be concerned for so vile and sinful a worm! Does communion with God in ordinances melt the heart into love to God (Son 2:3-5)? Why, so does the observation of His providences also. Never did any man converse with God's works of providence aright, but found his heart at some times melted into love to the God of his mercies. When God had delivered David from the hand of Saul and all his enemies, he said, 'I will love thee, O LORD my strength' (Psalms 18:1 compared with the title). Every man loves the mercies of God, but a saint loves the God of his mercies. The mercies of God, as they are the fuel of a wicked man's lusts, so they are fuel to maintain a good man's love to God; not that their love to God is grounded upon these external benefits. 'Not thine, but thee, O Lord,' is the motto of a gracious soul, yet these things serve to blow up the flame of love to God in their hearts, and they find it so. Does communion with God set the keenest edge upon the soul against sin? You see it does, and you have a great instance of it in Moses, when he had been with God in the mount for forty days and had there enjoyed communion with Him. When he came down and saw the calf the people had made, see what a holy paroxysm of zeal and anger it cast his soul into (Exodus 32:19-20). Why, the same effect you may discern to follow the saints' converse with God in His providences. What was that which pierced the heart of David with such a deep sense of the evil of his sin, which is so abundantly manifested in Psalms 51:1-19 throughout? Why, if you look into the title, you shall find it was the effect of what Nathan had laid before him, and if you consult 2 Samuel 12:7-10 you will find it was the goodness of God manifested to him in the several endearing providences of his life, which in this he had so evilly requited the Lord for. It was the realization of this that broke his heart to pieces. And I doubt not but some of us have sometimes found the like effects by comparing God's ways and our own together. Does communion with the Lord enlarge the heart for obedience

and service? Surely it is as oil to the wheels, that makes them run on freely and nimbly in their course. Thus when Isaiah had obtained a special manifestation of God, and the Lord asked: 'Whom shall I send?' he presents a ready soul for the employment) 'Here am I; send me' (Isaiah 6:8). Why, the very same effect follows sanctified providences, as you may see in Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 17:5-6) and in David (Psalms 116:12). O when a soul considers what God has done for him, he cannot choose but say, What shall I return? How shall I answer these engagements? And thus you see what sweet communion a soul may have with God in the way of His providences. O that you would thus walk with Him! How much of heaven might be found on earth this way! And certainly it will never repent the Lord He has done you good, when His mercies produce such effects upon your hearts. He will say of every favour thus improved, it was well bestowed, and will rejoice over you to do you good for ever.

A great part of the pleasure and delight of the Christian life is made out of the observations of Providence. 'The works of the LORD are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein' (Psalms 111:2). That is, the study of Providence is so sweet and pleasant that it invites and allures the soul to search and dive into it. How pleasant is it to a well-tempered soul to behold and observe.

Observe the sweet harmony and consent of divine attributes in the issues of Providence! They may seem sometimes to jar and clash, to part with each other, and go contrary ways; but they only seem so to do, for in the winding up, they always meet and embrace each other. 'Mercy and truth are met together: righteousness and peace have kissed each other' (Psalms 85:10). This is spoken with an immediate reference to that signal providence of Israel's deliverance out of the Babylonish captivity, and the sweet effects thereof. The truth and righteousness of God in the promises did, as it were, kiss and embrace the mercy and peace that was contained in the performance of them, after they had seemed for seventy years to be at a great distance from each other. For it is an allusion to the usual demonstration of joy and gladness that two dear friends are wont to give and receive after a long absence and separation from each other; they no sooner meet, but they smile, embrace and kiss each other. Even thus it is here. The Hebrew word may be rendered 'have met us,' and that also is true; for whenever these blessed promises and performances meet and kiss each other, they are also joyfully embraced and kissed by believing souls. There is, I doubt not, an indirect reference in this Scripture to the Messiah also, and our redemption by Him. In Him it is that these divine attributes, which before seemed to clash and contradict one another in the business of our salvation, have a sweet agreement and accomplishment. Truth and righteousness do in Him meet with mercy and peace in a blessed agreement. What a lovely sight is this, and how pleasant to behold! O, if we would but stand upon our watchtower (Habakkuk 2:3) to take due observations of Providence, what rare prospects might we have! Luther understands it of the Word of God, as much as to say, I will look into the Word, and observe there how God accomplishes all things, and brings them to pass, and how His works are the fulfilling of His Word. Others, as Calvin, understand it of a man's own retired thoughts and meditations, in which a man carefully observes what purposes and designs God has upon the world in general, or upon himself in particular, and how the truth and righteousness of God in the Word work them selves through all difficulties and impediments, and meet in the mercy, peace and happiness of the saints at last. Every believer, take it in which sense you will, has his watchtower as well as Habakkuk; and give me leave to say, it is an angelic employment to stand up and

behold the consent of God's attributes, the accomplishment of His ends and our own happiness in the works of Providence. For this is the very joy of the angels and saints in heaven, to see God's ends wrought out and His attributes glorified in the mercy and peace of the Church (Revelation 14:1-3, Revelation 14:8). And as it is a pleasant sight to see the harmony of God's attributes, so it is exceedingly pleasant to behold the resurrection of our own prayers and hopes as from the dead, Why, this you may often see, if you will duly observe the works of Providence towards you. We hope and pray for such and such mercies to the Church, or to ourselves; but God delays the accomplishment of our hopes, suspends the answer of our prayers and seems to speak to us: 'For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it: because it will surely come, it will not tarry' (Habakkuk 2:3). But we have no patience to wait the time of the promise, our hopes languish and die in the interim; and we say with the despondent Church, 'My hope is perished from the LORD' (Lamentations 3:18). But how sweet and comfortable it is to see these prayers fulfilled after we have given up all expectation of them! May we not say of them that it is even 'life from the dead.' This was David's case (Psalms 31:22); he gave up his hopes and prayers for lost, yet lived to see the comfortable and unexpected returns of them. And this was the case of Job (Job 6:11); he had given up all expectation of better days, and yet this man lived to see a resurrection of all his lost comforts with an advantage. Think how that change and unexpected turn of Providence affected his soul. It is with our hopes and prayers as with our alms: 'Cast thy bread on the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days' (Ecclesiastes 11:1). Or as it was with Jacob, who had given over all hopes of ever seeing his beloved Joseph again, but when a strange and unexpected Providence had restored that hopeless mercy to him again, O how ravishing and transporting it was! (Genesis 46:29-30).

What a transporting pleasure it is to behold great blessings and advantages to us wrought by Providence out of those very things that seemed to threaten our ruin or misery! And yet by duly observing the ways of Providence you may to your singular comfort find it so. Little did Joseph think his transportation into Egypt had been in order to his advancement there; yet he lived with joy to see it and with a thankful heart to acknowledge it (Genesis 45:5). Wait and observe, and you shall assuredly find that promise (Romans 8:28) working out its way through all providences. How many times have you been made to say as David, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted' (Psalms 119:71). O what a difference we have seen between our afflictions at our first meeting with them, and our parting from them! We have entertained them with sighs and tears but parted from them with joy, blessing God for them, as the happy instruments of our good. Thus our fears and sorrows are turned into praises and songs of thanksgiving.

What unspeakable comfort it is for a poor soul, that sees nothing but sin and vileness in itself, at the same time to see what a high esteem and value the great God has for him! This may be discerned by a due attendance to Providence, for there a man sees goodness and mercy following him through all his days (Psalms 23:6). Other men pursue good, and it flies from them, they can never overtake it; but goodness and mercy follow the people of God, and they cannot avoid or escape it. It gives them chase day by day, and finds them out even when they sometimes put themselves by sin out of the way of it. In all the providences that befall them goodness and mercy pursue them. O with what a melting heart do they sometimes reflect upon these things! 'And will not the goodness of God be discouraged from following me, notwithstanding all my vile affronts and abuses of it in former mercies? Lord, what am I, that mercy should thus pursue me, when

vengeance and wrath pursue others as good by nature as I am?' It certainly argues the great esteem God has of a man, when He thus follows him with sanctified providences, whether comforts or crosses, for his good. And so much is plain, from 'What is man . . that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment!' (Job 7:17-18). Certainly, God's people are His treasure, and by this it appears that they are so, that He withdraws not his eye from them (Job 36:7). I say not that God's favour and respect to a man may be concluded solely from His providences, but sanctified providences may very much make it clear to us; and when it does so, it cannot but be matter of exceeding great joy.

What is there in all this world that can give a soul such joy and comfort as to find himself by everything set on and furthered in his way to heaven! And yet this may be discerned by a careful attendance to the effects and issues of providences. However contrary the winds and tides of Providence at any time seem to us, yet nothing is more certain than that they all conspire to hasten sanctified souls to God and fit them for glory.

Saint Paul knew that both his bonds and the afflictions added to them should turn to, or, as the word imports, finally issue in his salvation. Not that in themselves they serve to any such purpose; but as they are overruled and determined to such an end, 'through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ' (Php 1:19). When prayer, the external, and the Spirit, the internal means are joined with them, then afflictions themselves become excellent means to promote salvation. And have we not with joy observed how those very things that sense and reason tell us are opposite to our happiness have been the most blessed instruments to promote it! How has God blessed crosses to mortify corruption, wants to kill our wantonness, disappointments to wean us from the world! O we little think how comfortable those things will be in the review, which are so burdensome to present sense!

I beseech you consider what an effectual means the due observation of Providence will be to overpower and suppress the natural atheism that is in your hearts.

There is a natural seed of atheism in the best hearts, and this is very much nourished by passing a rash and false judgment upon the works of Providence. When we see wicked ones prospering in the world, and godly men crushed and destroyed in the way of righteousness and integrity, it may tempt us to think there is no advantage by religion and all our self-denial and holiness to be little better than lost labour. Thus stood the case with good Asaph: 'Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches' (Psalms 73:12). And what does the flesh infer from this? Why, no less than the unprofitableness of the ways of holiness: 'Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency' (Psalms 73:13). This irreligious inference carnal reason was ready to draw from the dispensations of outward prosperity to wicked men; but now if we would carefully observe either the signal retributions of Providence to many of them in this world or to all of them in the world to come, O what a full confirmation is this to our faith! 'The LORD is known by the judgments which he executeth' (Psalms 9:16). Psalms 58:1-11 contains the characters of the most prodigious sinners, whose wickedness is aggravated by the deliberation with which it is committed (Psalms 58:2) by their habit and custom in it (Psalms 58:3) and by their incorrigibleness and persistence in it (Psalms 58:4-5). And the Providence of God is there invited to destroy their power (Psalms 58:6), and that either by a gradual and unperceived consumption of them (Psalms 58:7-8) or by a sudden and unexpected stroke (Psalms 58:9). And what shall the

effects of such providence be to the righteous? Why, it shall be matter of joy (Psalms 59:1-) and great confirmation to their faith in God: ‘Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth’ (Psalms 58:11).

And, on the contrary, how convincingly clear are those providences that demonstrate the being, wisdom, power, love and faithfulness of God in the supporting, preserving and delivering of the righteous in all their dangers, fears and difficulties! In these things the Lord shows Himself to His people (Psalms 94:1). Yea, He shows Himself to spiritual eyes in the providences, as clearly as the sun manifests itself by its own beams of light. ‘And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand; and there was the hiding of his power’ (Habakkuk 3:3-4). It is spoken of the Lord’s going forth for His people in their deliverance from their enemies. Then He had horns or rays and beams of power and mercy coming out of His hands. By His hands are meant His providential administrations and dispensations, and the horns that came out of them are nothing else but the glorious display of His attributes in those providences. How did God make Himself known to His people in that signal deliverance of them out of Egypt? (Exodus 6:3). Then He was known to them by His name Jehovah in giving being by His providences to the mercies promised.

Thus when Christ shall give His people the last and greatest deliverance from Antichrist, He shall show Himself to His people ‘in a vesture dipped in blood, and his name shall be called, The Word of God’ (Revelation 19:13). His name was the Word of God before; but then He was the Word revealing and manifesting the promises and truths of God; now accomplishing and fulfilling them. ‘For that thy name is near, thy wondrous works declare (Psalms 75:1). But more particularly, let us bring it home to our own experience. It may be we find ourselves sometimes assaulted with atheistical thoughts. We are tempted to think God has left all things below to the course and sway of nature, that our prayers do not reach Him (Lamentations 3:44), that He does not regard what evils befall us. But tell me, saints, have you not enough at hand to stop the mouths of all such temptations? O do but reflect upon your own experiences, and solemnly ask your own hearts the following questions: Have you never seen the all-sufficient God in the provisions He has made for you and yours, throughout all the way that you have gone? Who was it that supplied to you whatever was needful in all your straits? Was it not the Lord? ‘He hath given meat unto them that fear him; he will ever be mindful of his covenant’ (Psalms 111:5). O do but consider the constancy, seasonableness and at some times the extraordinariness of these provisions, and how they have been given in answer to prayer, and shut your eyes if you can against the convincing evidence of that great truth: ‘He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous’ (Job 36:7). Have you not plainly discerned the care of God in your preservation from so many and great dangers as you have escaped and been carried through hitherto? How is it that you have survived so many mortal dangers, sicknesses, accidents, designs of enemies to ruin you? It is, I presume, beyond question with you that the very finger of God has been in these things, and that it is by His care alone you have been preserved. When God had so signally delivered David from a dangerous disease and the plots of enemies against him, ‘By this,’ he says, ‘I know thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me’ (Psalms 41:11). He gathered from those gracious protections the care God had over him. Have you not plainly discerned the hand of God in the returns and accomplishments of your prayers? Nothing can be more evident than this to men of observation. ‘I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked unto him

and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles' (Psalms 34:6). Parallel to this runs the experience of thousands and ten thousands of Christians this day; they know they have the petitions they asked of Him. The mercy carries the very impress and stamp of the duty upon it, so that we can say, This is the mercy, the very mercy I have so often sought God about. O how satisfying and convincing are these things! Have you not evidently discerned the Lord's hand in the guiding and directing of your paths to your unforeseen advantage? Things that you never planned for yourselves have been brought about beyond all your thoughts. Many such things are with God; and which of all the saints has not found that word, 'The way of man is not in himself' (Jeremiah 10:23) verified by clear and undeniable experience? I presume, if you will but look over the mercies you possess this day, you will find three to one, it may be ten to one, thus wrought by the Lord for you. And how satisfying beyond all arguments in the world are these experiences, that there is a God to whom His people are exceedingly dear, a God that performs all things for them (Psalms 57:2)! Is it not fully convincing that there is a God who takes care of you, inasmuch as you have found in all the temptations and difficulties of your lives His promises still fulfilled and faithfully performed in all those conditions? I appeal to yourselves, whether you have not seen that promise made good: 'I will be with him in trouble' (Psalms 91:15) and that, 'God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able: but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may he able to bear it' (1 Corinthians 10:13). Have not these been as clearly made out by Providence before your eyes, as the sun at noonday? What room then is left for atheistical suggestions in your breasts? The remembering and recording of the performances of Providence will be a singular support to faith in future exigencies. This excellent use of it lies full in the very eye of the text. There never befell David in all his troubles a greater strait and distress than this; and doubtless his faith had staggered had not the consideration of former providences come in to its relief. From this topic faith argues, and that very strongly and conclusively. So did David's faith in many exigencies. When he was to encounter the champion of the Philistines, it was from former providences that he encouraged himself (1 Samuel 17:37). And the apostle Paul improves his experiences to the same purpose (2 Corinthians 1:9-10). Indeed the whole Scripture is full of it. What Christian does not understand the exceeding usefulness of those experiences he has had to relieve and enliven? But I shall not satisfy myself with the common assertion, than which nothing is more trite in the lips of professors, but will labour to show you wherein the great usefulness of our recorded experiences, for encouraging faith labouring under difficulties, consists. To this purpose, I shall desire the reader to ponder seriously these following particulars:

Consider how much advantage those things have upon our souls which we have already felt and tasted, beyond those which we never relished by any former experience? What is experience but the bringing down of the objects of faith to the adjudication and test of spiritual sense? Now when anything has been once tasted, felt and judged by a former experience, it is much more easily believed and received when it occurs again. It is much easier for faith to travel in a path that is well known to it, having formerly trod it, than to beat out a new one which it never trod, nor can see one step before it. Hence it is, though there is a difficulty in all the acts of faith, yet scarce in any like the first venture it makes upon Christ; and the reason lies here, because in the subsequent acts it has all its former experiences to aid and encourage it; but in the first venture it has none at all of its own, it takes a path which it never knew before. To trust God without any trial or experience is a more noble act of faith; but to trust Him after we have often tried Him is known to be more easy. O

it is no small advantage to a soul in a new plunge and distress to be able to say, This is not the first time I have been in these deeps and yet emerged out of them. Hence it was that Christ rubbed up His disciples' memories with what Providence had formerly wrought for them in a day of need. 'O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? Do ye not yet understand, neither remember?' (Matthew 16:8-11). As much as to say, Were you never in any need of bread before now? Is this the first difficulty that ever your faith met with? No, no, you have been in straits, and experienced the power and care of God in supplying them before now; and therefore I cannot but call you men of 'little faith'; for a very ordinary and small measure of faith, assisted with so much experience as you have had, would enable you to trust God. There is as much difference between believing before and after experience as there is between swimming with bladders and our first venture into the deep waters without them.

What a singular encouragement to faith do former experiences yield it, by answering all the pleas and objections of unbelief drawn from the object of faith! Now there are two things that unbelief stumbles at in God: His power and His willingness to help.

Unbelief maintains the impossibility of relief in deep distresses. 'Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? . . . Can he give bread also? Can he provide flesh for his people?' (Psalms 78:19-20). O vile and unworthy thoughts of God which proceed from our measuring the immense and boundless power of God by our own line and measure! Because we do not see which way relief should come, we conclude none is to be expected. But all these reasonings of unbelief are vanquished by a serious reflection upon our own experiences. God has helped, therefore He can. 'His hand is not shortened' (Isaiah 59:1). He has as much power and ability as formerly.

Unbelief queries the will of God, and questions whether He will now be gracious, though He has been so formerly. But after so many experiences of His readiness to help, what room for doubting remains? Thus Paul reasoned from the experience of what He had done to what He could do (2 Corinthians 1:10), and so did David (1 Samuel 17:36). Indeed, if a man had never experienced the goodness of God to him, it were not so heinous a sin to question His willingness to do him good; but what place is left after such frequent trials?

It gives great encouragement to faith to answer the objections of unbelief drawn from the subject. Now these objections are of two sorts also.

First, such as are drawn from our great unworthiness. How, says unbelief can so sinful and vile a creature expect that ever God should do this or that for me? It is true, we find He did great things for Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, etc., but these were men of eminent holiness, men that obeyed God and denied themselves for Him, and lived more in a day to His glory than ever I did all my days!

Well, but what signifies all this to a soul that under all its felt vileness and unworthiness has tasted the goodness of God as well as they? As unworthy as I am, God has been good to me notwithstanding. His mercy appeared first to me when I was worse than I am now, both in condition and disposition; and therefore I will still expect the continuance of His goodness to me, though I do not deserve it. 'For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life' (Romans 5:10).

Secondly, such as are drawn from the extremity of our present condition. If troubles or dangers grow to a height and we see nothing but ruin and misery in the eye of reason before us, now unbelief becomes importunate and troublesome to the soul. Now where are your prayers, your hopes, yea, where is now your God? But all this is easily put by and avoided by consulting our experiences in former cases. This is not the first time I have been in these straits, nor the first time I have had the same doubts and despondencies; and yet God has carried me through all (Psalms 77:7-9). This is what prevents a Christian from losing all his hopes in an hour of temptation. O how useful are these things to the people of God!

The remembrance of former providences will minister to your souls continual matter of praise and thanksgiving, which is the very employment of the angels in heaven, and the sweetest part of our lives on earth.

If God will prepare mercy and truth for David, he will prepare praises for his God, and that daily (Psalms 61:7-8). ‘By thee have I been holden up from the womb; thou art he that took me out of my mother’s bowels’; there mercies from the beginning are recognized. ‘My praise shall be continually of thee’ (Psalms 71:6); there the natural result of those recognitions is expressed.

There are five things belonging to the praise of God, and all of them have relation to His providences exercised about us:

(1) A careful observation of the mercies we receive from Him (Isaiah 41:17-20). This is fundamental to all praise. God cannot be glorified for the mercies we never noted.

(2) A faithful remembrance of the favours received. ‘Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits’ (Psalms 103:2). Hence the Lord brands the ingratitude of His people, ‘They soon forgat his works’ (Psalms 106:13).

(3) A due appreciation and valuation of every providence that does us good (1 Samuel 12:24). That providence that fed them in the wilderness with manna was a most remarkable providence to them; but since they did not value it at its worth, God had not that praise for it which He expected (Numbers 11:6).

(4) The stirring up of all the faculties and powers of the soul in the acknowledgment of these mercies to us. Thus David: ‘Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me bless his holy name’ (Psalms 103:1). Soul-praise is the very soul of praise: this is the very fat and marrow of that thank-offering.

(5) A suitable recompense for the mercies received. This David was careful about (Psalms 116:1). And the Lord taxes good Hezekiah for the neglect of it (2 Chronicles 32:24-25). This consists in a full and hearty resignation to Him of all that we have received by providence from Him, and in our willingness actually to part with all for Him when He shall require it.

Thus you see how all the ingredients to praise have respect to providences. But more particularly I will show you that, as all the ingredients of praise have respect to providences, so all the motives and arguments obliging and engaging souls to praise are found therein also. To this end consider how the mercy and goodness of God is exhibited by Providence to excite our thankfulness. The goodness and mercy of God to His people is seen in His providences concerning them: and this is the very root of praise. It is not so much the possession that Providence gives us of such or such

comforts as the goodness and kindness of God in the dispensing of them that engages a gracious soul to praise. ‘Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee’ (Psalms 63:3). To give, maintain and preserve our life are choice acts of Providence; but to do all this in a way of grace and lovingkindness, this is far better than the gifts themselves. Life is but the shadow of death without it. This is the mercy that crowns all other mercies (Psalms 103:4). It is this a sanctified soul desires God would manifest in every providence concerning him (Psalms 17:7), and what is our praising of God but our showing forth that lovingkindness which He shows to us in His providences? (Psalms 92:1-2). As the lovingkindness of God manifested in Providence is a motive to praise, so the free and undeserved favours of God, dispensed by the hand of Providence, oblige the soul to praise. This was the consideration that melted David’s heart into a thankful praising frame, even the consideration of the free and undeserved favours cast in upon him by Providence. ‘Who am I, O Lord GOD, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?’ (2 Samuel 7:18), that is, raised me by Providence from a mean condition to all this dignity; from following the ewes, to feed Jacob His people (Psalms 78:70-71). O this is what engages thankfulness (Genesis 32:10)! As the freeness of mercies dispensed by Providence engages praise: so the multitudes of mercies heaped this way upon us strongly oblige the soul to thankfulness. Thus David comes before the Lord encompassed with a multitude of mercies to praise Him (Psalms 5:7). We have our loads of mercies, and that every day (Psalms 68:19). O what a rich heap will the mercies of one day make, being laid together! As the multitudes of mercies dispensed by Providence oblige to praise, so the tenderness of God’s mercy, manifested in His providence, leaves the soul under a strong obligation to thankfulness. We see what tender regard the Lord has of all our needs, difficulties and burdens. ‘Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him’ (Psalms 103:13). He is ‘full of bowels’ as that word in James 5:11 signifies. Yea, there are not only bowels of compassion in our God, but the tenderness of bowels, like those of a mother to her sucking child (Isaiah 49:15). He feels all our pains as if the apple of His eye were touched (Zechariah 2:8), and all this is shown to His people in the way of His providences with them (Psalms 111:2-4). O who of all the children of God has not often found this in His providences? And who can see it, and not be filled with thankfulness? All these are so many bands clapped by Providence upon the soul to oblige it to a life of praise. Hence it is that the prayers of the saints are so full of thanksgivings upon these accounts. It is sweet to recount them to the Lord in prayer, to lie at His feet in a holy astonishment at His gracious condescension to poor worms.

The due observation of Providence will endear Jesus Christ every day more and more to your souls. Christ is the channel of grace and mercy. Through Him are all the streams of mercy that flow from God to us, and all the returns of praise from us to God (1 Corinthians 3:21-22). All things are ours upon no other title but our being His.

Now there are various things in Providence which exceedingly endear the Lord Jesus Christ to His people, and these are the most sweet and delightful parts of all our enjoyments. The purchase of all those mercies which Providence conveys to us, is by His own blood; for not only spiritual and eternal mercies but even all our temporal ones are the acquisition of His blood. As sin forfeited all, so Christ restored all these mercies again to us by His death. Sin had so shut up the womb of mercy that had not Christ made an atonement by death it could never have brought forth one mercy to all eternity for us. It is with Him that God freely gives us all things (Romans 8:32): heaven

itself, and all things needful to bring us thither, among which is principally included the tutelage and aid of divine Providence. So that whatever good we receive from the hand of Providence, we must put it upon the score of Christ's blood; and when we receive it, we may say, it is the price of blood; it is a mercy rising up out of the death of Christ; it cost Him dear though it come to me freely; it is sweet in the possession but costly in the acquisition. Now this is a most endearing consideration. Did Christ die that these mercies might live? Did He pay His invaluable blood to purchase these comforts that I possess? O what transcendent, matchless love was the love of Christ! You have known parents that have laid out all their stock of money to purchase estates for their children; but when did you hear of any that spent the whole stock and treasure of their blood to make a purchase for them? If the life of Christ had not been so painful and sad to Him, ours could not have been so sweet and comfortable to us. It is through His poverty we are enriched (2 Corinthians 8:9). These sweet mercies that are born of Providence every day are the fruits of 'the travail of his soul' (Isaiah 53:11). The sanctification of all those mercies which Providence conveys to us is by our union with Christ. It is by virtue of our union with His person that we enjoy the sanctified gifts and blessings of Providence. All these are mercies additional to that great mercy, Christ (Matthew 6:33). They are given with Him (Romans 8:32). This is the tenure by which we hold them (1 Corinthians 3:21-23). What we lost in Adam is restored again with advantage in Christ. Immediately upon the fall, that curse (Genesis 2:17) seized upon all the miserable posterity of Adam and upon all their comforts, outward as well as inward; and this still lies heavy upon them. All that Providence does for them that are Christless is but to feed so many poor condemned wretches till the sentence they are under is executed upon them. It is indeed bountiful and openhanded to many of them and fills them with earthly comforts; but not one special sanctified mercy is to be found among all their enjoyments. These gifts of Providence do but deceive, defile and destroy them through their own corruptions, and for want of union with Christ. 'The prosperity of fools shall destroy them' (Proverbs 1:32). But when a man is once in Christ, then all providences are sanctified and sweet. 'Unto the pure, all things are pure' (Titus 1:15). 'A little that a righteous man hath is better than the treasures of many wicked' (Psalms 37:16). Now Christ becomes a head of influence as well as of dominion; and in all things He consults the good of His own members (Ephesians 1:22). The dispensation of all our comforts and mercies is by His direction and appointment. It is true, the angels are employed in the kingdom of Providence. They move the wheels, that is, are instrumental in all the revolutions in this lower world; but still they receive directions and orders from Christ, as you may see in that admirable scheme of providences (Ezekiel 1:25-26). Now what an endearing meditation is this! Whatever creature is instrumental for any good to you, it is your Lord Jesus Christ that gave the orders and commands to that creature to do it; and without it they could have done nothing for you. It is your Head in heaven that consults your peace and comfort on earth; these are the fruits of His care for you. So in the prevention and restraints of evil; it is He that bridles the wrath of devils and men; He holds the reins in His own hands (Revelation 2:10). It was the care of Christ over His poor sheep at Damascus that stopped the raging adversary who was upon the way, designing to destroy them (Acts 9:1-433). The continuation of all your mercies and comforts, outward as well as inward, is the fruit of His intercession in heaven for you. As the offering up of the Lamb of God as a sacrifice for sin opened the door of mercy at first, so His appearing before God as a Lamb that had been slain still keeps that door of mercy open (Revelation 5:6; Hebrews 9:24). By this His intercession our peace and comforts are prolonged to us (Zechariah 1:12-13). Every sin we commit would put an end to the

mercies we possess were it not for that plea which is put in for us by it. ‘And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins’ (1 John 2:1-2). This stops all accusations, and procures new pardons for new sins Hence it is ‘he saves to the utter most’ (Hebrews 7:25), to the last completing act. New sins do not make void our former pardons nor cut off our privileges settled upon us in Christ. The returns and answers of all your prayers and cries to heaven for the removing of your afflictions or supply of your needs are all procured and obtained for you by Jesus Christ. He is the master of your requests; and were it not that God had respect to Him, He would never regard your cries to Him nor return an answer of peace to you, however great your distresses might be (Revelation 8:3-4). It is His name that gives our prayers their acceptance (John 15:16); because the Father can deny Him nothing, therefore your prayers are not denied. Does God condescend to hear you in the day of trouble? Does He convince you by your own experience that your prayers have power with God and do prevail? O see how much you owe to your dear Lord Jesus Christ for this high and glorious privilege! The Covenant of Grace, in which all your comfortable enjoyments are comprised, and by which they are secured, sanctified and sweetened to you, is made in Christ and ratified by Him between God and you. Your mercies are all comprised in this covenant, even your daily bread (Psalms 111:5), as well as your justification and other spiritual mercies. It is your covenant interest that secures to you whatever it comprises; hence they are called ‘the sure mercies of David’ (Isaiah 55:3). Nay, this is what sanctifies them and gives them the nature of special and peculiar mercies. One such mercy is worth a thousand common mercies. And being sanctified and special mercies, they must needs be exceedingly sweet beyond all other mercies. For these reasons it was that David so rejoiced in his covenant interest, though laden with many afflictions (2 Samuel 23:5). But now all this hangs entirely upon Christ. The New Testament is in His blood (1 Corinthians 11:25), and whatever mercies you reap from that covenant, you must thank the Lord Jesus Christ for them. Put all this together, and then think how such considerations will endear Christ to your souls!

The due observations of Providence have a marvelous efficacy to melt the heart, and make it thaw and submit before the Lord.

How can a sanctified heart do less than melt into tears while it either considers the dealings of God from time to time with it, or compares the mercies received with the sins committed, or the different administrations of Providence towards itself and others!

Let a man but set himself to think deliberately and closely of the ways of Providence towards him, let him but follow the leading of Providence, as it has led him all along the way that he has gone, and if there is any principle of gracious tenderness in him, he shall meet with variety of occasions to excite and draw it forth.

Go back with your serious thoughts to the beginning of the ways of God with you, the mercies that broke out early in your youth, even the first-born mercies from the womb of Providence; and you will say, What need I go farther? Here is enough, not only to move, but overwhelm my heart. ‘Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, my Father, thou art the guide of my youth?’ (Jeremiah 3:4). What a critical time is the time of youth! It is the molding age; and, ordinarily, according to the course of those leading providences after-providences do steer their course. What levity, rashness, ignorance and strong propensities to sin and ruin accompanied that age! How many being then left to the sway of their own lusts run themselves into those sins and miseries which

they never recover themselves from to their dying day! These, like the errors of the first concoction, are rarely rectified afterwards. Did the Lord guide you by His providence when but a child? Did He then preserve you from those follies and misdemeanors which blast the very blossom and nip the bud, so that no good fruit is to be expected afterwards? Did He then cast you into such families, or among such company and acquaintance, as molded and formed your spirit into a better disposition? Did He then direct you into that way of employment in which you have seen so large a train of happy consequences ever since following you? And will you not from henceforth say: 'My Father, thou art the guide of my youth'?

Let us but bring our thoughts close to the providences of after-times, and consider how the several changes and removes of our lives have been ordered for us. Things we never foresaw nor designed, but much better for us than what we did design, have been all along ordered for us. The way of man is not in himself. God's thoughts have not been our thoughts, nor His ways our ways (Isaiah 55:8). Among the eminent mercies of your life, reader, how many of them have been mere surprises to you! Your own projects have been thrust aside to make way for better things designed by Providence for you.

Nay, do but observe the springs and autumns of Providence, in what order they have flourished and faded with you, and you will find yourself overpowered with the sense of divine wisdom and goodness. When necessity required, such a friend was stirred up to help you, such a place opened to receive you, such a relation raised up or continued to refresh you. And no sooner does Providence deprive you of any of them, but either your need of them ceases, or some other way is opened to you. O the depth of God's wisdom and goodness! O the matchless tenderness of God to His people! Compare the dealings of Providence with you and others, yea, with others that sprang up with you in the same generation, it may be, in the same families and from the same parents, it may be in families greater and more flourishing in the world than yours, and see the difference, upon many great accounts, it has made between you and them. I knew a Christian who after many years' separation was visited by his own brother, the very sight of whom wrought upon him much as the sight of Benjamin did upon Joseph, so that he could not refrain to fall upon his neck and weep for joy; but after a few hours spent together, finding the spirit of his brother not only estranged from all that is spiritual and serious, but also very vain and profane, he hastened to his chamber, shut the door upon him, threw himself down at the feet of God and with flowing eyes and a melting heart admired the distinguishing grace of God, saying, 'Was not Esau Jacob's brother?' (Malachi 1:2). O grace, grace, astonishing grace!

Compare the behavior of Providence towards you, with your own behavior towards the Lord; and it must needs melt your hearts to find so much mercy bestowed where so much sin has been committed. What place did you ever live in, where you cannot remember great provocations committed, and notwithstanding that, manifold mercies received? O with how many notwithstandings and neverthelesses has the Lord done you good in every place! What relationship has not been abused by sin, and yet both raised up and continued by Providence for your comfort! In every place God has left the marks of His goodness, and you the remembrances of your sinfulness. Give yourselves but leave to think of these things, and it will be strange if your hearts do not melt at the remembrance of them. Or lastly, do but compare your dangers with your fears, and both with the strange outlets and doors of escape Providence has opened, and it cannot do less than overpower you with a full sense of divine care and goodness. There have been dark

clouds seen to rise over you, judgment even at your door, sometimes threatening your life, sometimes your liberty, sometimes your estates, and sometimes your dearest relatives, in whom, it may be, your life was bound up. Remember in that day what faintness of spirit seized you, what charges of guilt stirring up fears of the issue within you. You turned to the Lord in that distress, and has He not made a way to escape, and delivered you from all your fears (Psalms 34:4)?

O, is your life such a continued throng, such a mad hurry, that there is no time for Christians to sit alone and think on these things, and press these marvelous manifestations of God in His providences upon their own hearts? Surely, might these things but lie upon our hearts, talk with our thoughts by day and lodge with us at night, they would even force their passage down to our very reins.

Due observation of Providence will both beget and secure inward tranquility in your minds, amidst the vicissitudes and revolutions of things in this unstable vain world.

‘I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety’ (Psalms 4:8). He resolves the sinful fear of events shall not rob him of his inward quiet, nor torture his thoughts with anxious forebodings. He will commit all his concerns into that faithful fatherly hand that had hitherto wrought all things for him, and he does not mean to lose the comfort of one night’s rest, nor bring the evil of tomorrow upon today, but knowing in whose hand he was, wisely enjoys the sweet felicity of a resigned will.

Now this tranquility of our minds is as much begotten and preserved by a due consideration of Providence as by anything whatever. Hence it was that our Lord Jesus Christ, when He would cure the disciples’ anxious and distracting care about a livelihood, bids them consider the care Providence has over the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, how it feeds the one and clothes the other without any anxious care of theirs; and would have them well consider those providences, and reason themselves into a calm and sweet composure of spirit from those considerations (Matthew 6:27-34).

Two things destroy the peace and tranquility of our lives, our bewailing past disappointments, or fearing future ones. But would we once learn prevision and provision to be divine prerogatives and take notice how often Providence baffles those that pretend to it, causing the good they foresaw, according to their conjectures, coming to their hand, yet to baulk them and flee from them: and the evil they thought themselves sufficiently secured from, to invade them; I say, would we consider how Providence daily baffles these pretensions of men, and asserts its own dominion, it would greatly conduce to the tranquility of our lives. This is a great truth, that there is no face of adversity so formidable, but being viewed from this station, would become amicable. Now there are several things in the consideration of Providence that naturally and kindly compose the mind of a Christian to peace, and bring it to a sweet rest, while events hang in a doubtful suspense.

First, the supremacy of Providence and its uncontrollable power in working. This is often seen in the good that it brings us in a way that is above the thoughts and cares of our minds, or labour of our hands. ‘I had not thought,’ said Jacob, ‘to see thy face; and lo, God hath showed me also thy seed’ (Genesis 48:11). There is a frequent coincidence of providences in a way of surprise, which from no appearance or the remotest tendency of outward causes could be foreseen, but rather falls visibly contrary to the present scheme and state of our affairs. Nothing tends to convince us of

the vanity and folly of our own anxieties and fears more than this does.

Second, the profound wisdom of Providence in all that it performs for the people of God. The wheels are full of eyes (Ezekiel 1:18), that is, there is an intelligent and wise Spirit that sits upon and governs the affairs of this world. This wisdom shines out to us in the unexpected, yea, contrary events of things. How often have we been courting some beautiful appearance that invited our senses, and with trembling shunned the formidable face of other things, when, notwithstanding, the issues of Providence have convinced us that our danger lay in what we courted and our good in what we so studiously declined! This also is a sweet principle of peace and quiet to the Christian's mind, that he knows not but his good may be intended in what seemed to threaten his ruin. Many were the distresses and straits of Israel in the wilderness, but all was to humble them, that he might do them good in the latter end (Deuteronomy 8:16). Sad and dismal was the face of that providence that sent them out of their own land into the land of the Chaldeans; yet even this was a project to do them good (Jeremiah 24:5). How often have we retracted our rash and headlong censures of things upon experience of this truth, and been taught to bless our afflictions and disappointments in the name of the Lord! Many a time have we kissed those troubles at parting which we met with trembling. And what can promote peace under doubtful providences more effectually than this? The experiences we have had throughout our lives of the faithfulness and constancy of Providence are of excellent use to allay and quieten our hearts in any trouble that befalls us. 'Hitherto hath the LORD helped us' (1 Samuel 7:12). We never found Him wanting to us in any case hitherto. This is not the first strait we have been in nor the first time that our hearts and hopes have been low. Surely He is the same God now as heretofore, His hand is not shortened, neither does His faithfulness fail. O recount in how great extremities former experience has taught you not to despair! The conjectures Christians may make of the way of Providence towards them from what its former methods have been towards them is exceedingly quieting and comfortable. It is usual with Christians to compare times with times and to guess at the issue of one providence by another. The saints know what course Providence usually holds and accordingly with great probability infer what they may expect from what in like cases they have formerly observed. Christian, examine your own heart and its former observations, and you will find, (as Psalms 89:30-32) that it is usually the way of God to prepare some smart rods to correct you, when either your heart has secretly revolted from God and is grown vain, careless and sensual, or when your steps have declined and you have turned aside to commit iniquity. And then when those rods have been sanctified to humble, reduce and purge your heart, it is usually observed that those sad providences are then upon the change, and then the Lord changes the voice of His Providence towards you. 'Go and proclaim these words towards the north and say, Return thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity' (Jeremiah 3:12-13).

If therefore I find the blessed effects of the rod upon me, that it has done its work, to break the hard heart and pull down the proud heart and awaken the drowsy heart and quicken the slothful, negligent, lazy heart; now with great probability I may conjecture a more comfortable aspect of Providence will quickly appear, the refreshing and reviving time is nigh.

It is usual with Christians to argue themselves into fresh reviving hopes, when the state of things is most forlorn, by comparing the providences of God one with another.

It is a mighty composing meditation when we compare the providences of God towards the inanimate and irrational creatures with His providences towards us. Does He take care for the very fowls of the air for whom no man provides, as well as those at the door which we daily feed? Does He so clothe the very grass of the field, hear the young ravens when they cry for meat, and can it be supposed He should forget His own people, that are of much more value than these? (Matthew 6:26, Matthew 6:30). Or if we compare the bounty and care that Providence has expressed to the enemies of God, how it feeds and clothes and protects them, even while they are fighting against Him with His own mercies, it cannot but quieten and satisfy us, that surely He will not be wanting to that people upon whom He has set His love, to whom He has given His Son, and for whom He has designed heaven itself.

Lastly, it must needs quieten us, when we consider what the Lord did for us in the way of His providence, when we ourselves were in the state of nature and enmity against God. Did He not then look after us when we did not know Him, provide for us when we did not own Him in any of His mercies, bestow thousands of mercies upon us when we had no title to Christ or any one promise? And will He now do less for us since we are reconciled and become His children?

Surely, such considerations as these cannot but fill the soul with peace, and preserve the tranquility of it under the most disturbing providences.

06.10. The Advantages of Meditating cont'd

cont'd

Due observations of the ways of God in His providences towards us have an excellent usefulness and aptitude to advance and improve holiness in our hearts and lives. The holiness of God is manifested to us in all His works of providence. 'The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works' (Psalms 145:17). The instruments used by Providence may be very sinful and wicked; they may aim at base ends and make use of wicked means to attain them; but it is certain God's designs are most pure and all His workings are so too. Though He permits, limits, orders and overrules many unholy persons and actions, yet in all He works like Himself; and His holiness is no more defiled and stained by their impurity than the sunbeams are by the noxious exhalations of a dunghill. 'He is the rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he' (Deuteronomy 32:4). So that in all His providences He sets before us a perfect pattern of holiness, that we might be holy in all our ways, as our Father is in all His ways. But this is not all. His providences, if duly observed, promote holiness by stopping up our way to sin. O if men would but note the designs of God in His preventive providences how useful would it be to keep them upright and holy in their ways! For why is it that the Lord so often hedges up our way with thorns, as it is (Hosea 2:6), but that we should not find out paths to sin? Why does He clog us but to prevent our straying from Him? 'And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me' (2 Corinthians 12:7). O it is good to attend to these works of God, and study the meaning of them. Sometimes Providence ruins a hopeful thriving project to better our condition, and frustrates all our labours and plans; why is this, but to hide pride from man? Should you prosper in the world, that prosperity might be your snare, and make you a proud, sensual, vain soul. The Lord Jesus sees this, and therefore withdraws the food and fuel from your corruptions. It may be you have a diseased, weak body, you labour under many infirmities. In this the wisdom and care of God over your soul is manifested; for were you not so clogged, how probable is it that much more guilt might he contracted! Your poverty does but clog your pride, reproaches clog your ambition, want prevents wantonness, sickness of body conduces to the prevention of many inward gripes of conscience, and groans under guilt. The providences of God may be observed to conduce to our holiness, not only by preventing sin, that we may not fall into it; but also by purging our sins when we are fallen into them. 'By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin' (Isaiah 27:9). They are of the same use that fire and water are for purging and cleansing (Daniel 11:33-35); not that they can purge us from sin in their own virtue and power, for if so, those that have most afflictions would have most grace also; but it is in the virtue of Christ's blood and God's blessing upon afflictive providences that they purge us from sin. A cross without a Christ never did any man good. Now in God's afflictive providences for sin there are many things that tend to the purging of it.

Such rebukes of Providence reveal the displeasure of God against us. The Lord frowns upon us in those providences. Our Father is angry, and these are the tokens of it; and nothing works more to

the melting of a gracious heart than this. Must not the heart of a child melt and break while the father is angry? O this is more bitter to our spirits than all the smart and anguish of the affliction can be to our flesh. ‘O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath; neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure: For thine arrows stick fast in me; and thine hand presseth me sore. There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger: neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin’ (Psalms 38:1-3). By these rebukes of sin the evil of sin is revealed more apparent to us, and we are made to see more clearly the evil of it in these glasses of affliction which Providence at such times sets before us, than we ever saw formerly. ‘Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts’ (Jeremiah 2:19). O the gall and wormwood that we taste in it under God’s rebukes for it!

Providence blasts and frustrates all sinful projects to the people of God. Whoever else thrives in them, they shall not (Isaiah 30:1-5). And this also convinces them of the folly that is in sin, and makes them cleave to the way of simplicity and integrity.

Holiness is promoted in the soul by cautioning and warning the soul against sin for time to come. ‘I have borne chastisement; I will not offend any more’ (Job 34:31). O happy providences, however smart, that make the soul for ever afraid of sin! Surely such rods are well bestowed. This gives God His end, and if ever we sorrowed after a godly sort, in the day of our troubles it will work this carefulness. ‘For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you’ (2 Corinthians 7:11). O if ever a man have been under a sanctified rod which has showed him the evil of sin and kindly humbled him for it; and a temptation should again solicit him to the same evil, why, thinks he, what a madness is it for me to buy repentance at so dear a rate? Have I not smarted enough already? You may as well ask me whether I will run again into the fire, after I have been already scorched in it. To conclude - providences do greatly improve and promote holiness by drawing the soul into the presence of God, and giving it the opportunity and occasion of much communion with Him. Comfortable providences will do this; they will melt a man’s heart in love to the God of his mercies and so pain his bowels that he shall not be quiet till he have found a place to pour out his soul in thankfulness to the Lord (2 Samuel 7:18). Afflictive providences will drive us to the feet of God, and there make us to judge and condemn ourselves. And all this has an excellent use to destroy sin, and promote holiness in the soul.

Finally, the consideration and study of Providence will be of singular use to us in a dying hour. Hereby we treasure up that which will singularly sweeten our death to us, and greatly assist our faith in the last encounter. You find when Jacob died what reflections he had upon the dealings of God with him in the various providences of his life (Genesis 48:3, Genesis 48:7, Genesis 48:15-16). In like manner you find Joshua recording the providences of God when at the brink of the grave; they were the subject of his dying discourse (Joshua 24:1-33). And I cannot but think it is a sweet close to the life of any Christian. It must needs sweeten a deathbed to recount there the several remarkable passages of God’s care and love to us from our beginning to that day, to reflect upon the mercies that went along with us all the way, when we are come to the end of it. O Christians, treasure up these instances for such a time as that is, that you may go out of the world blessing God for ‘all the goodness and truth’ he has performed for you all your life long. Now the meditations of these things must needs be of great use in that day, if you consider the following particulars: The time of death is the time when souls are usually most violently assaulted by Satan

with horrid temptations and black suggestions. We may say of that figurative, as it is said of the natural serpent, ‘he never exerts his utmost rage fill the last encounter,’ and then his great design is to persuade the saints that God does not love them, has no care nor regard for them nor their cries; though they pray for ease and cry for sparing mercy, they see none comes. He handles them with as much roughness and severity as other men; yea, many of the vilest and most dissolute wretches endure less torments, and are more gently handled than they. ‘There are no bands in their death’ (Psalms 73:4), whereas you must go through a long lane of sickness to the grave and endure many deaths in one! But what credit can these plausible tales of Satan obtain with a Christian who has been treasuring up all his life long the memorials of God’s tender regard both to his needs and prayers, and who has carefully marked the evident returns of his prayers and gracious condescensions of God to him from his beginning to that moment? In this case his faith is mightily assisted by thousands of experiences which back and encourage it, and will not let the soul give up so easily a truth which he has so often felt and tasted. I am sure, says he, God has had a tender fatherly care of me ever since I became His. He never failed me yet in any former difficulty; and I cannot believe He will do so now. I know His love is like Himself, unchangeable. ‘Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end’ (John 13:1). ‘For this God is our God for ever and ever, he will be our guide even unto death’ (Psalms 48:14). Did He love me in my youth, and will He cast me off in my decrepit age? ‘O God,’ said David, ‘thou hast taught me from my youth; and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not’ (Psalms 71:17-18). At death the saints are engaged in the last and one of the most eminent works of faith, even the committing themselves into the hands of God when they are launching forth into that vast eternity and entering into that new state which will make so great a change to us in a moment. In this, Christ sets us a pattern: ‘Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit; and having said thus he gave up the ghost’ (Luke 23:46). So Stephen at his death, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit’ (Acts 7:59) and immediately fell asleep.

There are two signal and remarkable acts of faith, both exceedingly difficult, viz., its first act and its last. The first is a great venture that it makes of itself upon Christ, and the last is a great venture too, to cast itself into the ocean of eternity upon the belief of a promise. But yet I know the first venture of the soul upon Christ is much more difficult than the last venture upon death; and that which makes it so is in great measure the manifold recorded experiences that the soul has been gathering up from the day of its espousals to Christ unto its dying, which is, in a sense, its marriage day. O with what encouragement may a soul throw himself into the arms of that God with whom he has so long conversed and walked in this world! whose visits have been sweet and frequent, with whom the soul has contracted so intimate acquaintance in this world; to whom it has committed all its affairs formerly and still found Him a faithful God; and now has no reason to doubt but it shall find Him so in this last distress and exigency also. At death the people of God receive the last mercies that they shall ever receive in this world by the hand of Providence, and are immediately to make up their accounts with God for all the mercies that ever they received from His hand. What can be more suitable therefore to a dying person than to recount with himself the mercies of his whole life, the manifold receipts of favour for which he is to reckon with God speedily. And how shall this be done without a due and serious observation and recording of them now? I know there are thousands of mercies forgotten by the best of Christians: a memory of brass cannot contain them. And I know also that Jesus Christ must make up the account for us or it will never pass with God. Yet it is our duty to keep the accounts of our own mercies and how

they have been used by us, for we are stewards, and then are to give an account of our stewardship. At death we owe an account also to men, and stand obliged, if there is opportunity for it, to make known to them that survive us what we have seen and found of God in this world, that we may leave a testimony for God with men and bring up a good report upon His ways. Thus dying Jacob, when Joseph was come to take his last farewell of him in this world, strengthened himself and sat upon the bed and related to him the eminent appearances of God to him and the places where (Genesis 48:2-3), as also an account of his afflictions (Genesis 48:7). So Joshua in his last speech to the people makes it his business to vindicate and demonstrate the truth of the promises by recounting to them how the Providence of God had fulfilled the same to a tittle in his day. 'And behold,' said he, 'this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof' (Joshua 23:14). And certainly it is of great importance to the world to understand the judgments and hear of the experiences of dying men. They of all men are presumed to be most wise and most serious. Besides, this is the last opportunity that ever we shall have in this world to speak for God. O then what a sweet thing would it be to close our lives with an honourable account of the ways of God! to go out of the world blessing Him for all the mercies and truth which He has here performed to us! How this would encourage weak Christians and convince the atheistical world that verily there is a reality and an excellence in the ways and people of God! At death we begin the angelical life of praise and thanksgiving. We then enter upon that everlasting sweet employment; and as I doubt not but the providences in which we were concerned in this world will be a part of that song which we shall sing in heaven, so certainly it will become us to tune our hearts and tongue for it while we are here, and especially when we are ready to enter upon that blessed state. O therefore let it be your daily meditation and study what God has been to you and done for you from the beginning of His way hitherto. And thus I have spread before you some encouragements to this blessed work. O that you would be persuaded to take up this lovely and in every way beneficial practice. This I dare presume to say, that whoever finds a careful and a thankful heart to record and treasure up the daily experiences of God's mercy to him shall never lack new mercies to record to his dying day. It was said of Claudian that he lacked matter suitable for the excellency of his powers; but where is the head or heart that is suitable for this matter? 'Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? who can show forth all his praise?' (Psalms 106:2).

06.11. Practical Implications for the Saints

Chapter 11

Practical Implications for the Saints

If, as we have seen, God performs all things for you, God is to be owned by you in all that befalls you in this world, whether it is in a way of success and comfort, or of trouble and affliction. O it is your duty to observe His hand and disposal. When God gives you comforts, it is your great evil not to observe His hand in them. Hence was that charge against Israel: ‘For she did not know that I gave her corn and wine and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold’ (Hosea 2:8); that is, she did not actually and affectionately consider my care over her and goodness to her in these mercies. And so for afflictions, it is a great wickedness when God’s hand is lifted up not to see it (Isaiah 26:11). ‘The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master’s crib’ (Isaiah 1:3); the most dull and stupid creatures know their benefactors. O look to the hand of God in all; and know that neither your comforts nor afflictions do arise out of the dust, or spring up out of the ground.

If God performs all things for you, how great is His condescension to and care over His people! ‘What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him, and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him? And that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment?’ (Job 7:17-18). Such is His tender care over you that He does not withdraw His eye from you (Job 36:7). Lest any hurt you, He Himself will guard and keep you day and night (Isaiah 27:3). Should He withdraw His eye or hand one moment from you, that moment would be your ruin. Ten thousand evils watch but for such an opportunity to rush in upon you and destroy you and all your comforts. You are too dear to Him to be trusted in any hand but His own. ‘All his saints are in thy hand’ (Deuteronomy 33:3).

If God performs all things for you, see how obliged you are to perform all duties and services for God. It was the wish of a good man, ‘O that I could be to God what my hand is to me’ viz., a serviceable useful instrument. Shall God do all things for you, and will you do nothing for God? Is Providence every moment at work for you, and will you be idle? To what purpose then is all that God has done for you? Is it not the aim and design of all, to make you a fruitful people? If God plant and fence and water you by Providence, surely He expects you to bring forth fruit (Isaiah 5:1-4). O that in return for all the benefits of Providence, you would say to God, as grateful Elisha said to the Shunammite, ‘Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care. What is to be done for thee?’ (2 Kings 4:13), and with David, ‘What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits towards me?’ (Psalms 116:12). He is ever doing you good; be you always abounding in His work. His providence stands by you in your greatest distresses and dangers; do not then flinch from God when His service and your duty is compassed about with difficulties. O be active for that God who every moment is active for you. Does God perform all things for his people? Do not distrust Him then when new or great difficulties arise. Why should you think He that has done so many things for you will now do no more? Surely, ‘the LORD’s hand is not shortened that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear’ (Isaiah 59:1); if anything put a stop to His mercy, it is your iniquities, your distrust and infidelity. ‘How long will it be ere you believe him?’ If a thousand

and ten thousand trials and experiences of His tender care, faithfulness and love will cure this unbelief in you, you have them at hand to do it. If the frequent confutations of this your distrust by the unexpected breakings-out of mercy for you under like discouragements will cure it, look back and you may see them. Certainly you have been often forced by Providence with shame and repentance to retract your rash censures of His care; and yet will you fall into the same unbelieving state again? O that you would once learn this great truth, that no man ever lacked that mercy which he did not lack a heart to trust and wait quietly upon God for. You never yet sought God in vain, except when you sought Him vainly. Does God perform all things for you? Then seek God for all by prayer, and never undertake any design without Him.

Certainly, if He does not perform it for you, you can never have what you desire and labour for; and though He has designed to perform this or that mercy for you, yet for these things He will be enquired of, that He may do it for you (Ezekiel 36:37). I reckon that business as good as done, that mercy as good as if it were in hand, that trouble as good as over, for the doing, enjoying or removing of which we have engaged God by prayer. It is our folly to engage this instrument and that for us, to attempt this way and that to achieve our end, and all the while forget Him upon whose pleasure all instruments and means entirely depend. That which begins not with prayer seldom ends with comfort. 'The way of man is not in himself' (Jeremiah 10:23); if it were, prayer might then be reckoned lost labour. O let Him that performs all be owned and acknowledged in all.

If God performs all things for us, then it is our great interest and concern in all things to study to please Him, upon whom we depend for all things.

It is a grave and weighty observation of Chrysostom that nothing should be grievous and bitter to a Christian but to provoke the displeasure of God. Avoid that, and no affliction or trouble whatever can cast down such a prudent soul; but even as a spark is easily extinguished in the sea, so will the favour of God extinguish those troubles. It is with such a soul, says he, as it is with the heavens; we think the heavens suffer when they are overspread with clouds, and the sun suffers when it is eclipsed; but there is no such thing, they do not suffer when they seem to suffer. Everything is well and shall be well, when all is well between us and God. The great consolation of the saints lies in this, that all that concerns them is in the hands of their Father. Luther said, 'I had utterly despaired had not Christ been head of the Church.' When He that performs all things is our God, even our God that delights in our prosperity, that rejoices over us to do us good, what ample security is here in the greatest confusions and dangers! When one told Borromeus that there were some that laid wait for his life, his answer was: 'What! is God in the world for nothing?' And as notable was the reply of Silentiarius in a like case: 'If God takes no care of me, how do I live? how have I subsisted hitherto?' Though it seems a romance to many, yet we must either quit the Scripture or give credit to this, that the most infallible rules for one to raise his fortune and ensure a destiny that can control the stars are given forth there, viz., in the Scriptures, where one can see Sapiens dominabitur astris (that he who knows the truth will govern the stars) and quomodo unusquisque faber potest esse fortunae suae (the means by which every man can shape his own fortune). A good man may even be his own carver. O that we would but steer our course according to those rare politics of the Bible, those divine maxims of wisdom! Fear nothing but sin. Study nothing so much as how to please God. Do not turn from your integrity under any temptation. Trust God in the way of your duty. These are sure rules to secure yourselves and your interest in all the vicissitudes of this life.

06.12. Practical Problems in Connection

Chapter 12

Practical Problems in Connection with Providence

How may a Christian discover the will of God and his own duty under dark and doubtful providences? In order to answer this question we must consider what is meant by the will of God and what by those doubtful providences that make the discovery of His will difficult and what rules are to be observed for ascertaining God's will for us under such difficult and puzzling providences. As to the will of God, it falls under a twofold consideration of His secret and revealed will. This distinction is found in that Scripture: 'The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us' (Deuteronomy 29:29). The first is the rule of His own actions; the latter of ours, and this only is concerned in the query. This revealed will of God is either manifested to us in His Word or in His works. The former is His commanding will, the latter His effecting or permitting will, the one concerning good, the other evil. In these ways God manifests His will to men, but yet with great variety and difference, both as to the things revealed, the persons to whom He reveals them, and the degrees of clearness in which they are revealed. As to the things revealed, there is great difference. The great and necessary duties of religion are revealed to us in the Word with the greatest perspicuity and evidence; about these there can he no hesitation. But things of a lower nature and lesser concern are bit more obscure. As to the persons to whom God reveals His will, there is great difference. Some are strong men, others babes (1 Corinthians 3:1). Some have senses exercised, others are of weak and dull understanding; and we know everything is received according to the ability and measure of the person receiving it. Hence it is that one man's way is very plain before him, he knows what he ought to do; the other is ever and anon at a loss, dubious and uncertain what to do. The manner of God's revealing His will to men is also very varied. Some have had special, personal and peculiar discoveries of it made to them. So had Samuel about the choice of the person whom he should anoint king (1 Samuel 9:15-16). And so had David, for you find upon his inquiry of God, (probably by the Urim and Thummim), God told him what was his duty as to that expedition and what would be the event of it (1 Samuel 23:2, 1 Samuel 23:4, 1 Samuel 23:9-12). But now, all are tied up to the ordinary standing rule of the written word and must not expect any such extraordinary revelations from God. The way we now have to know the will of God concerning us in difficult cases is to search and study the Scriptures, and where we find no particular rule to guide us in this or that particular case, there we are to apply general rules and govern ourselves according to the analogy and proportion they bear towards each other.

Now it often falls out that in such doubtful cases we are entangled in our own thoughts, and put to a loss what course to take. We pray with David that God would make His way straight before us (Psalms 5:8). Afraid we are of displeasing God and yet fearful we may do so, whether we resolve this way or that. And this comes to pass not only through the difficulty of the case but from our own ignorance and carelessness; and very frequently from those providences that lie before us, in

which God seems to hint His mind to us, this way or that, and whether we may safely guide ourselves by those intimations of Providence is doubtful to us. That God does give men secret hints and intimations of His will by His Providence cannot be doubted; but yet providences in themselves are no staple rule of duty nor sufficient discovery of the will of God. We may say of them: 'Behold, I go forward, but he is not there: and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him' (Job 23:8-9).

If Providence in itself is allowed to be a sufficient means of knowing God's will for us, then we shall often be forced to justify and condemn the same cause or person, forasmuch as there is one event happens to all, and as it falls out to the good, so to the wicked (Ecclesiastes 9:2). Besides, if Providence alone were the rule to judge any action or design by, then a wicked undertaking would cease to be so, if it should succeed well; but sin is sin still and duty is duty still whatever the events and issues. The safest way therefore to make use of providences in such cases is to consider them as they follow the commands or promises of the Word and not singly and separately in themselves. If you search the Scriptures with an impartial and unbiased spirit, in a doubtful case, pray for counsel and direction from the Lord, attend to the dictates of conscience. And when you have done all, you will find the providences of God falling out agreeably to the dictates of your own conscience and the best light you can find in the Word. You may in such cases make use of it as an encouragement to you in the way of your duty. But the most signal demonstrations of Providence are not to be accepted against a Scripture rule. No smiles or successes of Providence may in this encourage us to proceed; and on the other side, no frowns or discouragements of Providence should discourage us in the way of our duty, however many we should encounter therein. Holy Job could not find the meaning of God in His works, yet would he not go back from the commandments of His lips (Job 23:12). The like resolution you find in David to proceed in his duty and cleave to the Word, however many stumbling-blocks Providence should permit to be laid in his way. 'For I am become,' saith he, 'like a bottle in the smoke,' not only black, but withered up by troubles, 'yet do I not forget thy statutes' (Psalms 119:83), and 'They had almost consumed me upon earth: but I forsook not thy precepts' (Psalms 119:87).

Paul, by the direction of the Spirit, was engaged to go to Jerusalem (Acts 20:22). After a clear revelation of the mind of God to him in that matter, how many difficult and discouraging providences befell him in his way! The disciples at Tyre said to him 'through the Spirit,' though in that they followed their own spirits, 'that he should not go to Jerusalem' (Acts 21:4).

Then at Caesarea he met Agabus a prophet, who told him what should befall him when he came there (Acts 21:10-11), but all this will not dissuade him. And after all this, how passionately do the brethren beseech him to decline that journey (Acts 21:12-13)! Yet knowing his rule and resolving to be faithful to it, he puts by all and proceeds in his journey.

Well then, Providence in concurrence with the Word may give some encouragement to us in our way; but no testimony of Providence is to be accepted against the Word. If Scripture and conscience tell you such a way is sinful, you may not venture upon it, however many opportunities and encouragements Providence may permit to offer themselves to you, for they are only permitted for your trial, not your encouragement. Take this therefore for a sure rule, that no providence can legitimize or justify any moral evil. Nor will it be a plea before God for any man to

say, The providence of God gave me encouragement to do it, though the Word gave me none. If therefore in doubtful cases you would discover God's will, govern yourselves in your search after it by the following rules:

(1) Get the true fear of God upon your hearts. Be really afraid of offending Him. God will not hide His mind from such a soul. 'The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant' (Psalms 25:14).

(2) Study the Word more, and the concerns and interests of the world less. The Word is a light to your feet (Psalms 119:105), that is, it has a discovering and directing usefulness as to all duties to be done and dangers to be avoided. It is the great oracle at which you are to inquire. Treasure up its rules in your hearts, and you will walk safely. 'Thy Word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against thee' (Psalms 119:11).

(3) Reduce what you know into practice, and you shall know what is your duty to practice. 'If any man do his will he shall know of the doctrine' (John 7:17). 'A good understanding have all they that do his commandments (Psalms 111:10).

(4) Pray for illumination and direction in the way that you should go. Beg the Lord to guide you in straits and that He would not permit you to fall into sin. This was the holy practice of Ezra: 'Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance' (Ezra 8:21).

(5) And this being done, follow Providence so far as it agrees with the Word and no further. There is no use to be made of Providence against the Word, but in subservience to it. And there are two excellent uses of Providence in subservience to the Word. Providences, as they follow promises and prayer are evidences of God's faithfulness in their accomplishment. When David languished under a disease, and his enemies began to triumph in the hopes of his downfall, he prays that God would be merciful to him and raise him up (Psalms 41:10); and by that, he says, he knew the Lord favored him, because his enemy did not triumph over him (Psalms 41:11). This providence he looked upon as a token for good, as elsewhere he calls it (Psalms 86:17). Also providences give us loud calls to those duties which the command lays upon us and tell us when we are actually and presently under the obligation of the commands as to the performance of them. Thus when sad providences befall the Church or ourselves, they call us to humiliation; and let us know that then the command upon us to humble ourselves at the feet of God is in force upon us. 'The LORD's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name. Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it' (Micah 6:9). The rod has a voice, and what does it speak? Why, now is the time to humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God. This is the day of trouble, in which God has bid you to call upon Him. And on the contrary, when comfortable providences refresh us, it now informs us this is the time to rejoice in God, according to the rule: 'In the day of prosperity be joyful' (Ecclesiastes 7:14). These precepts bind always, but not to always. It is our duty therefore and our wisdom to distinguish seasons, and know the proper duties of every season; and Providence is an index that points them out to us. Thus far with the first case.

How may a Christian be supported in waiting upon God, while Providence delays the performance of the mercies to him for which he has long prayed and waited?

It is supposed in this case that Providence may linger and delay the performance of those mercies to us that we have long waited and prayed for, and that during that delay and suspense our hearts and hopes may be very low and ready to fail.

Providence truly may long delay the performance of those mercies we have prayed and waited upon God for. For the right understanding of this, know that there is a twofold term or season fixed for the performance of mercy to us: one by the Lord our God in whose hand are times and seasons (Acts 1:7), another by ourselves who raise up our own expectations of mercies, sometimes merely through the eagerness of our desires after them and sometimes upon uncertain conjectural grounds and appearances of encouragement that lie before us.

Now nothing can be more precise, certain and punctual than is the performance of mercy at the time and season which God has appointed, however long it is, or however many obstacles lie in the way of it. There was a time prefixed by God Himself for the performance of that promise of Israel's deliverance out of Egypt; and it is said: 'And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the self-same day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out of the land of Egypt' (Exodus 12:41). Compare this with Acts 7:17, and there you have the ground and reason why their deliverance was not, nor could be delayed one day longer, because 'the time of the promise was now come.' Promises, like a pregnant woman, must accomplish their appointed months, and when they have so done, Providence will midwife the mercies they go big with into the world, and not one of them shall miscarry. But for the seasons which are of our own fixing and appointment, as God is not tied to them, so His providences are not governed by them; and here are our disappointments, 'We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble' (Jeremiah 8:15), and this is why we fret at the delays of Providence, and suspect the faithfulness of God in their performance, but His thoughts are not our thoughts (Isaiah 55:8). 'The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness' (2 Peter 3:9). It is slackness if you reckon by your own rule and measure, but it is not so if you reckon and count by God's. The Lord does not compute and reckon His seasons of working by our arithmetic. You have both these rules compared, and the ground of our mistake detected in that Scripture: 'For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it: because it will surely come, it will not tarry' (Habakkuk 2:3). God appoints the time; when that appointed time is come the expected mercies will not fail. But in the meantime, 'though it tarry,' says the prophet, 'wait for it, for it will not tarry.' Tarry, and not tarry, how shall this be reconciled? The meaning is, it may tarry much beyond your expectation, but not a moment beyond God's appointment.

During this delay of Providence the hearts and hopes of the people of God may be very low and much discouraged. This is too plain from what the Scriptures have recorded of others, and every one of us may find in our own experiences. We have an instance of this in Isaiah, where you have God's faithful promise that He will comfort His people, 'and will have mercy upon his afflicted' (Isaiah 49:13). Enough, one would think, to raise and comfort their hearts. But the mercy promised was long in coming, they waited from year to year, and still the burden pressed them and was not removed. And therefore 'Zion said, the LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me' (Isaiah 49:14); that is, it is in vain to look for such a mercy. God has no regard to us, we are out of His heart and mind; He neither cares for us nor minds what becomes of us. So it was with David, after God had made him such a promise, and in due time so faithfully performed it, that never was

mercy better secured to any man, for they are called, ‘the sure mercies of David’ (Isaiah 55:3), yet Providence delayed the accomplishment of them so long, and permitted such difficulties to intervene, that he despairs to see the accomplishment of them, but even concludes God had forgotten him too, ‘How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever?’ (Psalms 13:1), and what he speaks here by way of question, he elsewhere turns into a positive conclusion: ‘All men are liars’ (Psalms 116:11), ‘I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul.’ And the causes of these despondencies and sinkings of heart are partly from ourselves and partly from Satan.

If we duly examine our own hearts about it, we shall find that these sinkings of heart are the immediate effects of unbelief. We do not depend and rely upon the Word with that full trust and confidence that is due to the infallible Word of a faithful and unchangeable God. You may see the ground of this faintness in that Scripture: ‘I had fainted unless I had believed’ (Psalms 27:13). Faith is the only cordial that relieves the heart against these faintings and despondencies. Where this is wanting, or is weak, no wonder our hearts sink at this rate, when discouragements are before us. Our judging and measuring things by the rules of sense, this is a great cause of our discouragements. We conclude that according to the appearance of things will be their issues. If Abraham had done so, in that great trial of his faith, he had certainly lost his footing; but ‘against hope’, that is, against natural probability, he ‘believed in hope, . . . giving glory to God’ (Romans 4:18, Romans 4:20). If Paul had done so, he had fainted under his trials. We faint not, said he, while we look not at the things that are seen (2 Corinthians 4:16, 2 Corinthians 4:18); as much as to say, that which keeps up our spirits is our looking off from things present and visible, and measuring all by another rule, viz., the power and fidelity of God firmly engaged in the promises. In all these things Satan schemes against us. Hence he takes occasion to suggest hard thoughts of God, and to beat off our souls from all confidence in Him, and expectations from Him. He is the great mischief-maker between God and the saints. He reports and exploits the difficulties and fears that are in our way, and labours to weaken our hands and discourage our hearts in waiting upon God. And these suggestions gain the more credit with us, because they are confirmed and attested by sense and feeling. But here is a desperate design carrying on under very plausible pretenses against our souls. It concerns us to be watchful now, and maintain our faith and hope in God. Now blessed is he that can resign all to God, and quietly wait for His salvation (Lamentations 3:26). To assist the soul in this difficulty, I shall offer some further help in the following considerations:

Though Providence does not yet perform the mercies you wait for, yet you have no ground to entertain hard thoughts of God, for it is possible God never gave you any ground for your expectation of these things from Him.

It may be you have no promise to build your hope upon, and if so, why shall God be suspected and dishonored by you in a case in which His truth and faithfulness was never engaged to you? If we are thwarted in our outward concerns, and see our expectations of prosperity dashed, if we see such and such an outward comfort removed, from which we promised ourselves much, why must God be blamed for this? These things you promised yourselves, but where did God promise you prosperity and the continuance of those comfortable things to you? Produce His promise, and show where He has broken it. It is not enough for you to say there are general promises in the Scripture, that God will withhold no good thing, and these are good things which Providence withholds from you; for that promise (Psalms 84:11) has its limitations, it is expressly limited to

such as ‘walk uprightly.’ It concerns you to examine whether you have done so, before you quarrel with Providence for non-performance of it. Ah, friend, search your own heart, reflect upon your own ways. Do you not see so many flaws in your integrity, so many turnings aside from God, both in heart and life, that may justify God, not only in withholding what you look for, but in removing all that you enjoy? And besides this limitation as to the object, it is limited (as all other promises relating to externals are) in the matter or things premised by the wisdom and will of God, which is the only rule by which they are measured out to men in this world, that is, such mercies in such proportions as He sees needful and most conducive to your good; and these given out in such times and seasons as are of His own appointment, not yours.

God never came under an absolute unlimited tie for outward comforts to any of us, and if we are disappointed, we can blame none but ourselves. Who bid us expect rest, ease, delight, and things of that kind in this world? He has never told us we shall be rich, healthy, and at ease in our habitations, but on the contrary, He has often told us we must expect troubles in the world (John 16:33), and that we must ‘through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God’ (Acts 14:22). All that He stands bound to us by promise for is to be with us in trouble (Psalms 91:15), to supply our real and absolute needs. ‘When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them’ (Isaiah 41:17); and to sanctify all these providences to our good at last. ‘And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose’ (Romans 8:28). And as to all these things, not one tittle ever did or shall fail.

If you say you have long waited upon God for spiritual mercies to your souls according to the promise, and still those mercies are deferred, and your eyes fail while you look for them, I would desire you seriously to consider of what kind those spiritual mercies are for which you have so long waited upon God.

Spiritual mercies are of two sorts: such as belong to the essence, the very being of the new creature, without which it must fail, or to its well-being and the comfort of the inner man, without which you cannot live so cheerfully as you would. The mercies of the former kind are absolutely necessary, and therefore put into absolute promises, as you see, ‘And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me’ (Jeremiah 32:40). But for the rest they are dispensed to us in such measures and at such seasons as the Lord sees fit, and many of His own people live for a long time without them. The donation and continuation of the Spirit, to quicken, sanctify, and unite us with Christ, is necessary, but His joys and comforts are not so. A child of light may walk ‘in darkness’ (Isaiah 50:10). He lives by faith, and not by feeling.

You complain that Providence delays to perform to you the mercies you have prayed and waited for, but have you right ends in your desires after these mercies?

It may be that this is the cause you ask and receive not (James 4:3). The lack of a good aim is the reason why we lack good success in our prayers. It may be we pray for prosperity, and our aim is to please the flesh. We look no higher than the pleasure and accommodation of the flesh. We beg and wait for deliverance from such a trouble and affliction, not that we might be the more ready and prepared for obedience, but freed of what is grievous to us and destroys our pleasure in the world. Certainly, if it is so, you have more need to judge and condemn yourselves, than to censure

and suspect the care of God.

You wait for good, and it does not come; but is your will brought to a due submission to the will of God about it?

Certainly, God will have you come to this before you enjoy your desires. Enjoyment of your desires is the thing that will please you, but resignation of your wills is that which is pleasing to God. If your hearts cannot come to this, mercies cannot come to you. David was made to wait long for the mercy promised him, yea, and to be content without it before he enjoyed it. He was brought to he 'as a weaned child' (Psalms 131:2), and so must you. Your betters have waited long upon God for mercy, and why should not you?

David waited till his 'eyes failed' (Psalms 69:3). The Church waited for Him in the way of His judgments (Isaiah 26:8). Are you better than all the saints that are gone before you? Is God more obliged to you than to all His people? They have quietly waited, and why should not you? Will you lose anything by patient waiting upon God for mercies?

Certainly not! Yea, it will turn to a double advantage to you to continue in a quiet submissive waiting posture upon God. For though you do not yet enjoy the good you wait for, yet all this while you are exercising your grace; and it is more excellent to act grace than to enjoy comfort. All this time the Lord is training you up in the exercise of faith and patience, and bending your wills in submission to Himself, and what do you lose by that? Yea, and whenever the desired mercy comes, it will be so much the sweeter to you, for look how much faith and prayer has been employed to produce it, how many wrestlings you have had with God for it, so many more degrees of sweetness you will find in it when it comes. O therefore faint not, however long God delays you. Are not those mercies you expect from God worth waiting for?

If not, it is your folly to be troubled for the lack of them. If they are, why do you not continue waiting? Is it not all that God expects from you for the mercies He bestows upon you, that you wait upon Him for them? You know you have not deserved the least of them at His hands. You expect them, not as a recompense, but as a free favour; and if so, then certainly the least you can do is to wait upon His pleasure for them.

Consider how many promises are made in the Word to waiting souls.

One Scripture declares, 'Blessed are all they that wait for him' (Isaiah 30:18). Another tells us that none that wait for him shall be ashamed (Psalms 25:3), that is, they shall not be finally disappointed, but at last be made partakers of their hopes. A third Scripture tells us, 'They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength' (Isaiah 40:31), a promise you had need make much use of in such a fainting time, with many more of like nature; and shall we faint at this rate in the midst of so many cordials as are prepared to revive us in these promises?

How long has God waited for you to comply with His commands, to come up to your engagements and promises?

You have made God wait long for your reformation and obedience; and therefore you have no reason to think it much if God makes you wait long for your consolation. We have our 'how longs,' and has not God His? We cry: 'But thou, O LORD, how long?' (Psalms 6:3). 'How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long shall I take

counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?' (Psalms 13:1-2). But surely we should not think these things long, when we consider how long the Lord has exercised His patience towards us. We have made Him say, How long, how long? Our unbelief has made Him cry, 'How long will it be ere they believe me?' (Numbers 14:11). Our corrupt hearts have made Him cry, 'How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?' (Jeremiah 4:14). Our impure natures and ways have made Him cry, 'How long will it be ere they attain to innocency?' (Hosea 8:5). If God wait for you with so much patience for your duties, well may you wait upon Him for His mercies. This impatience and infidelity of yours, expressed in your weariness to wait any longer is a great evil in itself.

Very probably it is that evil which obstructs the way of your expected mercies. You might have your mercies sooner if your spirits were quieter and more submissive. And so much for the second case.

How may a Christian discern when a providence is sanctified, and comes from the love of God to him?

There are two sorts or kinds of providences which come to men in this world, the issues and events of which are vastly different, yea, contrary to each other. To some all providences are overruled and ordered for good, according to that blessed promise (Romans 8:28); not only things that are good in themselves, as ordinances, graces, duties and mercies, but things that are evil in themselves, as temptations, afflictions, and even their sins and corruptions, shall turn in the issue to their advantage and benefit. For though sin is so intrinsically and formally evil in its own nature, that in itself it is not capable of sanctification, yet out of this worst of evils God can work good to His people. And though He never makes sin the instrument of good, yet His providence may make it the occasion of good to His people, so that spiritual benefits may, by the wise overruling of Providence, be occasioned by it. And so for afflictions of all kinds, the greatest and sorest of them, under the influence of Providence bring a great deal of good to the saints, and that not only as the occasions, but as the instruments and means of it. 'By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged' (Isaiah 27:9); that is, by the instrumentality of this sanctified affliction. To others nothing is sanctified, either as an instrument or occasion of any spiritual good; but as the worst things are ordered to the benefit of the saints, so the best things wicked men enjoy do them no good. Their prayers are turned into sin (Psalms 109:7), the ordinances are the savour of death (2 Corinthians 2:16), the grace of God turned into wantonness (Jude 1:4), Christ Himself a rock of offense (1 Peter 2:8), their table a snare (Psalms 69:22), their prosperity their ruin (Proverbs 1:32). As persons are, so things work for good or evil. 'Unto the pure all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure' (Titus 1:15).

Seeing therefore the events of Providence fall out so opposite to each other upon the godly and ungodly, everything furthering the eternal good of the one, and the ruin of the other, it cannot but be acknowledged a most important case, in which every soul is deeply concerned, whether the providences under which he is, are sanctified to him or not? For the understanding of this I shall premise two necessary considerations, and then give the rules which will be useful for the resolution of the question.

First, let it be considered that we cannot know from the matter of the things before us, whether they are sanctified or unsanctified to us; for 'no man knoweth either love or hatred by all the things

that are before him; all things come alike to all' (Ecclesiastes 9:1-2). We cannot understand the mind and heart of God by the things He dispenses with His hand. If prosperous providences befall us, we cannot say, This is a sure sign that God loves me, for who have more of those providences than the people of His wrath? 'They have more than heart could wish' (Psalms 73:7). Surely that must be a weak evidence for heaven, which accompanies so great a part of the world to hell. By these things we may testify our love to God, but from ten thousand such enjoyments we cannot get any solid assurance of His love to us. And from adverse afflictive providences we cannot know His hatred. If afflictions, great afflictions, many afflictions, long-continued afflictions, should set a brand or fix a character of God's hatred upon the persons on whom they fall, where then shall we find God's people in the world? We must then seek out the proud, vain, sensual wantons of the world, who spend their days in pleasure, and say these are the men whom God loves.

Outward things are promiscuously dispensed, and no man's spiritual state is discernible by the view of his temporal. When God draws the sword, it may 'cut off the righteous as well as the wicked' (Ezekiel 21:3).

Secondly, though the providences of God materially considered afford no evidence of God's love to us, yet the manner in which they befall us, and the effects and fruits they produce in us, do distinguish them very manifestly; and by them we may discern whether they are sanctified providences and fruits of the love of God, or not. Yet these effects and fruits of providences by which we discern their nature do not always appear immediately; but time must be allowed for the soul's exercise under them. 'Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby' (Hebrews 12:11). The benefit of a providence is discerned as that of a medicine is. For the present it gripes, and makes the stomach sick and loathing, but afterwards we find the benefit of it in our recovery of health and cheerfulness. Now the providences of God are some of them comfortable, and others sad and grievous to nature, and the way to discern the sanctification and blessing of them is by the manner in which they come, and their operations upon our spirits. I shall consider the case as it respects both sorts of providences, and show you what effects of our troubles or comforts will show them to be sanctified and blessed to us. And first for sad and afflictive providences, in whatever kind or degree they befall us, we may warrantably conclude they are blessings to us, and come from the love of God, when they come in a proper season, when we have need of them, either to prevent some sin we are falling into, or recover us out of a remiss, supine, and careless frame of spirit into which we are already fallen. 'If need be, ye are in heaviness' (1 Peter 1:6). Certainly, it is a good sign that God designs your good by those troubles which are so fitted and wisely ordered to meet the need. If you see the husbandman pruning a tree in the proper season, it argues he aims at the fruitfulness and flourishing of it; but to do the same thing at midsummer speaks no regard to it yea, his design to destroy it. When our troubles are fitted both for quality and degree to work properly upon our most predominant corruptions, then they look like sanctified strokes. The wisdom of God is much seen in the choice of His rods. It is not any kind of trouble that will work upon and purge every sin; but when God chooses for us such afflictions as, like medicine, are suited to the disease the soul labours under, this speaks divine care and love. Thus we may observe that it is usual with God to smite us in those very comforts which stole away too much of the love and delight of our souls from God, and to cross us in those things from which we raised up too great expectations of comfort. These

providences show the jealousy of God over us, and His care to prevent far worse evils by these sad but needful strokes. And so for the degrees of our troubles, sanctified strokes are ordinarily fitted by the wisdom of God to the strength and ability of our inherent grace. ‘In measure, when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it: he stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind’ (Isaiah 27:8). It is an allusion to a physician, who exactly weighs and measures all the ingredients which he mingles in a potion for his sick patient, that it may be proportionate to his strength, and no more. And so much the next words intimate: ‘By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged’ (Isaiah 27:9).

It is a good sign that our troubles are sanctified to us when they turn our hearts against sin, and not against God. There are few great afflictions which befall men, but they make them quarrelsome and discontented. Wicked men quarrel with God, and are filled with discontent against Him. So the Scripture describes them: ‘And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues’ (Revelation 16:9). But godly men, to whom afflictions are sanctified, they justify God and fall out with sin, they condemn themselves and give glory to God. ‘O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces’ (Daniel 9:7), and ‘Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?’ (Lamentations 3:39). Happy afflictions, which make the soul fall out and quarrel only with sin.

It is a sure sign that afflicting providences are sanctified when they purge the heart from sin, and leave both heart and life more pure, heavenly, mortified, and humble than they found them. Sanctified afflictions are cleansers, they pull down the pride, refine earthliness, and purge out the vanity of the spirit. So you read (Daniel 11:35) that it purifies and makes their souls white. Hence it is compared to a furnace which separates the dross from the pure metal: ‘Behold I have refined thee but not with silver: I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction’ (Isaiah 48:10). But for wicked men, let them be never so long in the furnace, they lose no dross (Ezekiel 24:6). How many Christians can bear witness to this truth! After some sharp affliction has been upon them, how is the earthliness of their hearts purged! They see no beauty, taste no more relish in the world than in the white of an egg. O how serious, humble and heavenly are they, till the impressions made upon them by afflictions are worn off, and their deceitful lusts have again entangled them! And this is the reason why we are so often under the discipline of the rod. Let a Christian, says a late writer, be but two or three years without an affliction, and he is almost good for nothing. He cannot pray, nor meditate, nor discourse at that rate he was wont to do; but when a new affliction comes, now he can find his tongue, and come to his knees again, and live at another rate.

It is a good sign that afflictive providences are sanctified to us when we draw near to God under them and ‘turn to him that smites us.’ A wicked man under affliction ‘revolts more and more’ (Isaiah 1:5), ‘turneth not unto him that smiteth him’ (Isaiah 9:13), but grows worse than before; formality is turned into stupidity and indolence. But if God afflicts His own people with a sanctified rod, it awakens them to a more earnest seeking of God, it makes them pray more frequently, spiritually, and fervently than ever. When Paul was buffeted by Satan he ‘besought the Lord thrice’ (2 Corinthians 12:8).

We may conclude our afflictions to be sanctified, and to come from the love of God to us, when they do not alienate our hearts from God, but inflame our love to Him. This is a sure rule: whatever

ends in the increase of our love to God proceeds from the love of God to us. A wicked man finds his heart rising against God when He smites him, but a gracious heart cleaves the closer to Him; he can love as well as justify an afflicting God. ‘All this is come upon us: yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant. Our heart is not turned hack, neither have our steps declined from thy way: though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death’ (Psalms 44:17-19). Here you have a true account of the attitude and frame of a gracious soul under the greatest afflictions. To be ‘broken in the place of dragons, and covered with the shadow of death’, imports the most dismal state of affliction; yet even then a gracious heart does not turn back, that is, does not for all this abate one drachm of love to God. God is as good and dear to him in afflictions as ever.

We may call our afflictions sanctified when divine teachings accompany them to our souls. ‘Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law’ (Psalms 94:12). Sanctified afflictions are eye-salve; they teach us effectually, when the Spirit accompanies them, the evil of sin, the vanity of the creature, the necessity of securing things that cannot be shaken. Never does a Christian take a truer measure, both of his corruptions and graces, than under the rod. Now a man sees that filthiness that has been long contracting in prosperity, what interest the creature has in the heart, how little faith, patience, resignation and self-denial we can find when God calls us to the exercise of them. O it is a blessed sign that trouble is sanctified, when a man thus turns in upon his own heart, searches it, and humbles himself before the Lord for the evils of it! In the next place, let us take into consideration the other branch of providences, which are comfortable and pleasant. Sometimes it smiles upon us in successes, prosperity, and the gratification of the desires of our hearts. Here the question will be how the sanctification of these providences may be known by us? For resolution in this matter, I shall for clearness sake lay down two sorts of rules: one negative, the other positive.

1. Negative. It is a sign that comfort is not sanctified to us, which does not come ordinarily in the way of prayer. ‘For the wicked boasteth of his heart’s desire, and blesseth the covetous whom the LORD abhorreth. The wicked through the pride of his countenance will not seek after God; God is not in all his thoughts’ (Psalms 10:3-4). Here you see Providence may give men ‘their hearts’ desire,’ and yet they never once open their desires to God in prayer about it. But then those gifts of Providence are only such as are bestowed on the worst of men, and are not the fruits of love.

Whatever success, prosperity or comfort men acquire by sinful means and indirect courses are not sanctified mercies to them. This is not the method in which those mercies are bestowed. ‘Better is a little with righteousness, than great revenues without right’ (Proverbs 16:8), better upon this account that it comes in God’s way and with His blessing, which never follows the way of sin. God has cursed the ways of sin, and no blessing can follow them.

Whatever prosperity and success makes men forget God and cast off the care of duty is not sanctified to them. It is unsanctified prosperity which lulls men asleep into a deep oblivion of God. ‘He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat; and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape. But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked; thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made

him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation' (Deuteronomy 32:13-15). 'Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee' (Deuteronomy 32:18). Rarè fumant felicibus aræ (there is little stench of sacrifice on the altars of the rich). When prosperity is abused to sensuality and merely serves as fuel to maintain fleshly lusts, it is not sanctified. 'They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance. They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave' (Job 21:11-13).

It is a sign that prosperity is not sanctified to men, when it swells the heart with pride and self-conceitedness. 'At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. The king spake and said, Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power and for the honour of my majesty?' (Daniel 4:29-30). That success is not sanctified to men which takes them from off their duty, and makes them wholly negligent or very much indisposed to it. 'O generation, see ye the Word of the LORD. Have I been a wilderness unto Israel a land of darkness? Wherefore say my people, We are lords; we will come no more unto thee?' (Jeremiah 2:31). Nor can we think that prosperity sanctified, which wholly swallows up the souls of men in their own enjoyments, and makes them regardless of public miseries or sins. 'They lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; they chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music like David. They drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments; but they are not grieved for the afflictions of Joseph' (Amos 6:6).

2. Positive. Those mercies and comforts are undoubtedly sanctified to men which humble their souls kindly before God in the sense of their own vileness and unworthiness of them. 'And Jacob said, . .I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast shown unto thy servant' (Genesis 32:9-10).

Sanctified mercies are commonly turned into cautions against sin (Ezra 9:13). They are so many bands of restraint upon the soul that has them, to make them shun sin.

They will engage a man's heart in love to the God of His mercies (Psalms 18:1, cf. title).

They never satisfy a man as his portion, nor will the soul accept all the prosperity in the world upon that score. 'Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward' (Hebrews 11:26). Nor do they make men regardless of public sins or miseries (Nehemiah 2:1-3, compared with Acts 7:23).

It is a sure sign that mercies are sanctified when they make the soul more ready and enlarged for God in duty. 'Therefore the LORD established the kingdom in his hand: and all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat presents, and he had riches and honour in abundance. And his heart was lifted up in the ways of the LORD' (2 Chronicles 17:5-6). That which is obtained by prayer and returned to God again in due praise, carries its own testimonials with it, that it came from the love of God, and is a sanctified mercy to the soul. And so much for this third case.

How may we attain an evenness and steadiness of spirit under the changes and contrary aspects of Providence upon us?

Three things are supposed in this case: (1) that Providence has various and contrary aspects upon the people of God; (2) that it is a common thing with them to experience great disorders of spirit under those changes of Providence; (3) that these disorders may be, at least in a great measure, prevented by the due use and application of those rules and helps that God has given us in such cases. That Providence has various, yea, contrary aspects upon the people of God, is a case so plain that it needs no more than the mentioning to commend it to all our understandings. Which of all the people of God have not felt this truth? Providence rings the changes all the world over. 'He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them; he enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them again' (Job 12:23). The same it does with persons: 'Thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down' (Psalms 102:10). See what a sad alteration Providence made upon the Church: 'How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary!' (Lamentations 1:1). 'Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger' (Lamentations 1:12). And how great an instance was Job of this truth? (Job 29:1-25 and Job 30:1-31 compared). How many thousands have complained with Naomi, whose condition has been so strangely altered, that others have said, as the people of Bethlehem did of her: 'Is this Naomi?' (Rth 1:19).

These vicissitudes of Providence commonly cause great disorders of spirit in the best men. As intense heat and cold try the strength and soundness of the constitution of our bodies, so the alterations made by Providence upon our conditions try the strength of our graces, and too often reveal the weakness and corruption of holy men. Hezekiah was a good man, but yet his weakness and corruption was betrayed by the alterations Providence made upon his conditions. When sickness and pains summoned him to the grave, what bitter complaints and despondencies are recorded (Isaiah 38:1-22)! And when Providence lifted him up again into a prosperous condition, what ostentation and vain-glory did he show (Isaiah 39:2)! David had more than a common stock of inherent grace, yet not enough to keep him in an evenness of spirit under great alterations. 'And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved; thou didst hide thy face and I was troubled' (Psalms 30:6-7). It is not every man that can say with Paul, 'I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need' (Php 4:12). He is truly rich in grace whose riches or poverty neither hinders the acting nor impoverishes the stock of his graces.

Though the best men are subject to such disorders of heart under the changes of Providence, yet these disorders may in a great measure be prevented by the due application of such rules and helps as God has given us in such cases, and these shall be considered accordingly.

How may we attain to an evenness and steadiness of heart under the comfortable aspects of Providence upon us?

Under providences of this kind, the great danger is lest the heart he lifted up with pride and vanity, and fall into a drowsy and remiss condition. To prevent this, we had need urge humbling and awakening considerations upon our own hearts, such as the following:

These gifts of Providence are common to the worst of men, and are no special distinguishing fruits of God's love. The vilest of men have been filled even to satiety with these things. 'Their eyes

stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish' (Psalms 73:7).

Think how unstable and changeable all these things are. What you glory in today may be none of yours tomorrow. 'For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle towards heaven' (Proverbs 23:5). As the wings of a fowl grow out of the substance of its body, so the cause of the creature's transitoriness is in itself. It is subjected to vanity, and that vanity, like wings, carries it away; they are but fading flowers (James 1:10). The change of providences is never nearer to the people of God than when their hearts are lifted up, or grown secure by prosperity. Does Hezekiah glory in his treasures? The next news he hears is of an impoverishing providence at hand (Isaiah 39:2-7). Others may be left to perish in unsanctified prosperity, but you shall not. This is a great revelation of the carnality and corruption that is in your heart. It argues a heart little set upon God, little mortified to the world, little acquainted with the vanity and ensnaring nature of these things. O you do not know what hearts you have till such providences try them! And is not such a discovery matter of deep humiliation? Was it not better with you in a low condition than it is now? Reflect, and compare state with state, and time with time. How is the frame of your hearts altered with the alteration of your condition? So God complains of Israel: 'I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought. According to their pasture, so were they filled: they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me' (Hosea 13:5-6); as much as to say, You and I were better acquainted formerly when you were in a low condition; prosperity has estranged you and altered the case. How sad it is that God's mercies should be the occasion of our estrangement from Him!

How may our hearts be established and kept steady under calamitous and adverse providences?

Here we are in equal danger of the other extreme, viz., despondency and sinking under the frowns and strokes of contrary providences. Now, to support and establish the heart in this case, consider the following:

Afflictive providences are of great use to the people of God; they cannot live without them. The earth does not need more chastening frosts and mellowing snows than our hearts do nipping providences. Let the best Christian be but a few years without them, and he will be aware of the need of them; he will find a sad remissness and declining upon all his graces. No stroke of calamity upon the people of God can separate them from Christ. 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation?' (Romans 8:35). There was a time when Job could call nothing in this world his own but trouble. He could not say, My estate, my honour, my health, my children, for all these were gone; yet then he could say: 'My Redeemer' (Job 19:25). Well then, there is no cause to sink while interest in Christ remains sure to us.

All your calamities will have an end shortly. The longest day of the saints' troubles has an end; and then no more troubles for ever. The troubles of the wicked will be to eternity, but you shall suffer but a while (1 Peter 5:10). If a thousand troubles are appointed for you, they will come to one at last, and after that no more. Yea, and though 'our light afflictions are but for a moment,' yet they work 'for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory' (2 Corinthians 4:17). Let that support your hearts under all your sufferings.

Next, let us consider what may be useful to support and quieten our hearts under doubtful providences when our dear concerns hang in a doubtful suspense before us, and we do not know

which way the providence of God will cast and determine them.

Now the best hearts are apt to grow concerned and pensive, distracted with anxiety about the event and outcome. To relieve and settle us in this case, the following considerations are very useful.

Let us consider the vanity and uselessness of such anxiety. ‘Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?’ (Matthew 6:27). We may break our peace and waste our spirits, but not alter the case. We cannot turn God out of His way. ‘He is in one mind’ (Job 23:13). We may, by struggling against God, increase, but not avoid or lighten our troubles.

How often do we afflict and torment ourselves by our own restless thoughts, when there is no real cause or ground for so doing? ‘And hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy; and where is the fury of the oppressor?’ (Isaiah 51:13). O what abundance of disquiet and trouble might we prevent by waiting quietly till we see the issues of Providence, and not bringing as we do the evils of the morrow upon today?

How great a ground of quietness it is that the whole disposal and management of all our affairs and concerns is in the hand of our own God and Father. No creature can touch us without His commission or permission. ‘Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above’ (John 19:11). Neither men nor devils can do anything without God’s leave, and be sure He will sign no order to your prejudice.

How great satisfaction must it be to all that believe the divine authority of the Scripture that the faithfulness of God stands engaged for every line and syllable found therein! And how many blessed lines in the Bible may we mark, that respect even our outward concerns and the happy issue of them all!

Upon these two rounds, viz,, that our outward concerns with their steady direction to a blessed end is found in the Word; and this Word being of divine authority, the faithfulness and honour of God stands good for every tittle that is found there; I say these are grounds of such stability that our minds may repose with the greatest security and confidence upon them, even in the cloudiest day of trouble. Not only your eternal salvation but your temporal interests are there secured. Be quiet therefore in the confidence of a blessed outcome.

How great and sure a means have the saints ever found it to their own peace, to commit all doubtful outcomes of Providence to the Lord, and devolve all their cares upon Him! ‘Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established’ (Proverbs 16:3). By works he means any doubtful, intricate, perplexing business, about which our thoughts are racked and tortured. Roll all these upon the Lord by faith, leave them with Him, and the present immediate benefit you shall have by it, besides the comfort in the last issue, shall be tranquillity and peace in your thoughts. And who is there of any standing or experience in religion that has not found it so?

How may a Christian work his heart into resignation to the will of God when sad providences approach him and forebode great troubles and afflictions coming on towards him? For the right stating and resolving of this important case it will be needful to show what is not included and intended in the question, what it does suppose and include in it, and what help and directions are necessary for the due performance of this great and difficult duty.

It must be premised that the question does not suppose the heart or will of a Christian to be at his own command and disposal in this matter. We cannot resign it, and subject it to the will of God whenever we desire so to do. The duty indeed is ours, but the power by which alone we perform it is God's; we act as we are acted upon by the Spirit. It is with our hearts as with meteors hanging in the air by the influence of the sun; while that continues they abide above, but when it fails they fall to the earth. We can do this and all things else, however difficult, through Christ that strengthens us (Php 4:13). But without Him we can do nothing (John 15:5). He does not say, Without me ye can do but little, or without me ye can do nothing but with great difficulty, or without me ye can do nothing perfectly, but 'without me ye can do nothing' at all. And every Christian has a witness in his own breast to attest this truth. For there are cases frequently occurring in the methods of Providence in which, notwithstanding all their prayers and desires, all their reasonings and strivings, they cannot quieten their hearts fully in the disposal and will of God; but on the contrary they find all their endeavours in this matter to be but as the rolling of a returning stone against the hill. Till God say to the heart, Be still, and to the will, Give up, nothing can be done.

Let us consider what this case does suppose and include in it, and we shall find that it supposes the people of God to have a foresight of troubles and distresses approaching and drawing near to them. I confess it is not always so, for many of our afflictions, as well as comforts, come upon us by way of surprise; but often we have forewarning of troubles, both public and personal, before we feel them. As the weather may be discerned by the face of the sky - when we see a morning sky red and lowring, this is a natural sign of a foul and rainy day (Matthew 16:3) - so there are as certain signs of the times by which we may discern when trouble is near, even at the door. And these forewarnings are given by the Lord to awaken us to our duties, by which they may either be prevented (Zephaniah 2:1-2), or sanctified and sweetened to us when they come. These signs and notices of approaching troubles are gathered partly from the observation and collation of parallel Scripture cases and examples, God generally holding one tenor and steady course in the administrations of His providences in all ages (1 Corinthians 10:6), and partly from the reflections Christians make upon the attitude and disposition of their own hearts, which greatly need awakening, humbling and purging providences. For let a Christian be but a few years or months without a rod, and how formal, earthly, dead and vain will his heart grow! And such a disposition presages affliction to them that are beloved of the Lord, as really as the giving or sweating of the stones does rain. Lastly, the ordering and disposing of the next causes into a posture and preparation for our trouble, plainly warns us that trouble is at the door. Thus when the symptoms of sickness begin to appear on our own bodies, the wife of our bosom, or our children, that are as our own souls, Providence herein awakens our expectations of death and doleful separations. So when enemies combine together and plot the ruin of our liberties, estates or lives, and God seems to loose the bridle of restraint upon their neck, we cannot but be alarmed with the near approach of troubles, especially when at the same time our conscience reflects upon the abuse and non-improvement of these our threatened comforts. The case before us supposes that these premonitions and forerunners of affliction do usually very much disturb the order and break the peace of our souls; they put the mind under great discomposure, the thoughts under much distraction, and the affections into tumults and rebellion.

Ah, how unwilling we are to surrender to the Lord the loan which He lent us! to be disquieted by troubles when at ease in our enjoyments! How unwelcome are the messengers of affliction to the

best men! We are ready to say to them as the widow to Elijah: ‘What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God; art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?’ (1 Kings 17:18). And this arises partly from the remains of corruption in the best souls, for though every sanctified person is come by his own consent into the kingdom and under the government and sceptre of Christ, and every thought of his heart by right must be subjected to Him (2 Corinthians 10:5), yet in fact the conquest and power of grace is but incomplete and in part, and natural corruption, like Jeroboam with his vain men, rises u

06.12. Practical Problems in Connection 1

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Ah, how unwilling we are to surrender to the Lord the loan which He lent us! to be disquieted by troubles when at ease in our enjoyments! How unwelcome are the messengers of affliction to the best men! We are ready to say to them as the widow to Elijah: 'What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God; art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?' (1 Kings 17:18). And this arises partly from the remains of corruption in the best souls, for though every sanctified person is come by his own consent into the kingdom and under the government and sceptre of Christ, and every thought of his heart by right must be subjected to Him (2 Corinthians 10:5), yet in fact the conquest and power of grace is but incomplete and in part, and natural corruption, like Jeroboam with his vain men, rises up against it, and causes many mutinies in the soul, whilst grace, like young Abijah, is weak-handed and cannot resist them; and partly from the advantage Satan makes upon the season to irritate and assist our corruptions. He knows that what is already in motion is the more easily moved. In this confusion and hurry of thoughts he undiscernedly slips in his temptations, sometimes aggravating the evils which we fear with all the sinking and overwhelming circumstances imaginable, sometimes divining and forecasting such events and evils as, haply, never fall out, sometimes repining at the disposals of God as more severe to us than others, and sometimes reflecting with very unbelieving and unworthy thoughts upon the promises of God, and His faithfulness in them, by all which the affliction is made to sink deep into the soul before it actually comes. The thoughts are so disordered that duty cannot be duly performed. And the soul is really weakened and disabled to bear its trial when it comes indeed; just as if a man should be kept waking and restless all the night with the thoughts of his hard journey which he must travel tomorrow, and so when tomorrow is come he faints midway on his journey for want of rest.

It is here supposed to be the Christian's great duty, under the apprehensions of approaching troubles, to resign his will to God's and quietly commit the events and their outcome to Him, whatever they may prove. Thus did David in the like case and circumstances: 'And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city; if I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me back again, and show me both it and his habitation: But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee: behold here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him' (2 Samuel 15:25-26). O lovely and truly Christian attitude! As much as to say, Go Zadok, return with the ark to its place; though I have not the symbol, yet I hope I shall have the real presence of God with me in this sad journey. How He will dispose the events of this sad and doubtful providence I know not. Either I shall return again to Jerusalem or I shall not. If I do, then I shall see it again, and enjoy the Lord in His ordinances there. If I do not, then I shall go to that place where there is no need or use of those things. And either way it will be well for me. I am content to refer all to the divine pleasure, and commit the issue, be it whatever it will, to the Lord. And till our hearts come to the like resolve, we can have no peace within. 'Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established' (Proverbs 16:3). By works he means not only every enterprise and business we

undertake, but every puzzling, intricate and doubtful event we fear. These being once committed by an act of faith, and our wills resigned to His, besides the comfort we shall have in the issue, we shall have the present advantage of a well-composed and peaceful spirit. But this resignation is the difficulty. There is no doubt of peace, could we once bring our hearts to that. And therefore I shall here give such helps and directions as may, through God's blessing and in the faithful use of them, assist and facilitate this great and difficult work.

Labour to work into your hearts a deep and fixed sense of the infinite wisdom of God and your own folly and ignorance. This will make resignation easy to you. Whatsoever the Lord does is by counsel (Ephesians 1:11), His understanding is infinite (Psalms 147:5), His thoughts are very deep (Psalms 92:5), but as for man, yea, the wisest among men, how little does his understanding penetrate the works and designs of Providence! And how often we are forced to retract our rash opinions and confess our mistakes, and to acknowledge that if Providence had not seen with better eyes than ours, and looked farther than we did, we had precipitated ourselves into a thousand mischiefs, which by its wisdom and care we have escaped. It is well for us that the 'seven eyes of Providence' are ever awake and looking out for our good. Now if one creature can and ought to be guided and governed by another that is more wise and skillful than himself, as the client by his learned counsel, the patient by his skillful physician, much more should every one give up his weak reason and shallow understanding to the infinite and omniscient God.

It is nothing but our pride and arrogance over-valuing our own understandings that makes resignation so hard. Carnal reason seems to itself a wise disputant about the concerns of the flesh, but how often has Providence baffled it! The more humility, the more resignation.

How few of our mercies and comforts have been foreseen by us! Our own projects have come to nothing, and that which we never thought of or contrived has taken place; not our choice of the ground, or skill in weighing and delivering the bowl, but some unforeseen providence, like a rub in the green, was that which made the cast.

Deeply consider the sinfulness and vanity of torturing your own thoughts about the issues of doubtful providences.

There is much sin in so doing, for all our anxious and agitated emotions, what are they other than the immediate outcome and fruits of pride and unbelief? There is not a greater display of pride in the world than in the contests of our wills with the will of God. It is a presumptuous invading of God's prerogative to dictate to His providence and prescribe to His wisdom.

There is a great deal of vanity in it. All the thoughtfulness in the world will not make one hair white or black. All our discontents will not prevail with God to call back, or as the word may be rendered, make void His Word (Isaiah 31:2). He is in one mind (Job 23:13), the thoughts of His mind are from everlasting (Psalms 33:11).

Set before you those choice Scripture patterns of submission to the Lord's will in as deep, yea, much deeper points of self-denial than this before you, and shame yourselves out of this quarreling attitude with Providence.

You know what a close trial that providence was to Abraham, that called him from his native country and father's house to go he knew not where; and yet it is said that he came to God's foot,

as readily obeying his call as a servant when his master knocks for him with his foot (Isaiah 41:2).

Paul's voyage to Jerusalem had a dismal aspect upon himself. He could expect nothing but bonds and prisons, as he tells us (Acts 20:23), and a great trial it was to the saints, who could not tell how to give up such a minister; yet he resigns up his will to God's (Acts 20:22), and so do they: 'The will of the Lord be done' (Acts 21:14). But far beyond these, and all other patterns, what an example has our dear Lord Jesus set before us in the deepest point of self-denial that ever was in the world! When the Father gave the cup of sufferings into his hands in the garden, a cup of wrath, the wrath of the great and terrible God, and that without mixture, the very taste of which put nature into an agony and astonishment, a sore amazement, a bloody sweat, and forced from him that vehement and sad cry: 'Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me'; yet still with submission, 'nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt' (Mark 14:36). O blessed pattern of obedience and resignation to the pleasure of God! What is your case in comparison to this? Study the singular benefits and advantages of a will resigned up and melted into the will of God.

Such a spirit has a continual Sabbath within itself. The thoughts are established (Proverbs 16:3), and truly, till a man come to this, he does but too much resemble the devil, who is a restless spirit seeking rest but finding none. It was an excellent expression of Luther to one that was much perplexed in his spirit about the doubtful events of some affairs of his that were then depending: 'The Lord shall do all for thee, and thou shalt do nothing but be the Sabbath of Christ.' It is by this means that the Lord 'giveth his beloved sleep' (Psalms 127:2); he does not mean the sleep of the body, but of the spirit. As one has said on this verse: 'Though believers live in the midst of many troubles here, yet with quiet and composed minds they keep themselves in the silence of faith, as though they were asleep.' Besides, it fits a man's spirit for communion with God in all his afflictions, and this alleviates and sweetens them beyond anything in the world. And surely a man is never nearer the mercy he desires, or the deliverance he expects, as one truly observes, than when his soul is brought into a submissive attitude. David was never nearer the kingdom than when he became as a weaned child.

Think how repugnant an unsubmissive attitude is both to your prayers and professions.

You pray that the will of God may be done on earth as it is in heaven, and yet when it seems contrary to your will or interest, you struggle or fret against it. You profess to have committed your souls to His keeping, and to leave your eternal concerns in His hands, and yet cannot commit things infinitely less valuable unto Him. How contradictory are these things!

You profess as Christians to be led by the Spirit, but this practice shows you follow the perverse counsels of your own spirits. O then, regret no more, dispute no more, but lie down meekly at your Father's feet, and say in all cases and at all times, 'The will of the Lord be done.'

And thus I have, through the aid of Providence, performed what I designed to speak from this Scripture. I acknowledge that my performances have been accompanied with much weakness, yet I have endeavored to speak of Providence the things that are right. Blessed be the Lord who has thus far assisted and protected me in this work.

How Providence will dispose of my life, liberty and labours for time to come, I know not; but I cheerfully commit all to Him who has hitherto performed all things for me (Psalms 57:2).

06.13. The Advantages of Recording

Chapter 13

The Advantages of Recording our Experiences of Providence

In consideration of the great and manifold advantages resulting from a humble and careful observation of Providence, I cannot but judge it the concern of Christians that have time and ability for such a work, to keep written memorials or journals of Providence by them; for their own and others' use and benefit. For want of collecting and communicating such observations, not only ourselves, but the Church of God is greatly impoverished.

Some say the art of medicine was acquired and perfected thus. When anyone had met with some rare medicinal herb, and accidentally discovered the virtues of it, he would post it up in some public place; and so the physician attained his skill by a collection of those posted experiments and recipes.

I am not for posting up all that a Christian knows or meets with in his experience, for, as I have said before, religion does not lay all open; yet there is a prudent, humble and seasonable communication of our experiences and observations of Providence which is exceeding beneficial both to ourselves and our brethren.

If Christians in reading the Scriptures would judiciously collect and record the providences they shall meet with there, and (if destitute of other helps) but add those that have fallen out in their own time and experience, O what a precious treasure would these make! What an antidote would it be to their souls against the spreading atheism of these days, and satisfy them beyond what many other arguments can do, that 'The LORD he is the God; the LORD he is the God' (1 Kings 18:39).

Whilst this work was under my hand, I was both delighted and assisted by a pious and useful essay of an unknown author, who has to very good purpose used many Scriptural passages of Providence which seem to lie out of the road of common observation. Some passages I have noted out of it which have been sweet to me. O that Christians would everywhere set themselves to such work! Providence carries our lives, liberties and concerns in its hand every moment. Your bread is in its cupboard, your money in its purse, your safety in its enfolding arms; and surely it is the least part of what you owe to record the favours you receive at its hands. Do not trust your slippery memories with such a multitude of remarkable passages of Providence as you have, and shall meet with in your way to heaven. It is true, things that greatly affect us are not easily forgotten by us; and yet, how ordinary is it for new impressions to raze out former ones? It was a saying of that worthy man, Dr. Harris: 'My memory never failed me in all my life; for indeed, I durst never trust it.' Written memorials secure us against that hazard, and besides, make them useful to others when we are gone, so that you do not carry away all your treasure to heaven with you, but leave these choice legacies to your surviving friends. Certainly it were not so great a loss to lose your silver, your goods and chattels, as it is to lose your experiences which God has this way given you in this world.

Take heed of clasping up those rich treasures in a book, and thinking it enough to have noted them there; but have frequent recourse to them, as oft as new needs, fears or difficulties arise and assault you. Now it is seasonable to consider and reflect, Was I never so distressed before? Is this the first plunge that ever befell me? Let me consider the days of old, the years of ancient times, as Asaph did (Psalms 77:5).

Beware of slighting former straits and dangers in comparison with present ones. That which is next to us always appears greatest to us, and as time removes us farther and farther from our former mercies or dangers, so they grow less in our eyes, just as the land does from those who sail. Know that your dangers have been as great, and your fears no less formerly than now. Make it as much your business to preserve the sense and value as the memory of former providences, and the fruit will be sweet to you.

06.14. Publisher's Note

Publisher's Note

On 13th February, 1688, amidst the splendour of the Banqueting House at Whitehall an epoch-making event took place. Prince William and Princess Mary of Orange accepted the Crown from the estates of England. They were proclaimed as King and Queen; 'Thus,' in the words of Lord Macaulay, 'was consummated the English Revolution.' Throughout the land the following day was observed as a public thanksgiving for the deliverance of the nation from Papacy. Preaching at this celebration, one of the few surviving Puritan leaders, John Flavel, had occasion to observe a remarkable coincidence. In 1588 England had experienced a signal deliverance from Roman Catholicism. The mighty Armada of Spain, sent to dethrone the Protestant Elizabeth and restore her people to the 'old faith', had been blasted by the winds and waves. A hundred years had passed, Flavel reminded his hearers. 'Yet behold another Eighty-eight crowned and enriched with mercies, no less admirable and glorious than the former.' Another attempt to subjugate England to the yoke of Rome had been thwarted by the Providence of God. The century spanned by the Spanish Armadaa and the 'Glorious Revolution' was as decisive in the religious as in the political history of England. The religions of Rome and of the Reformation were locked in a struggle for national supremacy. 1662 saw the expulsion from the national Church of the Puritans, those who above all stood for the Reformation principle of the supremacy of Scripture in the Church. In 1688 the claim of Roman Catholicism to be the religion of England was, for generations to come, repudiated. This did not mean, however, the triumph of Puritanism. Indeed, it would be true to say that by 1688 the Puritan movement was virtually at an end. Its aims were to a large extent still unrealized. The history of Puritanism is quite remarkable. As a movement for thorough reform of the Church on the basis of the Word of God, it was indeed as old as the Reformation. But if the Reformation revived preaching, the Puritans came to stand for preaching of a particular kind. It has been the verdict of competent judges ever since that, for applying the Word of God to the conscience with power, thoroughness and unction, the Puritans stand alone. Yet it is difficult to define in detail how they differ from preachers of other ages. It is as difficult to explain how the movement arose, in a short time producing a host of outstanding preachers, and then, a hundred years or so later, how this supply dried up. If we take the view that the Puritan movement was nothing less than an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Church in England, then it is a signal instance of the principle of divine working enunciated by our Lord: 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth...' This view of the Puritan movement as pre-eminently God-given is borne out by the absence of anything in the nature of a gradual decline in the caliber of the Puritans. One of the most noteworthy of the later Puritans, John Flavel of Dartmouth, will bear comparison as a practical writer with any of his predecessors, though by far the greater part of his ministry fell after the Great Ejection of 1662. His father, Richard Flavel, was minister at Bromsgrove in Worcestershire, and from all accounts a faithful servant of God. His ministry, like many others, was terminated by law in 1662 and he died prematurely of the plague in 1655, after being imprisoned in

Newgate on a charge of sedition. John was the eldest son in a Puritan household and like many similarly placed, he was sent to university at what would now be considered an early age, entering University College, Oxford. The visitation of Oxford ordered by Parliament in 1647, after the first civil war, and the consequent reorganization of the university took place almost certainly while Flavel was there. Speaking of his time at Oxford, Flavel regretted that he had neglected the good of his own soul so much. None the less, in 1650 he was recommended as assistant to the minister of Diptford, Devon, and so commenced his life's work.

Mr. Walplate, the rector of Diptford, had sought help because of failing health. Consequently his young assistant was not starved of ministerial duties. Flavel was formally ordained to the ministry in October 1650. Hearing of an ordination service at Salisbury, he offered himself there for examination by the Presbytery and was duly recognized. Though he succeeded Walplate as rector of Diptford on the latter's death and was comparatively well-paid, Flavel accepted a call to another sphere of service in 1656. The seaport of Dartmouth in Devon could look back upon a long history. From an early period it was noted for its capacious harbour, and in 1190 had been the rendezvous of the Crusading Fleet. Coming down to the seventeenth century, it was an important post in the Civil War, captured for the king by Prince Maurice after a siege of four weeks in 1643 and retained by the Royalists until 1646, when it was taken by General Fairfax. In 1656, Anthony Hartford, minister of Dartmouth, died. Two churches were associated in the incumbency, Saint Saviour's and Townstall. To Saint Saviour's the inhabitants chose Allan Geare, son-in-law of the famous John Canne, pastor of the English church at Amsterdam. As Hartford's successor at Townstall church a young man was designated who had recently presided with distinction at a provincial synod of the Devonshire churches. That young man was John Flavel, and so commenced an association with Dartmouth which continued until his death.

Flavel's ministry at Dartmouth might well have been attended by great outward prosperity and success had it fallen in another era. In fact, like many others, including his own father, he was ejected by the Act of Uniformity in 1662. This enactment was successful in silencing some of the nonconforming ministers. Many, however, considered that their divine commission took precedence over any man-made laws. Thus Flavel continued to exercise his ministry in Dartmouth as he was able. Not satisfied with the ejection, the government of Charles II sought to destroy Dissent altogether. In 1665 the Oxford Act forbade nonconforming ministers to come within five miles of a town unless they took an oath, including a promise not to endeavour any alteration in church or state. Some of the nonconformists in Devon, notably John Howe, took the oath. Flavel, however, refused to do so, though this meant leaving his home and flock. Moving to Slapton, a village which was the prescribed distance from Dartmouth, he was resorted to by many of his old parishioners, to whom he preached on Sundays. A brief respite for the Puritans followed upon the Declaration of Indulgence issued by Charles II in 1672. The king, unknown to the nation and to Parliament, had entered into an engagement with Louis XIV of France to establish Roman Catholicism in England, and as a preliminary step, granted liberty of worship to dissenters, Protestant and Roman Catholic. Flavel took advantage of this liberty and was licensed as a Congregationalist. Even when, shortly afterwards, the Indulgence was withdrawn as a result of parliamentary pressure, he continued to preach in Dartmouth. He preached in private houses and woods and even held meetings at low water on a rock called Saltstone in Kingsbridge estuary. As a leading and active Nonconformist, Flavel was often in danger and in 1682 was compelled to

leave Dartmouth for London. In the city he met with other dissenting ministers, notably William Jenkyn. In September 1684, Jenkyn, Flavel and other friends were gathered for prayer when soldiers broke in upon them. Jenkyn was arrested and though Flavel managed to escape he was close enough to hear the soldiers' insolence to their captive. He returned to Devon soon after this experience, refusing an invitation to succeed Jenkyn, who died in prison in January 1685. Flavel lived to enjoy the liberty given to dissenters by the last Stuart king, James II, and rejoiced in the bloodless revolution of 1688-9, which made the English crown Protestant and gave lasting toleration to nonconformists. At this time measures were afoot to settle the differences between the Presbyterians and Congregationalists. This work was dear to Flavel's heart and he played a leading role in promoting the 'Happy Union' in Devon. It was while engaged in this work that he died suddenly at Exeter in 1691. He was buried at Dartmouth, 'being accompanied to his grave by many dissenters', says an unsympathetic witness. It is recorded that in 1709 his epitaph was removed. The vicar objected to it as being worthy of a bishop.

Even a brief glance at Flavel's history gives some indication of his outstanding character. Of his influence, Wood, the Royalist historian, observes that he had more disciples than either John Owen or Richard Baxter. The same writer accused him of plagiarism, sedition and faction. It seems, however, that to Wood his great crime was that he did not conform in 1662. One who was intimately acquainted with him, John Galpine of Totnes, draws attention in his memoir of Flavel to three characteristics, his diligence, his longing for the conversion of souls and his peaceable and healing spirit. In addition to the incidents recorded in his own writings, there are some remarkable examples of the effects of Flavel's ministry. Luke Short was a farmer in New England who attained his hundredth year in exceptional vigor though without having sought peace with God. One day as he sat in his fields reflecting upon his long life, he recalled a sermon he had heard in Dartmouth as a boy before he sailed to America. The horror of dying under the curse of God was impressed upon him as he meditated on the words he had heard so long ago and he was converted to Christ - eighty-five years after hearing John Flavel preach. Another remarkable convert was a London gentleman who tried to obtain some plays from a bookshop. The owner was a godly man and had none in stock but recommended Flavel's treatise On Keeping the Heart. The would-be reader scorned and threatened to burn the book but took it and returned in a month's time saying that God had used it to save his soul.

Flavel was a prolific writer and his works, separate and collected, have been republished many times since the author's lifetime. His complete works were republished in 1820 by W. Baynes & Son in London, making up six volumes. Although some of these writings are polemical, the author confessed that he found this kind of work disagreeable. His preference was for practical divinity, and it is here that his skill as a physician of souls shines most eminently. Divine Conduct or the Mystery of Providence Opened was first published in 1678 and has passed through several editions, the most recent being that published by the Sovereign Grace Union in 1935. The present edition differs from the original in two respects. Slight alterations of vocabulary and punctuation have been made, not to change, but to make clear the original force and sense of Flavel's words. Moreover, the treatise has been freshly subdivided and given new chapter headings. These are divisions which arise naturally out of the author's treatment of his subject. Thus, for all practical purposes, the matter of Flavel's work is unchanged, while the style of presentation has been altered slightly to help modern readers. This may have diminished the academic historical value of

this edition, but it is hoped that it has greatly increased its spiritual usefulness to this generation.

Yet even granting the timeless spiritual value of John Flavel as a writer, some friends will deem it unwise to introduce him to the Christian public through his work on Providence. Surely it would be better to let an old writer speak on a subject that is not peculiar to his own era! Why not see what Flavel had to say on personal evangelism, on guidance or on the way to achieve peace and victory in the Christian life? These, without doubt, are the themes which popular preachers in our own day chiefly dwell upon. These are the topics about which most Christians wish to read. Why should we not, then, find out whether the Puritans really can help us on the burning issues of the day? In answer to this, there is no doubt that Flavel and his colleagues gave advice in these matters. But their whole approach was in marked contrast to that to which we are accustomed. Our modern piety, when it deals with spiritual problems, tends to be self-centered and subjective: 'How can I find peace? How can I be victorious and effective? How can I be guided?' If we know the answers to these questions, it is often felt, nothing more can be asked of us. Within the terms of such an outlook, little time and attention can be spared for the consideration of such an apparently theoretical subject as the Providence of God. It may even provoke some impatience. In view of the demands of modern life, is it really necessary for us to spend time reading a lengthy treatment of what is not a priority?

Flavel's approach to the subject of Providence cuts clean across our modern criticisms. He insists from the outset that it is the duty of believers to observe all the performances of God's providence for them, especially when they are in difficulties. Clearly, this conviction is not shared by the majority of evangelical Christians in the present day. It is not our custom nor is it regarded as a mark of spiritual keenness to seek to discover and meditate upon the work of Providence in all that happens to us. Two reasons for this may be suggested. First and foremost, the Puritans had a lively sense of the sovereignty of God and it is just this that, speaking generally, we lack today. Many Christians reject it intellectually as repugnant to free will and their understanding of the love of God. When they suffer a setback in their personal affairs or in the work of the gospel, it is ascribed wholly to the Devil or to failure in themselves to 'fulfill the conditions.' They feel a sense of personal frustration and may even believe that God Himself has been frustrated. Their only hope of success is to intensify their spiritual exercises. Prayer on this basis is not so much a plea to Omnipotence as the throwing of one's weight into the scale on the side of God. Even those who profess to accept without question the truth of divine sovereignty are not infrequently guilty of practical unbelief. Glibly to assert that 'all things work together for good to them that love God' is relatively easy, but to believe this when our circumstances are distasteful and appear likely to deteriorate is evidence of a spiritual apprehension of the sovereignty of God. Yet we cannot truly recognize and improve the workings of Providence until we learn from the Scriptures that God performs all things for us. A second reason may be suggested why we do not meditate on the providence of God; it is that we have a deep distaste for meditation. This is not a matter of temperament. The recluse or introvert has no advantage over the active, busy Christian. True meditation is a work to which we are all naturally indisposed, but it is one to which the Holy Spirit prompts those whom He indwells, those who have trusted Christ. To the work of meditation upon Providence, believers must apply themselves; but first they must recognize it as a duty and understand what it involves. When John Flavel writes of the Providence of God, he does not simply deliver a lecture. He writes in a thrilling way out of a full heart. He knows from Church

history and from his own experience of the works of God on behalf of His people. Above all, he knows the Word of God intimately and he knows how to apply it. He shows how the hand of God may be discerned in our personal affairs, avoiding the extravagances of mysticism as well as the skepticism of unbelief. His treatise is calculated to abase man and exalt God, and yet to kindle faith and adoration in the heart of every child of God. To learn of the Providence of God under the tuition of John Flavel will bring Christian believers into a sphere they never reckoned with before. It will also, we are confident shed light on the great concerns of present-day evangelicals. How may we live a consecrated and victorious life? Let us first realize that everthing does not depend on us. Let us see what God has done and is doing for our spiritual good. Then we may seek to work out what He is working in us. And what of guidance? Let us learn that, in an ultimate sense, we can never be ‘outside of the will of God’ - Flavel would teach us that God’s will for us is our duty to be found in His Word. Moreover we should have a right attitude to all circumstances, even the most adverse. Finally, our Christian witness will not be crippled, as many fear, but quickened by a right apprehension of the sovereignty of God. What a great God is ours, greater than we ever thought when we first trusted Him for salvation! How futile for men and women to fight against Him! If Christians showed at all times by their demeanor that they had a living faith in the God of the Scriptures, they would be better placed to commend to an unbelieving world their God and His power to save.

Michael Boland

February, 1963

Chapter 102

S. A Short Biography

During the Plague of London, in 1665, a few Christian friends were gathered for prayer in a private house in Convent Garden; but, as it was an unlawful assembly, the soldiers broke in with drawn swords and arrested the worshippers. They were committed to Newgate prison, where the pestilence was raging; and an old minister from the country, Mr. Richard Flavel, and his wife, caught the infection, and were released only to die. Their eldest son was also at this time a minister. Although he did not become a musician or a poet, as his mother had hoped, this nobler vocation was his destiny. As a minister and author, he transmitted the joyful sound of the gospel through the dark reigns of Charles and James the Second; and of all who sang songs in that night, few found listeners so eager and grateful as John Flavel. In 1656, when he was about twenty-six years of age, the people of Dartmouth, in Devon, chose him as their minister. Going amongst them on their own invitation, and in all the freshness of his affections, he and the inhabitants became ardently attached to one another. With his fund of striking incidents, with his faculty of happy illustration, with a temperament in which cheerfulness and solemnity were remarkably blended, and with a style of address in which friendly encouragement alternated with grave remonstrance and melting pathos, except among the worst reprobates, his ministry was boundlessly popular. And when he went from home, his plain and arresting discourses were so often the means of awakening or converting careless hearers, that he was induced to extend his labors far beyond the bounds of his own large parish. The period, however, was brief during which he was allowed to ply such a free and unfettered ministry. Ejected by the Act of Uniformity, for some time he endeavored to keep together and instruct the members of his flock; but spies and penal laws made their meetings difficult and dangerous. At last the Oxford Act was promulgated, and according to its terms, Mr. Flavel could no longer reside in Dartmouth. On the day of his departure, the inhabitants accompanied him as far as the churchyard of Townstall, where, amidst prayers and tears, they parted. Nevertheless, his heart was still with his beloved people. He took up his abode as near them as the letter of the law allowed; and, sometimes in Dartmouth itself, sometimes in a quiet apartment in a neighboring village, and sometimes in a wood or other sheltered spot in the open air, he contrived to meet a detachment of them almost every Sabbath day. At last King James's Indulgence permitted the open resumption of his ministry. A commodious meeting-house was built, and there, for the remaining years of his life, he continued to warn, exhort, and comfort all who came, with a fervor of which the tradition has not yet died out in Devon. His prayers were wonderful. Much of his retirement was spent in devotional exercises; and in the great congregation he was sometimes seized with such agonies of earnestness, or carried away in such a rapture of praise and thanksgiving, that it seemed as if the tabernacle of clay must perish amidst the excessive emotion. At last, towards the end of June, 1691, he presided at a meeting of the Nonconformist ministers of Devonshire. The object was to bring about a union of Presbyterians and Independents. The preliminary resolutions passed unanimously, and "Mr. Flavel closed the work of the day with prayer and praise, in which his spirit was carried out with wonderful enlargement and affection." On the 26th, he wrote to a London minister an account of this auspicious meeting, and appeared remarkably cheerful and happy. But that evening, he was taken

with the palsy, and soon died. No period of English history has been so fruitful in religious literature as the half-century between the commencement of the Parliamentary War and the glorious Revolution; or we might say, the period included in the publishing career of Richard Baxter. But amidst that enormous authorship there are few books which retain so much attraction for modern readers as some of Flavel's practical treatises, such as On Keeping the Heart. For their enduring popularity, they are, no doubt, in some degree indebted to their kind, affable, and earnest tone; but still more, we presume, is due to the skill and felicity with which matters of the greatest moment are expounded. With a view to be useful, the writer's great anxiety was to be understood, and he sought out the words and the modes of representation which might suit the sailors of Dartmouth and Plymouth, and the farmers of Devon and Dorset. His books abound in anecdote, and they are rich in those homely metaphors and ingenious comparisons which are an effective ingredient in popular oratory. Above all, they command the reader's attention, by the importance of the themes which they handle; they secure his confidence, by their unaffected seriousness and deep sincerity; and they win his heart, by the evangelical warmth and personal kindness with which they are all aglow.

S. A Vindication of the Satisfaction of

A Vindication of the Satisfaction of Christ,

as the first Effect or Fruit of his Priesthood "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Galatians 3:13

You have seen the general nature, necessity and parts of Christ's priesthood, namely, oblation and intercession. Before you part from this office, it is necessary you should farther take into consideration the principal fruits and effects of his priesthood; which are, complete satisfaction and the acquisition or purchase of an eternal inheritance. The former namely, The satisfaction, made by his blood, is manifestly contained in this excellent scripture before us, wherein the apostle (having shown before, at Galatians 3:10. that whoever "continues not in all things written in the law, to do them, are cursed)" declares how, notwithstanding the threats of the law, a believer comes to be freed from the curse of it, namely, by Christ's bearing that curse for him, and so satisfying God's justice, and discharging the believer from all obligations to punishment.

More particularly, in these words you have the believer's discharge from the curse of the law, and the way and manner thereof opened.

1. The believers discharge; Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law. The law of God has three parts, commands promises, and threatening or curses. The curse of the law is its condemning sentence, whereby a sinner is bound over to death, even the death of soul and body. The chain, by which it binds him, is the guilt of sin; and from which none can loose the soul but Christ. This curse of the law is the most dreadful thing imaginable; it strikes at the life of a sinner, yes, his best life, the eternal life of the soul: and when it has condemned, it is inexorable, no cries nor tears, no reformation nor repentance can loose the guilty sinner; for it requires for its reparation that which no mere creature can give, even an infinite satisfaction. Now from this curse Christ frees the believer; that is, he dissolves the obligation to punishment, cancels the hand-writing, looses all the bonds and chains of guilt, so that the curse of the law has nothing to do with him forever.

2. We have here the way and manner in and by which this is done; and that is by a full price paid down, and that price paid in the room of the sinner, both making up a complete and full satisfaction. He pays a full price, every way adequate and proportionable to the wrong. So much this word, "hemas exegorasen", which we translate redeemed, imports; he has bought us out, or fully bought us, that is, by a full price. This price with which he so fully bought or purchased our freedom from the curse, is not only called "lutron", Matthew 20:28. or ransom, but more emphatically "antilutron", in 1 Timothy 2:5-6 which might be translated an adequate or fully answerable ransom. And so his freeing us by this price, is not only expressed by "egorasas toi Theoi hemas", "You have bought us to God by your blood," Revelation 5:9. but "exegorasen hemas", he has fully, perfectly, bought us out. And as the price or ransom paid was full, perfect, and sufficient in itself; so it was paid in our room, and upon our account: so says the text, "By his

being made a curse for us," the meaning is not, that Christ was made the very curse itself, changed into a curse; no more than when the word is said to be made flesh, the divine nature was converted into flesh, hut it assumed or took flesh; and so Christ took the curse upon himself; therefore it is said, 2 Corinthians 5:21. "He was made sin for us who knew no sin;" that is, our sin was imputed to our surety, and laid upon him for satisfaction. And so this word "huper" [for] implies a substitution of one, in the place and stead of another. Now the price being full, and paid in lieu of our sins, and thereupon we fully redeemed or delivered from the curse, it follows, as a fair and just deduction, that, DOCTRINE. The death of Christ has made a full satisfaction to God for all the sins of his elect.

"He (our surety, Christ) was oppressed, and he was afflicted," says the prophet, Isaiah 52:7. it may be fitly rendered, (and the words will bear it without the least force) it was exacted, and answered. But how, being either way translated, it establishes the satisfaction of Christ, may be seen in our learned Annotations on that place. So Colossians 1:14. "In whom we have ’apolutrosin dia tou haimatos’, redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sin." Here we have the benefit, namely, redemption interpreted by way of opposition, "even the remission of sins;" and the matchless price that was laid down to purchase it, the blood of Christ. So again, Hebrews 9:12. "By his own blood he entered once into the holy place, having obtained ’aionian lutrosin’, eternal redemption for us." Here is eternal redemption, the mercy purchased: his own blood, the price that procured it.

Now forasmuch as this doctrine of Christ’s satisfaction is so necessary, weighty and comfortable in itself, and yet so much opposed and intricated by several enemies to it; the method I shall take for the clearing, establishing, and preparing it for use, shall be, First, To open the nature of Christ’s satisfaction, and show what it is.

Secondly, To establish the truth of it, and prove that he made full satisfaction to God for all the sins of the elect.

Thirdly, To answer the most considerable objections made against it. And lastly, To apply it.

First, What is the satisfaction of Christ, and what does it imply? I answer, satisfaction is the act of Christ, God-man, presenting himself as our surety in obedience to God and love to us; to do and to suffer all that the law required of us: thereby freeing us from the wrath and curse due to us for sins.

1. It is the act of God-man; no other was capable of giving satisfaction for an infinite wrong done to God. But by reason of the union of the two natures in his wonderful person, he could do it, and has done it for us. The human nature did what was necessary in its kind; it gave the matter of the sacrifice: the divine nature stamps the dignity and value upon it, which made it an adequate compensation: so that it was opus "Theandrikon", the act of God-man; yet so, that each nature retained its own properties, notwithstanding their joint influence into the effect. If the angels in heaven had laid down their lives, or if the blood of all the men in the world had been poured out by justice, this could never have satisfied, because that "axiosis", worth and value which this sacrifice has, would have still been wanting. "It was God that redeemed the church with his own blood," Acts 20:18. If God redeem with his own blood, he redeems as God-man, without any dispute.

2. If he satisfy God for us, he must present himself before God, as our surety, in our stead, as well as for our good; else his obedience had signified nothing to us; to this end he was "made under

the law," Galatians 4:4. comes under the same obligation with us, and that as a surety, for so he is called, Hebrews 7:22. Indeed his obedience and sufferings could be exacted from him upon no other account. It was not for anything he had done that he became a curse. It was prophesied of him, Daniel 9:26. "The Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself;" and being dead, the scriptures plainly assert it was for our sins, and upon our account: so 1 Corinthians 15:3. "Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures." And it is well observed by our divines, who assert the vicegerency and substitution of Christ in his sufferings, that all those Greek particles which we translate [for] when applied to the sufferings of Christ do note the meritorious, deserving, procuring cause of those sufferings. So you find, Hebrews 10:12. "He offered one sacrifice 'huper hamartion', for sins." 1 Peter 3:18. "Christ once suffered, 'peri' for sins." Romans 4:25. "He was delivered, 'dia', for our offences." Matthew 20:28. "He gave his life a ransom, 'anti', for many." And there are that confidently affirm this last particle is never used in any other sense in the whole book of God; as "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," that is one in lieu of another. Just as those whom the Greeks called "antipsuchoi", men that exchanged their lives, or gave life for life, staking down their own to deliver another's, as Philumene did for Aristides. And so the poet Virgil speaks: Si fratrem Pollux alterna morte redemit. And indeed, this very consideration is that which supports the doctrine of imputation, the imputation of our sins to Christ, and the imputation of Christ's righteousness unto us, Romans 5:19. For how could our sins be laid on him, but as he stood in our stead? or his righteousness be imputed to us, but as he was our surety, performing it in our place; so that to deny Christ's sufferings in our stead, is to lose the corner-stone of our justification, and overthrow the very pillar which supports our faith, comfort and salvation. Indeed if this had not been, he would have been the righteous Lord, but not the Lord our righteousness, as he is stiled, Jeremiah 33:16. So that it was but a vain distinction, to say it was for our good, but not in our stead: for had he not been in our stead, we could not have had the good of it.

3. The internal moving cause of Christ's satisfaction for us, was his obedience to God, and love to us. That it was an act of obedience, is plain from Php 2:8. "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Now obedience respects a command, and each a command Christ received to die for us, as himself tells us, John 10:18. "I lay down my life of myself; I have power to lay it down, and power to take it again: this commandment have I received of my Father." So that it was an act of obedience with respect to God, and yet a most free and spontaneous act with respect to himself. And that he was moved to it out of pity and love to us, himself assures us: Galatians 5:2. "Christ loved us, and gave himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God." Upon this Paul sweetly reflected, Galatians 2:20. "Who loved me and gave himself for me." As the external moving cause was our misery, so the internal was his own love and pity for us.

4. The matter of Christ's satisfaction, was his active and passive obedience to all the law of God required. I know there are some that doubt whether Christ's active obedience have any place here, and so whether it he imputed as any part of our righteousness. It is confessed, that scripture most frequently mentions his passive obedience, as that which made the atonement, and procures our redemption, Matthew 20:28 and Matthew 26:28. Romans 3:24-25 and elsewhere: but his passive obedience is never mentioned exclusively, as the sole cause, or matter of satisfaction. But in those places where it is mentioned by itself, it is put for his whole obedience, both active and passive, by an usual trope; and in other scriptures it is ascribed to both, as Galatians 4:4. he is said, "to be under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." Now his being "made under the law" to

this end, cannot be restrained to his subjection to the curse of the law only, but to the commands of it also. So Romans 5:19. "As by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous." It were a manifest injury to this text also, to restrain it to the passive obedience of Christ only. To be short, this twofold obedience of Christ, stands opposed to a twofold obligation that fallen man is under; the one to do what God requires, the other to suffer what he has threatened for disobedience. We owe him active obedience as his creatures, and passive obedience as his prisoners. Suitably to his double obligation, Christ comes under the commandment of the law, to fulfill it actively, Matthew 3:15. and under the malediction of the law, to satisfy it passively. And whereas it is objected by some, if he fulfilled the whole law for us by his active, what need then of his passive obedience? We reply, great need; because both these make up that one, entire, and complete obedience, by which God is satisfied, and we justified. It is a good rule of Alsted, obedientia Christi est una copulativa; the whole obedience of Christ, both active and passive, make up one entire perfect obedience; and therefore there is no reason why one particle, either of the one, or of the other, should be excluded.

5. The effect and fruit of this his satisfaction, is our freedom, ransom, or deliverance from the wrath and curse due to us for our sins. Such was the dignity, value, and completeness of Christ's satisfactions, that in strict justice it merited our redemption and full deliverance; not only a possibility that we might be redeemed and pardoned, but a right whereby to be so, as the learned Dr. Twiss judiciously argues. If he be made a curse for us, we must then be redeemed from the curse, according to justice; so the apostle argues, Romans 3:25-26. "Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness, that God might be just, and the justifier of him that believes in Jesus." Mark the design and end of God in exacting satisfaction from Christ, it was to declare his righteousness in the remission of sin to believers; and lest we should lose the emphatical word, he doubles it, to declare, I say, his righteousness. Everyone can see how his mercy is declared in remission: but he would have us take notice, that his justification of believers is an act of justice; and that God, as he is a just God, cannot condemn the believer, since Christ has satisfied his debts. This attribute seems to be the main bar against remission; but now it is become the very ground and reason why God remits. O how comfortable a text is this! Does Satan or conscience set forth your sin in all its discouraging circumstances and aggravations? God has set forth Christ to be a propitiation. Must justice be manifested, satisfied and glorified? So it is in the death of Christ, ten thousand times more than ever it could in your damnation. Thus you have a brief account of the satisfaction made by Jesus Christ.

Secondly, We shall gather up all that has been said to establish the truth of Christ's satisfaction; proving the reality of it, that it is not an improper, catachrestical, fictitious satisfaction, by divine acceptilation, as some have very diminutively called it; but real, proper, and full, and as such accepted by God. For his blood is the stood of a Surety, Hebrews 7:22. who came under the same obligations of the law with us, Galatians 4:4. and though he had no sin of his own, yet standing before God as our Surety, the iniquities of us all were laid upon him, Isaiah 53:6. and from him did the Lord, with great severity, exact satisfaction for our sins, Romans 8:32. punish them upon his soul, Matth. 27:46. and upon his body, Acts 2:23. and with this obedience of his Son, is fully pleased and satisfied, Ephesians 5:2. and has in token thereof raised him from the dead, and set

him at his own right hand, 1 Timothy 3:16. and for his righteousness-sake acquitted and discharged believers, who shall never more come into condemnation, Romans 8:1; Romans 8:34. All this is plain in scripture; and our faith in the satisfaction of Christ, is not built on the wisdom of man, but the everlasting sealed truth of God: yet such is the perverse nature of man, and the pride of his heart, that while he should be humbly adoring the grace of God, in providing such a Surety for us, he is found accusing the justice, and diminishing the mercy of God, and raising all the objections which Satan and his own heart can invent, to overturn that blessed foundation upon which God has built up his own honor, and his people's salvation.

Thirdly, In the next place, therefore, we shall reject those doctrines, and remove the principal of those objections that are found militating against the satisfaction of Christ.

And, in the first place, we reject with deep abhorrence that doctrine, which ascribes to man any power, in whole, or in part, to satisfy God for his own, or other men's sins. This, no mere creature can do by active obedience, were it so complete that he could never sin in thought, word, or deed, any more, but live the most holy life that ever any lived: for all this would be no more than his duty as a creature, Luke 17:10. and so can be no satisfaction for what he is by nature, or has done against God as a sinner. Nor yet by suffering; for we have offended an infinite God, and can never satisfy him by our finite sufferings.

We also, with like detestation, reject that doctrine which makes the satisfaction of Christ either impossible, or fictitious, and inconsistent with grace, in the free pardon of sin. Many are the cavils raised against Christ's satisfaction; the principal are such as these that follow:

Objection. The doctrine of Christ's satisfaction is absurd, for Christ (say we) is God; if so then, God satisfied himself, than which what can be more absurd to imagine?

Solution. I answer, God cannot properly be said to satisfy himself for that would be the same thing as to pardon, simply, without any satisfaction. But there is a twofold consideration of Christ; one in respect of his Essence and Divine Nature, in which sense he is the object both of the offence, and of the satisfaction made for it. Another in respect of his person and economy, or office; in which sense he properly satisfies God, being in respect of his manhood another, and inferior to God, John 14:28. The blood of the man Christ Jesus is the matter of the satisfaction, the Divine Nature dignifies it, and makes it of infinite value. A certain family had committed treason against the king, and are all under the condemnation of the law for it' the king's son moved with pity and love, resolves to satisfy the law, and yet save the family; in order whereunto he marries a daughter of the family, whereby her blood becomes royal blood, and worth the blood of the whole family whence she sprang; this princess is by her husband executed in the room of the rest. In this case the king satisfies not himself for the wrong, but is satisfied by the death of another, equivalent in worth to the blood of them all. This similitude answers not to all the particulars, as indeed nothing in nature does, or can; but it only shows what it was that satisfied God, and how it became so satisfactory.

Objection. If Christ satisfied by paying our debt, then he should have endured eternal torments; for so we should, and the damned shall.

Solution. We must distinguish between what is essential, and what is accidental in punishment. The primary intent of the law is reparation and satisfaction; he that can make it at one entire

payment (as Christ could and did) ought to be discharged. He that cannot (as no mere creature can) ought to lie forever, as the damned do, under sufferings.

Objection. If God will be satisfied for our sins before he pardon them, how then is pardon an act of grace.

Solution. Pardon could not be an act of pure grace, if God received satisfaction from us; but if he pardon us upon the satisfaction received from Christ, though it be of debt to him, it is of grace to us: for it was grace to admit a Surety to satisfy, more grace to provide him, and most of all to apply his satisfaction to us, by uniting us to Christ, as he has done.

Objection. But God loved us before Christ died for us; for it was the love of God to the world that moved him to give his only-begotten Son. Could God love us, and yet not be reconciled and satisfied?

Solution. God's complacent love is indeed inconsistent with an unreconciled state: He is reconciled to everyone he so loves. But his benevolent love, consisting in his purpose of good, may be before actual reconciliation and satisfaction.

Objection. Temporal death, as well as eternal, is a part of the curse, if Christ have fully satisfied by bearing the curse for us, how is it, that those for whom he bare it, die as well as others?

Solution. As temporal death is a penal evil, and part of the curse, so God inflicts it not upon believers; but they must die for other ends, namely, to be made perfectly happy in a more full and immediate enjoyment of God, than they can have in the body: and so, death is theirs by way of privilege, 1 Corinthians 3:22. They are not death's by way of punishment. The same may be said of all the afflictions with which God, for gracious ends, now exercises his reconciled ones. Thus much may suffice to establish this great truth.

INFERENCE 1. If the death of Christ was that which satisfied God for all the sins of the elect, then certainly there is an infinite evil in sin, since it cannot be expiated but by an infinite satisfaction. Fools make a mock at sin, and there are but few souls in the world that are duly sensible of, and affected with its evil; but certainly, if God should damn you to all eternity, your eternal sufferings could not satisfy for the evil that is in one vain thought. It may be you may think this is harsh and severe, that God should hold his creatures under everlasting sufferings for sin, and never be satisfied with them any more. But when you have well considered, that the object against whom you sin, is the infinite blessed God, which derives an infinite evil to the sin committed against him; and when you consider how God dealt with the angels that fell, for one sin, and that but of the mind; (for having no bodily organs, they could commit nothing externally against God:) you will alter your minds about it. O the depth of the evil of sin! If ever you will see how great and horrid an evil sin is, measure it in your thoughts, either by the infinite holiness and excellency of God, who is wronged by it; or by the infinite sufferings of Christ, who died to satisfy for it; and then you will have deeper apprehensions of the evil of sin.

INFERENCE. 2. If the death of Christ satisfied God, and thereby redeemed the elect from the curse: then the redemption of souls is costly; souls are dear things, and of great value with God. "You know, (says the apostle,) that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, received by tradition; but with the precious blood of the Son of

God, as of a lamb without spot," 1 Peter 1:18-19. Only the blood of God is found an equivalent price for the redemption of souls. Gold and silver may redeem from Turkish, but not from hellish bondage. The whole creation sold to the utmost worth of it, is not a value for the redemption of one soul. Souls are very dear; he that paid for them found them so: yet how cheaply do sinners sell their souls, as if they were but low priced commodities! but you that sell your souls cheap, will buy repentance dear.

INFERENCE. 3. If Christ's death satisfied God for our sins, how unparalleled is the love of Christ to poor sinners! It is much to pay a financial debt to free another, but who will pay his own blood for another? We have a noted instance of Zaleucus, that famous Locrensian lawgiver, who decreed, that whoever was convicted of adultery, should have both his eyes put out. It so fell out that his own son was brought before him for that crime: hereupon the people interposing, made suit for his pardon. At length the father, partly overcome by their importunities, and not unwilling to show what lawful favor he might to his son, he first put out one of his own eyes, and then one of his son's; and so showed himself both a merciful father, and a just lawgiver; so tempering mercy with justice, that both the law was satisfied, and his son spared. This is written by the historian as an instance of singular love in his father, to pay one half of the penalty for his son. But Christ did not divide, and share in the penalty with us, but bare it all. Zaleucus did it for his son, who was dear to him; Christ did it for enemies, that were fighting and rebelling against him: Romans 5:8. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "O would to God (said a holy one) I could cause paper and ink to speak the worth and excellency, the high and loud praises of our brother ransomer! O the ransomer needs not my report; but O if he would take it, and make use of it! I should be happy if I had an errand to this world but for some few years, to spread proclamations, and out-cries, and love-letters of the highness [the highness evermore] of the ransomer, whose clothes were wet, and dyed in blood; howbeit, that after that, my soul and body should go back to their mother nothing."

INFERENCE. 4. If Christ by dying, has made full satisfaction, then God is no loser in pardoning the greatest of sinners that believe in Jesus; and consequently his justice can be no bar to their justification and salvation. He is just to forgive us our sins, 1 John 1:9. What an argument is here for a poor believer to plead with God! Lord, if you save me by Jesus Christ, your justice will be fully satisfied at one full payment; but if you damn me, and require satisfaction at my hands, you canned never receive it: I shall make but a dribbling payment, though I lie in hell to eternity, and shall still be infinitely behind with you. Is it not more for your glory to receive it from Christ's hand, than to require it at mine? One drop of his blood is more worth than all my polluted blood. O how satisfying a thing is this to the conscience of a poor sinner that is objecting the multitude, aggravations, and amazing circumstances, of his sins, against the possibility of their being pardoned! Can such a sinner as I be forgiven? Yes, if you believe in Jesus, you may; for so God will lose nothing in pardoning the greatest transgressors: "Let Israel hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption," Psalms 130:7. that is a large stock of merit lying by him in the blood of Christ, to pay him for all that you have done against him.

INFERENCE 5. Lastly, If Christ has made such a full satisfaction as you have heard, How much is it the concernment of every soul to abandon all thoughts of satisfying God for his own sins and retake himself to the blood of Christ, the ransomer, by faith, that in that blood they may be pardoned? It would grieve one's heart to see how many poor creatures are drudging and tugging

at a task of repentance, and revenge upon themselves, and reformation, and obedience, to satisfy God for what they have done against him: And alas! it cannot be, they do but lose their labor, could they swelter their very hearts out, weep until they can weep no more, cry until their throats be parched, alas, they can never recompense God for one vain thought; for such is the severity of the law, that when it is once offended, it will never be made amends again by all that we can do: it will not discharge the sinner, for all the sorrow in the world. Indeed, if a man be in Christ, sorrow for sin is something, and renewed obedience is something; God looks upon them favorably, and accepts them graciously in Christ: but out of him they signify no more than the entreaties and cries of a condemned malefactor, to reverse the legal sentence of the judge. You may toil all the days of your life, and at night go to bed without a candle. To that sense that scripture sounds, Isaiah 1:11. "Behold, all you that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that you have kindled: This shall you have of mine hand, you shall lie down in sorrow." By fire, and the light of it, some understand the sparkling pleasures of this life, and the sensitive joys of the creatures: but generally it is taken for our own natural righteousness, and all acts of duties, in order to our justification by them before God. And so it stands opposed to that faith of recumbence spoken of in the verse before. By their compassing themselves about with these sparks, understand their dependence on these their duties, and glorying in them. But see the fatal issue, You shall lie down in sorrow, that shall be your recompense from the hand of the Lord that is all the thanks and reward you must expect from him, for slighting Christ's, and preferring your own righteousness before his. Reader, be convinced, that one act of faith in the Lord Jesus pleases God more than all the obedience, repentance, and strivings to obey the law, through your whole life, can do. And thus you have the first special fruits of Christ's priesthood, in the full satisfaction of God, for all the sins of believers!

S. Christ the Desire of All Nations

Christ the Desire of All Nations by John Flavel "And the desire of all nations shall come." Haggai 2:7.

Haggai 1:1-15 is mainly spent in reproving the negligence of the Jews, who, being discouraged from time to time, had delayed the rebuilding of the temple. In the meantime they employed their care and cost in building and adorning their own houses: but, at last, being persuaded to set about the work, they met with this discouragement, that such was the poverty of the present time, that the second structure would not match the magnificence and splendor of the first. In Solomon's days the nation was wealthy, but now it was drained; so that there would be no comparison between the second and the first. To this great discouragement the prophet applies this relief: that whatsoever should be lacking in external pomp and glory, should be more than recompensed by the presence of Jesus Christ in this second temple. For Christ, "the desire of all nations," he says, shall come into it. Which, by the way, may give us this useful note: The presence of Jesus Christ gives a more real and excellent glory to the places of his worship, than any external beauty or outward ornaments whatsoever can bestow upon them. Our eyes, like the disciples, are apt to be dazzled with the sparkling stones of the temple, and, in the meantime, to neglect and overlook that which gives it the greatest honour and beauty. But to return. In these words we have both the description of Christ, and an arrow pointing at the time of his incarnation: he is called "the desire of all nations," and the time of his coming in the flesh is clearly implied to be during the time of the second temple. Where, by the way, we find a valid reason to stand amazed at and bemoan the blindness of the Jews. They admit the truth of this prophecy and are not able to deny the destruction of the second temple, many hundred years past, yet will not be brought to acknowledge the incarnation of the true Messiah. But to the point. Christ, called the desire of all nations, was to come into the world in the time of the second temple, Malachi 3:12, after grievous shocks and shakings of the world. They were to make way for his coming; for so our prophet here speaks, "I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come," to which the apostle alludes, in Hebrews 12:26, applying this prophecy to Jesus Christ. Here Christ is called the "desire of all nations," putting the act of desiring in the place of the thing desired: as in Ezekiel 24:16. "The desire of your eyes," that is to say, the desirable wife of your bosom; so here, the "desire of all nations," is Christ, the object of the desires of God's elect in all nations of the world. He is a Saviour infinitely desirable in himself, and actually desired by all the people of God, dispersed among all races, tongues, and nations of the world. Therefore note,

Doctrine: That the desires of God's elect in all kingdoms, and among all people of the earth, are, and shall be drawn out after and fixed upon, the Lord Jesus Christ. The merciful God beholding the universal ruins of the world by sin, has provided a universal remedy for his own elect, in every part of the earth. Christ is not restricted to any one kingdom or nation in the world; but intended to be God's salvation to the ends of the earth; and accordingly speaks the apostle, Colossians 3:11 "There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all." In the explanation of this point two things must be enquired into:

1. Why Christ is called the desire of all nations.

2. Upon what account the people of God, in all nations, desire him.

Let us begin with an examination of why he is called the desire of all nations, and what that phrase may mean. There are several things that are supposed, or included in it.

First, God the Father has appointed him as a common remedy for the sins and miseries of his people, in all parts and quarters of the world. So in the covenant of redemption, between the Father and the Son, the Lord expresses himself, Isaiah 49:6 "It is too small a thing that you should be my Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the gentiles, that you should be my salvation to the ends of the earth." This is similar to the prophecy of Isaiah 52:15 "So shall He sprinkle many nations." If God had not appointed him for this, he could not be desired by all nations.

And, indeed, the grace of God admirably shines forth in the freeness of it, that even the most barbarous nations are not excluded from the benefits of redemption by Christ. This is what the apostle delights, that Christ should be preached to the Gentiles, 1 Timothy 3:16. They were a people that seemed to be lost in the darkness of idolatry; yet even for them Christ was given by the Father, "Ask of me, and I will give you the nations for your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for your possession." (Psalms 2:8)

Secondly, Christ is called the desire of all nations, plainly because of the sufficiency that is in him to supply the needs of the whole world. As the sun in the heavens suffices all nations for light and influence, so does the Sun of righteousness suffice for the redemption, justification, sanctification and salvation of the people of God all over the world; Isaiah 45:22, "Look to me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth."

Thirdly, it implies the reality that is in godliness. It shows you that religion is no imagination, as the atheistic world would try to persuade us; and this evidently appears in the uniform effects of it upon the hearts of all men, in all nations of the world, that are truly religious. All their desires, like so many needles touched by one and the same loadstone, move towards Jesus Christ, and all meet together in one and the same blessed object, Christ. Were it possible for the people of God to come out of all nations, races and languages in the world, into one place, and there confer and compare the desires and workings of their hearts, though they never saw each other’s faces, nor heard of each other’s names, yet, as face corresponds to face in a glass, so would their desires after Christ correspond to each other. All hearts work after him in the same manner; what one says, all say: These are my troubles and burdens, these my wants and miseries; the same things are my desires and fears: one and the same Spirit works in all believers throughout the world. This could never be if religion were but an imagination, as some call it; or a fraud or conspiracy, as others call it: hallucinations are as various as faces; and conspiracies presuppose mutual acquaintance and conference.

Fourthly, Christ, the desire of all nations, implies the vast extent his kingdom has, and shall have in the world; out of every nation under heaven some shall be brought to Christ, and to heaven by him. Though the number of God’s elect, compared with the multitudes of the ungodly in all nations, is but a remnant, a little flock; and, in that comparative sense, there are few that shall be saved; yet considered absolutely, and in themselves, they are a vast number, which no man can number,

Matthew 8:11 "Many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." It is in order to accomplish this that the gospel, like the sun in the heavens, travels around the world. It arose in the east, and takes its course towards the western world; rising, by degrees, upon the remote, idolatrous nations of the earth: out of all which a number is to be saved. Even "Ethiopia will quickly stretch out her hands to God," Psalms 68:31. This consideration should move us to pray earnestly for the poor Heathens, who yet sit in darkness and the shadow of death. There is yet hope for them.

Fifthly, it holds forth this, that when God opens the eyes of men to see their sin and danger by it, nothing but Christ can give them satisfaction: it is not the amenity, fertility, riches and pleasures, the inhabitants of any kingdom of the world do enjoy, that can satisfy the desires of their souls: when once God touches their hearts with the sense of sin and misery, then Christ, and no one but Christ, is desirable and necessary in the eyes of such persons. Many kingdoms of the world abound with riches and pleasures; the providence of God has carved liberal portions of the good things of this life to many of them, and scarcely left any thing lacking to their desires that the world can afford. Yet all this can give no satisfaction without Jesus Christ, the desire of all nations, the one thing necessary, when once they come to see the necessity and excellency of him. When this happens, give them whatever you wish of the world, nevertheless they must have Christ, the desire of their souls.

Thus we see upon what grounds and reasons Christ is called the desire of all nations.

Objection. But there remains one great objection against this truth, which must be resolved, namely: if Christ is the desire of all nations, how is it possible that Jesus Christ finds no reception in so many nations of the world? For among many peoples Christianity is hissed at, and Christians are not tolerated to live among them? They see no "beauty in him that they should desire him." (Isaiah 53:2)

Answer. First, we must remember the nations of the world have their times and seasons of conversion; those that once embraced Christ, have now lost him, and idols are now set up in the places where he once was sweetly worshipped. The sun of the gospel is gone down upon them, and now shines in another Hemisphere; and so the nations of the world are to have their distinct days and seasons of illumination. The gospel, like the sea, gains in one place what it loses in another; and in the times and seasons appointed by the Father, they come successively to be enlightened in the knowledge of Christ; and then shall the promise be fulfilled, Isaiah 49:7 "Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, their Holy One, to him whom man despises, to him whom the nation abhors, to the Servant of rulers: 'Kings shall see and arise, Princes also shall worship, because of the Lord who is faithful.'"

Secondly, let it also be remembered, that although Christ may be rejected by the rulers and body of many nations; yet he is the desire of all the elect of God dispersed and scattered among those nations. In the next place, we are to enquire upon what account Christ becomes the desire of all nations, i.e. of all those in all the nations of the world, that belong, to the election of grace. And the true ground and reason thereof is, because only Christ has in himself that which relieves their emptiness, and answers to all their need. As,

First, they are all, by nature, under condemnation, Romans 5:16, Romans 5:18. under the curse of the law; against which nothing is found in heaven or earth able to relieve their consciences but the blood of sprinkling, the pure and perfect righteousness of the Lord Jesus. And hence it is that Christ becomes so desirable in the eyes of poor sinners, all the world over. If any thing in ordinary nature could be found to pacify and purge the consciences of men from guilt and fear, Christ would never be desirable in their eyes; but finding no other remedy but the blood of Jesus, to him, therefore, shall all the ends of the earth look for righteousness, and for peace.

Secondly, all nations of the world are polluted with the filth of sin, both in nature and practice, which they shall see, and bitterly bewail, when the light of the gospel shall shine among them; and the same light, by which this shall be discovered, will also reveal that the only remedy of this evil lies in the spirit of Christ, the only fountain opened to all nations for sanctification and cleansing. This will make the Lord Jesus incomparably desirable in their eyes. O how welcome will he be who comes to them, not by blood only, but by water also, 1 John 5:6.

Thirdly, when the light of the gospel shall shine upon the nations, they shall then see that because of the guilt and filth of sin, they are all barred out of heaven. Those doors are chained up against them, and that no one but Christ can open an entrance for them into that kingdom of God. For, "no one comes to the Father except through me," John 14:6. "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved," Acts 4:12. Hence the hearts of sinners shall pant after him, as a hart pants for the water brooks. And thus you see upon what grounds Christ becomes the desire of all nations. Five applications flow from this point:

1. For information.

2. For examination.

3. For consolation.

4. For exhortation.

5. For direction.

First Application: for information.

1. Is Christ the desire of all nations? How vile a sin is it then for any nation, upon whom the light of the gospel has shined, to reject Jesus Christ? They would say as those in Job 21:14, "Depart from us, For we do not desire the knowledge of your ways." They would thrust away his worship, government, and servants; and in effect say, as it is Luke 19:14, "We will not have this man to reign over us." Thus did the Jews, Acts 13:46. They put away Christ from among themselves, and thereby judged themselves unworthy of eternal life. This is at once a fearful sin, and a dreadful warning. How soon did vengeance overtake them like the overthrow of Sodom? O, let it be for a warning to all nations to the end of the world. He would have gathered the children of Israel under his wings as a hen does her brood, even when the Roman Eagle was hovering over them, but they would not, therefore their houses were left to them desolate, their city and temple made a heap.

2. If Jesus Christ be the desire of all nations, how incomparably happy then must that nation be, that enjoys Christ in the power and purity of his gospel-ordinances! If Christ under a veil made

Canaan a glorious land, [as it is called in] Daniel 11:41, what a glorious place must that nation be that beholds him with open face in the bright sun-shine of the gospel! O England, know your happiness and the day of your visitation! What others desire, you enjoy: provoke not the Lord Jesus to depart from you by corrupting his worship, longing after idolatry, abusing his messengers, and oppressing his people, lest his spirit depart from you.

Second Application: for examination.

If Christ is the desire of all nations, examine whether he is the desire of your souls in particular; otherwise you shall have no benefit by him. Are your desires after Christ true spiritual desires? Reflect, I beseech you, upon the attitudes and tempers of your heart. Can you say of your desires after Christ, as Peter did of his love to Christ? "Lord, you know all things, you know that I desire you." Examine your desires as to their sincerity by the following tests:

1. Are they passionate and earnest? Does Christ have the supreme place in your desires? Do you esteem all things to be but dross and dung in comparison to the excellencies of Jesus Christ your Lord? (Php 3:8) Is he to you as the refuge city to the man slayer? (Hebrews 6:18-19) As a spring of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land? (Isaiah 31:2) Such passionate desires are true desires.

2. Are your desires after Christ universal; that is to say, is every thing in Christ desirable in your eyes? The hypocrite, like the harlot, is for a divided Christ; they would be called by his name, but depend upon themselves, Isaiah 4:1. If his holiness and government, his cross and sufferings are desirable for his own sake: such universal desires are right desires.

3. Are your desires after Christ industrious desires, using all the means of accomplishing what you desire? You say you desire Christ, but what will you do to obtain your desires? If you serve him carefully and incessantly in all the ways of duty; if you will strive in prayer, labour to believe, cut off right hands, and pluck out right eyes, in other words- be content to part with the most profitable and pleasant ways of sin that you may enjoy Christ, the desire of your souls; then your desires are right desires.

4. Are your desires after Christ permanent desires, or only a sudden motion or impulse which later fades away? If your desires after Christ abide upon your hearts, if your longings be after him at all times, though not in the same height and degree, then your desires are right desires. Christ always dwells in the desires of his people; they can feel him in their desires, when they cannot discern him in their love or delight.

5. Will your desires after Christ admit no satisfaction, nor find rest anywhere but in the enjoyment of Christ? Then your desires are right desires. The soul that desires Christ can never be at rest till it comes home to Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:2, Php 1:23. The devil can satisfy others with the riches and pleasure of this world, as children are quieted with rattles; but if nothing but Christ can rest and accomplish your desires, surely such restless desires are right desires.

6. Do your desires after Christ spring from a deep sense of your need and want of Christ? Has conviction opened your eyes to see your misery, to feel your burdens, and to make you aware that your remedy lies only in the Lord Jesus? Then your desires are right desires. Bread and water are made necessary and desirable by hunger and thirst; by these things examine the truth of your

desires after Christ.

Third Application: for consolation. Do you indeed, upon serious examination, find such desires after Christ as were described above? O, bless the Lord for that day when Christ, the desire of all nations, became the desire of your souls; and for your comfort, know that you are happy and blessed souls at present.

1. You are blessed in this, that your eyes have been opened to see both the need and worth of Christ. Had not Christ applied his precious eye-salve to the eyes of your mind, you could never have desired him; you would have said with them in Isaiah 53:2, "He has no form or comeliness; and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." Or, as they asked the spouse, Song of Solomon 5:9 "What is your beloved more than another beloved?" O, blessed souls, enlightened of the Lord, to see those things that are hid from them that perish!

2. You are blessed in this, that your desires after Christ are a sure evidence that the desire of Christ is towards you: had he not first desired you, you could never have desired him. We may say of desires, as it is said of love, we desire him because he first desired us: your desires after Christ are inflamed from the desires of Christ after you.

3. You are blessed in this, that your desires shall surely be satisfied, Matthew 5:6, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Proverbs 10:24, "The desires of the righteous shall be granted." God never raised such desires as these in the souls of his people, to be a torment to them for ever.

4. You are blessed in this, that God has guided your desires to make the best choice that ever was made in the world, while the desires of others are hunting after riches, pleasure, and honour in the world; toiling themselves like children in pursuit of a painted butterfly, which when they have caught, only discolours their fingers. God, meanwhile, directed your desires to Christ, the most excellent object in heaven or earth. Any good will satisfy some men; O, happy soul, if none but Christ can satisfy you! (Psalms 4:6)

5. You are blessed in this, that there is a work of grace certainly wrought upon your soul; and these very desires after Christ are a part thereof.

6. You are blessed in this, that these desires after Christ keep your soul active and working after him continually in the ways of duty, Psalms 27:4 "One thing I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple." Desire will be a continual spring to diligence and industry in the ways of duty; the desire of the end awakens the use of means, Proverbs 16:26. Others may fall asleep and cast off duty, but it will be hard for you to do so, whose souls burn with desire after Christ.

7 You are blessed in this, that your desires after Christ will make death much the sweeter and easier to you, Php 1:23 "For I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." When a Christian was once asked, whether he was willing to die, he answered in return, "Let him be unwilling to die, who is unwilling to go to Christ." And much like it, was the reply of another, Vivere renuo, ut Christo vivam: I refuse this life, to live with Christ.

Fourth Application: for exhortation. In the fourth place, let me exhort and persuade all to make Jesus Christ the desire and choice of their souls. Here I present the extent and design of the gospel: O that I could effectively press home this exhortation upon your hearts; let me offer some moving considerations to you, and may the Lord apply them to your hearts.

1. Every creature naturally desires its own preservation; do not you desire the preservation of your precious and immortal soul? If you do, then make Christ your desire and choice, without whom they can never be preserved, Jude 1:1

2. Do not your souls earnestly desire the bodies they live in? How tender are they over them, how careful to provide for them? (Though they pay an expensive rent for those tenements they live in.) Is not union with Christ infinitely more desirable than the union of soul and body? O covet union with him! Then shall your souls be happy, when your bodies drop off from them at death, 2 Corinthians 5:1-2. Indeed, soul and body shall be happy in him, and with him forevermore.

3. How do the men of this world devote themselves to the enjoyments of it? They pant after the dust of the earth; they rise early, sit up late, eat the bread of carefulness; and all this for vanity indeed-- Shall a worldling do more for earth, than you for heaven? Shall the creature be so earnestly desired, and Christ neglected?

4. What do all your desires in this world benefit you, if you go christless? Suppose you had the desire of your hearts in these things, how long should you have comfort in them, if you miss Christ?

5. Does Christ desire you, who have nothing lovely or desirable in you? And have you no desires after Christ, the most lovely and desirable one in both worlds? "His desires are towards you," Proverbs 8:31. O make him the desire and choice of your souls.

6. How absolutely necessary is Jesus Christ to your souls? Bread and water, breath and life, are not so necessary as Christ is; "One thing is necessary," Luke 10:42, and that one thing is Christ. If you miss your desires in other things, you may yet be happy; but if you miss Christ you are undone for ever.

7. How suitable a good is Christ to your souls! He has within himself whatsoever they want, 1 Corinthians 1:30. Set your hearts where you will, nothing will be found to match and suit them, as Christ does.

8. How great are the benefits that will come to you by Jesus Christ! In him you will have a rich inheritance settled upon you: all things shall be yours, when you are Christ's, 1 Corinthians 3:22. And is not such a Christ worth desiring?

9. All your well grounded hopes of glory are built upon your union with Christ, 1 Corinthians 1:21. If you miss Christ, you must die without hope. Will not this draw your desires to him?

10. Suppose you were at the judgment seat of God, where you must shortly stand, and saw the terrors of the Lord in that day; the sheep divided from the goats; the sentences of absolution and condemnation passed by the great and awful Judge upon the righteous and wicked: would not Christ then be desirable in your eyes? As ever you expect to stand with comfort at that bar, let Christ be the desire and choice of your souls now.

Fifth Application: for direction. Do these, or any other considerations, put you upon this enquiry-how shall I get my desires kindled and enflamed towards Christ? Alas! my heart is cold and dead, not a serious desire is stirring in it after Christ. To you I shall offer the following directions:

Direction 1. Redeem some time every day for meditation; get out of the noise and clamour of the world, Psalms 4:4, and seriously consider how the present state of your soul stands, and how it is likely to go with you in eternity: here all sound conversion begins, Psalms 69:29.

Direction 2. Consider seriously that lamentable state in which you came into the world. You are a child of wrath by nature, under the curse and condemnation of the law: so that either your state must be changed, or you will inevitably be damned, John 3:3.

Direction 3. Consider the way and course you have taken since you came into the world, proceeding from iniquity to iniquity. What command of God have you not violated a thousand times over? What sin is committed in the world, that you are not one way or other guilty of before God? How many secret sins are upon your score, unknown to the most intimate friend you have in the world? Either this guilt must be separated from your souls, or your souls from God for all eternity.

Direction 4. Think upon the severe wrath of God reserved for every sin; "The wages of sin is death," Romans 6:23. And how intolerable the fulness of that wrath must be when a few drops sprinkled upon the conscience in this world are so insupportable, that has made some to choose suicide rather than life. Yet this wrath must abide for ever upon you, if you do not get an interest in Jesus Christ, John 3:36.

Direction 5. Ponder well the happy state and condition they are in who have obtained pardon and peace by Jesus Christ, Psalms 32:1-2. And seeing the grace of God is free, and you are set under the means of it; why may not you be as likely to find it as others?

Direction 6. Seriously consider the great uncertainty of your time and the preciousness of the opportunities of salvation, never to be recovered when they are once past, John 9:4. Let this arouse you to lay hold upon those golden seasons while they are yet with you; that you may not bewail your folly and madness, when they are out of your reach.

Direction 7. Associate yourselves with serious Christians; get into their acquaintance, and beg their assistance; beseech them to pray for you; and see that you rest not here, but be frequently upon your knees, begging of the Lord a new heart and a new state. In conclusion of the whole, let me beseech and beg all the people of God, as upon my knees, to take heed, and beware, lest by the carelessness and scandal of their lives they quench the weak desires beginning to kindle in the hearts of others. You know what the law of God demands for striking a woman with child, so that her fruit go from her, Exodus 21:22-23. O shed not soul-blood, by stifling the hopeful desires of any after Christ.

Blessed be God for Jesus Christ, the desire of all nations.

Chapter 105

S. Christ's Advent to Judgment, being the

Christ’s Advent to Judgment, being the fourth and last Degree of his Exaltation, illustrated and improved

"And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead." Acts 10:42

Christ enthroned in the highest glory in heaven is there to abide for the effectual and successful government, both of the world, and of the church, until the number given him by the Father, before the world was, and purchased by the blood of the cross, be gathered in; and then comes the judgement of the great day, which will perfectly separate the precious from the vile; put the redeemed in full possession of the purchase of his blood in heaven, and "then shall he deliver up the kingdom to his Father, that God may be all in all." This last act of Christ, namely, his judging the world, is a special part of his exaltation and honor bestowed upon him, "because he is the Son of man,", John 5:27. In that day shall his glory, as King, and absolute Lord, shine forth as the sun when it shines in its strength. O what an honor will it be to the man Christ Jesus, who stood arraigned and condemned at Pilate’s bar, to sit upon the great white throne, surrounded with thousands, and ten thousands of angels! Men and devils waiting upon him to receive the final sentence from his mouth. In this will the glory of Christ’s sovereignty and power be eminently and illustriously displayed before angels and men. And this is that great truth which he commanded to be preached and testified to the people, namely, that is it "he which is ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead".

Wherein we have four things to be distinctly considered, namely, The subject, object, fountain and truth of the supreme judiciary authority.

First, The subject of it, Christ, it is he that is ordained to be Judge. Judgement is the act of the whole undivided Trinity. The Father and Spirit judge, as well as Christ, in respect of authority and consent, but is it’s the act of Christ, in respect of visible management and execution, and so it is his per proprietatem by propriety, the Father having conferred it upon him, as the Son of man; but not his per appropriationem, so as to exclude either the Father or Spirit from their authority, for they judge by him.

Secondly, The object of Christ’s judiciary authority. The quick and dead, that is all that at his coming do live, or ever had lived. This is the Object personal. All men and women that ever sprang from Adam: all the apostate spirits that fell from heaven, and are reserved in chains to the judgement of this great day. And in this personal object, is included the real object, namely, All the actions, both secret and open, that ever they did, 2 Corinthians 5:5, Romans 2:16.

Thirdly, The Fountain of this delegated authority, which is God the Father; for he has ordained Christ to be the Judge. "He is appointed", as the Son of man, to this honorable office and work. The word notes, a firm establishment of Christ in that office by his Father. He is now, by right of redemption, Lord and King. He enacts laws for government, then he comes to judge of men’s

obedience and disobedience to his laws.

Fourthly, and lastly, Here is the infallible truth, or unquestionable certainty of all this: "He gave us commandment to preach and testify it to the people." We had it in charge from his own mouth; and dare not hide it. Hence the point of doctrine is plainly this, DOCTRINE. That our Lord Jesus Christ is ordained by God the Father to be the Judge of living and dead. This truth stands upon the firm basis of scripture authority. You have it from his own hand, John 5:22. "The Father judges no man, but has committed all judgement to the Son," namely, in the sense before given. And so the apostle, Acts 17:31. "He has appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by the man whom he has ordained; whereof he has given assurance," etc. And again, Romans 2:16. "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." Three things will be opened here. First, The certainty of a judgement to come. Secondly, The quality and nature of it. Thirdly, That it is a special part of Christ's exaltation to be appointed Judge in this day.

First, The certainty of a judgement. This is a truth of firmer establishment than heaven and earth. It is no devised fable, no cunning artifice to keep the world in awe! but a thing as confessedly true as it is awfully solemn. For,

First, As the scriptures aforementioned (with these, 2 Corinthians 5:10. Ecclesiastes 12:14. Matthew 12:36. and many other, the true and faithful sayings of God) do very plainly reveal it; so the justice and righteousness of God require it should be so. For the Judge of all the earth will do right, Genesis 18:25. Now righteousness itself requires that a difference be made between the righteous and the wicked: "Say you to the righteous it shall be well with him; woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him," Isaiah 3:10. But no such distinction is generally and fully made between one another in this world. Yes, rather the wicked prosper, and the righteous perish, there is a just man that perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness, Ecclesiastes 7:15. Yes, not only in, but for his righteousness, as it may be fairly rendered.

Here the "wicked devours the man that is more righteous than himself," Habakkuk 1:13. As the fishes of the sea, where the great and strong swallow up the small and weak. And even in courts of judicature, where the innocent might expect relief; there they often meet with the worst oppressions. How fairly and justly therefore does the wise man infer a judgement to come from this considerations, Ecclesiastes 3:16-17, "I saw under the sun the place of judgement that wickedness was there, and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there; I said in my heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked; for there is a time there for every purpose, and for every work," q. d. the judgement to come, is the only relief and support left to poor innocents, to quiet and comfort themselves withal. To the same purpose also is that, James 5:6-7. "You have condemned and killed the just; and he does not resist you; be patient, therefore, brethren unto the coming of the Lord." It is confessed, that sometimes, God vindicates his providence against the Atheism of the world, by particular strokes upon the wicked; but this is but rare. And as the Father well observes, "if no sin were punished here, no providence would be believed; again, if every sin were openly punished here, no judgement hereafter could be expected." Besides,

Secondly, Man is a reasonable being, and every reasonable being, is an accountable being. He is a subject capable of moral government. His actions have a relation to a law. He is swayed by rewards and punishments. He acts by counsel, and therefore of his actions, he must expect to give

an account, as it is Romans 14:12. "So then everyone of us, shall give an account of himself to God." Especially if we add, that all the gifts of body, mind, estate, time, etc. are so many talents, concredited and betrusted to him by God, and everyone of us has one talent at least; therefore a time to render an account for all these talents will come, Matthew 25:14-15. We are but stewards, and stewards must give an account, in order whereto, there must be a great audit day.

Thirdly, And what need we seek evidence of this truth, further than our own conscience? Lo, it is a truth engraved legibly upon every man's own bosom. Everyone has a kind of little tribunal, or privy sessions in his own conscience, which both accuses and excuses for good and evil, which it could never do, were there not a future judgement, of which it is now conscious to itself. In this court, records are now kept of all we do, even of our secret actions and thoughts, which never yet took air; but of no judgement, what need of records? Nor let any imagine, that this may be but the fruit of education and discourse. We have heard of such things, and so are scared by them. For if so, how comes it to obtain so universally? Who could be the author of such a common deception?

Reader, bethink yourself a little; if you have a mind (as one says) to impose a lie upon all the world, what course Would you take? How Would you lay the design? Or why do you in this case imagine what you know not how to imagine? It is evident that the very consciences of the Heathens, have these offices of accusing and excusing, Romans 2:15. And it is hard to imagine, (as an ingenious author speaks) that a general cheat should bow down the backs of all mankind, and induce so many doubts and fears, and troubles, among them; and give an interruption to the whole course of their corrupt living, and that there should be no account of it? And therefore it is undoubted that such a day will come. But I shall rather chose, in the

Second Place, to open the nature and manner of this judgement, than to spend more time in proving a truth, that cannot be denied without violence offered to a man's own light. If then the question be, What manner of judgement will this be? I answer,

First, It will be a great and awful day. It is called the "judgement of the great day," Jude 1:6. Three things will make it so, the manner of Christ's coming; the work he comes about; and the issues, or events of that work. The manner of Christ's coming, will be awfully solemn, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air," etc. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. Here Christ breaks out of heaven, with the shouts of angels, "en keleusmai", it signifies such a shout, says one, as is to be heard among seamen, when after a long and dangerous voyage, they first descry land, crying aloud, with united voices, a shore, a shore. As the poet describes the Italians, when they saw their native country, "lifting up their voices, and making the heavens ring again with Italy, Italy: or as armies shout when the signal of battle is given." Above all which (as some expound it) shall the voice of the Archangel be distinctly heard. And after this shout, the trumpet of God shall sound. By this tremendous blast, sinners will be affrighted out of their graves; but to the saints, it will carry no more terror, then the roaring of cannons, when armies of friends approach a besieged city, for the relief of them that are within it. The dead being raised, they shall be gathered before the great throne on which Christ shall sit in his glory; and there be divided exactly to the right and left hand of Christ, by the angels. Here will be the greatest assembly that ever met. Where Adam may see his numerous offspring, even as the sand upon the sea shore, which no

man can number. And never was there such a perfect division made, (how many divisions soever have been in the world) none was ever like it. The saints in this great Oecumenical assize (as the author stiles it) shall meet the Lord in the air, and there the Judge shall sit upon the throne, and all the saints shall be placed upon bright clouds, as on seats or scaffolds round about him; the wicked remaining below upon the earth, there to receive their final doom and sentence.

These preparatives will make it awful; and much more will the work itself, that Christ comes about, make it so. For it is "to judge the secrets of men," Romans 2:16. To sever the tares from the wheat; to make every man's whites and blacks appear; and according as they are found in that trial, to be sentenced to their everlasting and immutable states. O what a solemn thing is this! And no less will the execution of the sentence on both parts make it a great and solemn day. The heart of man cannot conceive what impressions the voice of Christ, from the throne, will make, both upon believers, and unbelievers.

Imagine Christ upon his glorious throne, surrounded with myriads and legions of angels, his royal guard; a poor unbeliever trembling at the bar; an exact scrutiny made into his heart and life; the dreadful sentence given; and then a cry; and then his delivering him over to the executioners of eternal vengeance, never, never, to see a glimpse of hope or mercy any more.

Imagine Christ, like the general of an army, mentioning with honor, on the head of all the hosts of heaven and earth, all the services that the saints have done for him in this world: then sententially justifying them by open proclamation; then mounting with him to the third heavens, and entering the gates of that city of God, in that noble train of saints and angels intermixed; and so forever to be with the Lord. O what a great day must this be!

Secondly, As it will be awful and solemn judgement, so it will be a critical and exact judgement, every man will be weighed to his ounces and drachms. The name of the judge is "Kardiognoses", the Searcher of hearts. The judge has eyes as flames of fire, which pierce to the dividing of the heart and reins. It is said, Matthew 12:36. That men shall then "give an account of every idle word that they shall speak." It is a day that will perfectly fan the world. No hypocrite can escape; Justice holds the balances in an even hand: Christ will go to work so exactly, that some divines of good note think, the day of judgement will last as long as this day of the gospel's administration has lasted, or shall last.

Thirdly, it will be an universal judgement, 2 Corinthians 5:10. "We must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ." And Romans 14:12. "Everyone of us shall give an account of himself to God." Those that were under the law, "and those that having no law, were a law to themselves," Romans 2:12. Those that had many talents, and he that had but one talent, must appear at this bar; those that were carried from the cradle to the grave, with him that stooped forage: the rich, and poor; the father, and the child; the master, and servant; the believer, and the unbeliever, must stand forth in that day. "I saw the dead, both small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened," Revelation 20:12.

Fourthly, It will be a judgement full of convictive clearness. All things will be so sifted to bran, (as we say), that the sentence of Christ, both on saints and sinners, shall be applauded. "Righteous are you, O Lord, because you have judged thus." His judgements will be as the light that goes forth. So that those poor sinners whom he will condemn, shall be first "autokatakritoi", self

condemned. Their own consciences shall be forced to confess, that there is not one drop of injustice in all that sea of wrath, into which they are to be cast.

Fifthly, and lastly, It will be a supreme and final judgement, from which lies no appeal. For it is the sentence of the highest, and only Lord. "For as the ultimate resolution of faith is into the word and truth of God, so the ultimate resolution of justice is into the judgement of God." This judgement is supreme and imperial. For Christ is the only Potentate, 1 Timothy 6:5. and therefore the sentence once passed, its execution is infallible. And so you find it in that judicial process, Matthew 25:1-46 ult. just after the sentence is pronounced by Christ, it is immediately added, "these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." This is the judgement of the great day.

Thirdly, In the last place, I must inform you, that God, in ordaining Christ to be the Judge, has very highly exalted him. This will be very much for his honor: for in this, Christ's royal dignity will be illustrated, beyond whatever it was since he took our nature, until that day; now he will appear in his glory. For,

First, This act of judging pertaining properly to the kingly office, Christ will be glorified as much in his kingly office, as he has been in either of the other. We find but some few glimpses of the kingly office, breaking forth in this world: as, his riding with Hosannas into Jerusalem; his whipping the buyers and sellers out of the temple, his title upon the cross, etc. But these were but faint beams: Now that office will shine in its glory, as the sun in the midst of the heavens. For what were the Hosannas of little children, in the streets of Jerusalem, to the shouts and acclamations of thousands of angels, and ten thousands of saints? what was his whipping the profane out of the temple, to his turning the wicked into hell, and sending his angels to gather out of his kingdom everything that offendeth? what was a title written be his judge, and fixed on the ignominious tree, to the name that shall now be seen on his vesture, and on his thigh, King of kings, and Lord of lords.

Secondly, This will be a display of his glory in the highest, before the whole world. For they will be present at once, and together, all the inhabitants of heaven, and earth, and hell; angels must be there to attend and minister; those glittering courtiers of heaven must attend his person; so that heaven will, for a time, be left empty of all its inhabitants: men and devils must be there to be judged: and before this great assembly, will Christ appear in royal Majesty. He will, (to allude to that text, Isaiah 24:23.) reign before his ancients gloriously. "For he will come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe," 2 Thessalonians 1:10. The inhabitants of the three regions, heaven, earth and hell, shall then rejoice, or tremble before him, and acknowledge him to be supreme Lord and King.

Thirdly, This will roll away forever the reproach of his death: for Pilate and the High-priest, that judged him at their bars, shall now stand quivering at his bar; with Herod that set him at nothing, the soldiers and officers that traduced and abused him: there they that reviled him on the cross, wagging their heads, will stand, with trembling knees, before his throne. For "every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him," Revelation 1:7. O what a contemptible person was Christ in their eyes once? As a worm, and no man. Every vile wretch could freely tread and trample on him; but now such will be the brightness of his glory, such the awful beams of majesty, that the wicked shall not stand in his presence, or "be able to rise up," (as that word imports, Psalms 1:5.) "before

him." So that this will be a full and universal vindication of the death of Christ, from all that contempt and ignominy that had attended it. We next improve it.

INFERENCE 1. Is Jesus Christ ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead? Great then is the security believers have, that they shall not be condemned in that day. Who shall condemn, when Christ is Judge? If believers be condemned in judgement, Christ must give sentence against them; yes, and they must condemn themselves too. I say, Christ must give sentence, for that is the proper and peculiar office of Christ. And, to be sure, no sentence of condemnation shall in that day be given by Christ against them. For,

First, He died to save them, and he will never cross and overthrow the designs and ends of his own death. That cannot be imagined. Nay,

Secondly, They have been cleared and absolved already. And being once absolved by divine sentence, they can never be condemned afterward. For one divine sentence cannot cross and rescind another. He justified them here in this world by faith: Declared in his word, (which shall then be the rule of judgement, Romans 2:16.) that "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ," Romans 8:1. And surely he will not retract his own word, and give a sentence quite cross to his own statute book, out of which he has told us that they shall be judged. Moreover,

Thirdly, The far greatest part of them will have passed their particular judgement, long, before that day, and being therein acquitted by God the Judge of all; and admitted into heaven upon the score and account of their justification; it cannot be imagined that Christ should now condemn them with the world. Nay,

Fourthly, He that judged them is their head, husband, friend, and brother: who loved them, and gave himself for them. O then, with what confidence may they go, even unto his throne? and say, with Job, "Though he try us as fire, we know we shall come forth as gold." We know that we shall be justified. Especially, if we add, that they themselves shall be the assessors with Christ in that day. And, (as a judicious author pertinently observes,) not a sentence shall pass without their votes. "So as that they may by faith not only look upon themselves as already in heaven, sitting with Christ, as a common person, in their right; but they may look upon themselves as judges already. So that if any sin should arise to accuse or condemn, yet it must be with their votes. And what greater security can they have than this, that they must condemn themselves, if they be condemned." No, it is not the business of that day to condemn, but to absolve and pronounce them pardoned and justified, according to the sentence of Acts 3:19. and Matthew 12:32. So that its must needs be a time of refreshing, (as all scriptures call it,) to the people of God. You that now believe, shall not come into condemnation, John 5:24. You that now judge yourselves, shall not be condemned with the world, 1 Corinthians 11:31-32.

INFERENCE. 2. If Christ be ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead, how miserable a case will Christless souls be in at that day! They that are Christless now, will be speechless, helpless, and hopeless then. How will their hands hang down, and their knees knock together! O what pale faces, quivering lips, fainting hearts, and roaring consciences will be among them in that day! O dreadful day! O astonishing sight! to see the world in a dreadful conflagration, the elements netting, the stars falling, the earth trembling, the judgement set, the prisoners brought forth; O who shall endure this day, but those that by union with Christ are secured against the danger and

dread of it! Let me demand of poor Christ less souls, whom this day is like to take unawares,

First, Do you think it possible to avoid appearing, after that terrible citation is given to the world by the trumpet of God? Alas, how can you imagine it? is not the same power that revived your dust, able to bring you before the bar? There is a necessity that you must come forth, 2 Corinthians 5:10. "We [must] all appear." It is not in the sinner's choice, to obey the summons or not.

Secondly, If you must appear, are there no accusers, nor witnesses, that will appear against you, and confront you in the court? What think you, was Satan so often a tempter to you here, and will he not be an accuser there? Yes, nothing surer; for that was the main design of all his temptations. What think you of your own consciences? are they not privy to your secret wickedness; do not they now sometimes whisper in your ears, what you care not to hear of? If they whisper now, they will thunder then, Romans 2:15-16. Will not the Spirit accuse you, for resisting his motions, and stifling thousands of his convictions? Will not your companions in sin accuse you, who drew or were drawn by you to sin? Will not your teachers be your accusers? How many times have you made them complain, Lord, they are iron and brass, they have made their faces harder than a rock; they refuse to return. Will not your very relations be your accusers, to whom you have failed in all your relational duties? Yes, and everyone whom you have tempted to sin, abused, defrauded, overreached; all these will be your accusers. So that it is without dispute, you will have accusers enough to appear against you.

Thirdly, Being accused before Jesus Christ what will you plead for yourselves: will you confess, or will you deny the charge. If you confess, what need more? "Out of your own mouth will I judge you," says Christ, Luke 19:22. If you deny, and plead not guilty, your Judge is the searcher of hearts, and knows a11 things. So that it will not at all help you to make a lie your last refuge. This will add to the guilt, but not cover it.

Fourthly, If no defense or plea be left you, then what canned you imagine should retard the sentence? Why should not Christ go on to that dreadful work? "Must not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Genesis 18:25. Must not you render to every man according to his deeds? 2 Corinthians 5:10. Yes, no question but he will proceed to that sentence, how terrible soever it be to you to think on it now, or hear it then.

Fifthly, To conclude, if sentence be once given by Christ against your soul, what in all the world canned you imagine should hinder the execution? will he alter the thing that is gone out of his mouth? No, Psalms 89:34. Do you hope he is more merciful and pitiful than so? You mistakes, if you expect mercy out of that way in which he dispenses it. There will be thousands, and ten thousands that will rejoice in, and magnify his mercy then; but they are such as obey his call, repented, believed, and obtained union with his person here; but for unbelievers, it is against the settled law of Christ, and constitution of the gospel, to show mercy to the despisers of it. But it may be, you think your tears, your cries, your pleadings with him, may move him; these indeed might have done somewhat in time, but they come out of season now. Alas, too late. What the success of such pleas and cries will be, you may see if you will but consult two scriptures, Job 27:8-9. "What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he has gained, when God takes away his soul? Will God hear his cry when trouble comes upon him?" No: And Matthew 7:22. "Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, and in your name have cast out devils, and in your name have done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I

never knew you; depart from me you that work iniquity." And must it come to this dismal issue with you indeed? God forbid it should. Oh then,

INFERENCE. 3. If Christ be appointed of God to be the Judge of all, how are all concerned to secure their interest in him, and therein an eternal happiness to their own souls, by the work of regeneration? Of all the business that men and women have in this world, there is none so solemn, so necessary, and important as this. O my brethren, this is a work, able to drink up your spirits, while you do but think of the consequence of it.

Summon in then your self-reflecting and considering powers: get alone, reader, and, forgetting all other things, ponder with yourself this deep, dear, eternal concernment of your. Examine the state of your own soul. Look into the scriptures, then into your own heart, and then to heaven, saying, Lord, let me not be deceived in so great a concernment to me as this. O let not the trifles of time wipe off the impressions of death, judgement, and eternity from your heart. O that long word [Eternity,] that it might be night any day with you; that the awe of it may be still upon your Spirit. A gentlewoman of this nation, having spent the whole afternoon, and a great part of the evening at cards, in mirth and jollity, came home late at night, and finding her waiting gentlewoman reading, she looked over her shoulder upon the book, and said, Poor melancholy soul, why do you sit here poring so long upon your book? That night she could not sleep, but lay sighing and weeping; her servant asked her once and again what ailed her; at last she burst out into tears, and said, Oh! it was one word that I cast my eye upon in your book, that troubles me; there I saw that word Eternity. How happy were I, if I were provided for eternity! Sure it concerns us, seeing we look for such things, to be diligent that we may be found of him in peace. O let not that day come by surprisal upon you. Remember, that as death leaves, so judgement will find you.

INFERENCE. 4. Is Jesus Christ appointed Judge of quick and dead, then look to it, all you that hope to be found of him in peace, that you avoid those sins, and live in the daily practice of those duties, which the consideration of that day powerfully persuades you to avoid or practice. For it not only presses to holiness in actu primu, in the being of it; but in actu secondo, in the daily exercise and practice of it. Do you indeed expect such a day? Oh then,

First, See you be meek and patient under all injuries and abuses for Christ’s sake. Avenge not yourselves, but leave it to the Lord, who will do it. Do not anticipate the work of God. "Be patient, my brethren, to the coming of the Lord," James 5:7-9.

Secondly, Be communicative, public-hearted Christians, studying and devising liberal things, for Christ’s distressed members; and you shall have both an honorable remembrance of it, and a full reward of it in that day, Matthew 25:34-35.

Thirdly, Be watchful, and sober, keep the golden bridle of moderation upon all your affections; and see that you be not overcharged with the cares and love of this present life, Luke 21:34-35. Will you that your Lord come and find you in such a posture? "O let your moderation be known unto all, the Lord is at hand," Php 4:5.

Fourthly, Improve all your Master’s talents diligently and carefully. Take heed of the napkin, Matthew 25:14; Matthew 25:18. Then must you make up your account for them all.

Fifthly, But, above all, be sincere in your profession. Let your hearts be found in God’s statutes, that you may never be ashamed; for this day will be the day of manifestation of all hidden things. And nothing is so secret, but that day will reveal it, Luke 12:1-3. "Beware of hypocrisy; for there is noting covered, which shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be made known." Thus I have finished, through divine aids, the whole doctrine of the impetration of redemption by Jesus Christ; we shall wind up the whole in a general exhortation, and I have done.

Chapter 106

S. Christ's Funeral illustrated, in its

Christ’s Funeral illustrated, in its Manner, Reasons, and excellent Ends

"Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulcher, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews’ preparation day; for the sepulcher was near at hand." John 9:40-41

You have heard the last words of dying Jesus commending his spirit into his Father’s hands. And now the life of the world hangs dead upon a tree. The light of the world, for a time, muffled up in a dismal cloud. The Sun of Righteousness set in the region and shadow of death. The Lord is dead, and he that wears the keys of the grave at his girdle, is now himself to be locked up in the grave.

All you that are the friends and lovers of Jesus, are this day invited to his funeral: such a funeral as never was since graves were first digged. "Come see the place where the Lord lay." There are six remarkable particulars, about this funeral, in these three verses.

1. The preparations that were made for it, and that was mainly in two particulars, namely, the begging and perfuming of the body. His body could not be buried, until, by begging, his friends had obtained it as a favor from his judge. The dead body was by law in the power of Pilate, who adjudged it to death, as the bodies of those that are hanged, are in the power of the judge to dispose of them as he pleases. And when they had gotten it from Pilate, they wind it in fine linen clothes with spices. But what need of spices to perfume that blessed body? His own love was perfume enough to keep it sweet in the remembrance of his people to all generations: however, by this they will manifest, as far as they are able, the dear affection they have for him

2. The Bearers that carried his body to its grave, Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus, two secret disciples; they were both men of estate and honor: none could imagine that these would have appeared at a time of so much danger, with such boldness for Christ; that ever they would have gone openly, and boldly to manifest their love to Christ, when dead, who were afraid to come to him (except by night) when he was living. But now a spirit zeal and courage is come upon them, when those that made greater and more open confessions of him are gone.

3. The Attendants who followed the hearse, were the women that followed him out of Galilee: among whom the two Maries, and the mother of Zebedee’s children are only named.

4. The grave, or sepulcher, where they laid him. It was in Joseph’s new tomb, which he had prepared in a garden near unto Golgotha, where our Lord died. Two things are remarkable about this tomb; it was another’s tomb, and it was a new tomb. It was another’s; for he had not a house of his own to lay his body in when dead. As he lived in other men’s houses, so he lay in another man’s tomb; and it was a new tomb, wherein never man was yet laid. Doubtless there was much of providence in this; for had any other been laid there before him, it might have proved an occasion both to shake the credit and slur the glory at his resurrection, by pretending it was some

former body, and not the Lord's, that rose out of it. In this also divine Providence had a respect to that prophecy, Isaiah 53:9 which was to be fulfilled at his funeral "He made his grave with the rich, because he had done no violence," etc.

5. The disposition of the body in that tomb. It is true, there is no mention made of the groans and tears with which they laid him in his sepulcher; yet we may well presume, they were not wanting in plentiful expressions of their sorrow that way; for as they wept, and smote their breasts when he died, Luke 23:48 so no doubt, they laid him with melting hearts, and flowing eyes in his tomb, when dead.

6. And lastly, The last remarkable particular in the text, is the solemnity with which his funeral rites were performed, and they were all suitable to his humbled state: it was, indeed, a funeral as decently ordered, as the straits of time, and state of things would then permit; but there was nothing of pomp or outward state at all observed: few marks of honor set by men upon it; only the heavens adorned it with divers miraculous works, which in their proper place will be spoken to. Thus was he laid in his grave, where he continued for three incomplete days and nights in the territories of death, in the land of darkness and forgetfulness: partly to correspond with Jonah his type, and partly to ascertain the world of the reality of his death. Whence our observation is,

DOCTRINE. That the dead body of our Lord Jesus Christ was decently interred by a small number of his own disciples, and continued in the state of the dead for a time. This observation containing matter of fact, and that so plainly and faithfully delivered to us by the pens of the several evangelists, we need do no more, to prepare it for our use, than to satisfy these two enquiries: why had Christ any funeral at all, since his resurrection was so soon to follow his death? And what manner of funeral Christ had?

First, Why had Christ any funeral at all, since he was to rise again from the dead, within that space of time that other men commonly have to lie by the wall before their interment; and had it continued longer unburied, it could see no corruption, having never been tainted by sin? Why, though there was no need of it at all upon that account that a funeral is needful for other bodies, yet there were these four weighty ends and reasons for it.

Reason 1. First, it was necessary Christ should be buried, to ascertain his death; else it might have been looked upon as a cheat: for, as they were ready enough to impose so gross a cheat upon the world at his resurrection, "That the disciples came by night, and stole him away," much more would they have denied at once the reality, both of his death and resurrection, had he not been so perfumed and interred. But this cut off all pretensions; for in their kind of embalming, his mouth, ears and nostrils were all filled with their spices and odors; bound up in linen, and laid long enough in the tomb to give full assurance to the world of the certainty of his death; so that there could be no latent principle of life in him. Now, since our eternal life is enrapt up in Christ's death, it can never be too firmly established. To this, therefore, we may well suppose Providence had special respect in his burial, and the manner of it.

Reason 2. Secondly, He must be buried, to fit the types and prophecies that went before. His abode in the grave was prefigured by Jonah's abode three days and nights in the belly of the whale, Matthew 12:40. So must the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Yes, the prophet had described the very manner of his funeral, and, long before he was

born, foretold in what kind of tomb his body should be laid, Isaiah 53:9 "He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death:" pointing, by that expressions at this tomb of Joseph, who was a rich man; and the scriptures cannot be broken.

Reason 3. Thirdly, He must be buried, to complete his humiliation; this being the lowest step he could possibly descend to in his abased state. They have brought me to the dust of death: lower he could not be laid; and so low he must lay his blessed head, else he had not been humbled to the lowest.

Reason 4. Fourthly, But the great end and reason of his interment was the conquering of death in its own dominion and territories; which victory over the grave furnished the saints with that triumphant "epinikion" song of deliverance, 1 Corinthians 15:55. "O death! where is your sting? O grave! where is your destruction?" Our graves would not be so sweet and comfortable to us, when we come to lie down in them, if Jesus had not lain there before us and for us. Death is a dragon, the grave its den; a place of dread and terror; but Christ goes into its den, there grapples with it, and forever overcomes it; disarms it of all its terror; and not only makes it to cease to be inimical, but to become exceeding beneficial to the saints; a bed of rest, and a perfumed bed; they do but go into Christ's bed, where he lay before them. For these ends he must be buried.

Secondly, Next let us enquire what manner of funeral Christ had? And if we intently observe it, we shall find many remarkable properties in it.

First, We shall find it to be a very obscure and private funeral. Here was no external pomp or gallantry: Christ affected it not in his life, and it was no way suitable to the ends and manner of his death. Humiliation was designed in his death; and state is inconsistent with such an end; besides, he died upon the tree; and persons so dying, do not use to have much ceremony and state at their funerals. Three things show it to be a very humble and obscure funeral, as to what concerned outward glory, with which the great ones of the earth are usually interred. For,

1. The dead body of the Lord was not brought from his own house, as other men's commonly are, but from the tree. They begged it of his judge. Had they not obtained this favor from Pilate, it must have been buried in Golgotha; it had been tumbled into a pit digged under the cross.

2. As it was first begged, then buried, so it was attended with a very poor train: a few sorrowful women followed the bier. Other men are accompanied to their graves by their relations and friends: the disciples were all scattered from him; afraid to own him dying, and dead.

3. And these few that were resolved to give him a funeral, are forced, by reason of the straits of time, to do it in great haste. Time was short; they take the next sepulcher they can get, and hurry him away that evening into it; for the preparation for the passover was at hand. This was the obscure funeral which the body of the Lord had. Thus was the Prince of the kings of the earth, who has the keys of death and hell, laid into his grave.

Secondly, Yet though men could bestow little honor upon it, the heavens bestowed several marks of honor upon it: adorned it with divers miracles, which wiped off the reproach of his death from him. These miracles were antecedent to his interment, or concomitants of it.

1. There was that extraordinary and preternatural eclipse of the sun; such an eclipse as was never seen since it first shone in heaven; the sun fainted at the sight of such a rueful spectacle, and

clothed the whole heaven in black. The sight of this caused a great philosopher, who was then far from the place where this unparalleled tragedy was acting, to cry out upon the sight of it, "Either the God of nature now suffers, or the frame of the world is now dissolved." The same Dionysius, writing to Apollophanes, a philosopher, who would not embrace the Christian faith, thus goes about to convince him. "What thinkest you, (says he) of the eclipse when Christ was crucified? were we not both of us at Heliopolis, and standing in the same place? Did we not see the moon in a new manner following the sun: and not in the conjunction, but from the ninth hour until the evening, by a reason unknown in nature, directly opposite to the sun? Did you not then, being greatly terrified, say unto me, O my Dionysius, what strange communications of the heavenly bodies are these?"

Such a preternatural eclipse is remembered in no other history; for it was not in time of conjunction, but opposition, the moon being then at full. From the sixth to the ninth hour, the sun and moon were together in the midst of heaven; but in the evening she appeared in the east, her own place, opposite to the sun. And then miraculously returning from east to west, did not pass by the sun, and set in the west before it, but kept it company for the space of three hours, and then returned to the east again. And whereas in all other natural eclipses, the shadow always begins on the western parts of the body of the sun, and that part is also first cleared; it was quite contrary in this; for though the moon was opposite to the sun, and distant from it the whole breadth of heaven, yet with a miraculous swiftness it overtook the sun, darkened first the eastern part of it, and soon prevailed over its whole body; which caused darkness over all the land; that is say some, over the whole earth; or, as others, over the whole land of Jewry; or, as others, over the whole horizon, and all places of the same altitude and latitude, which is most probable.

Secondly, And as Christ's funeral was adorned with such a miraculous eclipse, which put the heavens and earth into mourning; so you rocks did rend: the veil of the temple rent in twain from top to bottom; the graves opened, and the dead bodies of many saints arose and went into the holy city, and were seen of many. The rending of the rocks was a sign of God's fierce indignation, Nahum 1:6, and a discovery of the greatness of his power; showing them what they deserved, and what he could do to them that had committed this horrid fact; though he rather chose at this time to show the dreadful effects of it upon inanimate rocks, than rocky hearted sinners; but especially it served to convince the world, that it was none other but the Son of God that died; which was farther manifested by these concomitant miracles. As for the rending in twain of the veil, it was a notable miracle, plainly showing that all ceremonies were now accomplished and abolished; no more veils now: as also that believers have now most free access into heaven. At that very instant when the veil rent, the high priest was officiating in the most holy place, and the veil which hid him from the rest of the people, being rent, they might freely see him about his work in the holy of holies; a lively emblem of our High-priest, whom now we see by faith in the heavens there performing his intercession work for us. The opening of the graves, plainly showed the design and end of Christ's going into it; that it might not have dominion over the bodies of the saints, but being vanquished and destroyed by Christ, lets go all that are his whom he ransomed from the grave as a prey out of its paws: a specimen whereof was given in those holy ones that rose at that time and appeared to many in the holy city. Thus was the funeral of our Lord performed by men: Thus was it adorned by miracles from heaven.

Use. And now we have seen Jesus interred; he that wears at his girdle the keys of hell and death, himself locked up in the grave. What shall I say of him whom they now laid in the grave? shall I undertake to tell you what he was, what he did, suffered, and deserved? Alas! the tongues of angels must pause and stammer in such a work. I may truly say, as Nazianzen said of Basil, "No tongue but his own can sufficiently commend and praise him." He is a sun of righteousness; a fountain of life; a bundle of love. Of him it might be said in that day, Here lies lovely Jesus, in whom is treasured up whatever an angry God can require for his satisfaction, or an empty creature for his perfection; before him was none like him, and after shall none arise comparable to him. "If every leaf and spire of grass," (says one,) "nay, all the stars, sands and atoms, were so many souls and scraphims, whose love should double in them every moment to all eternity, yet would it fall infinitely short of what is due to his worth and excellency. Suppose a creature composed of all the choice endowments that ever dwelt in the best of men since the creation of the world, in whom you find a meek Moses, a strong Samson, a faithful Jonathan, a beautiful Absalom, a rich and wise Solomon; nay, and add to this, the understanding, strength, agility, splendor, and holiness of all the angels, it would all amount but to a dark shadow of this incomparable Jesus."

"Who ever weighed Christ in a pair of balances?" says another. "Who has seen the foldings and plaits, the heights and depths of that glory that is in him! O for such a heaven, as but to stand afar off and see, and love, and long for him, while time's thread be cut, and this great work of creation dissolved! -- O, if I could yoke in among the throng of angels and seraphim, and now glorified saints, and could raise a new love song of Christ before all the world! I am pained with wondering at new opened treasures in Christ. If every finger, member, bone and joint, were a torch burning in the hottest fire in hell, I would they could all send out love praises, high songs of praise for evermore, to that plant of renown, to that royal and high Prince, Jesus my Lord. But, alas! his love swelleth in me, and finds no vent. -- I mar his praises, nay, I know no comparison of what Christ is, and what he is worth. All the angels, and all the glorified, praise him not so much as in halves. Who can advance him, or utter all his praise? -- O, if I could praise him, I would rest content to die of love for him. O, would to God I could send in my praises to my incomparable Well-beloved, or cast my love-songs of that matchless Lord Jesus over the walls, that they might light in his lap before men and angels! -- But when I have spoken of him until my head rive, I have said just nothing; I may begin again. A Godhead, a Godhead, is a world's wonder! Set ten thousand thousand new made worlds of angels and elect men, and double them in number ten thousand thousand thousand times: let their hearts and tongues be ten thousand times more agile and large than the hearts and tongues of the seraphim, that stand with six wings before him; when they have said all for the glorifying and praising of the Lord Jesus, they have spoken little or nothing. O that I could even wear out this tongue in extolling his highness! But it is my daily admiration, and I am confounded with his incomparable love,"

Thus have his enamored friends faintly expressed his excellencies; and if they have therein done anything, they have shown the impossibility of his due praises.

Come and see, believing souls, look upon dead Jesus in his winding-sheet by faith, and say, Lo, this is he, of whom the church said, "My beloved is white and ruddy:" his ruddiness is now gone, and a death paleness has prevailed over all his body, but still as lovely as ever, yes, altogether lovely.

If David, lamenting the death of Saul and Jonathan, said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights; who put ornaments of gold upon your apparel;" Much rather may I say, Children of Zion, weep over Jesus, who clothed you with righteousness, and the garments of salvation. This is he who left the throne of glory; left the bosom of unspeakable delights; came in a body of flesh, produced in perfect holiness; brake through many and great impediments, (your great unworthiness, the wrath of God and man,) by the strength of love to bring salvation home to your soul. Can he that believingly considers this, do less than faint at the sense of that love that brought him to the dust of death, and cry out with that father, "My Lord was crucified!" But I will insist no longer upon generals; but draw down the particulars of Christ's funeral to your use, in the following corollaries,

Corollary 1. Was Christ buried in this manner? Then a decent and mournful funeral, where it can be had, is very laudable among Christians.

I know the souls of the saints have no concernment for their bodies, nor are they solicitous how the body is treated here; yet there is a respect due to them, as they are the temples wherein God has been served, and honored by those holy souls that once dwelt in them, as also upon the account of their relation to Christ, even when they lie by the walls; and the glory that will be one day put upon them, when they shall be changed, and made like unto Christ's glorious body. Upon such special accounts as these, their bodies deserve an honorable treatment, as well as upon the account of humanity, which owes this honor to the bodies of all men. To have no funeral, is accounted a judgement, Ecclesiastes 7:4. or to be tumbled into a pit without any to lament us, is as lamentable. We read of many solemn and mournful funerals in scriptures, wherein the people of God have affectionately paid their respects and honors to the dust of the saints, as men that were deeply sensible of their worth, and how great a loss the world sustains by their remove. Christ's funeral had as much of decency and solemnity in it, as the time would permit; though he was a stranger to all pomp, both in life and death.

Corol. 2. Did Joseph and Nicodemus so boldly appear at a time of so much danger, to beg the body, and give it a funeral? Let it be forever a caution to strong Christians, not to despise or glory over the weak. You see here a couple of poor, low spirited, and timorous persons, that were afraid to be seen in Christ's company, when the other disciples professed their readiness to die with him: yet those flee, and these appear for him, when the trial comes indeed. If God desert the strong, and assist the weak, the feeble shall be as David, and the strong as tow. I speak not this to discourage any man from striving to improve inherent graces to the utmost; for it is ordinarily found in experience, that the degrees of assisting grace, are given out according to the measures of inherent grace: but I speak it to prevent a sin incident to strong Christians, which is to despise the weak, which God corrects by such instances and examples as this before us.

Corol. 3. Hence we may be assisted in discerning the depths of Christ's humiliation for us: And see from what, to what his love brought him. It was not enough, that he who was in the form of God, became a creature, which was an infinite stoop, nay, to be made a Man, an inferior order of creatures; nay, to be a poor man, to spend his days in poverty and contempt, but also to be a dead corpse for our sakes. O what manner of love is this!

Now, the deeper the humiliation of the Son of God was, the more satisfactory to us it must needs be, for as it shows us the heinousness of sin, that deserves all this, so the fullness of Christ's

satisfaction, whereby he makes up that breach. O, it was deep humiliation indeed! how unlike himself is he now become! does he look like the Son of God? What! the Son of God, whom all the angels adore, to be hurried by three or four persons into his grave in an evening! to be carried from Golgotha to the grave in this manner, and there lie as a captive to death for a time! Never was the like change of conditions; never such an abasement heard of in the world.

Corol. 4. From this funeral of Christ results the purest, and strongest consolation and encouragement to believers, against the fears of death and the grave. If this be so, that Jesus has lain in the grave before you; let me say then to you, as the Lord spoke to Jacob, Genesis 46:2-3. "Fear not to go down into Egypt, for I will go down with you, and I will also surely bring you up again." So here, fear not believer, to go down to the grave, for God will be with you there, and will surely bring you up thence. This consideration that Jesus Christ has lain in the grave himself, gives manifold encouragements to the people of God, against the terrors of the grave.

First, The grave received, but could not destroy Jesus Christ: death swallowed him, as the whale did Jonah his type, but could not digest him when it had swallowed him, but quickly delivered him up again. Now Christ's lying in the grave, as the common head and representative of believers, what comfort should this inspire into their hearts: for, as it fared with Christ's body personal, so it shall with Christ's body mystical: it could not retain him; it shall not forever retain them. This resurrection of Christ out of his grave, is the very ground of our hope for a resurrection out of our graves. "Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept," 1 Corinthians 15:20.

Secondly, As the union between the body of Christ, and the Divine nature was not dissolved, when that body was laid in the grave, so the union between Christ and believers is not, cannot be dissolved, when their bodies shall be laid in their graves. It is true, the natural union between his soul and body was dissolved for a time; but the hypostatical union was not dissolved, no, not for a moment: that body was the body of the Son of God, when it was in the sepulcher. In like manner, the natural union between our souls and bodies is dissolved by death; but the mystical union between us and Christ, yes, between our very dust and Christ, can never be dissolved.

Thirdly, As Christ's body, when it was in the grave, did there rest in hope, and was assuredly a partaker of that hope; so it shall fare with the dead bodies of the saints, when they lay them down also in the dust: "My flesh also shall rest in hope," says Christ, Psalms 16:9-11. In like manner the saints commit their bodies to the dust in hope: "The righteous has hope in his death," Proverbs 14:32. And as Christ's hope was not a vain hope, so neither shall their hope be vain.

Fourthly, and lastly, Christ's lying in the grave before us, has quite changed, and altered the nature of the grave; so that it is not what it was: it was once a part of the curse. "Dust you are, and unto dust you shall return," was a part of the threatening, and curse for sin. The grave had the nature and use of a prison, to keep the bodies of sinners against the great assizes, and then deliver them up into the hands of a great and terrible God; but now it is no prison, but a bed of rest: yes, and a perfumed bed, where Christ lay before us. Which is a sweet consideration of the grave indeed; "They shall enter into peace, they shall rest in their beds," Isaiah 57:2. O then let not believers stand in fear of the grave. He that has one foot in heaven need not fear to put the other into the grave. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you ant with me," Psalms 23:4.

Indeed, the grave is a terrible place to them that are out of Christ; death is the Lord's sergeant to arrest them; the grave is the Lord's prison to secure them. When death draws them into the grave, it draws them there as a lion does his prey into the den to devour it. So you read, Psalms 49:14. "Death shall feed (or prey) upon them." Death there reigns over them in its full power, Romans 5:14. And though at last it shall render them again to God, yet it were better for them to lie everlastingly where they were, than to rise to such an end; for they are brought out of their graves, as a condemned prisoner out of the prison, to go to execution. But the case of the saints is not so; the grave (thanks be to our Lord Jesus Christ!) is a privileged place to them, while they sleep there; and when they awake, it will be with singing. When they awake, they shall be satisfied with his likeness.

Corollary 5. Lastly, Since Christ was laid in his grave, and his people reap such privileges by it; as ever you expect rest or comfort in your graves, see that you get union with Christ now.

It was an ancient custom of the Jews, to put rich treasures into the graves with their friends, as well as to bestow much upon their sepulchers. It is said, Hircanus opened David's sepulcher, and took out of it three thousand talents of gold and silver. And to this sense many interpret that act of the Chaldeans, Jeremiah 8:1. "At that time, says the Lord, they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judas, and the bones of his princes, etc. And they shall spread them before the sun and moon," etc. This is rather conceived to be an act of covetousness than cruelty: they shall ransack their graves for the treasure that is hid there among their bones. It is possible the case so stands with many of you, that you have no great matter to bestow upon your funerals, nor are they like to be splendid; no stately monuments; no hidden treasure; but if Christ be yours, you carry that with you to your graves, which is better than all the gold and silver in the world. What would you be the better if your coffin were made of beaten gold, or your grave-stone set thick with glittering diamonds? But if you lie in the Lord, that is interested in and united to the Lord, you shall carry six grounds of comfort with you to your graves, the least of which is not to be purchased with the wealth of both the Indies.

First, The first ground of comfort which a believer carries with him to the grave, is, that the covenant of God holds firmly with his very dust, all the days of its appointed time in the grave. So much Christ tells us, Matthew 22:31-32. "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob: God is not the God of the dead, but of the living;" q. d. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are naturally dead; but inasmuch as God, long after their deaths, proclaimed himself their God still, therefore they are all alive, foederally alive to God: they live, that is their covenant-relation lives still. "Whether we live, or whether we die, (says the apostle) we are the Lord's," Romans 14:7-9. Now, what an encouragement is here! I am as much the Lord's in the state of the dead, as I was in the state of the living: death puts an end to all other relations and bonds, but the bond of the covenant rots not in the grave: that dust is still the Lord's.

Secondly, As God's covenant with our very bodies is indissolvable, so God's love to our very dust is inseparable. "I am the God of Abraham." God looks down from heaven into the graves of his saints with delight, and looks on that pile of dust with delight, which those that once loved it cannot behold without loathing. The apostle is express, Romans 8:33, that death separates not the believer from the love of God. As at first it was not our natural loveliness or beauty that drew, or engaged his love to us; so neither will he cease to love us when that beauty is gone, and we

become objects of loathing to all flesh. When a husband cannot endure to see a wire, or a wife her husband; but says of them that were once dear and pleasant, as Abraham of his beloved Sarah, "Bury my dead out of my sight;" yet then the Lord delights in it as much as ever. The goldsmith does not value the dust of his gold, as God values the dust of his saints, for all these precious particles are united to Christ.

Thirdly, As God's love will be with you in the grave, so God's providence shall take order about your graves, when they shall be digged for you. And be sure he will not dig your graves until you are fit to be put into them: he will bring you there in the best time; Job 5:26. "You shall come to your grave as a shock of corn in its season:" you shall be ripe and ready before God house you there. It is said of David, that "after he had served his generation by the will of God, he fell asleep," Acts 13:36. O what a holy and wise will is that will of God, that so orders our death! And how equal is it, that our will should be concluded by it?

Fourthly, If you be in Christ, as God's covenant holds with you in the grave, his love is inseparable from your dust, his providence shall give order when it shall be digged for you, so, in the next place, his pardons have loosed all the bonds of guilt from you, before you lie down in the grave: so that you shall not die in your sins. Ah, friends, what a comfort is this! that you are the Lord's free men in the grave! sin is a bad bed-fellow, and a worse grave fellow. It is a grievous threatening, John 8:24. "You shall die in your sins." Better be cast alive into a pit among dragons and serpents, than dead in your graves among your sins. O what a terrible word is that, Job 20:11. "His bones are full of the sins of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust!" But from the company of sin, in the grave, all the saints are delivered. God's full, free, and final pardons have shut guilt out of your graves.

Fifthly, Whenever you come to your graves, you shall find the enmity of the grave slain by Christ: it is no enemy; nay, you will find it friendly, a privileged place to you: it will be as sweet to you that are in Christ, as a soft bed in a still quiet chamber to one that is weary and sleepy. Therefore, it is said, 1 Corinthians 3:21-22. "Death is yours;" yours is a privilege; your friend: there you shall find sweet rest in Jesus; be hurried, pained, troubled no more.

Sixthly, To conclude: if in Christ, know this for your comfort, that your own Lord Jesus Christ keeps the keys of all the chambers of death: and as he unlocks the door of death, when he lets you in, so he will open it again for you when you awake, to let you out; and from the time he opens to let you in, until the time he opens to let you out, he himself wakes and watches by you while you sleep there. "I (says he) have the keys of death," Revelation 1:18. O then, as you expect peace or rest in the chambers of death, get union with Christ. A grave with Christ is a comfortable place!

Chapter 107

S. Christ's Humiliation in his Life.

Christ’s Humiliation in his Life

"And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself; and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross." Php 2:8 This scripture has been once already under consideration, and, indeed, can never be enough considered: It holds forth the humbled state of the Lord Jesus, during the time of his abode on earth. The sum of it was delivered you before in this point:

DOCTRINE. That the state of Christ, from his conception to his resurrection, was a state of deep debasement and humiliation. The humiliation of Christ was proposed to you under these three general heads or branches; of his humiliation in his incarnation; his humiliation in his life; and his humiliation in his death. How he was humbled by incarnation, has been opened above in the 18th sermon. How he was humbled in his life, is the design of this sermon: yet expect not that I should give you here an exact history of the life of Christ. The scriptures speak but little of the private part of his life, and it is not my design to dilate upon all the memorable passages that the evangelists (those faithful narrators of the life of Christ) have preserved for us; but only to observe and improve those more observable particulars in his life, wherein especially he was humbled: and such are these that follow.

First, The Lord Jesus was humbled in his very infancy, by his circumcision according to the law. For being of the stock of Israel, he was to undergo the ceremonies, and submit to the ordinances belonging to that people, and thereby to put an end to them; for so it became him to fulfill all righteousness. Luke 2:21. "And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called Jesus." Hereby the Son of God was greatly humbled, especially in these two respects.

1. In that hereby he obliged himself to keep the whole law, though he was the Law-maker; Galatians 5:3. "For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law." The apostle’s meaning is, he is a debtor in regard of duty, because he that thinks himself bound to keep one part of the ceremonial law, does thereby bind himself to keep it all; for where all the parts are inseparably united, (as they are in the law of God) we pull all upon us, by engaging or meddling with any one. And he that is a debtor in duty to keep the whole law, quickly becomes a debtor in regard of penalty, not being able to keep any part of it. Christ therefore coming as our surety, to pay both those debts, the debt of duty, and the debt of penalty to the law; He, by his circumcision, obliges himself to pay the whole debt of duty by fulfilling all righteousness: and though his obedience to it was so exact and perfect, that he contracted no debt of penalty for any transgression of his own, yet he obliges himself to pay the debt of penalty which he had contracted, by suffering all the pains due to transgressors. This was that intolerable yoke that none were able to bear but Christ, Acts 15:10. And it was no small measure of Christ to bind himself to the law, as a subject made under it: For he was the Law-giver, above all law: and herein that sovereignty of a God (one of the choice flowers in the crown of heaven) was obscured and veiled by his subjection.

2. Hereby he was represented to the world not only as a subject, but also as a sinner: for though he was pure and holy, yet this ordinance passing upon him, seemed to imply as if corruption had indeed been in him, which must be cut off by mortification. For this was the mystery principally intended by circumcisions: it served to mind and admonish Abraham, and his seed, of the natural guiltiness, uncleanness, and corruption of their hearts and nature. So Jeremiah 4:4, "Circumcise yourselves unto the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your hearts, you men of Judah;" that is the sinfulness and corruption of them. Hence the rebellious and immortified are called "stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart," as it is Acts 7:51. And as it served in convince of natural uncleanness, so it signified and sealed "the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh," as the apostle phrases it, Colossians 2:11. Now, this being the end of God in the institution of this ordinance for Abraham and his ordinary seed, Christ, in his infancy, by submitting to it, did not only veil his sovereignty by subjection, but was also represented as a sinner to the world, though most holy and pure in himself.

Secondly, Christ was humbled by persecution, and that in the very morning of his life: he was banished almost as soon as born. Matthew 2:13. "Flee into Egypt (says the angel to Joseph) and be you there until I bring you word, for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him." Ungrateful Herod! was this entertainment for a Savior? what, raise a country against him, as if a destroyer, rather than a Savior, had landed upon the coast? what, deny him the protection of those laws, under which he was born, and that before he had broken the least punctilio of them? The child of a beggar may claim the benefit and protection of law, as his birth-right; and must the Son of God be denied it! But herein Herod fulfilled the scriptures, while venting his own lusts; for so it was foretold, Jeremiah 31:15. And this early persecution was not obscurely hinted in the title of Psalms 22:1-31, that psalm which looks rather like a history of the New, than a prophecy of the Old Testament; for as it contains a most exact description of Christ's sufferings, so it is fitted with a most suitable title, To the chief musician upon Aijeleth Shahar, which signifies the Hind of the morning, or that deer which the Hunter rouses betides in the morning, and singles out to hunt down that day; and so they did by him, as Psalms 22:16 will tell you; for, (says he), "Dogs have compassed me, the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me." Upon which Musculus sweetly and ingeniously descants: "O what sweet venison, (says he) is the flesh of Christ! abundantly sweeter to the believing soul, than that which the nobles of this world esteem most delicate: and lest it should want the highest and richest savor to a delicate palate, Christ, our hart, was not only killed, but hunted to the purpose before he was killed; even as great men use, by hunting and chasing, before they cut the throat of the deer, to render its flesh more sweet, tender, and delicate:" Thus was Christ hunted betides out of the country he was born in. And, no doubt but where such dogs scent and wind the Spirit of Christ in any, they would pursue them also to destruction, did not a gracious Providence rate them off. But to returns, how great a humiliation is this to the Son of God, not only to become an infant, but in his infancy, to be hurried up and down, and driven out of his own land as a vagabond!

Thirdly, Our Lord Jesus Christ was yet more humbled in his life, by that poverty and outward meanness which all along attended his condition: he lived poor and low all his days, so speaks the apostle, 2 Corinthians 8:9. "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor;" so poor, that he was never owner of a house to dwell in, but lived all his days in other men's houses, or lay in the open air. His outward condition was more neglected and destitute than that of the birds of the

air, or beasts of the earth; so he told that scribe, who professed such readiness and resolution to follow him, but was soon cooled, when Christ told him, Matthew 8:20. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has not where to lay his head.

It was a common saying, among the Jews, when the Messiah comes, he will not find a place to sit down in. Sometimes he feeds upon barley bread and broiled fish, and sometimes he was hungry, and had nothing to eat, Mark 11:12. As for money, he was much a stranger to it; when the tribute-money was demanded of him, he and Peter were not so well furnished to make half-a-crown between them to pay it, but must work a miracle for it, Matthew 17:1-27 ult.

He came hot to be ministered unto, but to minister, Matthew 20:28. not to amass earthly treasures, but to bestow heavenly ones. His great and heavenly soul neglected and despised those things, that too many of his own too much admire and prosecute. He spent not a careful thought about those things that eat up thousands and ten thousands of our thoughts. Indeed he came to be humbled, and to teach men by his example the vanity of this world, and pour contempt upon the ensnaring glory of it; and therefore went before us in a chosen and voluntary poverty: yet he lived not a mendicant life neither; but was sometimes fed by ordinary, and sometimes by miraculous and extraordinary ways. He had wherewith to support that precious body of his, until the time was come to offer it up to God; but would not indulge and pamper that flesh, which he purposely assumed to be humbled in.

Fourthly, Our dear Jesus was yet further humbled in his life, by the horrid temptations wherewith Satan assaulted him, than which nothings could be more grievous to his holy heart. The Evangelist gives us an account of this in Luke 4:1-44 from the first to the fourteenth verse: in which context you find how the bold and envious spirit meets the Captain of our salvation in the field, comes up with him in the wilderness, when he was solitary, and had not a second with him, Luke 4:1. There he keeps him fasting forty days and forty nights, to prepare him to close with his temptation: all this while Satan was pointing and edging that temptation, with which at last he resolves to try the bosom of Christ by a home thrust. Luke 4:2. By this time he supposes Christ was hungry, (as indeed he was) and now he thought it was time to make his assault, which he does in a very suitable temptation at first, and with variety of temptations, trying several weapons upon him afterwards But whom he had made a thrust at him with that first weapon, in which he especially trusted, "command that these stones may be made bread," Luke 4:3, and saw how Christ had put it by, Luke 4:4, then he changes postures and assaults him with temptations to blasphemy, even "to fall down and worship the Devil." But when he saw he could fasten nothing on him, that he was as pure fountain water in a crystal phial, how much soever agitated and shaken, no dregs, or filthy sediment would rise, but he remained pure still: I say, seeing this, he makes a politic retreat, quits the field for a season, Luke 4:13 yet leaves it cum animo revertendi, with a resolution to return to him again. And thus was our blessed Lord Jesus humbled by the temptations of Satan: and what can you imagine more burdensome to him that was brought up from eternity with God, delighting in the holy Father, to be now shut into a wilderness with the Devil, there to be baited so many days, and have his ears filled, though not defiled, with horrid blasphemy, quantum mutatus AB illo? O how was the case altered with Christ! From what, to what was he now come? A chaste woman would account it no common misery to be dogged up and down, and solicited by some vile ruffian, though there were no danger of defilement. A man would account it no small unhappiness to be shut up five or six weeks together with the Devil, though appearing in a human shape, and to hear

no language but that of hell spoken all that time; and the more holy the man is, the more would he be afflicted to hear such blasphemies malignantly spat upon the holy and reverend name of God; much more to be solicited by the devil to join with him in it. This, I say, would be accounted no small misery for a man to undergo. How great a humiliation then must it be to the great God, to be humbled to this! to see a slave of his house, setting upon himself the Lord! His jailer coming is take him prisoner, if he can! A base apostate spirit, daring to attempt such things as these upon him! Surely this was a deep abasement to the Son of God,

Fifthly, Our blessed Lord Jesus was yet more humbled in his life than all this, and that by his own sympathy with others, under all the burdens that made him groan. For he, much more than Paul, could say, who is afflicted, and I burn not? He lived all his time as it were in an hospital among the sick and wounded. And so tender was his heart, that every groan for sin, or under the effects of sin, pierced him so, that it was truly said, "himself bare our sicknesses, and took our infirmities," Matthew 8:16-17. It was spoken upon the occasion of some poor creatures that were possessed by the devil, and brought to him to be dispossessed. It is said of him, John 11:33 "That when he saw Mary weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the Spirit, and was troubled." And John 11:35 Jesus wept: yes, his heart flowed with pity for them that had not one drop of pity for themselves. Witness his tears spent upon Jerusalem, Luke 19:41-42. He foresaw the misery that was coming, though they never foresaw, nor feared it. O how it pierced him to think of the calamities hanging over that great city! Yes, he mourned for them that could not mourn for their own sins. Therefore it is said, Mark 3:5. "He was grieved for the hardness of the people’s hearts." So that the commendation of a good physician, that he does as it were die with every patient, was most applicable to our tender-hearted Physician. This was one of those things that made him "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." For the more holy any is, the more he is grieved and afflicted for the sin of others; and the more tender any man is, the more he is pierced with beholding the miseries that lie upon others. And it is sure, never any heart more holy, or more sensible, tender and compassionate than Christ’s.

Sixthly, Lastly, That which yet helped to humble him lower, was the ungrateful, and most base and unworthy entertainment the world gave him. He was not received or treated like a Savior, but as the vilest of men. One would think that he who came from heaven, "to give his life a ransom for many," Matthew 20:28. He that was, "not sent to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved", John 3:17. He that came "to dissolve the works of the devil," 1 John 3:8. knock off the chains, "open the prison-doors, proclaim liberty to the captives," Isaiah 61:1. I say, when such a Savior arrived, O with what acclamations of joy, and demonstration of thankfulness, should he have been received? One would have thought they should even kiss the ground he trod upon: but instead of this, he was hated, John 15:13. He was despised by them, Matthew 13:55. So reproached that he became "the reproach of men," as who should say, a corner for everyone to spit in; a butt for every base tongue to shoot at, Psalms 22:6. Accused of working his miracles by the power of the devil, Matthew 12:24. He was trod upon as a worm, Psalms 22:6. They buffeted him, Matthew 26:67. smote him on the head, Matthew 27:30. arrayed him as a fool, Matthew 27:20 spat in his face, Matthew 27:30 despised him as the basest of men, "this fellow said," Matthew 26:61. One of his own followers sold him, another forswore him, and all forsook him in his greatest troubles, All this was a great abasement to the Son of God, who was not thus treated for a day, or in one place, but all his days, and in all places. "He endured the contradiction of sinners against

himself." In these particulars I have pointed out to you something of the humble life Christ lived in the world. From all these particulars some useful inferences will be noted.

INFERENCE 1. From the first degree of Christ's humiliation, in submitting to be circumcised, and thereby obliging himself to fulfill the whole law, it followeth, that justice itself may set both hand and seal to the acquittances and discharges of believers. Christ hereby obliged himself to be the law's pay-master, to pay its utmost demand; to bear that yoke of obedience that never any before him could bear. And as his circumcision obliged him to keep the whole law; so he was most precise and punctual in the observation of it: so exact, that the sharp eye of Divine Justice cannot espy the least flaw in it; but acknowledges full payment, and stands ready to sign the believer a full acquittance. Romans 3:15. "That God may be just, and the justifier of him that believes in Jesus." Had not Christ been thus obliged, we had never been discharged. Had not his obedience been an entire, complete, and perfect thing, our justification could not have been so. He that has a precious treasure, will be loth to adventure it in a leaky vessel: woe to the holiest man on earth, if the safety of his precious soul were to be adventured on the bottom of the best duty that ever he performed. But Christ's obedience and righteousness is firm and sound; a bottom that we may safely adventure all in.

INFERENCE. 2. From the early flight of Christ into Egypt we infer, That the greatest innocence and piety cannot exempt from persecution and injury. Who more innocent than Christ? And who more persecuted? The world is the world still. "I have given them your word, and the world has hated them," John 17:14. The world lies in wait as a thief for them that carry this treasure; they who are empty of it may sing before him, he never stops them: but persecution follows piety as the shadow does the body, 2 Timothy 3:12. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution." Whoever resolves to live holy, must never expect to live quietly. It is godliness, and godliness in Christ Jesus, that is such as is derived from Christ, tulle godliness; and it is true godliness as it is manifested in practice. All that will live godly, that will exert holiness in their lives, which convinces and galls the consciences of the ungodly. It is this enrages, for there is an enmity and antipathy between them: and this enmity runs in the blood; and it is transmitted with it from generation to generation, Galatians 4:29. "As then he that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit; even so it is now." Mark, so it was, and so still it is. "Cain's club is still carried up and down crimsoned with the blood of Abel," said Bucholtzer: but thus it must be, to conform us unto Christ: and O that your spirits, as well as your conditions, may better harmonize with Christ. He suffered meekly, quietly, and self-denyingly; be you like him. Let it not be said of you, as it is of the hypocrite, whose lusts are only hid, but not mortified by his duties, that he is like flint, which seems cold; but if you strike him, he is all fiery. To do well, and suffer ill, is Christ-like.

INFERENCE. 3. From the third particular of Christ's humiliation, I infer, that such as are full of grace and holiness, may be destitute and empty of creature-comforts. What an overflowing fullness of grace was there in Christ? and yet to what a low ebb did his outward comforts sometimes fall? and as it fared with him, so with many others now in glory with him, while they were in the way to that glory; 1 Corinthians 4:11. "Even to this present hour, we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and buffeted and have no certain dwelling-place." Their souls were richly clothed with robes of righteousness, their bodies naked or meanly clad. Their souls fed high, even on hidden manna, their bodies hungry. Let us be content (says Luther) with our hard fare; for do we not feast with angels upon that bread of life? Remember, when wants pinch hard, that these fix

no marks of Gods hatred upon you. He has dealt no worse with you than he did with his own Son. Nay, which of you is not better accommodated than Christ was? If you be hungry or thirsty, you have some refreshments; you have beds to lie on; the Son of man had not where to lay his head; the Heir of all things had sometimes nothing to eat. And remember you are going to a plentiful country, where all your wants will be supplied; "poor in the world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which God has promised," James 2:5. The meanness of your present, will add to the luster of your future condition.

INFERENCE. 4. From the fourth particular of Christ's humiliation in his life, by Satan's temptations, we infer, That those in whom Satan has no interest, may have most trouble from him in this world, John 14:30. "The Prince of this world comes, and has nothing in me." Where he knows he cannot be a conqueror he will not cease to be a troubler. This bold and daring spirit adventures upon Christ himself; for doubtless he was filled with envy at the sight of him, and would do what he could though to no purpose, to obstruct the blessed design in his hand. And it was the wisdom and love of Christ to admit him to come as near him as might be, and try all his darts upon him; that by this experience he might be filled with pity to support them that are tempted. And as he set on Christ, so much more will he adventure upon us; and but too oft comes off a conqueror. Sometimes he shoots the fiery darts of blasphemous injections. These fall as flashes of lightning on the dry thatch, which instantly sets all in a combustion, And just so it is attended with an after thunderclap of inward horror, that shivers the very heart, and strikes all into confusion within.

Divers rules are prescribed in this case to relieve poor distressed ones. One adviseth to think seriously on that which is darted suddenly, and to do by your hearts as men used to do with young horses, that are apt to start and boggle at everything in the way; we bring them close to the things they fright at, make them look on them, and smell to them, that time and better acquaintance with such things, may teach them not to start. Others advise to diversions of the thoughts, as much as may be, to think quite another way. These rules are contrary to one another, and I think signify but little to the relief of a poor soul so distressed. The best rule, doubtless, is that of the apostle, Ephesians 6:16. "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." Act your faith, my friends, upon your tempted Savior, who passed through temptations before you: and particularly exercise faith on three things in Christ's temptations.

1. Believingly consider, how great variety of temptations were tried upon Christ; and of what a horrid blasphemous nature that was, fall down and worship me.

2. Believingly consider, that Christ came off a perfect conqueror in the day of his trial, beat Satan out of the field. For he saw what he attempted on Christ was as impossible as to batter the body of the sun with snow-balls.

3. Lastly, Believe that the benefits of those his victories and conquests are for you; and that for your sakes he permitted the tempter to come so near him: as you find, Hebrews 2:18.

Objection. Hebrews 4:15. If you say, true, Christ was tempted as well as I; but there is a vast differences between his temptations and mine: fir the prince of this world came, and found nothing in him, John 14:13. He was not internally defiled, though externally assaulted; but I am defiled by them as well as troubled.

Solution. This is a different case. True, it is so, and must be so, or else it had signified nothing to your relief: For had Christ been internally defiled, he had not been a fit Mediator for you; nor could you have had any benefit, either by his temptations, or sufferings for you. But he being tempted, and yet still escaping the defilement of sin, has not only satisfied for the sins you commit when tempted, but also got an experimental sense of the misery of your condition, which is in him, (though now in glory) as a spring of pity and tender compassion to you. Remember, poor tempted Christian, "the God of peace shall shortly tread Satan under your feet," Romans 16:20. You shall set your foot on the neck of that enemy: and as soon as both your feet are over the threshold of glory, you shall cast back a smiling look, and say, now, Satan, do your worst; now I am there where you canned not come. Mean while, until you be out of his reach, let me advise you to go to Jesus Christ, and open the matter to him; tell him how that base spirit falls upon you, yes, sets upon you, even in his presence: entreat him to rebuke and command him off: beg him to consider your case, and say, Lord, do you remember how your own heart was once grieved, though not defiled, by his assaults? I have grief and guilt together upon me. Ah Lord, I expect pity and help from you; you know the heart of a stranger, the heart of a poor and tempted one. This is singular relief in this case. O try it!

INFERENCE. 5. Was Christ yet more humbled, by his own sympathy with others in their distresses? Hence we learn, that a compassionate spirit, towards such as labor under burdens of sin, or affliction, is Christ like, and truly excellent: this was the Spirit of Christ: O be like him! Put on as the elect of God, affections of mercy, Colossians 3:12. "Weep with them that weep, and rejoice with them that rejoice," Romans 12:15. It was Cain that said "Am I my brother’s keeper?" Blessed Paul was of a contrary temper, 2 Corinthians 11:29. "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?" Three things promote sympathy in Christians, one is the Lords pity for them; he does as it were suffer with them; "in all their afflictions he was afflicted;" Isaiah 63:9. Another is, the relation we sustain to God’s afflicted people: they are members with us in one body, and the members should have the same care of one another, 1 Corinthians 12:25. The last is, we know not how soon ourselves may need from others, what others now need from us. "Restore him with the spirit of meekness, considering yourself, lest you also be tempted," Galatians 6:1.

INFERENCE. 6. Did the world help on the humiliation of Christ by their base and vile usage of him? Learn hence that the judgement the world gives of persons, and their worth, is little to be regarded. Surely it dispenses its smiles and honors very preposterously and unduly, in this respect, among others, the saints are styled persons, "of whom the world is not worthy" Hebrews 11:38. that is it does not deserve to have such choice spirits as these are, left in it, since it knows not how to use or treat them. It was the complaint of Salvian, above eleven hundred years ago? "if any of the nobility (says he) do but begin to turn to God, presently he loses the honor of nobility! O in how little honor is Christ among Christian people, when religion shall make a man ignoble! So that (as he adds) many are compelled to be evil, lest they should be esteemed vile." And indeed, if the world gives us any help to discover the true worth and excellency of men by, it is by the rule of contraries, for the most part. Where it fixes its marks of hatred, we may usually find that which invites our respect and love. It should trouble us the less to be under the slights and disrespects of a blind world. "I could be even proud upon it, (says Luther) that I see I have an ill name from the world." And Jerome "blessed God that counted him worthy to be hated of the world." Labor to

stand right in the judgement of God, and trouble not yourself for the rash and headlong censures of men. Let wicked men, says one, cut the throat of my credit, and do as they like best with it; when the wind of their calumnies has blown away my good name from me in the way to heaven, I know Christ will take my name out of the mire, and wash it, and restore it to me again.

INFERENCE. 7. From the whole of Christ's humiliation in his life, learn you to pass through all the troubles of your life with a contended, composed spirit, as Christ your fore-runner did. He was persecuted, and bare it meekly: poor, and never murmured; tempted, and never yielded to the temptation; reviled, and reviled not again. When you therefore pass through any of these trials, look to Jesus, and consider him. See how he that passed through those things before you, managed himself in like circumstances; yes, not only beat the way by his pattern, and example for you, but has in everyone of those conditions left a blessing behind him, for them that follow his steps. Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ!

Chapter 108

S. Christ's Humiliation unto Death, in

Christ’s Humiliation unto Death,

in his first preparative Act for it

"And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to you. Holy Father, keep through your own name those whom you have given me, that they may be one, as we are." John 17:11

We now come to the last and lowest step of Christ’s humiliation, which was in his submitting to death, even the death of the cross. Out of this death of Christ the life of our soul springs up; and in this blood of the cross, all our mercies swim to us. The blood of Christ runs deep to some eyes; the judicious believer sees multitudes, multitudes of inestimable blessings in it. By this crimson fountain I resolve to sit down; and concerning the death of Christ, I shall take distinctly into consideration the preparations made for it; the nature and quality of it; the deportment and carriage of dying Jesus; the funeral solemnities with which he was buried; and lastly, the blessed designs and glorious ends of his death. The preparatives for his death were six;. Three on his own part, and three more by his enemies. The preparations made by himself for it, were the solemn recommendation of his friends to his Father; the institution of a commemorative sign, to perpetuate and refresh the memory of his death in the hearts of his people, until he come again. And his pouring out his soul to God, by prayer in the garden; which was the posture he chose to be found in, when they should apprehend him. This scripture contains the first preparative of Christ for death, whereby he sets his house in order, prays for his people, and blesses them before he dies. The love of Christ was ever tender and strong to his people; but the greatest manifestation of it was at parting. And this he manifested two ways especially; namely, in leaving singular supports, and grounds of comfort with them in his last heavenly sermon, in John 14:1-31, John 15:1-27, John 16:1-33, and in pouring out his soul most affectionately to the Father for them in this heavenly prayer, John 17:1-26. In this prayer he gives them a specimen, or sample, of that his glorious intercession-work, which he was just then going to perform in heaven for them. Here his heart overflowed, for he was now leaving them, and going to the Father. The last words of a dying man are remarkable, how much more a dying Savior? I shall not launch out into that blessed ocean of precious matter contained in this chapter, but take immediately into consideration the words that I read, wherein I find a weighty petition, strongly followed and set home with many mighty arguments.

1. We have here Christ’s petition, or request in behalf of his people, not only those on the place, but all others that then did, or afterwards should believe on him. And the sum of what he here requests for them is, that his Father would keep them through his name. Where you have both the mercy, and the means of attaining it. The mercy is to be kept. Keeping implies danger, And there is a double danger obviated in this request; danger in respect of sin, and danger in respect of ruin and destruction. To both these the people of God lie open in this world. The means of their preservation from both is the name, that is the power of God. This name of the Lord is that "strong

tower to which the righteous fly, and are safe," Proverbs 18:10. Alas! It is not your own strength or wisdom that keeps you; but you are kept by the mighty power of God. This protecting power of God, does not, however, exclude our care and diligence, but implies it; therefore it is added, "You are kept by the mighty power of God, through faith, unto salvation," 1 Peter 1:5. God keeps his people, and yet they are to keep themselves in the love of God, Jude 1:21 to keep their hearts with all diligence, Proverbs 4:23. This is the sum of the petition

2. The arguments with which he urgeth and presses on this request, are drawn partly from his own condition, "I am no more in the world;" that is I am going to die; within a very few hours I shall be separated from them, in regard of my corporeal presence. Partly from their condition: "but these are in the world;" that is I must leave them in the midst of danger; and partly from the joint interest his Father and himself had in them; "Keep those that you have given me:" with several other most prevalent pleas, which, in their proper places, shall be anon produced, and displayed, to illustrate and confirm this precious truth which this scripture affords us,

DOCTRINE. That the fatherly care, and tender love of our Lord Jesus Christ, was eminently discovered in that pleading prayer he poured out for his people at his parting with them.

It pertained to the priest and father of the family to bless the rest, especially when he was to be separated from them by death. This was a rite in Israel. When good Jacob was grown old, and the time was come that he should be gathered to his fathers, then "he blessed Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, saying, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads", Genesis 48:15-16. This was a Prophetic and patriarchal blessing: not that Jacob could bless as God blesses; he could speak the words of blessing, but he knew the effect, the real blessing itself depended upon God. And though he blessed authoritatively, yet not potestatively; That is, he could as the mouth of God, pronounce blessings, but could not confer them. Thus he blessed his children, as his father Isaac had also blessed him before he died, Genesis 28:3. and all these blessings were delivered prayer-wise,

Now when Jesus Christ comes to die, he will bless his children also, and therein will discover how much dear and tender love he had for them: "Having loved his own, which were in the world, he loved them to the end," John 13:1. The last act of Christ in this world, was an act of blessing, Luke 24:50-51. To prepare this point for use, I will here open, First, The mercies which Christ requested of the Father for them. Secondly, The arguments used by him to obtain these mercies. Thirdly, Why he thus pleaded for them when he was to die. Fourthly, and lastly, How all this gives full evidence of Christ’s tender care and love to his people.

First, We will enquire what those mercies and special favors were, which Christ begged for his people, when he was to die. And, we find, among others, these five special mercies desired for them, in this context.

1. The mercy of preservation, both from sin and danger: so in the text; "Keep, through your own name, those whom you have given me", which is explained, John 17:15. "I pray not that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil." We, in ours, and the saints that are gone, in their respective generations, have reaped the fruit of this prayer. How else comes it to pass, that our souls are preserved amidst such a world of temptations, and these

assisted and advantaged by our own corruptions? How is it else, that our persons are not ruined and destroyed amidst such multitudes of potent and malicious enemies, that are set on fire of hell? Surely, the preservation of the burning bush, of the three children amidst the flames; of Daniel in the den of lions; are not greater wonders, than these our eyes do daily behold. As the fire would have certainly consumed, and the lions, without doubt, have rent and devoured, had not God, by the interposition of his own hand, stopped and hindered the effect; so would the sin that is in us, and the malice that is in others, quickly ruin our souls and bodies, were it not that the same hand guards and keeps us every moment. To that hand, into which this prayer of Christ delivered your souls and bodies, do you owe all your mercies and salvations, both temporal and spiritual.

2. Another mercy he prays for, is the blessing of union among themselves. This he joins immediately with the first mercy of preservation, and prays for it in the same breath, John 17:11. "That they may be one, as we are." And well might he join them together in one breath; for this union is not only a choice mercy in itself, but a special means of that preservation he had prayed for before: their union with one another, is a special means to preserve them all.

3. A third desirable mercy that Christ earnestly prayed for, was, that his "joy might be fulfilled in them," John 17:13. He would provide for their joy, even when the hour of his greatest sorrow was at hand; yes, he would not only obtain joy for them, but full joy: "that my joy might be fulfilled in them." It is as if he had said, O my Father, I am to leave these dear ones in a world of troubles and perplexities; I know their hearts will be subject to frequent despondencies; O let me obtain the cordials of divine joy for them before I go: I would not only have them live, but live joyfully; provide for fainting hours reviving cordials.

4. And as a continued spring to maintain all the aforementioned mercies, he prays "they all may be sanctified through the word of truth, John 17:17. That is, more abundantly sanctified than yet they were, by a deeper radication of gracious habits and principles in their heart. This is a singular mercy in itself, to have holiness spreading itself over and through their souls, as the light of the morning. Nothing is in itself more desirable. And it is also a singular help to their perseverance, union and spiritual joy, which he had prayed for before, and are all advanced by their increasing sanctification.

5. And lastly, as the complement and perfection of all desirable mercies, he prays, "that they may be with him, where he is, to behold his glory," John 17:24. This is the best and ultimate privilege they are capable of. The end of his coming down from heaven, and returning there again, all runs into this, to bring many sons and daughters unto glory. You see Christ asks no trifles, no small things for his people; no mercies, but the best that both worlds afford, will suffice him on their behalf.

Secondly, Let us see how he follows his requests, and with what arguments he pleads with the Father for these things: and, among others, I shall single out six choice ones, which are urged in this text, or the immediate context. The first argument is drawn from the joint interest, that both himself, and his Father, have in their persons, for whom he prays, "All mine are your, and your are mine," John 17:10. As if he should say, Father, behold, and consider the persons I pray for, they are not aliens, but Christians: yes, they are your children as well as mine: the very same on whom you have set your eternal love, and in that love have given them to me; so that they are both your and mine: great is our interest in them, and interest draws care and tenderness. Everyone cares

for his own, provides for, and secures his own. Property, (even among creatures) is fundamental to our labor, care, and watchfulness; they would not so much prize life, health, estates, or children, if they were not their own. Lord these are your own by many ties or titles: O therefore keep, comfort, sanctify, and save them, for they are your. What a mighty plea is this? Surely, Christians, your intercessor is skillful in his work, your advocate wants no eloquence or ability to plead for you. The second argument, and that a powerful one, treads as I may say, upon the very heel of the former, in the next words, "And I am glorified in them;" q. d. my glory and honor are infinitely dear to you; I know your heart is entirely upon the exalting and glorifying of your Son. Now, what glory have I in the world, but what comes from my people? Others neither can, nor will glorify one; nay, I am daily blasphemed and dishonored by them: these are they from whom my active glory and praise in the world must rise. It is true, both you and I have glory from other creatures objectively; the works that we have made, and impress our power, wisdom and goodness upon, do so glorify us: and honor we have from our very enemies accidentally; their very wrath shall praise us: but for active and voluntary praise, whence comes this but from the people that were formed for that very purpose? Should these then miscarry and perish, where shall my manifestative and active glory be? and from whom shall I expect it? So that here his property and glory are pleaded with the Father, to prevail for those mercies; and they are both great, and valuable things with God. What dearer, what nearer to the heart of God?

Argument 3. And yet, to make all fast and sure, he adds, in the beginning of this John 17:11 a third argument, in these words, "And now I am no more in the world." Where we must consider the sense of it, as a proposition, and the force of it, as an argument. This proposition, "I am no more in the world," is not to be taken simply and universally, as if, in no sense, Christ should be any more in this world: but only respectively, as to his corporeal presence; this was, in a little time, to be removed from his people, which had been a sweet spring of comfort to them,, in all their troubles. But now it might have been said to the pensive disciples, as the sons of the prophets said to Elisha, a little before Elijah's translation, "Know you not that your master shall be taken from your heads today?" This comfortable enjoyment must be taken from them; this is the sense. And here lies the argument; Father, consider the sadness and trouble I shall leave my poor children under. While I was with them, I was a sweet relief to their souls, whatever troubles they met with; in all doubts, fears, and dangers, they could repair to me, and in their straits and wants I still supplied them; they had my counsels to direct them, my reproofs to reduce them, and my comforts to support them; yes, the very sight of me was an unspeakable joy and refreshment to their souls: but now the hour is come, and I must be gone. All the comfort and benefit they had from my presence among them, is cut off. and, except you do make up all this to them another way, what will become of these children, when their Father is gone? What will be the case of the poor sheep, and tender lambs, when the shepherd is smitten? Therefore, O my Father, look you after them, see to them, for they are your as well as mine; I am glorified in them, and now leaving them, and removing out of this world from them.

Argument 4. And yet, to move and engage the Father's care and love for them, he subjoins another great consideration, in the very next words drawn from the danger he leaves them in; "But these are in the world." The world is a sinful, infecting, and unquiet place; it lies in wickedness: And a hard thing it will be for such poor, weak, imperfect creatures to escape the pollutions of it; or, if they do, yet the troubles, persecutions, and strong oppositions of it they cannot escape. Seeing

therefore I must leave your own dear children, as well as mine, and those from whom the glory is to rise, in the midst of a sinful, troublesome, dangerous world, where they can neither move backward nor forward, without danger of sin or ruin: O, since the case stands so, look after them, provide for them, and take special care for them all. Consider who they are, and where I leave them. They are your children, to be left in a strange country; your soldiers, in the enemies quarters; your sheep, in the midst of wolves; your precious treasure, among thieves.

Argument 5. And yet he has not done, for he resolves to strive hard for the mercies he had asked, and will not come off with a denial; and therefore adds another argument in the next words, And I come to you. As his leaving them was an argument, so his coming to the Father is a mighty argument also. There is much in these words, I come to you. [I,] your beloved Son, in which your soul delights; I, to whom you never deniedst anything. It is not a stranger, but a son; not an adopted, but your only begotten Son. It is I that [come.] I am now coming to you apace, my Father. I come to you swimming through a bloody ocean. I come, treading every step of my way to you in blood, and unspeakable sufferings; and all this for the sake of those dear ones I now pray for; yes, the design and end of my coming to you, is for them. I am coming to heaven in the capacity of an advocate, to plead with you for them. And I come to [You] my Father, and their Father; my God, and their God. Now then, since I, that am so dear, come through such bitter pangs, to you, so dear, so tender-hearted a Father; and all this on their score and account: Since I do but now, as it were, begin, or give them a little taste of that intercession work, which I shall live forever to perform for them in heaven; Father, hear, Father, grant what I request. O give a comfortable earnest of those good things which I am coming to you for, and which I know you will not deny me.

Argument 6. And, to close up all, he tells the Father how careful he had been to observe, and perform that trust which was committed to him; "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in your name; those that you gave me, I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition John 17:12. And thus lies the argument: You committedst to me a certain number of elect souls, to be redeemed by me; I undertook the trust, and said, if any of these be lost, at my hand let them be required, I will answer for them everyone to you. In pursuance of which trust, I am now here on the earth, in a body of flesh. I have been faithful to a point. I have redeemed them (for he speaks of that as finished and done, which was now ready to be done) I have kept them also, and confirmed them hitherto; and now, Father, I commit them to your care. Lo, here they are, not one is lost, but the son of perdition, who was never given. With how great care have I been careful for them! O let them not fail now; Let not one of them perish.

Thus you see what a nervous, argumentative, pleading prayer Christ poured out to the Father for them at parting.

Thirdly, The next enquiry is, why he thus prayed and pleaded with God for them, when he was to die? And certainly it was not because the Father was unwilling to grant the mercies he desired for them: No, they came not with difficulty, nor were they wrestled by mere importunity, out of the hand of an unwilling and backward person. For, he tells us, John 16:27. "The Father himself loves you," That is, he is propense enough of his own accord to do you good. But the reasons of this exceeding importunity, are,

1. He foresaw a great trial then at hand, yes, and all the aftertrials of his people as well as that. He knew how much they would be sifted, and put to, in that hour, and power of darkness, that was

coming. He knew their faith would be shaken, and greatly staggered by the approaching difficulties, when they should see their Shepherd smitten, and themselves scattered, the Son of man delivered into the hands of sinners, and the Lord of life hang dead upon the tree, yes, sealed up in the grave. He foresaw what straits his poor people would fall into, between a busy devil, and a bad heart; therefore he prays and pleads with such importunity and ardency for them, that they might not miscarry.

2. He was now entering upon his intercession-work in heaven, and he was desirous in this prayer to give us a specimen, or sample, of that part of his world, before he left us; that by this we might understand what he would do for us, when he should be out of sight. For this being his last prayer on earth, it shows us what affections and dispositions he carried hence with him, and satisfies us, that he who was so earnest with God on our behalf, such a mighty pleader here, will not forget us, or neglect our concerns in the other world. Yet, reader, I would have you always remember, that the intercession of Christ in heaven is carried much higher than this; it is performed in a way more suitable to that state of honor to which he is now exalted. Here he used prostrations of body, cries and tears in his prayers: there, his intercession is carried in a more majestic way, and with more state, becoming an exalted Jesus. But yet in this he has left us a special assistance, to discover much of the frame, temper, and working of his heart, now in heaven towards us.

3. And lastly, he would leave this as a standing monument of his father-like care, and love to his people, to the end of the world. And for this it is conceived Christ delivered this prayer so publicly, not withdrawing from the disciples to be private with God, as he did in the garden; but he delivers it in their presence, "These things which I speak in the world," John 17:13. This, with the circumstances of place, [in the world], does plainly speak it to be a public prayer. And not only was it publicly delivered, but it was also, by a singular providence, recorded at large by John, though omitted by the other evangelists; that so it might stand to all generations, for a testimony of Christ's tender care and love to his people.

Fourthly, If you ask how this gives evidence of Christ's tender care and love to his people? which is the last enquiry; I answer, in few words, for the thing is plain and obvious; it appears in these two particulars.

1. His love and care was manifested in the choice of mercies for them. He does not pray for health, honor, long life, riches, etc. but for their preservation from sin, spiritual joy in God sanctification and eternal glory. No mercies but the very best in God's treasure will content him. He was resolved to get all the best mercies for his people; the rest he is content should be dispenses promiscuously by Providence: but these he will settle as an heritage upon his children. O see the love of Christ! look over all your spiritual inheritance in Christ, compare it with the richest, fairest, sweetest inheritance on earth; and see what poor things these are to yours. O the care of a dear father! O the love of a tender Savior!

2. Besides, what an evidence of his tenderness to you, and great care for you, was this, that he should so intently, and so affectionately mind, and plead your concerns with God, at such a time as this was, even when a world of sorrow encompassed him on every side; a cup of wrath mixed, and ready to be delivered into his hand: at that very time when the clouds of wrath grew black, a storm coming, and such as he never felt before; when one would have thought, all his care, thoughts, and diligence, should have been employed on his own account, to mind his own

sufferings? No, he does as it were forget his own sorrows, to mind our peace and comfort. O love unspeakable!

Corollary 1. If this be so, that Christ so eminently discovered his care and love for his people, in this his parting hour; then hence we conclude, The perseverance of the saints is unquestionable. Do you hear how he pleads! how he begs! how he fills his mouth with arguments! how he chooses his words, and sets them in order, how he winds up his spirit to the very highest pitch of zeal and fervency? and can you doubt of success? Can such a Father deny the importunity, and strong seasonings and pleading of such a Son; O, it can never be! he cannot deny him: Christ has the are and skill of prevailing with God: He has (as in this appears) the tongue of the learned. If the heart or hand of God were hard to be opened, yet this would open them; but when the Father himself loves us, and is inclined to do us good, who can doubt of Christ's success? "That which is in motion, is the more easily moved" The cause Christ manages in heaven for us is just and righteous. The manner in which he pleads is powerful and therefore the success of his suit is unquestionable. The apostle professes, 2 Corinthians 1:3. "We can do nothing against the truth." He means it in regard of the bent of his heart; he could not move against truth and righteousness. And if a holy man cannot, much less will a holy God. If Christ undertake to plead the cause of his people with the Father, and use his oratory with him, there is no doubt of his prevailing. Every word in this prayer is a chosen shaft, drawn to the head by a strong and skillful hand; you need not question but it goes home to the white, and hits the mark aimed at. Does he pray, "Father, keep, through your own name, those you have given me?" Sure they shall be kept, if all the power in heaven can keep them. Think on this, when dangers surround your souls or bodies, when fears and doubts are multiplied within: when you are ready to say in your haste, All men are liars, I shall one day perish by the hand of sin or Satan; think on that encouragement Christ gave to Peter, Luke 22:31. "I have prayed for you."

Corollary 2. Again, hence we learn, that argumentative prayers are excellent prayers. The strength of everything is in its joints; there lies much of the strength of prayer also: how strongly jointed, how nervous and argumentative was this prayer of Christ. Some there are indeed, that think we need not argue and plead in prayer with God, but only present the matter of our prayers to him, and let Christ alone (whose office it is) to plead with the Father; as if Christ did not present our pleas and arguments, as well as simple desires to God; as if the choicest part of our prayers must be kept back, because Christ presents our prayers to God. No, no, Christ's pleading is one thing, ours another: "His and ours are not opposed, but subordinate;" his pleading does not destroy, but makes ours successful. God calls us to plead with him, Isaiah 1:18. "Come now let us reason together." "God (as one observes) reasons with us by his word and providences outwardly, and by the motions of his Spirit inwardly: let we reason with him by framing (through the help of his Spirit) certain holy arguments, grounded upon allowed principles, drawn from his nature, name, word, or works." And it is condemned as a very sinful defect in professors, that they did not plead the church's cause with God; Jeremiah 30:13. "There is none to plead your cause that you may be bound up." What was Jacob's wrestling with the angels but his holy pleading and importunity with God? and how well it pleased God, let the event speak, Genesis 32:24. Hosea 12:4. "As a prince he prevailed, and had power with God." On which instance, a Worthy thus glosseth: "Let God frown, smite or wound, Jacob is at a point, a blessing he came for, and a blessing he will have; I will not let you go, (says he) unless you bless me. His limbs, his life might go, but there is no going

from Christ without a pawn, without a blessing." This is the man, now what is his speed? The Lord admires him, and honors him to all generations. "What is your name?" says he; q. d. I never met with such a man, titles of honor are not worthy of you: you shall be called, not Jacob a shepherd with men, but Jacob a prince with God. Nazianzen said of his sister Gorgonia, That she was modestly impudent with God; there was no putting her off with a denial. The Lord, on this account, has honored his saints with the title of, His recorders, men fit to plead with him as that word [maskir] signifies: Isaiah 62:6. "You that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, give him no rest." It notes the office of him that recorded all the memorable matters of the king, and used to suggest seasonable items and memorandums of things to be done. By these holy pleadings, "the King is held in his galleries," as it is Song of Solomon 7:5. I know we are not heard, either for our much speaking, or our excellent speaking; it is Christ's pleading in heaven that makes our pleading on earth available: but yet surely, when the Spirit of the Lord shall suggest proper arguments in prayer, and help the humble suppliant to press them home believingly and affectionately, when he helps us to weep and plead, to groan and plead, God is greatly delighted in such prayers. "You have said, I will surely do you good," said Jacob, Genesis 32:12. It is your own free promise; I did not go on mine own head, but you badest me go, and encouragedst me with this promise. O this is pleasing to God, when by his spirit of adoption we can come to God, crying, Abba Father; Father, hear, forgive, pity, and help me. Am I not your child, your son, or daughter? To whom may a child be bold to go, with whom may a child have hope to speed, if not with his father? Father, hear me. The fathers of our flesh are full of affections, and pity their children, and know how to give good things to them, when they ask them. When they ask bread or clothes, will they deny them? And is not the Father of spirits more full of affections, more full of pity? Father, hear me. This is that kind of prayer, which is melody in the ears of God.

Corollary 3. What an excellent pattern is here, for all that have the charge and government of others committed to them, whether magistrates, ministers, or parents, to teach them how to acquit themselves towards their relations, when they come to die?

Look upon dying Jesus, see how his care and love to his people flamed out, when the time of his departure was at hand. Surely, as we are bound to remember our relations every day, and to lay up a stock of prayers for them in the time of our health, so it becomes us to imitate Christ in our earnestness with God for them, when we die. Though we die, our prayers die not with us: they out-live us, and those we leave behind us in the world, may reap the benefit of them, when we are turned to dust. For my own part, I must profess before the world, that I have a high value for this mercy, and do, from the bottom of my heart, bless the Lord, who gave me a religious and tender father, who often poured out his soul to God for me: he was one that was inwardly acquainted with God; and being full of affections to his children, often carried them before the Lord, prayed and pleaded with God for them, wept and made supplications for them. This stock of prayers and blessings left by him before the Lord, I cannot but esteem above the fairest inheritance on earth. O it is no small mercy to have thousands of fervent prayers lying before the Lord, filed up in heaven for us. And O that we would all be faithful to this duty! Surely our love, especially to the souls of our relations, should not grow cold when our breath does. O that we would remember this duty in our lives, and, if God give opportunity and ability, fully discharge it when we die; considering, as Christ did, we shall be no more, but they are in this world, in the midst of a defiled, tempting, troublesome world; it is the last office of love that ever we shall do for them. After a little while we shall be no

longer sensible how it is with them; for, (as the church speaks Isaiah 63:16. "Abraham is ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledgeth us not") what temptations and troubles may befall them, we do not know. O imitate Christ your pattern.

Corollary 4. To conclude; Hence we may see, what a high esteem and precious value Christ has of believers; this was the treasure which he could not quit, he could not die until he had secured it in a safe hand; "I come unto you, holy Father, keep through your own name those whom you have given me".

Surely believers are dear to Jesus Christ; and good reason, for he has paid dear for them: let his dying language, this last farewell, speak for him, how he prized them. The Lord's portion "is his people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance," Deuteronomy 32:9. "They are a peculiar treasure to him, above all the people of the earth," Exodus 19:5. What is much upon our hearts when we die, is dear to us indeed. O how precious, how dear should Jesus Christ be to us! Were we first and last upon his heart; did he mind us, did he pray for us, did he so wrestle with God about as, when the sorrows of death compassed him about? How much are we engaged, not only to love him, and esteem him, while we live, but to be in pangs of love for him, when we feel the pangs of death upon us! to be dying him, when our eye-strings break! To have hot affections for Christ, when our hands and feet grow cold! The very last whisper of our departing souls should be this, Blessed be God for Jesus Christ!

S. Christ's memorable Address to the

Christ’s memorable Address to the Daughters of

Jerusalem, in his Way to the Place of his Execution

"And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children." Luke 23:27-28, etc. The sentence of death once given against Christ, the execution quickly follows. Away they lead him from Gabbatha to Golgotha, longing as much to be nailing him to the cross, and feeding their eyes with his torments, as the eagle does to be tearing the flesh, and drinking the blood of that lamb she has seized in her talons, and is carrying away to the top of some rock to devour. The Evangelist here observes a memorable passage that fell out in their way to the place of execution; and that is, the laments lions and wailing of some that followed him out of the city, who expressed their pity and sorrow for him most tenderly and compassionately: all hearts were not hard, all eyes were not dry. "There followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him," etc. In this paragraph we have two parts, namely, the lamentation of the daughters of Jerusalem for Christ, and Christ’s reply to them.

1. The lamentation of the daughters of Jerusalem for Christ. Concerning them, we briefly enquire who they were, and why they mourned.

(1.) Who they were? The text calls them "daughters", that is inhabitants of Jerusalem"; for it is a Hebraism; as "daughters of Zion, daughters of Israel". And it is like the greatest part of them were women; and there were many of them, a troop of mourners, that followed Christ out of the city towards the place of his execution, with lamentations and wailings.

(2.) What the principle, or ground of these their lamentations was, is not agreed by those that have pondered the story. Some are of opinion their tears and lamentations were but the effects and fruits of their more tender and ingenuous natures, which were moved and melted with so tragical and sad a spectacle as was now before them. It is well observed by a judicious author, "That the tragical story of some great and noble personage, full of he royal virtue and ingenuity (yet inhumanely and ungratefully used) will thus work upon ingenuous spirits who read or hear of it, - which when it reaches no higher, is so far from being faith, that it is but a carnal and fleshly devotion, springing from fancy, which is pleased with such a story and the principles of ingenuity stirred towards one, who is of a noble spirit, and yet abused. Such stories use to stir up a principle of humanity in men unto a compassionate love; which Christ himself at his suffering found fault with, as being not spiritual, nor raised enough in those women that went weeping to see the Messiah so handled. Weep not for me, (says he) that is weep not so much for this, to see me so unworthily handled by those for whom I die." This is the principle from which some conceive those tears to flow. But Calvin attributes it to their faith, "looking upon these mourners as a remnant reserved by the Lord in that miserable dispersion; and though their faith was but weak, yet he

judges it credible that there was a secret seed of godliness in them, which afterwards grew to a maturity, and brought forth fruit". And to the same sense others give their opinion also.

2. Let us consider Christ's reply to them; "weep not for me, you daughters of Jerusalem," etc. Strange, that Christ should forbid them to weep for him, yes for him under such unparalleled sufferings and miseries. If ever there was a heart melting object in the world, it was here. O who could hold, whose heart was not petrified, and more obdurate than the senseless rocks? This reply of Christ undergoes a double sense and interpretation, suitable to the different construction of their sorrows. Those that look upon their sorrows as merely natural, take Christ's reply in a negative sense, prohibiting such tears as those. They that expound their sorrows as the fruit of faith, tell us, though the form of Christ's expression be negative, yet the sense is comparative, as Matthew 9:13. "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice," that is mercy rather than sacrifice. So here, weep rather upon your own account, than mine; reserve your sorrows for the calamities coming upon yourselves and your children. You are greatly affected, I see, with the misery that is upon me; but mine will be quickly over, yours will be long. In which he shows his merciful and compassionate disposition, who was still more mindful of the troubles and burdens of others than of his own. And indeed, the days of calamity coming upon them and their children were doleful days. What direful and unprecedented miseries befell them at the breaking up and devastation of the city, who has not read or heard? And who can refrain from tears that hears or reads it?

Now if we take the words in the first sense, as a prohibition of their merely natural and carnal affections, expressed in tears and lamentations for him, no otherwise than they would have been upon any other like tragical story; then the observation from it will be this,

DOCTRINE. 1. That melting affections and sorrows, even from the sense and consideration of the sufferings of Christ, are no infallible signs of grace.

If you take it in the latter sense, as the fruit of their faith, as tears flowing from a gracious principle; then the observation will be this,

DOCTRINE. 2. That the believing meditation of what Christ suffered for us, is of great force and efficacy to melt and break the heart.

I shall rather choose to prosecute both these branches, than to decide the controversy; especially since the notes gathered from either may be useful to us. And therefore I shall begin with the first, namely,

DOCTRINE. 1. That melting affections and sorrows, even from the sense of Christ's sufferings, are no infallible marks of grace. In this point I have two things to do, to prepare it for use.

First, To show, what the melting of the affections by way of grief and sorrow is.

Secondly, That they may be so melted, even upon the account of Christ, and yet the heart remain unrenewed.

First, What the melting of the affections, by way of grief and sorrow, is.

Tears are nothing else but the juice of a mind oppressed, and squeezed with grief. Grief compresses the heart; the heart so compressed and squeezed, vents itself sometimes into tears,

sighs, groans, etc. and this is two-fold: gracious, and wholly supernatural; or common, and altogether natural. The gracious melting or sorrow of the soul, is likewise two-fold; habitual or actual. Habitual bodily sorrow is that gracious disposition, inclination, or tendency of the renewed heart to mourn and melt, when any just occasion is presented to the soul that calls for such sorrow. It is expressed, Ezekiel 36:26. "By taking away the heart of stone, and giving a heart of flesh;" that is a heart impressive, and yielding to such arguments and considerations as move it to mourning.

Actual sorrow is the expression and manifestation of that its inclination upon just occasions; and it is expressed two ways, either by the internal effects of it, which are the heaviness, shame, loathing, resolution, and holy revenge begotten in the soul upon the account of sin: or also by more external and visible effects, as sighs, groans, tears, etc. The former is essential to godly sorrow, the latter contingent and accidental, much depending upon the natural temperature and constitution of the body.

Natural and common meltings are nothing else but the effects of a better temper, and the fruit of a more ingenuous spirit, and easier constitution, which shows itself on any other, as well as upon spiritual occasions: as Austin said, he could weep plentifully when he read the story of Dido. The history of Christ is a very tragical and pathetical history, and may melt an ingenuous nature, where are is no renewed principles at all. So that,

Secondly, Our affections may be melted, even upon the score and account of Christ; and yet that is no infallible evidence of a gracious heart. And the reasons for it are,

1. Because we find all sorts of affections discovered by such as have been no better than temporary believers. The stony ground hearers in Matthew 13:20. "received the word with joy," and so did John s hearers also, who for "a season rejoiced in his light," John 3:35. Now, if the affections of joy under the word may be exercised, why not of sorrow also? If the comfortable things revealed in the gospel may stir up the one, by a parity of reason, the sad things it reveals may answerably work upon the other. Even those Israelites whom Moses told they should fall by the sword, and not prosper, for the Lord would not be with them, because they were turned away from him; yet when Moses rehearsed the message of the Lord in their ears, they mourned greatly, Numbers 14:39. I know the Lord pardoned many of them their iniquities, though he took vengeance on their inventions; and yet it is as true, that with many of them God was not well pleased, 1 Corinthians 10:5. Many instances of their weeping and mourning before the Lord we find in this sacred history; and yet their hearts were not steadfast with God.

2. Because though the object about which our affections and passions are moved, may be spiritual; yet the motives and principles that set them on work, may be but carnal and natural ones. When I see a person affected in the hearing of the word, or prayer, even unto tears, I cannot presently conclude, surely this is the effect of grace; for it is possible, the pathetical quality of subject matter, the rhetoric of the speaker, the very affecting tone, and modulation of the voice, may draw tears as well as faith working upon the spirituality, and deep concernment the soul has in those things.

While Austin was a Manichee, he sometimes heard Ambrose; and, says he, "I was greatly affected in hearing him, even, unto tears many times:" howbeit, it was not the heavenly nature of the

subject, but the abilities and rare parts of the speaker that so affected him. And this was the case of Ezekiel's hearers, Ezekiel 33:32.

Again, 3. These motions of the affections may rather be a fit and mood, than the very frame and temper of the soul. Now there is a vast difference between these; there are times and seasons, when the roughest and most obdurate hearts may be pensive and tender: but that is not its temper and frame, but only a fit, a pang, a transient passion. So the Lord complains of them, Hosea 6:4. "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto you? O Judah, what shall I do unto you? for your goodness is as a morning cloud and as the early dew, it goes away. And so he complains, Psalms 78:34-36. When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and enquired early after God. And the remembered that God was their rock, and the most high God their redeemer; nevertheless they did flatter him with their lips, and lied unto him with their tongues." For had this remembrance of God been the gracious temper of their souls, it would have continued with them; they would not have been thus wavering thus hot and cold with God, as they were. Therefore we conclude, that we cannot infer a work of grace upon the heart, simply and mere from the meltings and thaws that are sometimes upon it. And hence, for your use, I shall infer, that,

INFERENCE 1. If such as sometimes feel their hearts thawed and melted with the consideration of the sufferings of Christ, may yet be deceived; What cause have they to fear and tremble, whose hearts are as unrelenting as rocks, yielding to nothing that is proposed, or urged upon them? How many such are there, of whom we may say, as Christ speaks of the inflexible Jews, "We have piped unto you, but you have not danced; we have mourned unto you, but you have not lamented" Matthew 11:1-30. They must inevitably come short of heaven, who come so short of those that do come short of heaven. If those perish that have rejoiced under the promises, and mourned under the threats of the word; what shall become of them that are as unconcerned, and unteached by what they hear, as the seats they sit on, or the dead that lie under their feet? Who are given up to such hardness of heart, that nothing can touch or affect them? One would think, the consideration of the sixth chapter to the Hebrew should startle such men and women, and make them cry out, Lord, what will become of such a senseless, stupid, dead creature as I am? If they that shave been enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, may, notwithstanding such high raised affections as these, so fall away, that it shall be impossible to renew them again by repentance, what shall we then say, or think of his estate, to whom the most penetrating and awakening truths are no more than a tale that is told? The fire and hammer of the gospel can neither melt nor break them; they are iron and brass, Jeremiah 6:28-29.

INFERENCE 2. If such as these may eternally miscarry; then let us look carefully to their foundation, and see that they do not bless themselves in a thing of nothing. It is manifest from 1 Corinthians 10:12. that many souls stand exceeding dangerously, who are yet strongly conceited of their own safety. And if you please to consult those scriptures in the margin, you shall find vain confidence to be ruling folly over the greatest part of men; and that which is the utter overthrow, and undoing of multitudes of professors.

Now there is nothing more apt to beget and breed this vain soul- undoing confidence, than the stirrings and meltings of our affections about spiritual things, while the heart remains unrenewed all the while. For (as a grave divine has well observed) such a man seems to have all that is

required of a Christian, and herein to have attained the very end of all knowledge; which is operation and influence upon the heart and affections.

Indeed (thinks such a poor deluded soul) if I did hear, read, or pray, without any inward affections, with a dead, cold, and unconcerned heart, or if I did make a show of zeal and affection in duties, and had it not, well might I suspect myself to be a self-cozening hypocrite; but it is not so with me, I feel my heart really melted many times, when I read the sufferings of Christ; I feel my heart raised and ravished with strange joys and comforts, when I hear the glory of heaven opened in the gospel: Indeed if it were not so with me, I might doubt the root of the matter is wanting; but if to my knowledge, affections be added; a melting heart joined with a knowing head, then I may be confident all is well. I have often heard ministers cautioning and warning their people not to rest satisfied with idle and unpractical notions in their understandings, but to labor for impressions upon their hearts; this I have attained, and therefore what danger of me? I have often heard it given as a mark of a hypocrite, that he has light in his head, but it sheds not down its influence upon the heart: whereas in those that are sincere, it works on their heart and affections: So I find it with me, therefore I am in a most safe estate.

O soul! of all the false signs of grace, none more dangerous than those that most resemble true ones; and never does the devil more surely and incurably destroy, than when transformed into an angel of light. What if these meltings of your heart be but a flower of nature? What if you are more beholden to a good temper of body, than a gracious change of spirit for these things? Well, so it may be. Therefore be not secure, but fear, and watch. Possibly, if you would but search your own heart in this matter, you may find, that any other pathetical, moving story, will have the like effects upon you. Possibly too, you may find, that, notwithstanding all your raptures and joys at the hearing of heaven, and its glory, yet after that pang is over, your heart is habitually earthly, and your conversation is not there. For all you canned mourn at the relations of Christ's sufferings, you are not so affected with sin, that was the meritorious cause of the sufferings of Christ, as to crucify one corruption, or deny the next temptation, or part with any way of sin that is gainful, or pleasurable to you for his sake.

Why now, reader, if it be so with you, what are you the better for the influence of your affections? Do you think in earnest, that Christ has the better thoughts of you, because you canned shed tears for him, when notwithstanding you every day fiercest and woundest him? O! be not deceived. Nay, for ought know, you may find, upon a narrow search, that you puttest your tears in the room of Christ's blood, and divest the confidence and dependence of your soul to them; and if so, they shall never do you any good.

O therefore search your heart, reader be not too confident: take not up too easily upon such poor weak grounds as these, a soul-undoing confidence. Always remember the wheat and tares resemble each other in their first springing up; that an egg is not liker to an egg, than hypocrisy, in some shapes and forms into which it can cast itself, is like a genuine work of grace. O remember that among the ten virgins, that is, the reformed professors of religion that have cast off and separated themselves from the worship and defilements of Antichrist, five of them were foolish.

There be first, that shall be last; and last, that shall be first, Matthew 19:30. Great is the deceitfulness of our hearts, Jeremiah 17:9. And many are the subtleties and devices of Satan, 2 Corinthians 11:3. Many also are the astonishing examples of self-deceiving souls recorded in the

word. Remember what you lately read of Judas. Great also will be the exactness of the last judgement. And how confident soever you be, that you shall speed well in that day, yet still remember that trial is not yet past. Your final sentence is not yet come from the mouth of your Judge. This I speak not to affright and trouble, but excite and warn you. The loss of a soul is no small loss, and, upon such grounds as these, they are every day cast away. This may suffice to be spoken to the first observation, built on this supposition, that it was but a pang of mere natural affection in them. But if it were the effect of a better principle, the fruit of their faith, as some judge; then I told you're the observation from it would be this,

DOCTRINE. 2. That the believing meditation of what Christ suffered for us, is of great force and efficacy to melt and break the heart.

It is promised, Zechariah 12:10. that "they shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." Ponder seriously here, the spring and motive, They shall look upon me; it is the eye of faith that melts and breaks the heart. The effect of such a sight of Christ; they shall look and mourn; be in bitterness and sorrow. True repentance is a drop out of the eye of faith; and the measure or degree of that sorrow caused by a believing view of Christ. To express which, two of the fullest instances of grief we read of, are borrowed; that of a tender father, mourning over a dear and only son; that of the people of Israel, mourning over Josiah, that peerless prince, in the valley of Megiddo.

Now to show you how the believing meditation of Christ, and his sufferings, come kindly and savingly to break and melt down the gracious heart, I shall propound these four considerations of the heart-breaking efficacy of faith, eyeing a crucified Jesus.

First, The very realizing of Christ and his sufferings by faith, is a most affecting and melting thing. Faith is a true glass that represents all those his sufferings and agonies to the life. It presents them not as a fiction, or idle tale, but as a true and faithful narrative. This (says faith) is a true and faithful saying, that Christ was not only clothed in our flesh; even he that is over all, God blessed forever, the only Lord, the Prince of the kings of the earth, became a man; but it is also most certain, that in this body of his flesh, he grappled with the infinite wrath of God, which filled his soul with horror and amazement; that the Lord of life did hang dead upon the tree; that he went as a lamb to the slaughter, and was as a sheep dumb before the shearer; that he endured all this, and more than any finite understanding can comprehend, in my room and stead; for my sake he there groaned and bled; for my pride, earthliness, lust, unbelief, hardness of heart, he endured all this. I say, to realize the sufferings of Christ thus, is of great power to affect the coldest, dullest heart. You cannot imagine the difference there is in presenting things as realities, with convincing and satisfying evidences, and our looking on them as a fiction or uncertainty.

Secondly, But faith can apply as well as realize; and if it do so, it must needs overcome the heart.

Ah! Christian, canned you look upon Jesus as standing in your room, to bear the wrath of a Deity for you? Canned you think on it, and not melt? That when you, like Isaac, were bound to the altar, to be offered up to justice, Christ, like the ram, was caught in the thicket, and offered in your room. When your sins had raised a fearful tempest, that threatened every moment to entomb you in a sea of wrath, Jesus Christ was thrown over to appease that storm! Say, reader, can your heart

dwell one hour upon such a subject as this? Canned you with faith, present Christ to yourself, as he was taken down from the cross, drenched in his own blood, and say, These were the wounds that he received for me; this is he that loved me, and gave himself for me: out of these wounds comes that balm that heals my soul; out of these stripes my peace: When he hanged upon the cross, he bore my name upon his bosom, like the high priest. It was love, pure love, strong love to my poor soul; to the soul of an enemy that drew him down from heaven, and all the glory he had there, to endure these sorrows in soul and body for me.

O you cannot hold up your hearts long to the piercing thoughts of this, but your affections will be pained, and, like Joseph, you will seek a place to vent your hearts in.

Thirdly, Faith cannot only realize and apply Christ, and his death, but it can reason and conclude such things from his death, as will fill the soul with affection to him, and break the heart in pieces, in his presence. When it views Christ as dead, it infers, Is Christ dead for me? then was I dead in law, sentenced and condemned to die eternally; 2 Corinthians 5:14. "If one died for all, then were all dead." How woeful was my case when the law had passed sentence on me? I could not be sure when I lay down, but that it might be executed before I rose; nothing but a puff of breath between my soul and hell.

Again, Is Christ dead for me? then I shall never die. If he be condemned, I am acquitted. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifies, it is Christ that died," Romans 8:34. My soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler; I was condemned, but am now cleared; I was dead, but am sow alive; O the unsearchable riches of Christ! O love past finding out!

Again, Did God give up Christ to such miseries and sufferings for me? How shall he with-hold anything from me? He that "spared not his own Son, will doubtless with him freely give me all things", Romans 8:32. Now I may rest upon him for pardon, peace, acceptance, and glory for my soul. Now I may rely upon him safely for provision, protection, and all supplies for my body. Christ is the root of these mercies; he is more than all these, he is nearer and dearer to God than any other gift. O what a blessed, happy, comfortable state has he now brought my soul into! To conclude, Did Christ endure all these things for me? then it is past doubt, he will never leave nor forsake me: It cannot be that after he has endured all this, he will cast off the souls for whom he endured it. Here the soul is evangelically broken, considering the mercies that emerge and flow to it out of the sea of Christ’s blood.

Fourthly, and lastly, Faith can not only realize, apply, and infer, but it can also compare the love of Christ in all this, both with his dealings with others, and with the soul’s dealing with Christ, who loved it. To compare Christ’s dealings with others, is most affecting: he has not dealt with everyone, as with me; nay, few there are that can speak of such mercies as I have from him. How many are there that have no part nor portion in his blood? Who must bear that wrath in their own persons, that he bare himself for me! He espied me out, and singled me forth to be the object of his love, leaving thousands and millions still unreconciled; not that I was better than they, for I was the greatest of sinners, far from righteousness, as unlikely as any to be the object of such grace and love: my companions in sin are left, and I am taken. Now the soul is full, the heart grows big, too big to contain itself.

Yes, faith helps the soul to compare the love of Christ to it, with the returns it has made to him for that love. And what, my soul! has your carriage to Christ been, since this grace that wants a name, appeared to you? Have you returned love for love? Love suitable to such love? Have you prized, valued, and esteemed this Christ, according to his own worth in himself, or his kindness to you? Ah no, I have grieved, pierced, wounded his heart a thousand times since that, by my ingratitude; I have suffered every trifle to jostle him out of my heart? I have neglected him a thousand times, and made him say, Is this your kindness to your friend? Is this the reward I shall have for all that I have done, and suffered for you? Wretch that I am, how have I requited the Lord! This shames, humbles and breaks the heart. And when from such sights of faith, and considerations as these, the heart is thus affected, it affords a good argument, indeed, that you are gone beyond all the attainments of temporary believers? flesh and blood has not revealed this.

INFERENCE 1. Have the believing meditations of Christ, and his sufferings, such heart melting influences? Then sure there is but little faith among men. Our dry eyes and hard hearts are evidences against us, that we are strangers to the sights of faith.

God be merciful to the hardness of your hearts. How is Christ and his love slighted among men! How shallow does his blood run to some eyes? O that my head were waters, and mine eyes fountains of tears for this! What monsters are carnal hearts? We are as if God had made us without affections, as if all ingenuity and tenderness were dried up. Our ears are so accustomed to the sounds of Christ, and his blood, that now they are become as common things. If a child die, we can mourn over our dead: but who mourns for Christ as for an only son? We may say of faith, when men and women sit so unaffected under the gospel, as Martha said of Christ concerning her brother Lazarus, If you (precious faith) had been here, so many hearts had not been dead this day, and in this duty. Faith is that burning-glass which contracts the beams of the grace, and love, and wisdom, and power of Jesus Christ together, reflects these on the heart, and makes it burn; but without it, we feel nothing savingly.

INFERENCE. 2. Have the believing meditations of Christ, and his sufferings, such heart melting influences? Then surely the proper order of raising the affections, is to begin at the exercise of faith. It grieves me to see how many poor Christians strive with their own dead hearts, endeavoring to raise and affect them, but cannot: they complain and strive, strive and complain, but can discover no love to the Lord, no brokenness of heart; they go to this ordinance and that, to one duty and another, hoping that now the Lord will affect it, and fill the sails; but come back disappointed and ashamed, like the troops of Tema. Poor Christian, hear me one word; possibly it may do your business, and stand you in more stead, than all the methods you have yet used. If you Would indeed get a heart evangelically melted for sin, and broken with the kindly sense of the grace and love of Christ, your way is not to force your affections, nor to vex yourself, and go about complaining of a hard heart, but set yourself to believe, realize, apply, infer, and compare by faith as you have been directed; and see what this will do: "They shall look on me whom they have pierced, and mourn." This is the way and proper method to raise the heart, and break it.

INFERENCE. 3. Is this the way to get a truly broken heart? Then let those that have attained brokenness of heart this way, bless the Lord while they live, for so choice a mercy; and that upon a double account.

1. For as much as a heart so affected and melted, is not attainable by any natural or unrenewed person; if they would give all they have in the world, it cannot purchase one such tear, or groan over Christ; mark, what characters of special grace it bears, in the description that is made of it, in that aforementioned place, Zechariah 12:10. Such a frame as this is not born with us, or to be acquired by us; for it is there said to be poured out by the Lord upon us, "I will pour upon them," etc. There is no hypocrisy or dissimulation in these mournings, they being compared to the mourning of a man for his only son: an sure parents hearts are not untouched when they behold such sights.

Nature is not the principle of it, but faith; for it is there said, they shall look on me; that is believe and mourn. Self is not the end and center of these sorrows; it is not so much for damning ourselves, as for piercing Christ: "They shall look on me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn;" so that this is sorrow after God, and not a flesh of nature, as discoursed in the former point. Therefore you have cause to bless the Lord, while you live for such a special mercy as this is. And,

2. As it is the right, so it is the choicest, and most precious gift that can be given you; for it is ranked among the prime mercies of the new covenant, Ezekiel 36:26. This shall be the covenant; "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." What would you have given sometimes for such a heart as now you have, though it be not yet as you would have it? And however you value and esteem it, God himself sets no common value on it: for mark what he says of it, Psalms 51:17. "The sacrifices of God are a broken heart: a broken and a contrite spirit, O God, you will not despise;" That is, God is more delighted with such a heart, than with all the sacrifices in the world; one groan, one tear, flowing from faith, and the spirit of adoption, are more to him, than the cattle upon a thousand hills. And to the same sense he speaks again, Isaiah 66:1-2. "Thus says the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool, Where is the house that you build to me? And where is the place of my rest? - But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word;" q. d. All the magnificent temples and glorious structures in the world, give me no pleasure in comparison of such a broken heart as this.

O then, forever bless the Lord, that has done that for you, which none else could do, and which he has done but for few besides you!

Christ’s memorable Address to the Daughters of

Jerusalem, in his Way to the Place of his Execution

"And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children." Luke 23:27-28,etc. The sentence of death once given against Christ, the execution quickly follows. Away they lead him from Gabbatha to Golgotha, longing as much to be nailing him to the cross, and feeding their eyes with his torments, as the eagle does to be tearing the flesh, and drinking the blood of that lamb she has seized in her talons, and is carrying away to the top of some rock to devour. The Evangelist here observes a memorable passage that fell out in their way to the place of execution; and that is, the laments

lions and wailing of some that followed him out of the city, who expressed their pity and sorrow for him most tenderly and compassionately: all hearts were not hard, all eyes were not dry. "There followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him," etc. In this paragraph we have two parts, namely, the lamentation of the daughters of Jerusalem for Christ, and Christ's reply to them.

1. The lamentation of the daughters of Jerusalem for Christ. Concerning them, we briefly enquire who they were, and why they mourned.

(1.) Who they were? The text calls them "daughters", that is inhabitants of Jerusalem"; for it is a Hebraism; as "daughters of Zion, daughters of Israel". And it is like the greatest part of them were women; and there were many of them, a troop of mourners, that followed Christ out of the city towards the place of his execution, with lamentations and wailings.

(2.) What the principle, or ground of these their lamentations was, is not agreed by those that have pondered the story. Some are of opinion their tears and lamentations were but the effects and fruits of their more tender and ingenuous natures, which were moved and melted with so tragical and sad a spectacle as was now before them. It is well observed by a judicious author, "That the tragical story of some great and noble personage, full of he royal virtue and ingenuity (yet inhumanely and ungratefully used) will thus work upon ingenuous spirits who read or hear of it, - which when it reaches no higher, is so far from being faith, that it is but a carnal and fleshly devotion, springing from fancy, which is pleased with such a story and the principles of ingenuity stirred towards one, who is of a noble spirit, and yet abused. Such stories use to stir up a principle of humanity in men unto a compassionate love; which Christ himself at his suffering found fault with, as being not spiritual, nor raised enough in those women that went weeping to see the Messiah so handled. Weep not for me, (says he) that is weep not so much for this, to see me so unworthily handled by those for whom I die." This is the principle from which some conceive those tears to flow. But Calvin attributes it to their faith, "looking upon these mourners as a remnant reserved by the Lord in that miserable dispersion; and though their faith was but weak, yet he judges it credible that there was a secret seed of godliness in them, which afterwards grew to a maturity, and brought forth fruit". And to the same sense others give their opinion also.

2. Let us consider Christ's reply to them; "weep not for me, you daughters of Jerusalem," etc. Strange, that Christ should forbid them to weep for him, yes for him under such unparalleled sufferings and miseries. If ever there was a heart melting object in the world, it was here. O who could hold, whose heart was not petrified, and more obdurate than the senseless rocks? This reply of Christ undergoes a double sense and interpretation, suitable to the different construction of their sorrows. Those that look upon their sorrows as merely natural, take Christ's reply in a negative sense, prohibiting such tears as those. They that expound their sorrows as the fruit of faith, tell us, though the form of Christ's expression be negative, yet the sense is comparative, as Matthew 9:13. "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice," that is mercy rather than sacrifice. So here, weep rather upon your own account, than mine; reserve your sorrows for the calamities coming upon yourselves and your children. You are greatly affected, I see, with the misery that is upon me; but mine will be quickly over, yours will be long. In which he shows his merciful and compassionate disposition, who was still more mindful of the troubles and burdens of others than of his own. And indeed, the days of calamity coming upon them and their children were doleful days. What direful

and unprecedented miseries befell them at the breaking up and devastation of the city, who has not read or heard? And who can refrain from tears that hears or reads it?

Now if we take the words in the first sense, as a prohibition of their merely natural and carnal affections, expressed in tears and lamentations for him, no otherwise than they would have been upon any other like tragical story; then the observation from it will be this,

DOCTRINE. 1. That melting affections and sorrows, even from the sense and consideration of the sufferings of Christ, are no infallible signs of grace.

If you take it in the latter sense, as the fruit of their faith, as tears flowing from a gracious principle; then the observation will be this,

DOCTRINE. 2. That the believing meditation of what Christ suffered for us, is of great force and efficacy to melt and break the heart.

I shall rather choose to prosecute both these branches, than to decide the controversy; especially since the notes gathered from either may be useful to us. And therefore I shall begin with the first, namely,

DOCTRINE. 1. That melting affections and sorrows, even from the sense of Christ's sufferings, are no infallible marks of grace. In this point I have two things to do, to prepare it for use.

First, To show, what the melting of the affections by way of grief and sorrow is.

Secondly, That they may be so melted, even upon the account of Christ, and yet the heart remain unrenewed.

First, What the melting of the affections, by way of grief and sorrow, is.

Tears are nothing else but the juice of a mind oppressed, and squeezed with grief. Grief compresses the heart; the heart so compressed and squeezed, vents itself sometimes into tears, sighs, groans, etc. and this is two-fold: gracious, and wholly supernatural; or common, and altogether natural. The gracious melting or sorrow of the soul, is likewise two-fold; habitual or actual. Habitual bodily sorrow is that gracious disposition, inclination, or tendency of the renewed heart to mourn and melt, when any just occasion is presented to the soul that calls for such sorrow. It is expressed, Ezekiel 36:26. "By taking away the heart of stone, and giving a heart of flesh;" that is a heart impressive, and yielding to such arguments and considerations as move it to mourning.

Actual sorrow is the expression and manifestation of that its inclination upon just occasions; and it is expressed two ways, either by the internal effects of it, which are the heaviness, shame, loathing, resolution, and holy revenge begotten in the soul upon the account of sin: or also by more external and visible effects, as sighs, groans, tears, etc. The former is essential to godly sorrow, the latter contingent and accidental, much depending upon the natural temperature and constitution of the body.

Natural and common meltings are nothing else but the effects of a better temper, and the fruit of a more ingenuous spirit, and easier constitution, which shows itself on any other, as well as upon spiritual occasions: as Austin said, he could weep plentifully when he read the story of Dido. The

history of Christ is a very tragical and pathetical history, and may melt an ingenuous nature, where are is no renewed principles at all. So that,

Secondly, Our affections may be melted, even upon the score and account of Christ; and yet that is no infallible evidence of a gracious heart. And the reasons for it are,

1. Because we find all sorts of affections discovered by such as have been no better than temporary believers. The stony ground hearers in Matthew 13:20. "received the word with joy," and so did John s hearers also, who for "a season rejoiced in his light," John 3:35. Now, if the affections of joy under the word may be exercised, why not of sorrow also? If the comfortable things revealed in the gospel may stir up the one, by a parity of reason, the sad things it reveals may answerably work upon the other. Even those Israelites whom Moses told they should fall by the sword, and not prosper, for the Lord would not be with them, because they were turned away from him; yet when Moses rehearsed the message of the Lord in their ears, they mourned greatly, Numbers 14:39. I know the Lord pardoned many of them their iniquities, though he took vengeance on their inventions; and yet it is as true, that with many of them God was not well pleased, 1 Corinthians 10:5. Many instances of their weeping and mourning before the Lord we find in this sacred history; and yet their hearts were not steadfast with God.

2. Because though the object about which our affections and passions are moved, may be spiritual; yet the motives and principles that set them on work, may be but carnal and natural ones. When I see a person affected in the hearing of the word, or prayer, even unto tears, I cannot presently conclude, surely this is the effect of grace; for it is possible, the pathetical quality of subject matter, the rhetoric of the speaker, the very affecting tone, and modulation of the voice, may draw tears as well as faith working upon the spirituality, and deep concernment the soul has in those things.

While Austin was a Manichee, he sometimes heard Ambrose; and, says he, "I was greatly affected in hearing him, even, unto tears many times:" howbeit, it was not the heavenly nature of the subject, but the abilities and rare parts of the speaker that so affected him. And this was the case of Ezekiel’s hearers, Ezekiel 33:32.

Again, 3. These motions of the affections may rather be a fit and mood, than the very frame and temper of the soul. Now there is a vast difference between these; there are times and seasons, when the roughest and most obdurate hearts may be pensive and tender: but that is not its temper and frame, but only a fit, a pang, a transient passion. So the Lord complains of them, Hosea 6:4. "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto you? O Judah, what shall I do unto you? for your goodness is as a morning cloud and as the early dew, it goes away. And so he complains, Psalms 78:34-36. When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and enquired early after God. And the remembered that God was their rock, and the most high God their redeemer; nevertheless they did flatter him with their lips, and lied unto him with their tongues." For had this remembrance of God been the gracious temper of their souls, it would have continued with them; they would not have been thus wavering thus hot and cold with God, as they were. Therefore we conclude, that we cannot infer a work of grace upon the heart, simply and mere from the meltings and thaws that are sometimes upon it. And hence, for your use, I shall infer, that,

INFERENCE 1. If such as sometimes feel their hearts thawed and melted with the consideration of the sufferings of Christ, may yet be deceived; What cause have they to fear and tremble, whose hearts are as unrelenting as rocks, yielding to nothing that is proposed, or urged upon them? How many such are there, of whom we may say, as Christ speaks of the inflexible Jews, "We have piped unto you, but you have not danced; we have mourned unto you, but you have not lamented" Matthew 11:1-30. They must inevitably come short of heaven, who come so short of those that do come short of heaven. If those perish that have rejoiced under the promises, and mourned under the threats of the word; what shall become of them that are as unconcerned, and unteached by what they hear, as the seats they sit on, or the dead that lie under their feet? Who are given up to such hardness of heart, that nothing can touch or affect them? One would think, the consideration of the sixth chapter to the Hebrew should startle such men and women, and make them cry out, Lord, what will become of such a senseless, stupid, dead creature as I am? If they that shave been enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, may, notwithstanding such high raised affections as these, so fall away, that it shall be impossible to renew them again by repentance, what shall we then say, or think of his estate, to whom the most penetrating and awakening truths are no more than a tale that is told? The fire and hammer of the gospel can neither melt nor break them; they are iron and brass, Jeremiah 6:28-29.

INFERENCE 2. If such as these may eternally miscarry; then let us look carefully to their foundation, and see that they do not bless themselves in a thing of nothing. It is manifest from 1 Corinthians 10:12. that many souls stand exceeding dangerously, who are yet strongly conceited of their own safety. And if you please to consult those scriptures in the margin, you shall find vain confidence to be ruling folly over the greatest part of men; and that which is the utter overthrow, and undoing of multitudes of professors.

Now there is nothing more apt to beget and breed this vain soul- undoing confidence, than the stirrings and meltings of our affections about spiritual things, while the heart remains unrenewed all the while. For (as a grave divine has well observed) such a man seems to have all that is required of a Christian, and herein to have attained the very end of all knowledge; which is operation and influence upon the heart and affections.

Indeed (thinks such a poor deluded soul) if I did hear, read, or pray, without any inward affections, with a dead, cold, and unconcerned heart, or if I did make a show of zeal and affection in duties, and had it not, well might I suspect myself to be a self-cozening hypocrite; but it is not so with me, I feel my heart really melted many times, when I read the sufferings of Christ; I feel my heart raised and ravished with strange joys and comforts, when I hear the glory of heaven opened in the gospel: Indeed if it were not so with me, I might doubt the root of the matter is wanting; but if to my knowledge, affections be added; a melting heart joined with a knowing head, then I may be confident all is well. I have often heard ministers cautioning and warning their people not to rest satisfied with idle and unpractical notions in their understandings, but to labor for impressions upon their hearts; this I have attained, and therefore what danger of me? I have often heard it given as a mark of a hypocrite, that he has light in his head, but it sheds not down its influence upon the heart: whereas in those that are sincere, it works on their heart and affections: So I find it with me, therefore I am in a most safe estate.

O soul! of all the false signs of grace, none more dangerous than those that most resemble true ones; and never does the devil more surely and incurably destroy, than when transformed into an angel of light. What if these meltings of your heart be but a flower of nature? What if you are more beholden to a good temper of body, than a gracious change of spirit for these things? Well, so it may be. Therefore be not secure, but fear, and watch. Possibly, if you would but search your own heart in this matter, you may find, that any other pathetical, moving story, will have the like effects upon you. Possibly too, you may find, that, notwithstanding all your raptures and joys at the hearing of heaven, and its glory, yet after that pang is over, your heart is habitually earthly, and your conversation is not there. For all you canned mourn at the relations of Christ's sufferings, you are not so affected with sin, that was the meritorious cause of the sufferings of Christ, as to crucify one corruption, or deny the next temptation, or part with any way of sin that is gainful, or pleasurable to you for his sake.

Why now, reader, if it be so with you, what are you the better for the influence of your affections? Do you think in earnest, that Christ has the better thoughts of you, because you canned shed tears for him, when notwithstanding you every day fiercest and woundest him? O! be not deceived. Nay, for ought know, you may find, upon a narrow search, that you puttest your tears in the room of Christ's blood, and divest the confidence and dependence of your soul to them; and if so, they shall never do you any good.

O therefore search your heart, reader be not too confident: take not up too easily upon such poor weak grounds as these, a soul-undoing confidence. Always remember the wheat and tares resemble each other in their first springing up; that an egg is not liker to an egg, than hypocrisy, in some shapes and forms into which it can cast itself, is like a genuine work of grace. O remember that among the ten virgins, that is, the reformed professors of religion that have cast off and separated themselves from the worship and defilements of Antichrist, five of them were foolish.

There be first, that shall be last; and last, that shall be first, Matthew 19:30. Great is the deceitfulness of our hearts, Jeremiah 17:9. And many are the subtleties and devices of Satan, 2 Corinthians 11:3. Many also are the astonishing examples of self-deceiving souls recorded in the word. Remember what you lately read of Judas. Great also will be the exactness of the last judgement. And how confident soever you be, that you shall speed well in that day, yet still remember that trial is not yet past. Your final sentence is not yet come from the mouth of your Judge. This I speak not to affright and trouble, but excite and warn you. The loss of a soul is no small loss, and, upon such grounds as these, they are every day cast away. This may suffice to be spoken to the first observation, built on this supposition, that it was but a pang of mere natural affection in them. But if it were the effect of a better principle, the fruit of their faith, as some judge; then I told you're the observation from it would be this,

DOCTRINE. 2. That the believing meditation of what Christ suffered for us, is of great force and efficacy to melt and break the heart.

It is promised, Zechariah 12:10. that "they shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." Ponder seriously here, the spring and motive, They shall look upon me; it is the eye of faith that melts and breaks the heart. The effect of such a sight of Christ; they shall look and mourn; be in bitterness and sorrow. True repentance is a drop out of the eye of faith;

and the measure or degree of that sorrow caused by a believing view of Christ. To express which, two of the fullest instances of grief we read of, are borrowed; that of a tender father, mourning over a dear and only son; that of the people of Israel, mourning over Josiah, that peerless prince, in the valley of Megiddo.

Now to show you how the believing meditation of Christ, and his sufferings, come kindly and savingly to break and melt down the gracious heart, I shall propound these four considerations of the heart-breaking efficacy of faith, eyeing a crucified Jesus.

First, The very realizing of Christ and his sufferings by faith, is a most affecting and melting thing. Faith is a true glass that represents all those his sufferings and agonies to the life. It presents them not as a fiction, or idle tale, but as a true and faithful narrative. This (says faith) is a true and faithful saying, that Christ was not only clothed in our flesh; even he that is over all, God blessed forever, the only Lord, the Prince of the kings of the earth, became a man; but it is also most certain, that in this body of his flesh, he grappled with the infinite wrath of God, which filled his soul with horror and amazement; that the Lord of life did hang dead upon the tree; that he went as a lamb to the slaughter, and was as a sheep dumb before the shearer; that he endured all this, and more than any finite understanding can comprehend, in my room and stead; for my sake he there groaned and bled; for my pride, earthliness, lust, unbelief, hardness of heart, he endured all this. I say, to realize the sufferings of Christ thus, is of great power to affect the coldest, dullest heart. You cannot imagine the difference there is in presenting things as realities, with convincing and satisfying evidences, and our looking on them as a fiction or uncertainty.

Secondly, But faith can apply as well as realize; and if it do so, it must needs overcome the heart.

Ah! Christian, canned you look upon Jesus as standing in your room, to bear the wrath of a Deity for you? Canned you think on it, and not melt? That when you, like Isaac, were bound to the altar, to be offered up to justice, Christ, like the ram, was caught in the thicket, and offered in your room. When your sins had raised a fearful tempest, that threatened every moment to entomb you in a sea of wrath, Jesus Christ was thrown over to appease that storm! Say, reader, can your heart dwell one hour upon such a subject as this? Canned you with faith, present Christ to yourself, as he was taken down from the cross, drenched in his own blood, and say, These were the wounds that he received for me; this is he that loved me, and gave himself for me: out of these wounds comes that balm that heals my soul; out of these stripes my peace: When he hanged upon the cross, he bore my name upon his bosom, like the high priest. It was love, pure love, strong love to my poor soul; to the soul of an enemy that drew him down from heaven, and all the glory he had there, to endure these sorrows in soul and body for me.

O you cannot hold up your hearts long to the piercing thoughts of this, but your affections will be pained, and, like Joseph, you will seek a place to vent your hearts in.

Thirdly, Faith cannot only realize and apply Christ, and his death, but it can reason and conclude such things from his death, as will fill the soul with affection to him, and break the heart in pieces, in his presence. When it views Christ as dead, it infers, Is Christ dead for me? then was I dead in law, sentenced and condemned to die eternally; 2 Corinthians 5:14. "If one died for all, then were all dead." How woeful was my case when the law had passed sentence on me? I could not be sure when I lay down, but that it might be executed before I rose; nothing but a puff of breath between

my soul and hell.

Again, Is Christ dead for me? then I shall never die. If he be condemned, I am acquitted. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies, it is Christ that died," Romans 8:34. My soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler; I was condemned, but am now cleared; I was dead, but am sow alive; O the unsearchable riches of Christ! O love past finding out!

Again, Did God give up Christ to such miseries and sufferings for me? How shall he with-hold anything from me? He that "spared not his own Son, will doubtless with him freely give me all things", Romans 8:32. Now I may rest upon him for pardon, peace, acceptance, and glory for my soul. Now I may rely upon him safely for provision, protection, and all supplies for my body. Christ is the root of these mercies; he is more than all these, he is nearer and dearer to God than any other gift. O what a blessed, happy, comfortable state has he now brought my soul into! To conclude, Did Christ endure all these things for me? then it is past doubt, he will never leave nor forsake me: It cannot be that after he has endured all this, he will cast off the souls for whom he endured it. Here the soul is evangelically broken, considering the mercies that emerge and flow to it out of the sea of Christ's blood.

Fourthly, and lastly, Faith can not only realize, apply, and infer, but it can also compare the love of Christ in all this, both with his dealings with others, and with the soul's dealing with Christ, who loved it. To compare Christ's dealings with others, is most affecting: he has not dealt with everyone, as with me; nay, few there are that can speak of such mercies as I have from him. How many are there that have no part nor portion in his blood? Who must bear that wrath in their own persons, that he bare himself for me! He espied me out, and singled me forth to be the object of his love, leaving thousands and millions still unreconciled; not that I was better than they, for I was the greatest of sinners, far from righteousness, as unlikely as any to be the object of such grace and love: my companions in sin are left, and I am taken. Now the soul is full, the heart grows big, too big to contain itself.

Yes, faith helps the soul to compare the love of Christ to it, with the returns it has made to him for that love. And what, my soul! has your carriage to Christ been, since this grace that wants a name, appeared to you? Have you returned love for love? Love suitable to such love? Have you prized, valued, and esteemed this Christ, according to his own worth in himself, or his kindness to you? Ah no, I have grieved, pierced, wounded his heart a thousand times since that, by my ingratitude; I have suffered every trifle to jostle him out of my heart? I have neglected him a thousand times, and made him say, Is this your kindness to your friend? Is this the reward I shall have for all that I have done, and suffered for you? Wretch that I am, how have I requited the Lord! This shames, humbles and breaks the heart. And when from such sights of faith, and considerations as these, the heart is thus affected, it affords a good argument, indeed, that you are gone beyond all the attainments of temporary believers? flesh and blood has not revealed this.

INFERENCE 1. Have the believing meditations of Christ, and his sufferings, such heart melting influences? Then sure there is but little faith among men. Our dry eyes and hard hearts are evidences against us, that we are strangers to the sights of faith.

God be merciful to the hardness of your hearts. How is Christ and his love slighted among men! How shallow does his blood run to some eyes? O that my head were waters, and mine eyes fountains of tears for this! What monsters are carnal hearts? We are as if God had made us without affections, as if all ingenuity and tenderness were dried up. Our ears are so accustomed to the sounds of Christ, and his blood, that now they are become as common things. If a child die, we can mourn over our dead: but who mourns for Christ as for an only son? We may say of faith, when men and women sit so unaffected under the gospel, as Martha said of Christ concerning her brother Lazarus, If you (precious faith) had been here, so many hearts had not been dead this day, and in this duty. Faith is that burning-glass which contracts the beams of the grace, and love, and wisdom, and power of Jesus Christ together, reflects these on the heart, and makes it burn; but without it, we feel nothing savingly.

INFERENCE. 2. Have the believing meditations of Christ, and his sufferings, such heart melting influences? Then surely the proper order of raising the affections, is to begin at the exercise of faith. It grieves me to see how many poor Christians strive with their own dead hearts, endeavoring to raise and affect them, but cannot: they complain and strive, strive and complain, but can discover no love to the Lord, no brokenness of heart; they go to this ordinance and that, to one duty and another, hoping that now the Lord will affect it, and fill the sails; but come back disappointed and ashamed, like the troops of Tema. Poor Christian, hear me one word; possibly it may do your business, and stand you in more stead, than all the methods you have yet used. If you Would indeed get a heart evangelically melted for sin, and broken with the kindly sense of the grace and love of Christ, your way is not to force your affections, nor to vex yourself, and go about complaining of a hard heart, but set yourself to believe, realize, apply, infer, and compare by faith as you have been directed; and see what this will do: "They shall look on me whom they have pierced, and mourn." This is the way and proper method to raise the heart, and break it.

INFERENCE. 3. Is this the way to get a truly broken heart? Then let those that have attained brokenness of heart this way, bless the Lord while they live, for so choice a mercy; and that upon a double account.

1. For as much as a heart so affected and melted, is not attainable by any natural or unrenewed person; if they would give all they have in the world, it cannot purchase one such tear, or groan over Christ; mark, what characters of special grace it bears, in the description that is made of it, in that aforementioned place, Zechariah 12:10. Such a frame as this is not born with us, or to be acquired by us; for it is there said to be poured out by the Lord upon us, "I will pour upon them," etc. There is no hypocrisy or dissimulation in these mournings, they being compared to the mourning of a man for his only son: an sure parents hearts are not untouched when they behold such sights.

Nature is not the principle of it, but faith; for it is there said, they shall look on me; that is believe and mourn. Self is not the end and center of these sorrows; it is not so much for damning ourselves, as for piercing Christ: "They shall look on me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn;" so that this is sorrow after God, and not a flesh of nature, as discoursed in the former point. Therefore you have cause to bless the Lord, while you live for such a special mercy as this is. And,

2. As it is the right, so it is the choicest, and most precious gift that can be given you; for it is ranked among the prime mercies of the new covenant, Ezekiel 36:26. This shall be the covenant; "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." What would you have given sometimes for such a heart as now you have, though it be not yet as you would have it? And however you value and esteem it, God himself sets no common value on it: for mark what he says of it, Psalms 51:17. "The sacrifices of God are a broken heart: a broken and a contrite spirit, O God, you will not despise;" That is, God is more delighted with such a heart, than with all the sacrifices in the world; one groan, one tear, flowing from faith, and the spirit of adoption, are more to him, than the cattle upon a thousand hills. And to the same sense he speaks again, Isaiah 66:1-2. "Thus says the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool, Where is the house that you build to me? And where is the place of my rest? - But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word;" q. d. All the magnificent temples and glorious structures in the world, give me no pleasure in comparison of such a broken heart as this.

O then, forever bless the Lord, that has done that for you, which none else could do, and which he has done but for few besides you!

S. Christian View of Death, the

The Christian View of Death

John Flavel

I shall offer several considerations calculated to help the people of God in time of sickness, to keep their hearts loose from all earthly objects, and cheerfully willing to die:

1. Death is harmless to the people of God; its shafts leave no sting in them. Why then are you afraid that your sickness may bring you to death? If you were to die in your sins; if death were to reign over you as a tyrant, to feed upon you as a lion does upon his prey; if death to you were to be the precursor of hell—then you might reasonably startle and shrink back from it with horror and dismay! But if your sins are blotted out; if Christ has vanquished death in your behalf, so that you have nothing to encounter but bodily pain, and possibly not even that; if death will be to you the forerunner of heaven—why should you be afraid? Why not bid it welcome? It cannot hurt you; it is easy and harmless; it is like taking off your clothes, of taking rest.

2. It may keep your heart from shrinking back, to consider that death is necessary to fit you for the full enjoyment of God. Whether you are willing to die or not, there certainly is no other way to complete the happiness of your soul. Death must do you the kind office to remove this veil of flesh—this animal life which separates you from God—before you can see and enjoy him fully. "While we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord." And who would not be willing to die for the perfect enjoyment of God? I think one would look and sigh, like a prisoner, through the grates of this mortality—"O that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest!" Indeed most men need patience to die; but a saint, who understands what death will introduce him to, rather needs patience to live. On his deathbed he should often look out and listen to his Lord's coming; and when he perceives his dissolution to be near, he should say, "The voice of my beloved! Behold he comes, leaping over the mountains, skipping over the hills!"

3. Consider that the happiness of heaven commences immediately after death. That happiness will not be deferred until the resurrection; but as soon as death has passed upon you, your soul will be swallowed up in life. When you have once loosed from this shore, you shall be quickly wafted to the shore of a glorious eternity! And can you not say—I desire to die, and to be with Christ? Did the soul and body die together, or did they sleep until the resurrection, as some have fancied, it would have been folly for Paul to desire to die, for the enjoyment of Christ; because he would have enjoyed more in the body than he could have enjoyed out of it. The Scripture speaks of but two ways in which the soul can properly live—that is, by faith and vision. These two comprehend its present and future existence. Now, if when faith fails, sight should not immediately succeed, what would become of the soul? But the truth on this subject is clearly revealed in Scripture. See Luke 23:3; John 14:3, etc. What a blessed change then, will death make in your condition! Rouse up, dying saint, and rejoice; let death do his work, that the angels may conduct your soul to the world of light!

4. It may increase your willingness to die, to reflect that by death, God often removes his people out of the way of great troubles and temptations. When some extraordinary calamity is coming upon the world, God sometimes removes his saints out of the way of the evil. Thus Methuselah died the year before the flood; Augustine a little before the sacking of Hippo; Pareus just before the taking of Heidelburg. Luther observes that all the apostles died before the destruction of Jerusalem; and Luther himself died before the wars broke out in Germany. How it may be that by death you will escape some grievous trial, which you could not and need not endure. But even if no extraordinary trouble would come upon you, yet God desires by death to relieve you from innumerable evils and burdens which are inseparable from the present state. Thus you will be delivered from indwelling sin, which is the greatest trouble; from all temptations from whatever source; from bodily illnesses and failings; and from all the afflictions and sorrows of this life. The days of your mourning will be ended, and God will wipe away all tears from your eyes. Why then should you not hasten to depart?

5. If you still linger, like Lot in Sodom, what are your pleas and pretenses for a longer life? Why are you unwilling to die? Are you concerned for the welfare of your relations? If so, are you anxious for their temporal support? Then let the word of God satisfy you: "Leave your fatherless children to me, I will keep them alive, and let your widows trust in me." Luther says, in his last will, "Lord, you have given me a wife and children, I have nothing to leave them, but I commit them unto you. O Father of the fatherless and Judge of widows, nourish, keep and teach them." But are you concerned for the spiritual welfare of your relations? Remember that you cannot convert them, if you should live; and God can make your prayers and counsels effectual when you are dead.

Perhaps you desire to serve God longer in this world. But if he has nothing further for you to do here, why not say with David, "Here am I, let God do what seems good to him." He is calling you to higher service in heaven, and can accomplish by other hands what you desire to do further here. Do you feel too imperfect to go to heaven? Consider that you must be imperfect until you die; your sanctification cannot be complete until you get to heaven.

But,’ you say, ’I lack assurance; if I had that I could die easily.’ Consider, then, that a hearty willingness to leave all the world to be freed from sin, and to be with God—is the direct way to that desired assurance; no carnal person was ever willing to die upon this ground.

Chapter 111

S. Consolation of the Sick which is an Instruct

The Consolation of the Sick which is an Instruction in Faith, and the Way of Salvation to prepare Believers to die willingly

Since Adam was created just and good, that is to say, holy, righteous and immortal, and dominion given him over all the creatures which God had created; and whereas he did not long remain in this state, but has through the subtlety of the Devil and his own rebellion fallen from this excellent glory, whereby he has brought upon us the misery of temporal and eternal death; this is the original sin of which David speaks in Psalms 51:1-19, saying, I was shaped in iniquity and in Psalms 51:5 sin did my mother conceive me: In like manner Paul says to the Romans, That by one man sin entered into the world, and Romans 5:12 death by sin, and death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. For as soon as Adam was thus fallen, he immediately came under a certain curse, as we read in Genesis, where God says, Cursed is the ground for thy sake, Genesis 3:17, in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life, in Genesis 3:19 the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. Whence we certainly know, that all things which receive life, must once die. This David clearly testifies, saying, What man is he that liveth, Psalms 89:48 and shall not see death? For Solomon says, The living know Ecclesiastes 9:5 that they shall die. For here we have no continuing city, but Hebrews 13:14 we seek one to come. And to the Hebrews, That it is appointed unto men once to die, but, but after this the judgment. For Hebrews 9:27 as the Scripture says: We must needs all die, and are as 2 Samuel 14:1-33, water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again. 2 Samuel 14:14 For our days are like the days of a hireling, and swifter Job 9:25 than a post. And we pass away (says David) like a stream, yea like a leaf which the wind driveth away, and a withered stalk and a garment moth-eaten. For the dust must return to the earth, as it was, and the spirit unto God who gave it; as Job Ecclesiastes 12:7 says, We are ashes and must return to ashes. Likewise James says, That man's life is even a vapour that appeareth for a James 4:14 little time and then vanisheth away. Yea our time passeth away as a cloud and is consumed like a mist, and vanisheth as a shadow. And Peter also says (quoting from Isaiah), That all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of men, as the flower of 1 Peter 1:1-25, grass; the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth 1 Peter 1:24 away. Again Jesus Syrach says, This is the old covenant, you must die; --the one today and the other tomorrow, like as green leaves upon a tree, some fall off, and others grow again: Thus it goes with mankind, some die and some are born. As Solomon says, To every thing there is a season, a time to Ecclesiastes 3:1-22, be born, and a time to die. Ecclesiastes 3:1-2 And this time is in the hands of the Lord, as Job says, Man Job 14:5 has his appointed time, the number of his months are with him, he has appointed our bounds that we cannot pass. Which Paul also says, That God has determined the times before Acts 7:26 appointed, and the bounds of their habitation. And David says, That our days are as a hand-breadth by the Lord, and Psalms 39:5 our age is as nothing before him: How vain are all men who live so unconcernedly? For our days are lighter than a Job 7:6 weaver's shuttle, and swifter than a post. Moreover, we are Job 9:25 here only pilgrims and strangers for a

short time. For the Hebrews 11:13 days of our years are threescore years and ten, and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their Psalms 90:10 strength, labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. And when we live long we live a hundred years: As drops of water are to the sea, so are our years to eternity. And Peter says, That one day is with the Lord as a thousand 2 Peter 3:8 years, and a thousand years as one day, even so are our years to eternity.

Whereas then we must all die, according to holy Scripture, who would not earnestly wish for death, when we behold in what state and ruin we are plunged through Adam, namely, in all unrighteousness, misery and trouble; inasmuch that we are wicked, and inclined to wickedness from our very infancy. For as Paul says, We are by nature the children of wrath, and Ephesians 2:3 reprobate unto every good work, having nothing of ourselves Titus 1:16 but sin. And David also says, There is none that does good, Psalms 14:1 they are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy. For the good that we would, we do not, by reason of sin that Romans 7:19 dwells in us. Of this inherent sin, David witnesseth, That we are conceived and born in sin, and proceed in the same. For Psalms 51:1-19 the inclination of men's hearts is to evil from their youth.

Since we thus lie under the wrath of God, and in the shadow of death, yea in hell and damnation, therefore Christ the light of the world appeared unto us, and the sun of righteousness is risen: Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification, and has also Romans 4:25 quickened us when we were dead in sin, and has forgiven us our sins, and blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that Colossians 2:14 was against us, and took it out of the way, and nailed it on the cross; whereby he has triumphed over all our enemies, as death, Satan, hell and the curse of the law, as God has spoken by the Prophet Hosea, O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, which gives us 1 Corinthians 15:1-58, the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who has also 1 Corinthians 15:55, 1 Corinthians 15:57 (according to the promise of God) bruised the head of the Devil, in whose power we were kept captives, by reason of the transgressions of sin.

God to the end that he might deliver us therefrom, has given us his dearest pledge, namely his only beloved Son in whom the Father is well pleased, and commands us to hear him. Whom he has given for a propitiation and a ransom. For God so John 3:16 loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Also in this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into 1 John 4:1-21, the world, that we might live through him. And this is life 1 John 4:9 eternal (says Christ), that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. He is the true Messiah, who came into the world in the fullness of John 1:1-51, time, true God to crush the power of the Devil; and true man 17,3 to be our mediator before God, that he might deliver those who were captive under the law. He is that lamb without blemish, that was wounded and offered for our transgressions, to be a propitiation for all our sins, as Isaiah clearly testifies. And he who was rich, for our sakes became poor, 2 Corinthians 8:1-24 that we through his poverty might be rich, for he has given unto us, all his goods, all his benefits, all his righteousness, merits and holiness. Therefore we must embrace him in faith, and be thankful to him with love and obedience. And who would not love him who first loved us? In that when we were yet his enemies, he delivered and reconciled us, how Romans 5:18 much more being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life? For how can one have greater love, than to lay down his life John 15:1-27, for his friends? Which Christ as a good shepherd has done, John 15:13 who has been obedient to his

Father, unto death, even the death of the cross, and was made a little lower than the Php 2:8 angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and Hebrews 2:9 honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. Also he is the true Samaritan who has poured oil Luke 10:1-42, and wine in our wounds, that is to say, he has poured out his Luke 10:34 precious blood or our sins, and bought us with such a precious price. For we are not (says Peter) redeemed with 1 Peter 1:1-25, gold or silver, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of 1 Peter 1:18-19 a lamb without blemish and without spot. For we are not redeemed by the blood of goats or calves, but by his own Hebrews 9:12 blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us: Who has also delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the kingdom of Colossians 1:1-29, his dear Son, in whom we have the redemption through his Colossians 1:13-14 blood, even the forgiveness of sins.

Since we certainly know this, that we only obtain eternal salvation, without our merits (for we have none, wherefore we are unprofitable servants), through the death and resurrection of Christ, we must therefore come boldly unto Hebrews 4:16 the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. And since we always stand in need of help, we must go unto him; for he says, by the Prophet David, Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee. Psalms 50:15 And although a mother might forsake her child, yet will I never forsake thee, as Christ himself says in the gospel, Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I Matthew 11:1-30, will give you rest, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. Matthew 11:28-29 To whom else should we go? He has the words of eternal life, John 6:68 and life is made manifest in him. He is that heavenly manna, which eternally satisfies our souls, that heavenly bread of which he that eateth through faith, shall never hunger, and whosoever drinketh of his blood shall never thirst.

Again Christ says by the Apostle John, Let him that is Revelation 22:17 a-thirst, come and take the water of life freely: He that John 7:38 believeth on me, as the Scripture has said, out of this belly shall flow rivers of living water, which are the operations of the Holy Ghost: Whosoever drinketh of that living water, John 4:14 shall never thirst, for the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. As God has said by the Prophet Isaiah, Ho, every one Isaiah 55:1 that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that has no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price. Therefore let us go to this fountain for our refreshment, and not to broken wells which contain no water, For of his fullness have we all received John 1:1-51, grace for grace: For the law was given by Moses, but grace John 1:16-17 and truth came by Jesus Christ.

He is the true mediator who stands between God and us, to be our advocate against all our accusers: For there is one 1 Timothy 2:5 mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. For this Hebrews 9:15 cause he is also a mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of an eternal inheritance. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto Hebrews 7:25 God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us; with which the Apostle John agreeing, says, If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the 1 John 2:1-29, righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins: And not for 1 John 2:1-2 ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world: Namely for all peoples and nations of the whole world, who sincerely repent and turn themselves to God: For the lamb was slain, from

the beginning of the world for believers, as Christ himself says, That Abraham saw his day and was glad. John 8:56

Thus we see that God is no respecter of persons. For God is Acts 10:1-48, not only the God of the Jews, but of the Gentiles also: Acts 10:34 Namely he is a God who justifies the circumcision by faith, Romans 3:1-31, and uncircumcision through faith; for he has justified us by Romans 3:29-30 faith, without the deeds of the law, after which manner David also speaks, that salvation is only come unto the man to whom God imputes righteousness without works, where he says, Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is Psalms 32:1-2 covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity.

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, Romans 5:1 through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have a certain access into the holy place, by his blood, whereby he has made peace between God and us; for he is our true peace, wherefore we have nothing to fear. For Paul says, If God be for us who Romans 8:1-39, can be against us? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of Romans 8:31, Romans 8:33-35 God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who maketh intercession for us; who shall separate us from the love of

Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or sword? Therefore though we have the daily actual and other sins remaining in us, we must not despair. For the Prophet Isaiah says, Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be Isaiah 1:18 red like crimson, they shall be as wool. And this is done through Jesus Christ, who has washed away our sins by his blood, of which baptism is a sign; and the Lord's Supper is a token unto us, that we are redeemed by the sacrifice of Christ once offered on the cross, that he might deliver us Tit.2:24 from the wrath to come, and all iniquity; and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works, by which the Lord may be praised.

We then knowing for certain, that we are reconciled to God by Jesus Christ, ought (according to the word of God) to have an earnest desire of being delivered from this mortal body, by which we must come to that glorious inheritance of all the children of God, which is prepared for us in heaven. This, Paul, that chosen vessel of God, desired, when he says, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of Romans 7:24 this death? Moreover he says, We know that if our own earthly 2 Corinthians 5:1 house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, eternal in the heavens; for in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon, with our house which 2 Corinthians 5:1-21, is from heaven, and we are always confident, knowing that 2 Corinthians 5:2, 2 Corinthians 5:6, 2 Corinthians 5:8 whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord; therefore we are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Again Paul says, We know that the whole creation groaneth with us, and not only Romans 8:22 they, but we ourselves groan within ourselves, who have the first fruits of the spirit, waiting for the adoption, to wit the redemption of our body. And since we are pilgrims and strangers, who would not desire to be at home in his native country? For here we walk in absence, and in faith, but not in sight. For now we see through a glass darkly, but then 1 Corinthians 12:1-31, face to face, as he is. Who would not long after this sight, 1 Corinthians 12:12 since we see that the holy men of God have craved after it? As we read in Psalms 42:1-11, As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God! My soul thirsteth for God, for

the living God; when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat, day and night, while they continually say unto me, where is thy God? This unutterable glorious sight of God is so great (as the prophet says), That eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has Isaiah 64:4 entered into the heart of man the things which God has 1 Corinthians 2:9 prepared for them that live him. Again David says, that a day in the courts of the Lord, is better than a thousand; yea I Psalms 84:10 had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of God, than to dwell Psalms 34:1, Psalms 34:4 long in the tents of wickedness. How amiable are thy Psalms 36:8-9 tabernacles, O Lord of Host! Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: They will be still praising thee. And they shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life, in thy light shall we see light; this is the delightful mansion, of which Christ spoke John 14:1-31, by John, In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were John 14:2-3 not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, I come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there may ye be also; namely in the new Jerusalem, which has no need of the sun, neither of the moon, for the glory of Revelation 21:23 God lightens it, and the lamb is the light thereof. There God will wipe all tears away from our eyes, and death shall be no more. Which is the last enemy that God will trample under his feet. There God has prepared a glorious wedding, where we shall sit at the table of the Lord together with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: And blessed are they who are called to this wedding or supper.

We cannot come to this supper by any other means than through death, therefore Paul says, For to me to live is Christ and Php 1:21 to die is gain. And as soon as the faithful depart from hence, they enter into eternal rest, as Christ says, Where I John 12, am there shall also my servant be: Again, He that hearth my 26 Word and believeth in him that sent me, has everlasting life John 5:24 and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life. Which is also plainly to be observed in the malefactor, when he prayed and said, Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. Upon which Christ answered him Luke 23:1-56, Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise: Therefore Paul Luke 23:42-43 justly said (agreeable to this), I desire to depart and to be Php 1:23 with Christ. Solomon likewise says, That dust must return to Ecclesiastes 12:7 the earth as it was, and the spirit unto Goad who gave it. Which also evidently appears in the example of Enoch and Elias, who were both taken up into heaven, where our citizenship and conversation is: from whence also we look for Php 3:1-21, the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile Php 3:20-21 body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body. And we cannot arrive to this state of glory, unless through such tribulation, of which Jesus Syrach elegantly speaks: My son (says he), if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation: In which thou shalt also rejoice, thou who has for a short time, mourned with much temptation. But 1 Peter 5:1-14, the God of all grace, who has called us unto his eternal 1 Peter 5:10 glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while will make you perfect, stablish, strenghten, settle you.

Again Paul says, If so be that we suffer with Christ, we Romans 8:1-39, shall also be glorified together. For the sufferings of this Romans 8:17-18 present time, are not to be compared with the glory which 2 Corinthians 4:1-18, shall be revealed to us. For our affliction is temporal and 2 Corinthians 4:17 light, but works an eternal and exceeding weight of glory. And David said, Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes Psalms 30:5 in the morning. Therefore rejoice, that when his glory shall 1 Peter 4:1-19, be revealed ye may be glad also with exceeding joy: Christ 1 Peter 4:13 has also suffered without the gate, therefore let us also go Hebrews 13:1-25,

forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For Hebrews 13:12-13 herein has Christ left us an example, that we should follow 1 Peter 2:1-25, his steps. Again Peter says, “forasmuch then, as Christ has 1 Peter 2:21 suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with 1 Peter 4:1 the same mind: For he that suffers in the flesh ceaseth from sin. Moreover the Apostle James also says, My beloved James 1:2 brethren, count it all joy when you fall in divers Romans 5:1-21, temptations, And Paul likewise says, We glory in Romans 5:3-5 tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience, experience; and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed. For which reason we must not despise the chastening of the Lord, when we are rebuked of him; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and he scourgeth, every son whom he receiveth; which may be seen at large in Hebrews 12:1-29. Be therefore patient, Hebrews 12:8-10 and establish your hearts, for the coming up of the Lord draweth nigh. Take also the prophets for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience; we count them happy which endure, for we have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, who have left us an example of Hebrews 2:9 perseverance. For we see that Christ for the suffering of Matthew 10:1-42, death, has been crowned with never fading honour. Therefore Matthew 10:22 Christ also says, He that endureth to the end shall be saved: 2 Timothy 4:1-22, And the Apostle Paul says, I have fought a good fight, I have 2 Timothy 4:7-8 finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord shall give me; and not only to me, but unto all them that James 1:12 love his appearing. Likewise James says, Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them, that love him. To obtain this crown of righteousness, we must manfully fight against all our enemies, who attack us on all sides, Particularly against the wiles of the Devil, against which put on the whole armour of God, with which you will be able to withstand the Devil and all his might. Peter speaking of 1 Peter 5:1-14, his fight says, That the Devil walketh about as a roaring 1 Peter 5:8-9 lion seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, and he will flee from you. This victory and resistance we have of God through Christ, who tramples the Devil under our feet, in whose power and bonds we were bound. He is the prince of this world whom Christ has cast out; and we have likewise through him obtained the victory, and are also through faith made partakers of him. He is the old serpent who seeks to devour us who did devour our first parents, and who still bites us in the heel, wherefore he is called a murderer from the beginning.

Therefore we must be diligent on our guard against his wiles as Peter says, Be sober and watch unto prayer. For as Christ 1 Peter 4:7 says, We know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Lord will come. But this ye know that, if the good man of the Matthew 25:1-46, house had known in what hour the thief would come, he would Matthew 25:13 have watched. Be ye ready therefore also, for the Son of Man Luke 12:1-59, will come at an hour when we watch not, but begin to beat our Luke 12:39-40, Luke 12:45, fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, Luke 12:46 then the Lord will come and cut us in sunder, and our portion will be with the hypocrites: there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, there the worm never dies, and the fire is Mark 9:44 not quenched. For we certainly know that the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, when we shall say, Peace 2 Peter 3:1-18, and safety, then sudden destruction will come upon us, as 2 Peter 3:10 travail upon a woman with child. Therefore take heed to yourselves lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and cares of this life, and so Luke 21:1-38, that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare, or as Luke 21:34 lightning which

comes suddenly, shall it come on us all.

Watch therefore and pray always, that ye may be accounted Luke 21:1-38, worthy to escape all these things, that shall come to pass, Luke 21:35-36 and to stand undaunted before the Son of Man. But this worthiness to stand before the Son of Man consists in a pure undefiled and immovable faith which works through love, by which we receive and embrace Christ with all his merits and benefits. Which faith we must show by a pure life, as James says. And of this purity Christ speaks by Matthew, Matthew 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. And the principal purity lies in the heart, for as Christ says, Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, Matthew 15:1-39, fornication, thefts, false witness and blasphemies: these Matthew 15:19-20 things defile man. Therefore the fruits of the spirit follow, Galatians 5:1-26, which are, love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, Galatians 5:22-23 goodness, faith, meekness, chastity, righteousness, and truth. Therefore unless we are born again, we cannot see the Matthew 3:3 kingdom of God. Yea as Christ says, Except ye repent and become as children (to wit in sin) ye shall not enter into Mark 10:1-52, the kingdom of heaven. There shall nothing enter into it that Mark 10:14 defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a Revelation 21:27 lie, as Paul likewise clearly testifieth.

Since then the law of Cod requires this perfection of us, as it is written, Cursed is every one who does not keep the whole law; as James also says, Whosoever offendeth in one James 2:10 point, he is guilty of all. Again whosoever does the law, shall live by it: But we do not keep the least commandment perfectly. As the wise man says, When we imagine to have done we only begin (and in case we did do it, we only do our duty), wherefore we are by the law condemned in God's righteous judgment; for this we have a sure remedy and cure, namely Christ who has redeemed us (as Paul says) from the Galatians 3:13 curse of the law, and has satisfied the righteousness of God for us, making reconciliation; and who has broken down the wall which was between us, namely the law, contained in ordinances, and forgiven us our sins, and torn the handwriting of them, and nailed it to the cross: For this great love of Christ, we ought also to love him, and to be thankful to him, with good works, and verily to believe in him, for the gift of these excellent benefits: For he that comes to God, must believe that he is a rewarder of them that Hebrews 11:6 seek him; for the just shall live by his faith. Therefore we Hebrews 2:4 conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds Romans 3:28 of the law; and although we suffer a little with Christ, we must not despair, for we see that Christ himself when he was smote for our sins, did not smite again, but suffered patiently. And if the ungodly live in great prosperity, as David and the prophets testify, we must not marvel, neither stumble, but comfort ourselves, being assured that their end is everlasting death. He lets them go as sheep to the slaughter, therefore it is to be wondered at that the faithful meet with still more crosses in comparison to the glorious joy which is prepared for them, and on the contrary, that the ungodly have still more prosperity, than they have, in comparison to the dreadful damnation which attends them. Therefore if the trial of believers is not alike, so neither shall the resurrection of the dead be alike. And in this we have great comfort, that all believers will rise at the last day; of which Paul reasoning, says, If the dead rise not, then is not Christ risen, then is our preaching vain, and we are found false witnesses of God. The 1 Corinthians 15:1-58 manner of our resurrection we may read in Ezekiel 37:1-288, how that we shall rise with flesh and bones. And Job also says, I know that my redeemer liveth, and will hereafter Job 19:1-29 raise me up out of the earth, and that I shall be covered with my skin, and in

my own flesh, see God; likewise the Prophet Isaiah says, that the earth and the sea shall give up the dead which have slept in them, for Christ is the resurrection, the first of them that slept. But you must not be ignorant concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow 1 Thess. not even as others, which have no hope. For if we believe 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 that Jesus died and rose again, even so those also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him, for this we say as a true word of God; that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep, for the Lord himself, shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in 2 Corinthians 5:1-21, the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. Where we must appear 2 Corinthians 5:10 before the judgment seat of Christ: Where every one will receive according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad. Then Christ will separate the sheep from the goats, and the sheep will be set on his right hand, who shall hear the delightful voice, Come ye blessed, inherit the kingdom of my Father prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

There we shall stand with greater confidence against those who have distressed us: Then we shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of our Father, there we shall come to the hope of an innumerable company of angels. There we shall reign from eternity to eternity, Amen.

Blessed are they whose names are written in the Book of Life.

S. Evil Effects of Unbelief

Evil Effects of Unbelief by John Flavel “Why are ye so fearful, and how is it that ye have no faith?”

Mark 4:40. The less faith, still the more fear. Fear is generated by unbelief, and unbelief strengthened by fear. As in nature there is an observable circular generation, vapors beget showers, and showers new vapors, so it is in things moral, and therefore all the skill in the world can never cure us of the disease of fear till God first cures us of our unbelief. Christ therefore took the right method to rid his disciples of their fear by rebuking their unbelief. The remains of this sin in God’s own people are the cause and fountain of their fears; and more particularly to show how fear is generated by unbelief let a few particulars be needfully adverted to.

1. Unbelief weakens and stumbles the assenting act of faith, and thereby cuts off from the soul, in a great measure, its principal relief against dangers and troubles. It is the use and office of faith to realize to the soul the invisible things of the world to come, and thereby encourage it against the fears and dangers of the present world. Thus “Moses forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured, as seeing him that is invisible.” If this assenting act of faith be weakened or staggered in the soul; if once invisibles seem uncertainties, and visibles the only realities, no wonder we are so scared and frightened when these visible and sensible comforts are exposed and endangered, as they often are and will be in this mutable world. That man must needs be afraid to stand his ground that is not thoroughly persuaded the ground he stands on is firm and good; it is not to be wondered that men should tremble, who seem to feel the ground shake and reel under them.

2. Unbelief shuts up the refuges of the soul in the divine promises, and, by leaving it without those refuges, must needs leave it in the hands of fears and terrors. That which fortifies and emboldens a Christian in evil times is his dependence on God for protection. “I fly unto thee to hide me.” The cutting off this retreat, which nothing but unbelief can do, deprives the soul of all those succors and supports which the promises afford, and, consequently, fills the heart with anxiety and fear.

3. Unbelief makes man negligent and careless in providing for troubles before they come, and so brings them by the way of surprise upon them; and the more surprising any evil is, the more frightful it is always found to be. We can not think that Noah was so affrighted at the flood, when it began to swell above all the hills and mountains, as all the rest of the world were; nor was there any reason that he should, having foreseen it by faith, and made provision for it. “By faith Noah, being warned of God, prepared an ark.” Augustine relates a very pertinent and memorable story of Paulinus, bishop of Nola, who was a very rich man both in goods and grace. He had much of the world in his hands, but little of it in his heart; and it was well there was not, for the Goths, a barbarous people, breaking into that city like so many devils, fell upon their prey. Those that trusted to the treasures which they had were deceived and ruined by them, for the rich were put to tortures to confess where they had hid their moneys. This good bishop fell into their hands, and lost all he had, but was scarce moved at the loss, as appears by his prayer, which my author relates thus: “Lord, let me not be troubled for my gold and silver; thou knowest it is not my treasure

that I have laid up in heaven according to thy command. I was warned of this judgment before it came, and provided for it; and where all my interest lies, Lord, thou knowest."

Thus Mr. Bradford, when the keeper's wife came running into his chamber suddenly with words able to have put the most of men in the world into a trembling posture, "Oh Mr. Bradford! I bring you heavy tidings; tomorrow you must be burned, and your chain is now buying." He put off his hat, and said, "Lord, I thank thee. I have looked for this a great while; it is not terrible to me. God, make me worthy of such a mercy." See the benefit of a prospect of and preparation for sufferings!

4. Unbelief leaves our dearest interests and concerns in our own hands; it commits nothing to God, and, consequently, must needs fill the heart with distracting fears when imminent dangers threaten us. Reader, if this be thy case, thou wilt be surrounded with terrors whenever thou shalt be surrounded with dangers and troubles. Believers in this, as well as in many other things, have the advantage, that they have committed all that is precious and valuable to them into the hand of God by faith; to him they have committed the keeping of their souls and all their eternal concerns; and these being put into safe hands, they are not distracted with fears about other matters of less value, but can trust them where they have entrusted the greater, and enjoy the quietness and peace of a resigned soul to God. But as for thee, thy life, thy liberty, yea, which is infinitely more than all these things, thy soul, will lie upon thy hands in the day of trouble, and thou wilt not know what to do with them, nor which way to dispose of them. Oh! these be the dreadful straits and frights that unbelief leaves men in; it is a fountain of fears and distractions. And, indeed, it can not but distract and confound carnal men, in whom it reigns and is in its full strength, when sad experience shows us what fears and tremblings the remains of this sin beget in the best men who are not fully freed from it. If the unpurged remains of unbelief in them can thus darken and cloud their evidences, thus greaten and multiply their dangers; if it can draw such sad and frightful conclusions in their hearts, notwithstanding all the contrary experience of their lives, what panic fears and unrelieved terrors must it put those men under where it is in its full strength and dominion?

Chapter 113

S. Flavel's Reply to Hyper-Calvinism

Flavel’s Reply to Baptist Hyper-Calvinism from Vindiciæ Legis et Fœderis A Reply to Baptist Hypercalvinism an excerpt from Vindiciæ Legis et Fœderis

By: John Flavel

(1630-1691)

(Excerpt)

"Come we next to consider that opinion of yours, which led you into these other gross mistakes and absurdities, and that is this, that the covenant of grace is absolute; and whatever covenant is not so, but hath any condition upon our part, must needs for that reason be a covenant of works. See page 229. It is observable (say you) that as the covenants mentioned Genesis 2:1-25. Exodus 20:1-26. &c were all conditional, and therefore legal covenants, requiring strict and perfect obedience, as the condition propounded, in order to the enjoyment of the mercies contained in them, which are all therefore done away in Christ; so on the other hand we see, that the covenant God made with Abraham, Genesis 12:2-3 and Genesis 17:2-3 and Genesis 22:16-18 was wholly free and absolute, and therefore purely evangelical, &c. We will review these things anon, and see if you truly represent the matter; but in order to it, let me tell you,

First, What we mean by a gospel-condition. Secondly, Prove that there are such in the gospel-covenant. Thirdly, Shew you the absurdity of your opinion against it.

(1.) What we mean by a condition in the gospel-covenant. By a condition of the covenant, we do not mean in the strictest rigid sense of the word, such a restipulation to God from man of perfect obedience in his own person, at all times, so as the least failure therein forfeits all the mercies of the covenant; that is rather the condition of Adam’s covenant of works, than of the evangelical covenant: nor do we assert any meritorious condition, that in the nature of an impulsive cause shall bring man into the covenant and its privileges, or continue him in when brought in. This we renounce as well as you: but our question is about such a condition as is neither in the nature of an act perfect in every degree, nor meritorious in the least of the benefit conferred, nor yet done in our own strength. But plainly and briefly, our question is, Whether there be not something as an act required of us in point of duty, to a blessing consequent by virtue of a promise? Such a thing, whatever it be, hath the nature of a condition, inasmuch as it is antecedent to the benefit of the promise; and the mercy or benefit granted, is suspended until it be performed. The question is not, whether there be any intrinsical worth or value in the thing so required, to oblige the disposer to make or perform the grant or promise, but merely that it be antecedent to the enjoyment of the benefit; and that the disposer of the benefit do suspend the benefit until it be performed? Thus an act or duty of ours, which has nothing at all of merit in it, or answerable value to the benefit it relates to, may be in a proper sense a condition of the said benefit. "For what is a condition in the true notion of it, but (1) the suspension of a grant until something future be done?" "Or, (2) as others to the same purpose, The adding of words to a grant, for the future, of a suspending quality,

according to which the disposer will have the benefit he disposeth to be regulated?" This properly is a condition, though there be nothing of equivalent value or merit in the thing required. And such your brethren, in their narrative, page 14 do acknowledge faith to be, when they assert none can be actually reconciled, justified, or adopted, till they are really, implanted into Jesus Christ by faith; and so, by virtue of this their union with him, have these fundamental benefits actually conveyed unto them; which contains the proper notion of the condition we contend for. And such a condition of salvation we assert faith to be in the new covenant grant; that is to say, the grant of salvation by God in the gospel-covenant is suspended from all men, till they believe, and is due by promise, not merit, to them as soon as they do truly believe. The notes or signs of a condition given by civilians, or moralists, are such as these, If, if not, unless, but if, except, only, and the like. When these are added in the promise of a blessing or benefit for the future, they make that promise conditional; and your grammar (according to which you must speak, if you speak properly and strictly) will tell you, that Si, sin, modo, dum, dummodo, are all conditional particles; and it is evident, that these conditional particles are frequently inserted in the grants of the blessings and privileges of the New Testament. As for example; Mark 11:23, ει δυνασαι πιςευσαι, "If thou canst believe." Acts 8:37, ει πιστε■εις εξ ■λης της καρδ■ας, "If thou believest with thy whole heart thou mayest," &c. Romans 10:9, οτι εαν, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth, and believe with thy heart," &c. "thou shall be saved." Matthew 18:3, εαν μη, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Mark 5:36, μονον, "Only believe." Mark 11:26, ει δε υμεις ουκ αφιετε, "But if ye forgive not," &c. with multitudes more, which are all conditional particles inserted in the grants of benefits.

(2.) Having shewn you what the nature of a condition is, I shall, I hope, make it plain to you, that faith is such a condition in the gospel-grant of our salvation; for we find the benefit suspended till this act of faith be performed; John 3:36, "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" And most plainly, Romans 10:9, having shewn before what the condition of legal righteousness was, he tells us there what the gospel-condition of salvation is; "The righteousness which is of faith, speaketh on this wise; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart, that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." I ask you, sir, whether it be possible to put words into a frame more lively expressive of a condition than these are? Do but compare Mark 16:16, "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned:" Do but compare, I say, that scripture-phrase with the words of Jacob's sons, which all allow to be conditional, Genesis 43:4-5, "If thou wilt send our brother with us, we will go down; but if thou wilt not send him, we will not go down;" and judge whether the one be not as conditional as the other: more particularly,

Argument I.

If we cannot be justified or saved till we believe, then faith is the condition on which those consequent benefits are suspended. But we cannot be justified or saved till we believe; Ergo. The sequel of the major is evident; for, as we said before, a condition is the suspension of a grant till something future be done. The minor is plain in scripture; Romans 4:24, "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that righteousness was imputed to him; but for our sakes also, to whom it shall be imputed if we believe." οις μ■λλει λογιζεσθαι, Quibus futurim est ut imputetur, to whom it shall come to pass, that it shall be imputed, if we believe: And Acts 10:43, "Whosoever believeth on

him, shall receive remission of sins." John 3:36, "He that believeth not, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him;" with multitudes more. Now, sir, lay seriously before your eyes such scriptures as these, that promise salvation to believers, and threaten damnation to all unbelievers, as Mark 16:16 doth, and then give a plain and clear answer to this question; either the positive part of that text promises salvation absolutely to men, whether they believe or believe not, and consequently unbelievers shall be saved as well as believers; and the negative part threatens damnation absolutely to sinners, as sinners; and consequently all sinners shall be damned, whether they believe or not: or else, if you allow neither to be absolute, but that none can be saved till they believe, nor any damned when they do believe; is not that a conditional promise and threatening?

Argument II.

If God's covenant with Abraham, Genesis 12:2-3 and that Genesis 17:2-3 were (as you say) pure gospel-covenants of grace, and yet in both some things are required as duties on Abraham's part, to make him partaker of the benefits of the promises; then the covenant of grace is not absolute, but conditional. But so it was in both these covenants; Ergo. The minor only requires proof; for which let us have recourse to the places, and see whether it be so or not.

(1.) For the first you instance in as a pure gospel-covenant made with Abraham, Genesis 12:2-3. I must confess, as you dismember the text, p.229, by chusing out the second and third verses, and leaving out the first, which was the trial of Abraham's obedience, in forsaking his native country, and his father's house; I say, give me but this liberty to separate and disjoin one part of a covenant from the other, and it is easy to make any conditional covenant in the world to become absolute; for take but the duty required, from the promise that is made, and that which was a conditional, presently becomes an absolute grant. Suppose, sir, that Abraham had refused to leave his dear native country, and dearest relations, as many do; think you that the promised mercies had been his? I must plainly tell you, you assume a strange liberty in this matter, and make a great deal bolder with the scriptures than you ought: and the very same usage the other scriptures hath.

(2.) For when you cite your second covenant with Abraham, you only cite Genesis 17:2-3 and then call it an absolute gospel-covenant; when indeed you make it so, by leaving out the first verse, which contains the condition or duty required on Abraham's part; for thus run the three first verses, "And when Abraham was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abraham, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk thou before me, and be thou perfect, and I will make my covenant between me and thee," &c. Here an upright conversation before God is required of him, at God's entrance into this covenant with him; but that is, and must be omitted, and cut off, to make the covenant look absolute, I am really grieved to see the scriptures thus dealt with to serve a design!

Argument III.

If all the promises of the gospel be absolute and unconditional, requiring no restipulation from man, then they cannot properly and truly belong to the new covenant. But they do properly and truly belong to the new covenant; therefore they are not all absolute and unconditional. The sequel of the major is only liable to doubt or denial, namely, That the absoluteness of all the promises of the New Testament cuts off their relation to a covenant; but that it doth so, no man can deny, that understands the difference between a covenant and an absolute promise. A covenant is a mutual

compact or agreement betwixt parties, in which they bind each other to the performance of what they respectively promise; so that there can be no other proper covenant where there is not a restipulation or re-obligation of one part, as well as a promise on the other; but an absolute promise binds only one party and leaves the other wholly free and unobliged to any thing in order to the enjoyment of the good promised. So then, if all the New Testament promises be unconditional and absolute, they are not part of a covenant, nor must that word be applied to them; they are absolute promises, binding no man to whom they are made to any duty, in order to the enjoyment of the mercies promised: But those persons that are under these absolute promises, must and shall enjoy the mercies of pardon and salvation, whether they repent or repent not, believe or believe not, obey or obey not. Now to what licentiousness this doctrine leads men, is obvious to every eye. Yet this absoluteness of the covenant (as you improperly call it) is by you asserted, p. 229, 230. There is (say you) no condition at all, it is wholly free and absolute, as the covenant with Abraham, Genesis 12:2-3. Genesis 17:2-3. Thank you, sir, for making them so; for by cutting off the first verses, where the duty required on Abraham's part is contained, you make them what God never intended them to be. And the same foul play is in Deuteronomy 30:1-20, where you separate the plain condition contained in Deuteronomy 30:1-2, from the promise, Deuteronomy 30:6. Or if the condition, Deuteronomy 30:1-2 be not plain enough, but you will make it part of the promise, I hope that after, in Deuteronomy 30:10 is too plain to be denied. As to the other texts, more anon; mean time see how you destroy the nature of a covenant.

Objection. But say you, page 233. To impose new conditions, though never so mild, is a new covenant of works with some mercy, but not a covenant of grace, properly so called.

Solution. It is true, if those works or acts of ours, which God requires, be understood of meritorious works in our own strength and power to perform, it destroys the free grace of the covenant; but this we utterly reject, and speak only of faith wrought in us by the Spirit of God, which receives all from God, and gives the entire glory to God; Ephesians 2:5, Ephesians 2:8.

Objection. But you will say, If faith be the condition, and that faith be not of ourselves, then both the promise and the condition are on God's part (if you will call faith a condition) and so still on our part the covenant is absolute.

Solution. This is a mistake, and the mistake in this leads you into all the rest; though faith (which we call the condition on our part) be the gift of God, and the power of believing be derived from God, yet the act of believing is properly our act, though the power by which we believe be of God; else it would follow, when we act any grace, as faith, repentance, or obedience, that God believes, repents, and obeys in us, and it is not we, but God that doth all these. This, I hope, you will not dare to assert; they are truly our works, though wrought in God's strength? Isaiah 26:12. "Lord, thou hast wrought all our works in us;" i.e., though they be our works, yet they are wrought in us by thy grace or strength. As for Dr. Owen, it is plain from the place you cite in the doctrine of justification, p. 156, he only excludes conditions, as we do, in respect of the dignity of the act, as is more plain in his treatise of redemption, p. 103,104, in which he allows conditions in both the covenants, and makes this the difference, That the Old required them, but the New effects them in all the fœderates.

I know no orthodox divine in the world, that presumes to thrust in any work of man's into the covenant of grace, as a condition, which, in the Arminian sense, he may or may not perform,

according to the power and pleasure of his own free will, without the preventing or determining grace of God; which preventing grace is contained in those promises, Ezekiel 36:25-27, &c. Nor yet that there is any meritorious worth, either of condignity or congruity in the Popish sense, in the very justifying act of faith, for the which God justifies and saves us. But we say, That though God, in the way of preventing grace, works faith in us, and when it is so wrought, we need his assisting grace to act it, yet neither his assisting nor preventing grace makes the act of faith no more to be our act; it is we that believe still though in God's strength, and that upon our believing, or not believing, we have or have not the benefits of God's promises; which is the very proper notion of a condition.

Argument IV.

If all the promises of the new covenant be absolute and unconditional, having no respect nor relation, to any grace wrought in us, nor duty done by us, then the trial of our interest in Christ, by marks and signs of grace, is not our duty, nor can we take comfort in sanctification, as an evidence of our justification. But it is a Christian's duty to try his interest in Christ by marks and signs; and he may take comfort in sanctification, as an evidence of justification. Ergo. The sequel of the major is undeniably clear: so that can never be a sign or evidence of an interest in Christ, which that interest may be without; yea, and as Dr. Crispe asserts, according to his Antinomian principles, 'Christ is ours (saith he) before we have gracious qualifications; every true mark and sign must be inseparable from that it signifies.' Now, if the works of the Spirit in us be not so, but an interest in Christ may be where these are not, then they are no proper marks or signs; and if they are not, it cannot be our duty to make use of them as such, and consequently if we should, they can yield us no comfort. The minor is plain in scripture; 1 John 2:3, "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." The meaning is, we perceive and discern ourselves to be sincere believers, and consequently that Christ is our propitiation, when obedience to his commands is become habitual and easy to us; So 1 John 3:19, "Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him;" i.e., by our sincere cordial love to Christ and his members, as 1 John 3:18, this shall demonstrate to us, that we are the children of truth; and again, 1 John 3:15, "We know that we are passed from death to life; because we love the brethren:" With multitudes more to the same purpose, which plainly teach Christians to fetch the evidences of their justification out of their sanctification, and to prove their interest in Christ, by the works of his Spirit found in their own hearts. And this is not only a Christian's liberty, but his commanded duty to bring his interest in Christ to this touchstone and test; 2 Corinthians 13:5, "Examine yourselves, prove yourselves," &c. 2 Peter 1:10, "Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure," i.e., your election by your calling. No man can make his election sure a priori, nor can any make it surer than it is in se; therefore it is only capable of being made sure to us a posteriori; arguing from the work of sanctification in us, to God's eternal choice of us. And as the saints in all ages have taken this course, so they have taken great and lawful comfort in the use of these marks and signs of grace; 2 Kings 20:3.; 2 Corinthians 1:12.

I am sensible how vehemently the Antinomian party, Dr. Crispe, Mr. Eyre, and some others, do oppugn [oppose] this truth, representing it as legal and impracticable (for they are for the absolute and unconditional nature of the new covenant, as well as you); but by your espousing their principle, you have even run Anabaptism into Antinomianism; and must, by this principle of yours, renounce all marks and trials of an interest in Christ, by any work of the Spirit wrought in us. You

must only stick to the immediate sealings of the Spirit; which, if such a thing be at all, it is but rare and extraordinary.

I will not deny but there may be an immediate testimony of the Spirit; but sure I am his mediate testimony by his graces in us, is his usual way of sealing believers. We do not affirm any of these his works to be meritorious causes of our justification; or that, considered abstractly from the Spirit, they can of themselves seal, or evidence our interest in Christ. Neither do we affirm, that any of them are complete and perfect works; but this we say, that they being true and sincere, though imperfect graces, they are our usual and standing evidences, to make out our interest in Christ by. And I hope you, and the whole Antinomian party, will find it hard, yea, and impossible, to remove the saints from that comfortable and scriptural way of examining their interest in Christ, by the graces of his Spirit in them; as the saints, who are gone to heaven before them, have done in all generations.

Argument V.

If the covenant of grace be altogether absolute and unconditional, requiring nothing to be done on our part, to entitle us [to come into possession of the right] to its benefits; then it cannot be man's duty in entering covenant with God, to deliberate the terms, count the cost, or give his consent by word or writing, explicitly to the terms of this covenant. But it is man's duty in entering Covenant with God, to deliberate the terms, and count the cost; Luke 14:26-34. and explicitly to give his consent thereunto, either by word or writing: Ergo. The sequel of the major is self-evident: For where there are no terms or conditions required on our part, there can be none to deliberate, or give our consent to; and so a man may be in a covenant without his own consent. The minor is undeniable in the text cited: If you say, These are duties, but not conditions; I reply, they are such duties, without the performance of which we can have no benefit by Christ and the new covenant, Luke 14:33. And such duties have the true suspending nature of conditions in them. If you say they are only subsequent duties, but not antecedent or concomitant acts, the 28th verse directly opposes you: Let him first sit down and count the cost. And for those overt-acts, whereby we explicitly declare our consent to the terms of the covenant, at our first entering into the bond of it, I hope you will not say, that it is a legal covenant too; Isaiah 44:3-4, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine off-spring; and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses; One shall say, I am the Lord's, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord," &c. A plain allusion to soldiers, when they list themselves under a captain, or general.

What remains now to reply to these arguments, but either that the places by me cited and argued upon, do not intend the new covenant, under which we are; or that this new covenant hath its conditions, and is not altogether absolute, as you have asserted it to be."

Chapter 114

S. Fountain of Life (excerpts)

Choice excerpts from John

Flavel's "The Fountain of Life"

When most lame and defective in themselves

Happy were it, if puzzled and perplexed Christians would turn their eyes from the defects that are in their obedience, to the fullness and completeness of Christ's obedience; and see themselves complete in Him, when most lame and defective in themselves. By the hand of His own Father!

To wrath, to the wrath of an infinite God without mixture—to the very torments of hell was Christ delivered—and that by the hand of His own

Father! Surely then, that love is fathomless, which made the Father of mercies deliver His only Son to such miseries for us sinners! The most precious thing in heaven or earth

In giving Christ to die for poor sinners, God gave the richest jewel in His cabinet; a mercy of the greatest worth, and most inestimable value.

Heaven itself is not so valuable and precious as Christ is! Ten thousand thousand worlds—as many worlds as angels can number, would not outweigh Christ's love, excellency and sweetness! O what a lovely One! What an excellent, beautiful, ravishing One—is Christ!

Put the beauty of ten thousand paradises, like the garden of Eden, into one; put all flowers, all smells, all colors, all tastes, all joys, all sweetness, all loveliness into one; O what a lovely and excellent thing would that be!

And yet it should be less to that loveliest and dearest well beloved Christ—than one drop of rain to all the seas, rivers, lakes, and fountains of ten thousand earths!

Now, for God to bestow the mercy of mercies, the most precious thing in heaven or earth, upon poor sinners; and, as great, as lovely, as excellent as His Son was—what kind of love is this!

Stupefying, damning, intoxicating!

Imagine the self-revenges, the self-torments, which the damned suffer for their folly; and what a value they would set upon one offer of salvation.

It is astonishing, that you should despise a mercy in which your own souls are so dearly, so deeply, so everlastingly concerned, as they are in this gift of God.

Oh, what a monster are you, to cast your soul away thus!

What! will you slight your own souls? Don't you care whether they are saved, or whether they are damned? Have you imagined a tolerable hell? Is it easy to perish? Have you not only turned God's enemies, but your own too? Oh see what monsters, sin can turn people into!

Oh the stupefying, damning, intoxicating power of sin!

Christ is so in love with holiness, that at the price of His blood, He will buy it for us!

See the greatness and dreadfulness of that breach which sin made between God and us. No less a sacrifice than Christ himself must make atonement. Judge of the greatness of the wound which sin made, by the magnitude of the remedy which Christ made.

All our repentance, could we shed as many tears for sin, as there have fallen drops of rain since the creation, could not have atoned for our sin!

A double spot

"A lamb without blemish or spot." 1 Peter 1:19

Every other man has a double spot on him: the heart-spot, and the life-spot;

the spot of original sin, and the spots of actual sin.

But Christ was without either—His life was spotless and pure. "He did no iniquity." And though tempted to sin, yet He was never defiled in heart or practice.

Yours! Mine!

Lord, the condemnation was Yours, that the justification might be mine!

The agony was Yours, that the victory might be mine!

The pain was Yours, and the ease mine!

The stripes were Yours, and the healing balm issuing from them mine!

The vinegar and gall were Yours, that the honey and sweet might be mine!

The curse was Yours, that the blessing might be mine!

The crown of thorns was Yours, that the crown of glory might be mine!

The death was Yours, the life purchased by it mine!

You paid the price, that I might enjoy the inheritance!

O wretched idol

O that dreadful house-idol—myself!

We have need to be redeemed from ourselves, as much as from the devil and the world!

I would like to make a sweet bargain, and shuffle out self, and substitute Christ my Lord in place of myself! Not I, but Christ! Not my will, but Christ’s! Not my ease, not my lusts, not my home—but Christ, Christ!

O wretched idol, myself! When shall I see you wholly cast out, and Christ wholly put in your place? The knife that stabbed Christ to the heart!

"They will look at Me, whom they have pierced. Then they will mourn for Him as one mourns for an only son, and they will cry bitterly for Him as one cries for a firstborn son." Zechariah 12:10

Do you complain of the hardness of your hearts, and lack of love to Christ? Behold Him dying for your sins! Such a sight, (if any in the world will do it) will melt your hard hearts.

It is reported of Johannes Milieus, that he was never observed to speak of Christ and His sufferings, but his eyes would drop tears.

Are you too little touched and unaffected with the evil of sin? Look at the cross of Christ, and see what efficacy there is in it to make sin forever bitter as death to your soul.

Suppose your own father had been stabbed to the heart with a certain knife, and his blood were still upon it. Would you delight to see, or endure to use that knife any more?

Sin is the knife that stabbed Christ to the heart!

Sin shed his blood!

If God should damn you for all eternity

If the death of Christ was that which satisfied God for all the sins of the elect, then certainly there is an infinite evil in sin, since it cannot be expiated but by an infinite satisfaction. Fools make a mock at sin, and there are but few people who are duly sensible of, and affected with—the evil of sin.

If God should damn you for all eternity, your eternal sufferings could not pay for the evil that is in one vain thought! Perhaps you think that this is harsh

and severe—that God should hold His creatures under everlasting sufferings for sin. But when you have well considered, that the One against whom you sin, is the infinite blessed God; and that sin is an infinite evil committed against Him; and when you consider how God dealt with the angels that fell, for one sin—you will alter your minds about it.

O the depth of the evil of sin! If ever you will see how dreadful and horrid an evil, sin is, you must measure it either by the infinite holiness and excellency of God, who is wronged by it; or by the infinite sufferings of Christ, who died to pay its penalty; and then you will have deeper apprehensions of the evil of sin. Its ensnaring beauty

"The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Matthew 20:28

Jesus did not come to amass earthly treasures, but to bestow heavenly ones. His great and heavenly soul neglected and despised those things, that too many of His own people too much admire and live for. He spent not an anxious thought about those things that eat up thousands and ten thousands of our thoughts.

Indeed He came to be humbled, and to teach men by His example the vanity of this world, and pour contempt upon its ensnaring beauty.

Cain’s club!

The greatest innocence and piety cannot exempt from persecution and injury. Who more innocent than Christ? And who more persecuted? The world is the world still. "I have given them your word, and the world has hated them." The world lies in wait as a thief for those who carry this treasure. Persecution follows piety—as the shadow does the body. "All who will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution." Whoever resolves to live holy—must never expect to live quietly.

All who will live godly, manifest holiness in their lives, will gall the consciences of the ungodly. Holiness enrages them, for there is an enmity and antipathy between them! This enmity runs in the blood; and it is transmitted with it from generation to generation. "Just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh, persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now." So it was, and so still it is. "Cain's club is still carried up and down crimsoned with the blood of Abel!"

O that your spirits, as well as your conditions, may better harmonize with Christ. He suffered meekly, quietly, and self-denyingly. Be like Him. Let it not be said of you, as it is of the hypocrite—that he is like flint, which seems cold; but if you strike him, he is all fiery.

To do well, and suffer ill, is Christlike.

Holy Father, keep them in your name.

"And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name." (John 17:11)

The world is a sinful, infecting and disturbing place; it lies in wickedness. It is a hard thing for such poor, weak, imperfect creatures to escape the pollutions of it. And if they do, yet they cannot escape the troubles, persecutions, and strong oppositions of it. Seeing therefore I must leave Your own dear children, as well as Mine, in the midst of a sinful, troublesome, dangerous world, where they can neither move backward nor forward, without danger of sin or ruin; O, since the case stands so, look after them, provide for them, and take special care of them all. Holy Father, consider who they are—and where I leave them.

They are Your children—left in a strange country.

They are Your soldiers—in the enemies grounds.

They are Your sheep—in the midst of wolves.

They are Your precious treasure—among thieves.

"And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name." (John 17:11)

Cursed sin!

O how inflexible and severe is the justice of God! What, no abatement? no sparing mercy? No, not even to His own Son!

Cultivate a deep indignation against sin.

Oh cursed sin! It was you who slew my dear Lord! For your sake He underwent all this! If your vileness had not been so great, His sufferings had not been so many. Cursed sin! You were the knife which stabbed Him! You the sword which pierced Him!

Empty titles

"Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—either of sin, which leads to death,

or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?" (Romans 6:16)

It is but a mockery to give Christ the empty titles of ’Lord’ and ’King’—while you give your real service to sin and Satan. What is this but to be like the Jews

—to bow the knee to Him, and say, "Hail master!" and crucify him? Here is honey in the tongue—and poison in the heart!

O what a melting consideration is this! That . . .

out of His agony, comes our victory;

out of His condemnation, comes our justification;

out of His pain, comes our ease;

out of His stripes, comes our healing;

out of His gall and vinegar, comes our honey;

out of His curse, comes our blessing;

out of His crown of thorns, comes our crown of glory;

out of His death, comes our life!

Great force and efficacy

The believing meditation of what Christ suffered for us, is of great force and efficacy to melt and break the heart.

"They will look at Me, whom they have pierced. Then they will mourn for Him as one mourns for an only son, and they will cry bitterly for Him as one cries for a firstborn son." Zechariah 12:10

Ponder seriously here, the spring and motive—it is the eye of faith that melts and breaks the heart. The effect of such a sight of Christ—they shall look and mourn; be in bitterness and sorrow.

True repentance is a drop out of the eye of faith. The measure or degree of that sorrow, is caused by a believing view of Christ.

You are the one who has done this!

"I remained speechless. I did not open my mouth because You are the one who has done this!" (Psalms 39:9)

Look upwards, when tribulations come upon you! Look to that sovereign Lord, who commissions and sends them upon you. You know that troubles do not rise out of the dust, nor spring out of the ground, but are framed in heaven.

"This is what the Lord says: I'm going to prepare a disaster and make plans against you." Jeremiah 18:11. Troubles and afflictions are of the Lord's framing and

devising, to reduce His wandering people to Himself.

You may observe much of divine wisdom in the choice, measure, and season of your troubles. Sovereignty, in electing the instruments of your affliction; in making them as afflictive as He pleases; and in making them obedient both to His call, in coming and going, when He pleases. Now, could you in times of trouble look up to this sovereign hand, in which your souls, bodies, and all their comforts and mercies are; how quiet would your hearts be!

Oh, when we have to do with men, and look no higher, how do our spirits swell and rise with revenge and impatience! But if you once come to see that man as a rod in your Father's hand, you will be quiet. "Be still, and know that I am God." Consider with whom you have to do; not with your fellow, but with your God, who can puff you to destruction with one blast of His mouth; in whose hand you are, as the clay in the potter's hand.

It is for lack of looking up to God in our troubles, that we fret, murmur, and despond at the rate we do.

"It is the Lord. Let Him do what seems good to Him." (1 Samuel 3:18)

Behold your mother!

"Then He said to the disciple—Behold your mother!" John 19:27

We now pass to the consideration of the second memorable and instructive word of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, contained in this scripture. Wherein He has left us an excellent pattern for the discharge of our 'relative duties'. It may be well said, the gospel makes the best husbands and wives, the best parents and children, the best masters and servants in the world; seeing it furnishes them with the most excellent precepts, and proposes the best patterns.

Here we have the pattern of Jesus Christ presented to all godly children for their imitation, teaching them how to behave towards their parents, according to the laws of nature and grace. Christ was not only subject and obedient to His parents while He lived, but manifested His tender care even while He hanged in the torments of death upon the cross. "Then He said to the disciple—Behold your mother!"

Let not your vain heart slight sin!

"My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46)

How horrid a thing is sin! How great is to that evil of evils, which deserves that all this should be inflicted and suffered for the expiation of it!

The sufferings of Christ for sin give us the true account, and fullest representation of its evil. "The law is a bright glass, wherein we may see the evil of sin; but there is the red glass of the sufferings

of Christ, and in that we may see more of the evil of sin, than if God should let us down to hell, and there we should see all the tortures and torments of the damned. If we would see them how they lie sweltering under God's wrath there, it were not so much as the beholding of sin through the red glass of the sufferings of Christ."

Suppose the bars of the bottomless pit were broken up; and damned spirits should ascend from thence, and come up among us, with the chains of darkness rattling at their heels, and we should hear the groans, and see the ghastly paleness and trembling of those poor creatures upon whom the righteous God has impressed His fury and indignation; if we could hear how their consciences are lashed by the fearful scourge of guilt, and how they shriek at every lash the arm of justice gives them.

If we should see and hear all this, it is not so much as what we may see in this text, where the Son of God, under his sufferings for it, cries out, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?"

O then, let not your vain heart slight sin, as if it were but a small thing! If ever God shows you the 'face of sin' in this glass, you will say, there is not such another horrid thing in all the world!

Fools make a mock at sin, but wise men tremble at it. The best of our duties

"It is finished!" (John 19:30)

Has Christ perfected and completely finished all His work for us? How sweet a relief is this to against all the defects and imperfections of all the works which are wrought by us. There is nothing finished that we do. All our duties are imperfect duties; they come off lamely and defectively from our hands. O there is much sin and vanity in the best of our duties. But Jesus Christ has finished all His work, though we can finish none of ours. And so, even though we are defective, poor, imperfect creatures in ourselves, yet we are complete in Christ. His complete obedience being imputed to us, makes us complete, and without fault before God. The kings of the earth are but as little bits of clay!

"Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful and worship God in reverence and fear in a way that pleases Him. For our God is an all-consuming fire." (Hebrews 12:28-29)

O with what solemn reverence should we approach Him in worship! Away with light and low thoughts of Christ! Away with formal, irreverent, and careless frames in praying, hearing, receiving; yes, in conferring and speaking of Christ. Away with all deadness, and drowsiness in duties; for He is a great King with whom you have to do. A king, to whom the kings of the earth are but as little bits of clay! Lo, the angels cover their faces in His presence. Has He put you so many times into the furnace?

You have a further advantage to a holy life, by all the chastisements with which God visits you.

By these afflictions, God prevents your straying and wandering. Others may wander even as far as hell, and God will not spend a sanctified rod upon them, to reduce or stop them; but says, "let them alone!" Hosea 4:17. But if you wander out of the way of holiness, He will clog you with one trouble or other to keep you within bounds.

Holy Basil was a long time sorely afflicted with an inveterate headache, he often prayed for the removal of it. At last God removed it, but in the place of it, he was sorely exercised with the motions and temptations of lust; which, when he perceived, he heartily desired his headache again, to prevent a worse evil.

You little know the ends and uses of many of your afflictions.

Are you exercised with bodily weakness? It is a mercy you are so; and if these pains and infirmities were removed, these clogs taken off, you may with Basil, wish for them again, to prevent worse evils.

Are you poor? Why, with that poverty God has clogged your pride!

Are you reproached? With these reproaches God has clogged your sinful ambition.

Corruptions are prevented by your afflictions. And, is not this a marvelous help to holiness of life?

By your afflictions, your corruptions are not only clogged, but purged. By these God dries up and consumes that spring of sin which defiles your lives. God orders your wants to fill your wantonness; and makes your poverty poison to your pride.

Afflictions are God's medicines, to purge ill humours out of your souls. Others have the same afflictions that you have, but they do not work on them as on you. They are both fire for the purifying; and water for the cleansing of your souls. Christ's blood is the only fountain to wash away sin. But, in the virtue

and efficacy of that blood, sanctified afflictions are cleansers and purifiers too.

A cross without a Christ never made any man better; but with Christ, saints are much the better for the cross. Has God been so many days and nights a whitening you, and yet is not the hue of your conversation altered? Has He put you so many times into the furnace, and yet is not the dross separated? The more afflictions you have been under, the more assistance you have had for this life of holiness.

By all your troubles, God has been weaning you from the world, the lusts, loves, and pleasures of it; and drawing out your souls to a more excellent life and state than this. He often makes you groan under your burdens. And yet, will you not be weaned from he lusts, customs, and evils of this world?

Chapter 115

S. Life of the Late Rev. Mr. John Flavel

John Flavel, Life. The Life of the late Rev. Mr. John Flavel, minister of Dartmouth.

Those of the name of Flavel derive their pedigree from one who was the third great officer that came over with William the Conqueror; but this worthy Divine was far from that weakness and vanity to boast of any thing of that nature, being of the poet's mind, who said, Et genus, et proavos, et quae non fecimus ipsi, Vix ea nostra voco --- His father was Mr. Richard Flavel, a faithful and eminent minister. He was first minister at Broomsgrove, in Worcestershire, then at Hasler, and removed from thence to Willersey, in Gloucestershire, where he continued to 1660, whence he was outed upon the restoration of King Charles II because it was a sequestered living, and the incumbent then alive: this did not so much affect Mr. Flavel, as that he wanted a fixed place for the exercise of his pastoral function. He was a person of such extraordinary piety, that those who conversed with him, said, They never heard one vain word drop from his mouth. A little before the turning out of the Nonconformist ministers, being near Totness, in Devon, he preached from Hosea 7:6. "The days of visitation are come, the days of recompence are come, Israel shall know it". His application was so close, that it offended some people, and occasioned his being carried before some Justices of the Peace; but they could not reach him, so that he was discharged. He afterwards quitted that country, and his son's house, which was his retiring place, and came to London, where he continued in a faithful and acceptable discharge of his office, till the time of the dreadful plague in 1665, that he was taken and imprisoned in the manner following. He was at Mr. Blake's house in Covent-Garden, where some people had met privately for worship: whilst he was at prayer, a party of soldiers brake in upon them, with their swords drawn and demanded their preacher, threatening some, and flattering others to discover him, but in vain. Some of the company threw a coloured cloak over him, and in this disguise he was, together with his hearers, carried to Whitehall; the women were dismissed, but the men were detained and forced to lie all that night upon the bare floor; and, because they would not pay five pounds each, were sent to Newgate, where the pestilence raged most violently, as in other places of the city. Here Mr. Flavel and his wife were shut up, and seized with the sickness: they were bailed out, but died of the contagion; of which their son John had a divine monition given him by a dream, as we shall observe in its proper place. Mr. Richard Flavel left two sons behind him, both ministers of the gospel, viz. John and Phinehas.

John the eldest was born in Worcestershire. It was observable, that whilst his mother lay in with him, a nightingale made her nest in the out-side of the chamber-window, where she used to sing most sweetly. He was religiously educated by his father, and having profiled well at the grammar schools, was sent early to Oxford, and settled a commoner in University College. He plied his studies hard, and exceeded many of his contemporaries in university learning.

Soon after his commencing bachelor of arts, Mr. Walplate, the minister of Diptford, in the county of Devon, was rendered incapable of performing his office by reason of his age and infirmity, and sent to Oxford for an assistant; Mr. Flavel, though but young, was commended to him as a son

duly qualified, and was accordingly settled there by the standing committee of Devon, April 27, 1650, to preach as a probationer and assistant to Mr. Walplate.

Mr. Flavel considering the weight of his charge, applied himself to the work of his calling with great diligence; and being assiduous in reading, meditation and prayer, he increased in ministerial knowledge daily, (for he found himself that he came raw enough in that respect from the university) so that he attained to an high degree of eminency and reputation for his useful labours in the church.

About six months after his settling at Diptford, he heard of an ordination to be at Salisbury, and therefore went thither with his testimonials, and offered himself to be examined and ordained by the presbyters there: they appointed him a text, upon which he preached to their general satisfaction; and having afterwards examined him as to his learning, &c. they set him apart to the work of the ministry, with prayer and imposition of hands, on the 17th day of October, 1650.

Mr. Flavel being thus ordained, returned to Diptford, and after Mr. Walplate's death succeeded in the rectory. To avoid all encumbrances from the world, and avocations from his studies and ministerial work, he chose a person of worth and reputation in the parish (of whom he had a good assurance that he would be faithful to himself, and kind to his parishioners) and let him the whole tithes much below the real value, which was very pleasing to his people. By this means he was the better able to deal with them in private, since the hire of his labours was no way a hindrance to the success of them.

Whilst he was at Diptford he married one Mrs. Jane Randal, a pious gentlewoman, of a good family, who died in travail of her first child without being delivered. His year of mourning being expired, his acquaintance and intimate friends advised him to marry a second time, wherein he was again very happy. Sometime after this second marriage, the people of Dartmouth (a great and noted sea-port in the county of Devon, formerly under the charge of the Reverend Mr. Anthony Hartford, deceased) unanimously chose Mr. Flavel to succeed him. They urged him to accept their call, (1.) Because there were exceptions made against all the other candidates, but none against him. (2.) Because, being acceptable to the whole town, he was the more like to be an instrument of healing the breaches among the good people there. (3.) Because Dartmouth, being a considerable and populous town, required an able and eminent minister, which was not so necessary for a country-parish, that might besides be more easily supplied with another pastor than Dartmouth. That which made them more pressing and earnest with Mr. Flavel, was this; at a provincial synod in that county, Mr. Flavel, though but a young man, was voted into the chair as moderator, where he opened the assembly with a most devout and pertinent prayer; he examined the candidates who offered themselves to their trials for the ministry with great learning, stated the cases and questions proposed to them with much acuteness and judgement, and in the whole demeaned himself with that gravity, piety, and seriousness, during his presidency, that all the ministers of the assembly admired and loved him. The Reverend Mr. Hartford, his predecessor at Dartmouth, took particular notice of him, from that time forward contracted a strict friendship with him, and spoke of him among the magistrates and people of Dartmouth, as an extraordinary person, who was like to be a great light in the church. This, with their having several times heard him preach, occasioned their importunity with Mr. Flavel to come and be their minister; upon which, having spread his case before the Lord, and submitted to the decision of his neighbouring

ministers, he was prevailed upon to remove to Dartmouth, to his great loss in temporals, the rectory of Diptford being a much greater benefice.

Mr. Flavel being settled at Dartmouth by the election of people, and an order from Whitehall by the commissioners for approbation of public preachers, of the 10th of December, 1656, he was associated with Mr. Allein Geere, a very worthy, but sickly, man. The ministerial work was thus divided betwixt them; Mr. Flavel was to preach on the Lord's-day at Townstall, the mother-church standing upon a hill without the town; and every fortnight in his turn at the Wednesday's Lecture in Dartmouth. Here God crowned his labours with many conversions. One of his judicious hearers expressed himself thus concerning him; "I could say much, though not enough, of the excellency of his preaching; of his seasonable, suitable and spiritual matter; of his plain expositions of scripture, his taking method, his genuine and natural deductions, his convincing arguments, his clear and powerful demonstrations, his heart searching applications, and his comfortable supports to those that were afflicted in conscience. In short that person must have a very soft head, or a very hard heart, or both, that could sit under his ministry unaffected." By his unwearied application to study, he had acquired a great stock both of divine and human learning. He was master of the controversies betwixt the Jews and Christians, Papists and Protestants, Lutherans and Calvinists, and betwixt the Orthodox, and the Armenians and Socinians: he was likewise well read in the Controversies about Church-discipline, Infant-Baptism, and Antinomianism. He was well acquainted with the School-divinity, and drew up a judicious and ingenious scheme of the whole body of that Theology in good Latin, which he presented to a person of quality, but it was never printed. He had one way of improving his knowledge, which is very proper for young divines; whatever remarkable passage he heard in private conference, if he was familiar with the relator, he would desire him to repeat it again, and insert it into his Aversaria: by these methods he acquired a vast stock of proper materials for his popular sermons in the pulpit, and his more elaborate works for the press.

He had an excellent gift of prayer, and was never at a loss in all his various occasions for suitable matter and words; and, which was the most remarkable of all, he always brought with him a broken heart and moving affections: his tongue and spirit were touched with a live coal from the altar, and he was evidently assisted by the holy Spirit of grace and supplication in that divine ordinance. Those who lived in his family, say, that he was always full and copious in prayer, seemed constantly to exceed himself, and rarely made use twice of the same expressions. When the act of uniformity turned him out with the rest of his nonconforming brethren, he did not thereupon quit his relation to his church, he thought the souls of his flock to be more precious than to be so tamely neglected; he took all opportunities of ministering the word and sacraments to them in private meetings, and joined with other ministers in solemn days of fasting and humiliation, to pray that God would once more restore the ark of his covenant unto his afflicted Israel. About four months after that fatal Bartholomew day, his reverend colleague, Mr. Allein Geere, died; so that the whole care of the flock devolved upon Mr. Flavel, which, though a heavy and pressing burden, he undertook very cheerfully.

Upon the execution of the Oxford act, which banished all nonconformist ministers five miles from any towns which sent members to parliament, he was forced to leave Dartmouth, to the great sorrow of his people, who followed him out of town; and at Townstall church-yard they took such a mournful farewell of one another as the place might very well have been called Bochim. He

removed to Slapton, a parish five miles from Dartmouth, or any other corporation, which put him out of the legal reach of his adversaries. Here he met with signal instances of God's fatherly care and protection, and preached twice every Lord's-day to such as durst adventure to hear him, which many of his own people and others did, not withstanding the rigour and severity of the act against conventicles. He many times slipped privately into Dartmouth, where by preaching and conversation he edified his flock, to the great refreshment of his own soul and theirs, though with very much danger, because of his watchful adversaries, who constantly laid wait for him, so that he could not make any long stay in the town. In those times Mr. Flavel being at Exeter, was invited to preach by many good people of that city, who for safety chose a wood about three miles from the city to be the place of their assembly, where they were broke up by their enemies by that time the sermon was well begun. Mr. Flavel, by the care of the people, made his escape through the middle of his enraging enemies; and though many of his hearers were taken, carried before Justice Tuckfield, and fined; yet the rest, being nothing discouraged, reassembled, and carrying Mr. Flavel to another wood, he preached to them without any disturbance; and, after he had concluded, rode to a gentleman's house near the wood, who, though an absolute stranger to Mr. Flavel, entertained him with great civility that night, and next day he returned to Exeter in safety. Amongst those taken at this time, there was a Tanner who had a numerous family, and but a small stock; he was fined notwithstanding in forty pounds; at which he was nothing discouraged, but told a friend, who asked him how he bore up under his loss, "That he took the spoiling of his goods joyfully, for the sake of his Lord Jesus for whom his life and all that he had was too little. As soon as the Nonconformists had any respite from their trouble, Mr. Flavel laid hold of the opportunity, and returned to Dartmouth, where, during the first indulgence granted by King Charles II he kept open doors, and preached freely to all that would come and hear him; and when that liberty was revoked, he made it his business notwithstanding to preach in season and out of season, and seldom missed of an opportunity of preaching on the Lord's-day. During this time, God was pleased to deprive him of his second wife, which was a great affliction, she having been a help meet for him, and such an one he stood much in need of, as being a man of an infirm and weak constitution, who laboured under many infirmities. In convenient time he married a third wife, Mrs. Ann Downs, daughter of Mr. Thomas Downs, minister of Exeter, who lived very happy with him eleven years, and left him two sons, who are youths of great hopes. The persecution against the Nonconformists being renewed, Mr. Flavel found it unsafe to stay at Dartmouth, and therefore resolved to go to London, where he hoped to be in less danger, and to have more liberty to exercise his function. The night before he embarked for that end, he had the following premonition by a dream; he thought he was on board the ship, and that a storm arose which exceedingly terrified the passengers, during their consternation there sat writing at the table a person of admirable sagacity and gravity, who had a child in a cradle by him that was very froward; he thought he saw the father take up a little whip, and give the child a lash, saying, "Child be quiet, I will discipline, but not hurt thee". Upon this Mr. Flavel awaked, and musing on his dream, he concluded, that he should meet with some trouble in his passage: his friends being at dinner with him, assured him of a pleasant passage, because the wind and weather were very fair; Mr. Flavel replied, "That he was not of their mind, but expected much trouble because of his dream", adding, "that when he had such representations made to him in his sleep, they seldom or never failed.

Accordingly, when they were advanced within five leagues of Portland in their voyage, they were overtaken by a dreadful tempest insomuch that betwixt one and two in the morning, the master

and seamen concluded, that, unless God changed the wind, there was no hope of life; it was impossible for them to weather Portland, so that they must of necessity be wrecked on the rocks or on the shore. Upon this Mr. Flavel called all the hands that could be spared into the cabin to prayer; but the violence of the tempest was such, that they could not prevent themselves from being thrown from the one side unto the other as the ship was tossed; and not only so, but mighty seas broke in upon them, as if they would have drowned them in the very cabin. Mr. Flavel in this danger took hold of the two pillars of the cabin bed, and calling upon God, begged mercy for himself and the rest in the ship. Amongst other arguments in prayer, he made use of this, that if he and his company perished in that storm, the name of God would be blasphemed, the enemies of religion would say, that though he escaped their hands on shore, yet divine vengeance had overtaken him at sea. In the midst of prayer his faith and hope were raised, insomuch that he expected a gracious answer; so that, committing himself and his company to the mercy of God, he concluded the duty. No sooner was prayer ended, but one came down from the deck, crying, "Deliverance! Deliverance! God is a God hearing prayer! In a moment the wind is coming fair west!" And so sailing before it, they were brought safely to London. Mr. Flavel found many of his old friends there; and God raised him new ones, with abundance of work, and extraordinary encouragement in it. During his stay in London, he married his fourth wife, a widow gentlewoman, (daughter to Mr. George Jeffries, formerly minister of King’s Bridge) but now his sorrowful relict.

Mr. Flavel, while he was in London, narrowly escaped being taken, with the reverend Mr. Jenkins, at Mr. Fox’s in Moorfields, where they were keeping a day of fasting and prayer. He was so near, that he heard the insolence of the officers and soldiers to Mr. Jenkins when they had taken him; and observed it in his diary, that Mr. Jenkins might have escaped as well as himself, had it not been for a piece of vanity in a lady, whose long train hindered his going down stairs, Mr. Jenkins, out of his too great civility having let her pass before him.

Mr. Flavel after this, returned to Dartmouth, where with his family and dear people he blessed God for his mercies towards him. He was in a little time after confined close prisoner to his house, where many of his dear flock stole in over night, or betimes on the Lord’s day in the morning, to enjoy the benefit of his labours, and spend the sabbath in hearing, praying, singing of psalms, and holy discourses.

Mr. Jenkins, above mentioned, dying in prison, his people gave Mr. Flavel a call to the pastoral office among them, and Mr. Reeve’s people did the like. Mr. Flavel communicated these calls unto his flock, and kept a day of prayer with them to beg direction of God in this important affair; he was graciously pleased to answer them by fixing Mr. Flavel’s resolution to stay with his flock at Dartmouth. Many arguments were made use of to persuade him to come to London, as, that since he was turned out by the act of uniformity, he had had but very little maintenance from his church; that those at London were rich and numerous congregations; that he had a family and children to provide for; and that the city was a theatre of honour and reputation. But none of these things could prevail with him to leave his poor people at Dartmouth. In 1687, when it pleased God so to over-rule affairs, that King James II thought it his interest to dispense with the penal laws against them, Mr. Flavel, who had formerly been confined to a corner, shone brightly, as a flaming beacon upon the top of an hill. His affectionate people prepared a large place for him, where God blessed his labours to the conviction of many people, by his sermons on Revelation 3:20. "Behold I stand at the door and knock". This encouraged him to print those sermons, under the title of England’s

Duty, &c. hoping that it might do good abroad, as well as in his own congregation. He made a vow to the Lord under his confinement, that if he should be once more entrusted with public liberty, he would improve it to the advantage of the gospel; this he performed in a most conscientious manner, preached twice every Lord's-day, and lectured every Wednesday, in which he went over most of the 3d chapter of St John's gospel, shewing the indispensable necessity of regeneration. He preached likewise every Thursday before the sacrament, and then after examination admitted communicants. He had no assistance on sacrament-days, so that he was many times almost spent before he distributed the elements. When the duty of the day was over, he would often complain of a sore breast, an aking head, and a pained back; yet he would be early at study again next Monday. He allowed himself very little recreation, accounting time a precious jewel that ought to be improved at any rate.

He was not only a zealous preacher in the pulpit, but a sincere Christian in his closet, frequent in self-examination, as well as in pressing it upon others; being afraid, lest while he preached to others he himself should be a cast-away. To prove this, I shall transcribe what follows from his own diary.

"To make sure of eternal life, (said he) is the great business which the sons of death have to do in this world. Whether a man consider the immortality of his own soul, the ineffable joys and glory of heaven, the extreme and endless torments of hell, the inconceivable sweetness of peace of conscience, or the misery of being subject to the terrors thereof; all these put a necessity, a solemnity, a glory upon this work. But, Oh! the difficulties and dangers attending it! How many, and how great are these? What judgement, faithfulness, resolution, and watchfulness does it require? Such is the deceitfulness, darkness, and inconstancy of our hearts, and such the malice, policy and diligence of Satan to manage and improve it, that he who attempts this work had need both to watch his seasons for it, and frequently look up to God for his guidance and illumination, and to spend many sad and serious thoughts before he adventure upon a determination and conclusion of the state of his soul. To the end therefore that this most important work may not miscarry in my hands, I have collected, with all the care I can, the best and soundest characters I can find in the writings of our modern divines, taken out of the scripture, and by their labours illustrated and prepared for use, that I might make a right application of them.

1. I have earnestly sought the Lord for the assistance of his Spirit, which can only manifest my own heart unto me, and show me the true state thereof, which is that thing my soul does most earnestly desire to know; and I hope the Lord will answer my desire therein, according to his promises, Luke 11:13. John 14:26.

2. I have endeavoured to cast out and lay aside self-love, lest my heart being prepossessed therewith, my judgement should be perverted, and become partial on passing sentence on my estate. I have, in some measure, brought my heart to be willing to judge and condemn myself for an hypocrite, if such I shall be found on trial, as to approve myself for sincere and upright. Yea, I would have it so far from being grievous to me so to do, that if I have been all this while mistaken and deceived, I shall rejoice and bless the Lord with my soul, that now at last it may be discovered to me, and I may be set right, though I lay the foundation new again. This I have laboured to bring my heart to, knowing that thousands have dashed and split to pieces upon this rock. And indeed he that will own the person of a judge, must put off the person of a friend.

3. It has been my endeavour to keep upon my heart a deep sense of that great judgement-day throughout this work as knowing by experience what a potent influence this has on the conscience, to make it deliberate, serious and faithful in its work, and therefore I have demanded of my sun conscience, before the resolution of each question, O my conscience, deal faithfully with me in this particular, and say no more to me than thou wilt own and stand to in the great day, when the counsels of all hearts shall be made manifest.

4. Having seriously weighed each mark, and considered where in the weight and substance of it lieth, I have gone to the Lord in prayer for his assistance, ere I have drawn up the answer of my conscience, and as my heart has been persuaded therein, so have I determined and resolved: what has been clear to my experience, I have so set down; and what has been dubious, I have here left it so.

5. I have made choice of the fittest seasons I had for this work, and set to it when I have found my heart in the most quiet and serious frame. For as he that would see his face in a glass, must be fixed, not in motion, or in water, must make no commotion in it; so it is in this case.

6. Lastly, To the end I may be successful in this work, I have laboured all along carefully to distinguish betwixt such sins as are grounds of doubting, and such as are only grounds of humiliation; knowing that not every evil is a ground of doubting, though all, even the smallest infirmities, administer matter of humiliation; and thus I have desired to enterprise this great business. O Lord, assist thy servant, that he may not mistake herein; but, if his conscience do now condemn him, he may lay a better foundation whilst he has time; and if it shall now acquit him, he may also have boldness in the day of judgement."

These things being previously dispatched, he tried himself by the scripture marks of sincerity and regeneration; by this means he attained to a well-grounded assurance, the ravishing comforts of which were many times shed abroad in his soul; this made him a powerful and successful preacher, as one who spoke from his own heart to those of others. He preached what he felt, what he had handled, what he had seen and tasted of the word of life, and they felt it also.

We may guess what a sweet and blessed intercourse he had with heaven, from that history we meet with in his "Pneumatologia", p. 323, which I refer to, and likewise of that revelation he had of his father and mother’s death, p. 339. He was a mighty wrestler with God in secret prayer, and particularly begged of him to crown his sermons, printed books and private discourses, with the conversion of poor sinners, a work which his heart was much set upon. It pleased God to answer him by many instances, of which the two that follow deserve peculiar notice. In 1673, there came into Dartmouth port a ship of Pool, in her return from Virginia; the Surgeon of this ship, a lusty young man of 23 years of age, fell into a deep melancholy, which the Devil improved to make him murder himself. This he attempted on the Lord’s-day, early in the morning, when he was in bed with his brother; he first cut his own throat with a knife he had prepared on purpose, and leaping out of the bed, thrust it likewise into his stomach, and so lay wallowing in his own blood, till his brother awaked and cried for help. A Physician and Surgeon were brought, who concluded the wound in his throat mortal; they stitched it up however, and applied a plaister, but without hopes of cure, because he already breathed through the wound, and his voice was become inarticulate. Mr. Flavel came to visit him in this condition, and apprehending him to be within a few minutes of eternity, laboured to prepare him for it; he asked him his own apprehensions of his condition, and

the young man answered, that he hoped in God for eternal life. Mr. Flavel replied, that he feared his hopes were ill grounded: the scripture tells us, that "no murderer has eternal life abiding in him: self-murder was the grossest of all murder, &c. Mr. Flavel insisted so much on the aggravations of the crime, that the young man's conscience began to fail, his heart began to melt, and then he broke out into tears, bewailing his sin and misery, and asked Mr. Flavel, If there might yet be any hope for him? he told him there might; and finding him altogether unacquainted with the nature of faith and repentance, he opened them to him. The poor man sucked in this doctrine greedily, prayed with great vehemence to God, that he would work them on his soul, and entreated Mr. Flavel to pray with him, and for him, that he might be, though late, a sincere gospel penitent, and sound believer. Mr. Flavel prayed with him accordingly, and it pleased God exceedingly to melt the young man's heart, during the performance of that duty. He was very loth to part with Mr. Flavel, but the duty of the day obliging him to be gone, in a few words he summed up those counsels that he thought most necessary, and so took his farewell of him, never expecting to see him any more in this world. But it pleased God to order it otherwise; the young man continued alive contrary to all expectation, panted earnestly after the Lord Jesus, and no discourse was pleasing to him, but that of Christ and faith. In this frame Mr. Flavel found him in the evening; he rejoiced greatly when he saw him come again, intreated him to continue his discourse upon those subjects, and told him, Sir, the Lord has given me repentance for this and for all my other sins; I see the evil of them now, so as I never saw them before! O I loathe myself! I do also believe, Lord, help my unbelief. I am heartily willing to take Christ upon his own terms; hut one thing troubles me, I doubt this bloody sin will not be pardoned. Will Jesus Christ, said he, apply his blood to one, who has shed his own blood? Mr. Flavel told him that the Lord Jesus shad his blood for them who with wicked hands had shed his own blood, which was a greater sin then shedding the blood of his; to which the wounded man replied, I will cast myself upon Christ, let him do what he will. In this condition Mr. Flavel left him that night.

Next morning his wounds were to be opened, and the Surgeon's opinion was, that he would immediately expire: Mr. Flavel was again requested to give him a visit, which he did, found him in a very serious frame, and prayed with him. The wound in his stomach was afterwards opened, when the ventricle was so much swollen, that it came out at the orifice of the wound, and lay like a livid discoloured tripe upon his body, and was also cut through; every one thought it impossible for him to live; however, the Surgeon enlarged the orifice of the wound, fomented it, and wrought the ventricle again into his body, and, stitching up the wound, left his patient to the disposal of providence.

It pleased God that he was cured of those dangerous wounds in his body; and, upon solid grounds of a rational charity, there was ground to believe that he was also cured of that more dangerous wound which sin had made in his soul. Mr. Flavel spent many hours with him during his sickness; and when the Surgeon returned to Pool, after his recovery, Mr. Samuel Hardy, that worthy minister there, thanked Mr. Flavel in a letter, for the great pains he had taken with that young man, and congratulated his success, assuring him, that if ever a great and thorough work was wrought, it was upon that man. The second instance is this: Mr. Flavel being in London in 1673, his old bookseller, Mr. Boulder, gave him this following relation, viz. That some time before, there came into his shop a sparkish gentle man to enquire for some play-books; Mr. Boulder told him he had none, but shewed him Mr. Flavel's little treatise of "Keeping the Heart", intreated him to read it,

and assured him it would do him more good than play books. The gentleman read the title, and glancing upon several pages here and there, broke out into these and such other expressions, What a damnable Fanatic was he who made this book? Mr. Boulter begged of him to buy and read it, and told him he had no cause to censure it so bitterly; at last he bought it, but told him he would not read it. What will you do with it then, said Mr. Boulter? I will tear and burn it, said he, and send it to the Devil. Mr. Boulder told him, that he should not have it. Upon this the gentleman promised to read it; and Mr. Boulder told him, if he disliked it upon reading, he would return him his money. About a month after, the gentleman came to the shop again in a very modest habit, and with a serious countenance, bespoke Mr. Boulder thus; Sir, I most heartily thank you for putting this book into my hands; I bless God that moved you to do it, it has saved my soul; blessed be God that ever I came into your shop. And then he bought a hundred more of those books of him, and told him he would give them to the poor who could not buy them, and so left him, praising and admiring the goodness of God. Thus it pleased God to bless the sermons, discourses and writings of Mr. Flavel.

He never delighted in controversies, but was obliged, contrary to his inclination, to write against Mr. Cary, the principal Anabaptist in Dartmouth, with whom, however, he maintained a friendly and Christian correspondence. When he wrote his "Planelogia", or, "Blow at the Root", he declared to his friends, that though those studies were very necessary, he took no pleasure in them, but had rather be employed in practical divinity. When he composed his "Reasonableness of Personal Reformation", he told an intimate acquaintance of his, that he seldom had a vain thought to interrupt him, which made him hope it would do the more good in the world. He purposed to have enlarged his book of "Sacramental Meditations", and had most judiciously stated and handled several cases of conscience on that occasion, which he designed to have inserted in the next edition, but lived not to finish them for the press.

Many times, when he preached abroad, he has had letters sent him from unknown persons, informing him how God had blessed his ministry to their souls, and converted them from being bitter enemies to religion. This encouraged him when he rode abroad, not only to accept of invitations to preach, but many times to offer his labours unto those that would be pleased to hear him; though for this he had no occasion where he was known, the people being generally importunate with him. One day after a long and hard journey, an intimate friend of his, out of a tender regard to him, pressed him with cogent arguments to forbear preaching at that season, but could not prevail with him; his bowels of compassion to needy and perishing souls made him overlook all considerations of himself: he preached an excellent sermons by which there was one converted, as he declared himself afterwards upon his admission to the Lord’s table. The last sermon that he preached to his people at Dartmouth, was on a public day of fasting and humiliations; in the close of which he was enlarged in such an extraordinary manner, when offering up praises to God for mercies received, that he seemed to be in ecstasy. This happened about a week before his death, and may justly be accounted a foretaste of those heavenly raptures that he now enjoys among the blessed spirits above. The last sermon he preached was on the 21st of June, 1691, at Ashburton, from 1 Corinthians 10:12. "Wherefore let him that standeth take heed lest he fall". It was a very pathetical discourse, tending to awaken careless professors, and to stir them up to be solicitous about their souls. After having preached this sermon, he went to Exeter; and at Topsham, within three miles of that city, he presided as moderator in an assembly of the Nonconformist ministers of Devonshire, who unanimously voted him into the chair: the occasion of

the meeting was about an union betwixt the Presbyterian and Independents, which Mr. Flavel was very zealous to promote, and brought to so great an issue in those parts, that the ministers declared their satisfaction with the heads of agreement concluded on by the London ministers of those denominations. Mr. Flavel closed the work of the day with prayer and praises, in which his spirit was carried out with wonderful enlargement and affection.

He wrote a letter to an eminent minister in London, with an account of their proceedings, that same day that he died; providence ordering it so, that he should finish that good work his heart was so intent upon, before he finished his course. The manner of his death was sudden and surprising, his friends thought him as well that day in the evening of which he died, as he had been for many years: towards the end of supper he complained of a deadness in one of his hands, that he could not lift it to his head. This struck his wife and his friends about him with astonishment, they used some means to recover it to its former strength, but instead thereof, to their great grief the distemper seized all upon one side of his body. They put him to bed with all speed, and sent for physicians, but to no purpose; his distemper prevailed upon him so fast, that in a short time it made him speechless. He was sensible of his approaching death, and when they carried him upstairs, expressed his opinion that it would be the last time; but added, I know that it will be well with me; which were some of his last words. Thus died this holy man of God suddenly, and without pain, not giving so much as one groan. He exchanged this life for a better, on the 26th day of June, 1691, in the 64th year of his age. His corpse was carried from Exeter to Dartmouth, attended by several ministers, and a great many other persons of good quality; abundance of people rode out from Dartmouth, Totness, Newton, Ashburton, and other places, to meet the corpse; when it was taken out of the hearse at the water side, his people and other friends could not forbear expressing the sense of their great loss, by floods of tears, and a bitter lamentation. It was interred the same night in Dartmouth church, and next day Mr. George Trosse, a minister of Exeter, preached his funeral-sermon from Elisha’s lamentation upon the translation of Elijah, 2 Kings 2:12. "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.

We shall conclude with a character of Mr. Flavel. He was a man of a middle stature, and full of life and activity: he was very thoughtful, and when not discoursing or reading, much taken up in meditation, which made him digest his notions well. He was ready to learn from every body, and as free to communicate what he knew. He was bountiful to his own relations, and very charitable to the poor, but especially to the household of faith, and the necessitous members of his own church, to whom, during their sickness, he always sent suitable supplies. He freely taught academical learning to four young men whom he bred to the ministry, and one of them he maintained all the while at his own charge. He was exceedingly affectionate to all the people of Dartmouth, of which we shall give one remarkable instance. When our fleet was first engaged with the French, he called his people together to a solemn fast, and, like a man in an agony, wrestled with God in prayer for the church and nation, and particularly for the poor seamen of Dartmouth, that they might obtain mercy; the Lord heard and answered him, for not one of that town was killed in the fight, though many of them were in the engagement. As he was a faithful ambassador to his Master, he made his example the rule of his own practice, and was so far from reviling again, those that reviled him, that he prayed for those that despitefully used him: one remarkable instance of which is as follows: In 1685, some of the people of Dartmouth, accompanied too by some of the magistrates, made up his effigy, carried it through the streets in derision, with the

covenant and bill of exclusion pinned to it, and set it upon a bonefire, and burnt it; some of the spectators were so much affected with the reproach and ignominy done to this reverend and pious minister, that they wept, and others scored and jeered: it was observable, that at the very same time, though he knew nothing of the matter, he was heaping coals of fire of another nature upon the heads of those wicked men, for he was then praying for the town of Dartmouth, its magistrates and inhabitants; and when news was brought him, upon the conclusion of his prayer, what they had been doing, he lifted up his prayer unto God for them in our Saviour's words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

End. www.ccel.org

Chapter 116

S. Method of Grace (Excerpts)

CHOICE EXCERPTS from John

Flavel's "The Method of Grace"

You have all your hearts can wish!

"My God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." Php 4:19

O say with a melting heart—I have a full Christ,

and He is filled for me! I have . . .

His pure and perfect righteousness to justify me,

His holiness to sanctify me,

His wisdom to guide me,

His comforts to refresh me,

His power to protect me,

His all-sufficiency to supply me.

O be cheerful, be thankful—you have all your hearts can wish! And yet be humble—it is all from free-grace to empty and unworthy creatures!

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No sin startles less—or damns surer!

Unbelief is man's great sin, and condemnation is his great misery. How dreadful a sin is the sin of unbelief, which brings men under the condemnation

of the great God. No sin startles less—or damns surer! Unbelief is a sin which does not affright the conscience as some other sins do, but it kills the soul more certainly than any of those sins. Other sins could not damn us were it not for unbelief, which fixes the guilt of them all upon us. Unbelief is the sin of sins; and when the Spirit comes to convince men of sin, He begins with this as the capital sin.

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Only fully understood in hell

Condemnation is a word of deep and dreadful signification. It is a word whose deep sense and emphasis are only fully understood in hell. Condemnation is the judgment or sentence of God, condemning a man to bear the punishment of His eternal wrath for sin.

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O the blessed chemistry of heaven!

The Lord makes use even of your sins and infirmities to do you good. By these, He . . .

humbles you,

beats you off from self-dependence,

makes you admire the riches of grace,

makes you long more ardently for heaven,

causes you to entertain sweeter thoughts of death.

Does not the Lord then make blessed fruits to spring up from such a bitter root? O the blessed chemistry of heaven—to extract such mercies out of such miseries!

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O what a hell will it be!

"For what is the hope of the hypocrite—when God takes away his soul?" Job 27:8

Nothing more aggravates a man's damnation, than to sink suddenly into it from amid so many hopes and such high confidence of safety. For a man to find himself in hell when he thought himself within a step of heaven—O what a

hell will it be! The higher vain hopes lifted men up—the more dreadful must their fall be.

"The hypocrite's hope shall perish!" Job 8:13

"The expectation of the wicked shall perish!" Proverbs 10:28

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Adorn the gospel

"That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things." Titus 2:10

Your duty is to adorn the gospel by your life. The words signify to deck or adorn the gospel, to make it attractive and lovely to the eyes of beholders. When there is a beautiful harmony and lovely proportion between Christ's doctrine and our practice—then do we walk suitably to the Lord of glory.

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The mirth of unregenerate men!

How groundless is the mirth of unregenerate men! They feast in their prison and dance in their fetters. O the madness that is in their hearts! If men did but

realize that they are condemned already, it would be impossible for them to live in vanity as they do. And is their condition less dangerous because it is not understood? Surely not, but much more

so! O poor sinners, perhaps you have found out a way to prevent your present troubles. It would be infinitely better if you could find out how to prevent eternal misery! But it is easier for a man to stifle conviction, than to prevent damnation. Your mirth prevents repentance and increases your future torment. O what a hell will theirs be—who drop into it out of all the sinful pleasures of this world!

"In hell, where he was in torment." Luke 16:23

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Does it not deserve a tear?

As death takes the believer from many sorrows, and brings him to the vision of God, to a state of freedom and full satisfaction; so it drags the unregenerate

from all his sensual delights to the place of torment!

Death is the king of terrors—a serpent with a deadly sting to every man who is out of Christ.

How lamentable is the state of unregenerate persons! Were this truth heartily believed, we could not but mourn over them with the most tender compassion and sorrow. If our husbands, wives, or children are dying a natural death—how are our hearts rent with pity and sorrow for them; what cries, tears, and wringing of hands show the deep sense we have of their misery! O Christians, is all the love you have for your relatives spent upon their bodies? Are their souls of no value? Is spiritual death no misery? Does it not deserve a tear? May the Lord open your eyes, and affect your hearts with the wretchedness of spiritual death.

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In a deep sleep!

The Christless and unregenerate world are in a deep sleep! A spirit of slumber and security is fallen upon them, though they lie immediately exposed to eternal wrath, ready to drop into hell every moment!

A man fast asleep in a house on fire, and while the consuming flames are round about him, having his imagination sporting itself in some pleasant dream, is a very accurate picture of the unregenerate soul.

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The old has gone, the new has come!

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" 2 Corinthians 5:17

All the faculties of the soul are renewed by regeneration.

The understanding was dark—but now is light in the Lord.

The conscience was dead, or full of guilt and horror—but is now become tender, watchful, and full of peace.

The will was rebellious and inflexible—but is now obedient to the will of God.

The desires once pursued vanities—now they are set upon God.

Love once doated upon earthly things—now it is swallowed up in the infinite excellencies of God and Christ.

Joy was once in trifles—now his rejoicing is in Christ Jesus.

Fear once was about worldly things—now God is the object of his reverence, and sin the object of his dread.

The expectations were once only from this world—but now are from that to come.

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Poor toys and empty bubbles

Saints and sinners are wonders one to the other.

It is the wonder of the world to see Christians glorying in reproaches; they wonder that the saints run not with them into the same excess of riot. And it is a wonder to believers how such poor toys and empty bubbles should keep

the sinner from Jesus Christ and their everlasting happiness in Him.

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The astonishing wonder of the whole world!

How wonderful was the love of Christ the Lord of glory—to be so abased and humbled for us vile and sinful dust! It is astonishing to conceive that ever Jesus Christ should strip Himself of His robes of glory—to clothe Himself with the lowly garment of our flesh. If the sun had been turned into a wandering atom, if the most glorious angel in heaven had been transformed even into a fly—it

would be nothing compared to the abasement of the Lord of glory. This act of Christ's love, is the astonishing wonder of the whole world!

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One step beyond the state of this mortality

Christ cures all outward troubles in His people by death, which is their removal from the place of sorrows—to peace and rest for evermore. Then God wipes all tears from their eyes, and the days of their mourning are at an end. They then put off the garments and spirit of mourning, and enter into peace. They come to that place and state where tears and sighs are unknown.

One step beyond the state of this mortality brings us quite out of the sight and hearing of all troubles and lamentations.

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The scale

What is guilt, but the obligation of the soul to everlasting punishment and misery? It puts the soul under the sentence of God to eternal wrath —the condemning sentence of the great and awesome God! Nothing is more dreadful and insupportable than this! Put all pains, all poverty, all afflictions, all miseries in one scale—and God's wrath in the other; and you weigh but so many feathers against a ton of lead.

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The louder our groans

Grace never appears grace—until sin appears to be sin. The deeper our sense of the evil of sin—the deeper will be our apprehensions of the free grace of God in Christ. The louder our groans have been under the burden of sin—the louder will our acclamations and praises be for our salvation from it by Jesus Christ!

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I was upon the brink of hell

Acceptance with God brings you to heaven hereafter, but assurance will bring heaven into your souls now! O, what a life of delight and pleasure does the assured believer live! What pleasure is it to him to look back and consider where he once was—and where he now is; to look forward, and consider where he now is—and where shortly he shall be!

"I was in my sins—I am now in Christ! I am in Christ now—I shall be with Christ, and that forever, after a few days! I was upon the brink of hell—I am now upon the very borders of heaven!"

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Why is this to such a worm as I?

The heart that receives Jesus Christ is in a frame of deep humiliation and self-abasement. O, when a man begins to apprehend the first approaches of grace, pardon, and mercy by Jesus Christ to his soul; when he is convinced of his utter unworthiness and desert of hell, and can scarcely expect anything from the just and holy God but damnation—how do the first dawnings of mercy melt and humble him!

"O Lord, what am I, that you should feed me and preserve me; that you should but for a few years spare me! But that ever Jesus Christ should love me, and give Himself for me; that such a wretched sinner as I should obtain union with his person, pardon, peace, and salvation by his blood! Lord, why is this to such a worm as I? And will Christ indeed bestow Himself on me? Shall so great a blessing as Christ, ever come to such a soul as mine? Will God in very

deed be reconciled to me in his Son? What, to me —to such an enemy as I have been? Shall my sins, which are so many, so horrid, so much aggravated

beyond the sins of most men, be forgiven? O, what am I, vile dust, base wretch, that ever God should do this for me!"

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Supernatural and astonishing

Now for a soul to renounce and deny self, in all its forms, modes, and interests, as everyone does who comes to Christ; to disclaim and deny natural, moral, and religious self; and come to Christ as a poor, miserable, wretched, empty creature, to live upon His righteousness forever, is as supernatural and astonishing as to see the hills and mountains start from their bases and centers, and fly like wandering atoms in the air!

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Till God draws

"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him." John 6:44

All the preaching in the world can never effect the new birth—unless a supernatural and mighty power goes forth with it. Let the angels of heaven

be the preachers, till God draws—the soul comes not to Christ.

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At last reach heaven

As nothing can comfort a man that must go to hell at last; so nothing should deject a man that shall, through many troubles, at last reach heaven.

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The great change

Conversion is the great change which the Spirit causes upon the soul, turning it by a sweet, irresistible efficacy, from the power of sin and Satan—to God in Christ.

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Those who see God in the clearest light

"I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Job 42:5-6

Those who see God in the clearest light, abhor themselves in the deepest humility. If the Lord had effectually opened your eyes by a discovery of your

state by nature, and the course of your life under the influence of continual temptations and corruptions—how would your pride fall.

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A white hand—and a very foul heart

The crucifixion of sin does not consist in the suppression of the external acts of sin only; for sin may reign over the souls of men, while it does not break forth in open actions. Many a man shows a white hand who has a very foul heart.

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The consolation of believers

"As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." Revelation 3:19

Are outward afflictions the ground of dejection and trouble? How do our hearts fail and our spirits sink, under the many smarting rods of God upon us! But our relief and consolation under them all is in Christ Jesus; for the rod that afflicts us is in the hand of Christ who loves us! His design in affliction is our profit. Hebrews 12:10. That design of His for our good shall certainly be accomplished—and after that no more afflictions forever! "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Revelation 21:3. Thus two things are most evident:

1. Nothing can comfort the soul without Christ. He is the soul that animates all comforts; they would be dead without him. Temporal enjoyments, riches, honors, health, relations, yield not a drop of true comfort without Christ. Spiritual enjoyments, ministers, ordinances, promises, are fountains sealed and springs shut up until Christ opens them; a man may go comfortless in the midst of them all.

2. No troubles or afflictions can deject the soul which Christ comforts. "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." 2 Corinthians 6:10. A believer may walk with a heart full of comfort amidst all the troubles of the world. So that the conclusion stands firm—that Christ, and Christ only, is the consolation of believers.

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Though Satan pulls hard

"I give them eternal life, and they will never perish—ever! No one will snatch them out of My hand." John 10:28

Though Satan pulls hard, yet he will never be able to pluck them out of Jesus’ hand! O what relief is this!

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Places of worship

The presence of Jesus Christ gives a more real and excellent glory to places of worship than any external beauty whatever can bestow upon them.

Our eyes, like the disciples, are apt to be dazzled with the goodly stones of the temple, and in the mean time to neglect and overlook that which gives it the greatest honor and beauty.

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All your sorrows and tears for sin

All your sorrows and tears for sin cannot obtain God’s mercy. Could you shed as many tears for any sin you have committed, as all the children of Adam have shed since the creation of the world—they would not purchase the

pardon of that one sin.

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The cure of the dominion of sin

As Jesus cures the guilt of sin by pouring out His blood for us; so He cures its dominion by pouring out His Spirit upon us. Justification is the cure of guilt; sanctification is the cure of the dominion of sin.

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Go to a filthy puddle

How unreasonable and wholly inexcusable in believers is the sin of backsliding from Christ. Have you found rest in Him, when you could not find it in any other? Did He receive you, and give peace to your soul when all other persons and things were physicians of no value? And will you after this backslide from Him? O what madness! No man in his right mind would leave the pure, cold, refreshing stream of a crystal fountain—to go to a filthy puddle or an empty cistern! Such are the best enjoyments of this world in comparison with Jesus Christ.

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If there is justice in heaven, or fire in hell

"The one who believes in the Son has eternal life, but the one who refuses to believe in the Son will not see life; instead, the wrath of God remains on him." John 3:36

There are dreadful threatenings denounced by the Spirit in the word against all who refuse or neglect to come to Christ, which are of great use to engage and quicken souls in their way to Christ. If there is justice in heaven, or fire in hell, every soul who does not come to Christ must perish to all eternity! Upon your own heads be the destruction of your own souls forever if you will not come to him.

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The necessities of our souls

"You are complete in Him." Colossians 2:10

Christ is virtually and eminently all that the necessities of our souls require: bread to the hungry, and clothing to the naked.

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Do you not teach yourself?

"You, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself?" Romans 2:21

O, it is far easier to study and press a thousand truths upon others, than to feel the power of one truth upon our own hearts! It is easier to teach others duties to be done, than duties by doing them.

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The disordered soul

Man, by the apostasy, has become a most disordered and rebellious creature, opposing his Maker—

as the First Cause, by self-dependence;

as the Chief Good, by self-love;

as the Highest Lord, by self-will;

and as the Last End, by self-seeking.

Thus he is quite disordered, and all his actions are irregular.

But by regeneration the disordered soul is set right;

this great change being, the renovation of the soul

after the image of God, in which—

self-dependence is removed by faith;

self-love, by the love of God;

self-will, by subjection and obedience to the will of God;

and self-seeking by self-denial.

The darkened understanding is illuminated,

the refractory will sweetly subdued,

the rebellious appetite gradually conquered.

Thus the soul which sin had universally depraved,

is by grace restored.

S. Of CHRIST'S Wonderful Person. Joh_1:14.

SERMON V. Of CHRIST’S Wonderful Person. John 1:14. And the Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us , &c _____

YOU have heard the covenant of redemption opened. The work therein propounded by the Father, and consented to by the Son, is such as infinitely exceeds the power of any mere creature to perform. He that undertakes to satisfy God, by obedience for man’s sin, must himself be God; and he that performs such a perfect obedience, by doing, and suffering all that the law required, in our room, must be man. These two natures must be united in one person, else there could not be a concourse or cooperation of either nature in his mediatory works. How these natures are united, in the wonderful person of our Immanuel, is the first part of the great mystery of godliness: a subject studied and adored by angels! and the mystery thereof is wrapped up in this text. Wherein we have, First, The incarnation of the Son of God plainly asserted.

Secondly, That assertion strongly confirmed.

(1.) In the assertion we have three parts.

1. The Person assuming, ov lovgo", the Word, 1. e. the second Person or Subsistent in the most glorious Godhead, called the Word, either because he is the scope or principal matter, both of the prophetical and promissory word; or because he expounds and reveals the mind and will of God to men, as John 1:18. The only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared or expounded him.

2. The Nature assumed, savrx, Flesh, 1. e. the entire human nature, consisting of a true human soul and body. For so this word in Romans 3:20. and the Hebrew word rcb which answers to it, by an usual Metonomy of a part for the whole, is used, Genesis 6:12. And the word Flesh is rather used here, than Man, on purpose to enhance the admirable condescension and abasement of Christ; there being more of vileness, weakness, and opposition to spirit in this word, than in that, as is pertinently noted by some. Hence the whole nature is denominated by that part, and called flesh.

3. The assumption itself, elenevto, he was made; not fruit, he was, (as Socinus would render it, designing thereby to overthrow the existence of Christ’s glorified body now in heaven) but factus est, it was made, 1. e. he took or assumed the true human nature (called flesh, for the reason before rendered) into the unity of his divine person, with all its integral parts and essential properties; and so was made, or became a true and real man, by that assumption. The apostle speaking of the same act, Hebrews 2:16. uses another word, He took on him, evpilambavvnetai fitly rendered he took on him, or he assumed; which assuming, though inchoative, it was the work of the whole Trinity, God the Father, in the Son, by the Spirit, forming or creating that nature; as if three sisters should make a garment betwixt them, which only one of them wears: yet, terminative, it was the act of the Son only: it was he only that was made flesh. And when it is said, he was made flesh, misconceive not, as if there was a mutation of the Godhead into flesh; for this was

performed, "not by changing what he was, but by assuming what he was not," as Augustine well expresseth it. As when the scripture, in a like expression, saith, "He was made. sin," 2 Corinthians 5:21, and made a curse, Galatians 3:13. the meaning is not, that he was turned into sin, or into a curse; no more may we think here the Godhead was turned into flesh, and lost its own being and nature, because it is said he was made flesh. This is the sum of the assertion.

(2.) This assertion ["that the word was made flesh,"] is strongly confirmed. He "dwelt among us," and we saw his glory. This was no phantasm, but a most real and indubitable thing. For, evsxhnw'sen evn h]min, pitched his tent, or tabernacled with us. And we are eye-witnesses of it. Parallel to that, 1 John 1:1-3. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life, &c. declare we unto you." Hence note,

Doct. That Jesus Christ did really assume the true and perfect nature of a man, into a personal union with his divine nature, and still remains true God, and true man, in one person for ever. The proposition contains one of the deepest mysteries of godliness, 1 Timothy 3:16. A mystery, by which apprehension is dazzled, invention astonished, and all expression swallowed up. If ever the tongues of angels were desirable to explicate any word of God, they are so here. Great is the interest of words in this doctrine. We walk upon the brink of danger. The least tread awry may ingulph us in the bogs of error. Anus would have been content, if the council of Nice would but have gratified him in a letter, o]mouvsio" and o]moivsio". The Nestorians also desired but a letter, qeodovco", zeotovko". These seemed but small and modest requests, but, if granted, had proved no small prejudice to Jesus Christ, and his truths. I desire therefore the reader would, with greatest attention of mind, apply himself to these truths. It is a doctrine hard to understand, and dangerous to mistake. I am really of his mind that said, [Augustine}'It is better not touch the bottom, than not keep within the circle:' Melius est nescire centrum, quam non tenere circulum. He did assume a true human body; that is plainly asserted, Php 2:7-8, &c. Hebrews 2:14, Hebrews 2:16. In one place it is called taking on him the seed of Abraham, and in the text, flesh. He did also assume a true human soul, this is undeniable by its operations, passions, and expiration at last, Matthew 26:38, and Matthew 27:50. And that both these natures make but one person, is as evident from Romans 1:3-4. "Jesus Christ was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to he the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." So Romans 9:5. "Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." But that you may have a sound and clear understanding of this mystery, I will (1.) Open the nature; (2.) The effects; and (3.) The reasons or ends of this wonderful union.

First, The nature of this union. There are three illustrious and dazzling unions in scripture: that of three persons in one God, Essentially. That of two distinct natures, and persons; by one spirit Mystically: and this of two distinct natures in one person, Hypostatically. This is my task to open at this time: and, for the more distinct and perspicuous management thereof, I shall speak to it both negatively and positively.

1. Negatively. Think not when Christ assumed our nature, that it was united consubstantially, so as the three persons in the Godhead are united among themselves. They all have but one and the same nature and will; but in Christ are two distinct natures and wills, though but one person.

2. Nor yet that they are united Physically, as soul and body are united in one person; for death actually dissolves that; but this is indissoluble. So that when his soul expired, and his body was interred, both soul and body were still united to the second person as much as ever.

3. Nor yet is it such a mystical union, as is between Christ and believers. Indeed that is a glorious union; but though believers are said to be in Christ, and Christ in them, yet they are not one person with him. They are not christed into Christ, or godded into God, as blasphemous Familists speak.

Secondly, Positively. But this assumption of which I speak, is that whereby the second Person in the Godhead did take the human nature into a personal union with himself by virtue whereof the manhood subsists in the second person, yet without confusion, both making but one person, Qevanqrwvpo", or Immanuel, God with us. So that though we truly ascribe a two-fold nature to Christ, yet not a double person; for the human nature of Christ never subsisted separately and distinctly, by any personal subsistence of its own, as it doth in all other men, but from the first moment of conception, subsisted in union with the second person. To explicate this mystery more particularly, let it be considered; First, The human nature was united to the second person miraculously and extraordinarily, being supernaturally framed in the womb of the Virgin, by the over-shadowing power of the Highest, Luke 1:34-35. By reason whereof it may truly and properly he said to be the fruit of the womb, not of the loins of men, nor by man. And this was necessary to exempt the assumed nature from the stain and pollution of Adam's sin, which it wholly escaped; inasmuch as he received it not, as all others do, in the way of ordinary generation, wherein original sin is propagated: but this being extraordinarily produced, was a most pure and holy thing, Luke 1:35. And indeed this perfect shining holiness, in which it was produced, was absolutely necessary, both in order to its union with the divine Person, and the design of that union; which was both to satisfy for, and to sanctify us. The two natures could not be conjoined in the person of Christ, had there been the least taint of sin upon the human nature. For God can have no fellowship with sin, much less be united to it. Or, supposing such a conjunction with our sinful nature, yet he being a sinner himself, could never satisfy for the sins of others; nor could any unholy thing ever make us holy. "Such an High-priest therefore became us as is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," Hebrews 7:26. And such an one he must needs be, whom the Holy Ghost produces in such a peculiar way, tov a]giovn, that holy thing.

Secondly, As it was produced miraculously, so it was assumed integrally that is to say, Christ took a complete and perfect human soul and body, with all and every faculty and member pertaining to it. And this was necessary (as both Austin and Fulgentius have well observed) that thereby he might heal the whole nature of that leprosy of sin, which hath seized and infected every member and faculty. Pavnta avnelavben i]na Pavnta a]guavas. "He assumed all, to sanctify all;" as Damascene expresseth it. He designed a perfect recovery, by sanctifying us wholly in soul, body, and spirit and therefore assumed the whole in order to it.

Thirdly, He assumed our nature, as with all its integral parts, so with all its sinless infirmities. And therefore it is said of him, Heb. 4:17. " That it behooved him," Kat pavnta o]moiwzhvnai, according to all things (that is, all things natural, not formally sinful, as it is limited by the same apostle, Hebrews 4:15.) to be made like unto his brethren. But here our divines so carefully distinguish infirmities into personal and natural. Personal infirmities are such as befal particular persons, from particular causes, such as dumbness, blindness, lameness, leprosies, monstrosities, and other

deformities. These it was no way necessary that Christ should, nor did he at all assume; but the natural ones, such as hunger, thirst, weariness, sweating, bleeding, mortality, &c. which though they are not in themselves formally and intrinsically sinful; yet are they the effects and consequents of sin. They are so many marks, that sin hath left of itself upon our natures. And on that account Christ is said to be sent " in the likeness of sinful flesh," Romans 8:5. Wherein the gracious condescension of Christ for us is marvellously signalized, that he would not assume our innocent nature, as it was in Adam before the fall, while it stood in all its primitive glory and perfection; but after sin had quite defaced, ruined, and spoiled it.

Fourthly, The human nature is so united with the divine, as that each nature still retains its own essential properties distinct. And this distinction is not, nor can be lost by that union. So that the two understandings, wills, powers, &c. viz. The divine and human, are not confounded; but a line of distinction runs betwixt them still in this wonderful person. It was the heresy of the Eutychians, condemned by the council of Chalcedon, to affirm, that there was no distinction betwixt the two natures in Christ. Against whom that council determined, that they were united avsunw'cuvtw", without any immutation or confusion.

Fifthly, The union of the two natures in Christ, as an inseparable union; so that from the first moment thereof, there never was, nor to eternity shall be, any separation of them.

Doubt. If you ask how the union remained betwixt them, when Christ's human soul and body were separated from each other upon the cross? Is not death the dissolution of the union betwixt soul and body?

Resolution. True, the natural union betwixt his soul and body was dissolved by death for a time, but this hypostatical union remained even then as entire and firm as ever: for, though his soul and body were divided from each other, yet neither of them from the divine nature. Divines assist our conception of this mystery, by an apt illustration. A man that holds in his hand a sword sheathed, when he pleaseth, draws forth the sword; but still holds that in one hand, and the sheath in the other, and then sheaths it again, still holding it in his hand: so when Christ died, his soul and body retained their union with the divine nature, though not (during that space) one with another. And thus you are to form and regulate your conceptions of this great mystery. Some adumbrations and imperfect similitudes of it may be found in nature. Among which some commend that union which the soul and body have with each other; they are of different natures, yet both make one individual man. Others find fault with this, because both these united make but one complete human nature; whereas, in Christ's person, there are two natures, and commend to us a more perfect emblem, viz. That of the Cyon and the tree or stock, which have two natures, yet make but one tree. But then we must remember that the Cyon wants a root of its own, which is an integral part, but Christ assumed our nature integrally. This defect is by others supplied in the Mistletoe and the Oak, which have different natures; and the Mistletoe subsists in union with the Oak, still retaining the difference of nature; and though making but one tree, yet bears different fruits. And so much to the first thing, namely, the nature of this union.

Secondly, For the effects, or immediate results of this marvellous union, let these three be well considered.

1. The two natures being thus united in the person of the Mediator, by virtue whereof the properties of each nature are attributed, and do truly agree in the whole person; so that it is proper to say, the Lord of glory was crucified, 1 Corinthians 2:8. and the blood of God redeemed the Church, Acts 20:28, that Christ was both in heaven, and in the earth at the same time, John 3:13.

Yet we do not believe that one nature doth transfuse or impart its properties to the other, or that it is proper to say the divine nature suffered, bled, or died; or the human is omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent; but that the properties of both natures, are so ascribed to the person, that it is proper to affirm any of them of him in the concrete, though not abstractly. The right understanding of this would greatly assist, in teaching the true sense of the fore-named, and many other dark passages in the scriptures.

2. Another fruit of this hypostatical union, is the singular advancement of the human nature in Christ, far beyond and above what it is capable of in any other person, it being hereby replenished and filled with an unparalleled measure of divine graces and excellencies; in which respect he is said to be "anointed above, or before his fellows," Psal. 14:8. and so becomes the object of adoration and divine worship, Acts 7:59. This the Socinians oppugn with this argument: He that is worshipped with a divine worship, as he is Mediator, is not so worshipped as God; but Christ is worshipped as Mediator. But we say, that to be worshipped as Mediator, and as God, are not opposite, but the one is necessarily included in the other; and therein is further included the ratio formalis sub qua [the formal ground upon which the worship of Christ, as Mediator, is founded.] of that divine religious worship.

3. Hence, in the last place, follows, as another excellent fruit of this union, The concourse and co-operation of each nature to his mediatory works; for in them he acts according to both natures: the human nature doing what is human, viz. suffering, sweating, bleeding, dying; and his divine nature stamping all these with infinite value; and so both sweetly concur unto one glorious work and design of mediation. Papists generally deny that he performs any of these mediatory works as God, but only as man; but how bold]y do they therein contradict these plain scriptures? See 2 Corinthians 5:10. Hebrews 9:14-15. And so much as to the second thing propounded, viz. the fruits of this union.

Thirdly, The last thing to be opened is the grounds and reasons of this assumption. And we may say, touching that, (1.) That the human nature was not assumed to any intrinsical perfection of the Godhead, not to make that human nature itself perfect. The divine did not assume the human nature necessarily, but voluntarily; not out of indigence, but bounty; not because it was to be perfected by it, but to perfect it, by causing it to lie as a pipe, to the infinite all-filling fountain of grace and glory, of which it is the great receptacle. And so, consequently, to qualify and prepare him for a full discharge of his mediatorship, in the offices of our Prophet, Priest, and King. Had he not this double nature in the unity of his person, he could not have been our Prophet: For, as God, he knows the mind and will of God, John 1:18 and John 3:13. and as man he is fitted to impart it suitably to us, Deuteronomy 18:15-18. compared with Acts 20:22. As Priest, had he not been man, he could have shed no blood; and if not God, it had been no adequate value for us, Hebrews 2:17. Acts 3:28. As King, had he not been man, he had been an heterogeneous, and so no fit head for us. And if not God, he could neither rule nor defend his body the Church.

These then were the designs and ends of that assumption.

Use 1. Let all Christians rightly inform their minds in this truth of so great concerment in religion, and hold it fast against all subtle adversaries, that would wrest it from them. The learned Hooker observes, that the dividing of Christ's person, which is but one, and the confounding of his natures, which are two, hath been the occasion of those errors, which have so greatly disturbed the peace of the church. The Arians denied his deity, levelling him with other mere men. The Apollinarians maimed his humanity. The Sabellians affirmed, that the Father and Holy Ghost were incarnated as well as the Son; and were forced, upon that absurdity, by another error, viz. denying the three distinct persons in the Godhead, and affirming they were but three names. The Eutychians confounded both natures in Christ, denying any distinction of them. The Seleusians affirmed, that he unclothed himself of his humanity when he ascended, and hath no human body in heaven. The Nestorians so rent the two names of Christ asunder, as to make two distinct persons of them. But ye (beloved) have not so learned Christ. Ye know he is, (1.) True and very God; (2.) True and very man; that, (3.) these two natures make but one person, being united inseparably; (4.) that they are not confounded or swallowed up one in another, but remain still distinct in the person of Christ. Hold ye the sound words which cannot be condemned. Great things hang upon all these truths. O suffer not a stone to be loosed out of the foundation.

Use 2. Adore the love of the Father, and the Son, who bid so high for your souls, and at this rate were contented you should be recovered.

1. The love of the Father is herein admirably conspicuous, who so vehemently willed our salvation, that he was content to degrade the darling of his soul to so vile and contemptible a state, which was, upon the matter, an undoing to him, in point of reputation; as the apostle intimates, Php 2:7. If two persons be at a variance, and the superior, who also is the wronged person, begin to stoop first, and say, you have deeply wronged me, yea, your blood is not able to repair the wrongs you have done me: however, such is my love to you, and willingness to be at peace with you, that I will part with what is most dear to me in all the world, for peace-sake; yea, though I stoop below myself, and seem, as it were, to forget my own relation and endearments to my own son, I will not suffer such a breach betwixt me and you. John 3:16. "God so loved "the world, that he gave his only begotten Son."

2. And how astonishing is the love of Christ, that would make such a stoop as this to exalt us! Oh, it is ravishing to think, he should pass by a more excellent and noble species of creatures, refusing the angelic nature, Hebrews 2:16. to take flesh; and not to solace and disport himself in it neither, nor experience sensitive pleasures in the body; for, as he needed them not, being at the fountain-head of the highest joys, so it was not at all in his design, but the very contrary, even to make himself a subject capable of sorrows, wounds, and tears. It was, as the apostle elegantly expresseth it, in Hebrews 2:9. o]pw" u]per pavnto" guevshtaiv qavnate; that he might sensibly taste what relish death hath, and wilst bitterness is in those pangs and agonies. Now, Oh that you would get your hearts suitably impressed and affected with these high impressures of the love both of the Father and the Son! How is the courage of some noble Romans celebrated in history, for the brave adventures they made for the commonwealth; but they could never stoop as Christ did, being so infinitely below him in personal dignity.

Use 3. And here infinite wisdom has also left a famous and everlasting mark of itself; which invites, yea, even chains the eyes of angels and men to itself; Had there been a general council of angels,

to advise upon a way of recovering poor sinners, they would all have been at an everlasting demur and loss about it. It could not have entered their thoughts, (though they are intelligencers, and more sagacious creatures) that ever mercy, pardon, and grace, should find such a way as this to issue forth from the heart of God to the hearts of sinners. Oh, how wisely is the method of our recovery laid so that Christ may be well called, "the power and wisdom of God;" 1 Corinthians 1:24; forasmuch as in him the divine wisdom is more glorified than in all the other works of God, upon which he hath impressed it. Hence it is, that some of the schoolmen affirm, (though I confess myself unsatisfied with it) that the incarnation of Christ was in itself so glorious a demonstration of God's wisdom and power, and thereupon so desirable in itself, that though man had not sinned, yet Christ would have been made man.

Use 4. Hence also we infer the incomparable sweetness of the Christian religion, that shews poor sinners such a fair fountain to rest their trembling consciences upon. While poor distressed souls look to themselves, they are perpetually puzzled. That is the cry of a distressed natural conscience, Micah 6:6. "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?" the Hebrew is wrw]hy mwqa how shall I prevent or anticipate the Lord? and so Montanus renders it, in quo proeoccupabo Dominum? Conscience sees God arming himself with wrath, to avenge himself for sin; cries out, Oh, how shall I prevent him; if he would accept the fruit of my body, (those dear pledges of nature,) for the sin of my soul, he should have them. But now we see God coming down in flesh, and so intimately united our flesh to himself, that it hath no proper subsistence of its own, but is united with the divine person: hence it is easy to imagine what worth and value must be in that blood; and how eternal love, springing forth triumphantly from it, flourishes into pardon, grace, and peace Here is a way in which the sinner may see justice and mercy kissing each other, and the latter exercised freely, without prejudice to the former. All other consciences, through the world, lie either in a deep sleep in the devil's arms, or else are rolling (sea sick) upon the waves of their own fears and dismal presages. Oh, happy are they that have dropped anchor on this ground, and not only know they have peace, but why they have it!

Use 5. Of how great concernment is it, that Christ should have union with our particular persons, as well as with our common nature? For by this union with our nature alone, never any man was, or can be saved. Yea, let me add, that this union with our natures, is utterly in vain to you, and will do you no good, except he have union with your persons by faith also. It is indeed infinite mercy, that God is come so near you, as to dwell in your flesh; and that he hath fixed upon such an excellent method to save poor sinners. And hath he done all this? is he indeed come home, even to your own doors, to seek peace? doth he vail his unsupportable glory under flesh, that he might treat the more familiarly? and yet do you refuse him, and shut your hearts against him? then hear one word, and let thine ears tingle at the sound of it: Thy sin is hereby aggravated beyond the sin of devils, who never sinned against a mediator in their own nature; who never despised, or refused, because indeed, they were never offered terms of mercy, as you are. And I doubt not but the devils themselves, who now tempt you to reject, will, to all eternity, upbraid your folly for rejecting this great salvation, which in this excellent way is brought down, even to your own doors.

Use 6 If Jesus Christ has assumed our nature, then he is sensibly touched with the infirmities that attend it, and so hath pity and compassion for us, under all our burdens. And indeed this was one end assuming it, that he might be able to have compassion on us, as you read, Hebrews 2:17, Hebrews 2:18. "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he

might be a merciful and faithful High-priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." O what a comfort is this to us, that he who is our High-Priest in heaven, hath our nature on him, to enable him to take compassion on us!

Use 7. Hence we see, to what a height God intends to build up the happiness of man, in that he hath laid the foundation thereof so deep, in the incarnation of his own Son.

They that intend to build high, use to lay the foundation low. The happiness and glory of our bodies, as well as souls, are founded in Christ's taking our flesh upon him: for, therein, as in a model or pattern, God intended to shew what in time he resolves to make of our bodies; for he will metachvmativzein, transform our vile bodies, and make them one day conformable to the glorious body of Jesus Christ, Php 3:21. This flesh was therefore assumed by Christ, that in it might be shewn, as in a pattern, how God intends to honour and exalt it. And indeed, a greater honour cannot be done to the nature of man, than what is already done, by this grace of union; nor are our persons capable of higher glory, than what consists in their conformity to this glorious head. Indeed the flesh of Christ will ever have a distinct glory from ours in heaven, by reason of this union; for being the body which the Word assumed, it is two ways advanced singularly above the flesh and blood of all other men, viz. subjectively, and objectively: Subjectively, it is the flesh and blood of God, Acts 20:28. and so hath a distinct and incommunicable glory of its own. And objectively, it is the flesh and blood which all the angels and saints adore. But though in these things it be super-eminently exalted, yet it is both the medium and pattern of all that glory which God designs to raise us to.

Use 8. Lastly, How wonderful a comfort is it, that he who dwells in our flesh is God? What joy may not a poor believer make out of this? what comfort one made out of it, I will give you in his own words, "I see it a work of God, (saith he) that experiences are all lost, when summonses of improbation, to prove our charters of Christ to be counterfeit, are raised against poor souls in their heavy trials. But let me be a sinner, and worse than the chief of sinners, yea, a guilty devil, I am sure my well-beloved is God and my Christ is God.. And when I say my Christ is God, I have said all things, I can say no more. I would I could build as much on this, My Christ is God, as it would bear: I might lay all the world upon it."

God and man in one person! Oh! thrice happy conjunction! As man he is full of experimental sense of our infirmities, wants, and burdens; and, as God, he can support and supply them all. The aspect of faith upon this wonderful Person, how relieving, how reviving, how abundantly satisfying is it? God will never divorce the believing soul, and its comfort, after he hath married our nature to his own Son, by the hypostatical, and our persons also, by the blessed mystical union.

Chapter 118

S. Of Christ's Humiliation

An Exposition of the Assembly’s Shorter Catechism by John Flavel Of Christ’s Humiliation.

Q. 27. Wherein did Christ’s humiliation consist?

A. Christ’s humiliation consisted in his being born, and that in a low condition, made under the law, undergoing the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, and the cursed death of the cross; in being buried, and continuing under the power of death for a time.

Q. 1. What doth Christ’s humbling of’ himself import?

A. His voluntariness in the deepest point of self-denial? Psalms 40:7. Then said I, Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me.

Q. 2. What was the first act of Christ’s humiliation?

A. His taking man’s nature on him, with all its sinless infirmities; Romans 8:3. God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh.

Q. 3. What is the second part of his humiliation?

A. That mean life he lived in this world, which obscured his divine glory; Mark 6:3. Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?

Q. 4. What was the first thing in Christ’s life that humbled him?

A. The poverty of it; Matthew 7:20. And Jesus saith unto him, the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.

Q. 5. What was the second thing in his life that humbled him?

A. The temptations of Satan, to which he was subject; Matthew 4:1. Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil, and that for our sakes. Hebrews 2:17-18. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren. For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

Q. 6. What was the third thing in Christ’s life that humbled him?

A. His subjection to the law; Galatians 1:4. But when the fulness of’ the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made tinder the law.

Q. 7. What was the fourth thing in Christ’s life that humbled him ?

A. The revilings and contradictions of’ sinners; Hebrews 12:3. For consider him that endureth such contradiction of sinners against himself.

Q. 8. Wherein was Christ humbled in his death?

A. His death was painful and ignominious; Galatians 3:13. Christ bath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: For it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree. Made a curse for us, and deserted in it; Matthew 27:46. And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabacthani; that is to say, My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Q. 9. What is the first inference from hence?

A. That lowliness and humility becomes Christ's followers; Matthew 11:29. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.

Q. 10. What is the second inference?

A. That Christ's love to sinners is astonishingly great; 2 Corinthians 8:9. For ye know the grace of' our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might he made rich.

Q. 11. What is the third inference?

A. Christians should be ready to stiffer for Christ; 1 Peter 4:1. Forasmuch as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: fi)r he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.

Q. 12. What is the last inference?

A. That humiliation is the true way to exaltation; Matthew 23:12 And whosoever shall exalt himself, shall be abased; and lie that shall humble himself, shall be exalted.

Chapter 119

S. Of Christ's Incarnation

An Exposition of the Assembly’s Shorter Catechism by John Flavel Of Christ’s Incarnation.

Q. 22. How did Christ, being the Son of God, become man?

A. Christ the Son of God became man by taking to himself a true body and a reasonable soul, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and born of her, yet without sin.

Q. 1. Who is the only Redeemer of God’s elect?

A. The Lord Jesus Christ is their only Redeemer, and there is no other Redeemer besides him; Acts 4:12. Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

Q. 2. How is he the Son of God, or can be, as no other is so?

A. He is the Son of God by nature, from all eternity, and so no angel or saint is; Hebrews 1:5. For unto which of the angels said heat any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?

Q. 3. Why was it necessary he should become man?

A. That he might be capable to suffer death in our room; Hebrews 2:15-17. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham; wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

Q. 4. Why must the Redeemer be God as well as man?

A. Because the blood of a mere man could not satisfy and redeem us; Acts 20:28. Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

Q. 5. Do these two natures make two persons?

A. No, the human nature is united to the second person, and subsists in union with it; John 1:14. And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Q. 6. Was the union only for a time?

A. No, it continues and abides for ever; Hebrews 7:24. But this man, because he continueth ever, bath an unchangeable priesthood.

Q. 7. What is the first instruction from hence?

A. Hence we learn the transcendent love of God to poor sinners; John 3:16. God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but

have everlasting life.

Q. 8. What is the second instruction?

A. Hence we learn the matchless love of Christ, that he should stoop to such a condition for us; 2 Corinthians 8:9. For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be made rich.

Q. 9. What is the third instruction?

A. That the greatest sins are capable of remission to believers; John 1:29. Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world.

Q. 10. What is the fourth instruction?

A. That those that be in Christ need not fear the denial or want of any other mercy; Romans 8:32. He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all; how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

Q. 11. What is the fifth instruction?

A. Hence we learn how impious it is to ascribe any part of the glory of redemption to any other besides Christ.

Q. 12. What is the sixth instruction?

A. This teaches us the miserable condition of all that are out of Christ, and the necessity of their damnation, he being the only Redeemer.

S. Of Christ's Kingly Office.

Westminster Shorter Catechism Project An Exposition of the Assembly's

Shorter Catechism

by John Flavel Of Christ's Kingly Office.

Q. 26. How doth Christ execute the office of a king?

A. Christ executeth the office of a king, in subduing us to himself; in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies.

Q. 1. How manifold is Christ's kingdom?

A. Twofold. First, Internal in men's souls; Luke 17:21. Behold, the kingdom of God is within you. Secondly, External, over all the world; Ephesians 1:22. And bath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be Head over all things to the church.

Q. 2. What is the end of Christ's providential kingdom?

A. The good and salvation of the church; John 17:2. As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

Q. 3. Wherein doth lie exercise his kingly power?

A. In restraining his, and his people's enemies; Psalms 76:10. Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.

Q. 4. How else is it exercised?

A. In protecting his church amidst all enemies; Exodus 3:3. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.

Q. 5. What instruments doth Christ use?

A. Angels are ministering spirits to him; Hebrews 1:14. Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation; And men, yea, the worst of men; Revelation 12:16. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

Q. 6. In what manner doth Christ rule the world?

A. By supreme power; Revelation 19:16. He hath on his vesture, and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords. And perfect wisdom; Ephesians 1:11. In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.

Q. 7. What learn we from hence?

A. That the church is saved amidst all dangers; Jeremiah 30:11. For I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee; though I make a full end of all nations, whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee.

Q. 8. What is the second instruction?

A. That the godly may safely trust to Christ's care; 2 Chronicles 16:9. For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself Strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him.

Q. 9. What is the third instruction?

A. That all plots against the church shall surely be defeated; Isaiah 54:17. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper.

Q. 10. What is the fourth instruction?

A. It gives the saints full satisfaction in all conditions; Romans 8:28. And we know that all things work together, for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose.

Q. 11. What is the last inference?

A. We should not stand in a slavish fear of men; Isaiah 51:12. 1, even I am he that comforteth you; who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man, which shall be made as grass.

S. Of Christ's Prophetical Office.

Westminster Shorter Catechism Project An Exposition of the Assembly's

Shorter Catechism

by John Flavel Of Christ's Prophetical Office.

Q. 24. How doth Christ execute the office of a prophet?

A. Christ executeth thc office of a prophet, in revealing to us his word and Spirit, the will of God for our salvation.

Q. 1. What doth Christ's prophetical office imply?

A. It implies man's natural blindness and ignorance; 1 Corinthians 2:14. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Q. 2. What else doth it imply?

A. That Christ is the original and fountain of all that light which guides us to salvation; 2 Corinthians 4:6-7. For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Q. 3. How doth Christ teach men the will of God?

A. He doth it by external revelation of it; Acts 3:22. For Moses truly said to the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me, him shall ye hear, in all things, whatsoever he shall say unto you. And by internal illumination; Luke 24:45. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scripture.

Q. 4. What need then of man's ministry?

A. Very much; for Christ hath instituted ministers as instruments, by whom he will teach us; Ephesians 4:11-12. And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists and some pastors, and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. Acts 26:18. To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins.

Q. 5. Can no man savingly know the will of God without the teachings of Christ?

A. No; though common knowledge may be obtained in a natural way, yet not saving; Matthew 11:25. At that time Jesus answered, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord, of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

Q. 6. How appears it that Christ is appointed to this office?

A. We have the written word for it; Acts 3:22. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me, him shall ye hear in all things, whatsoever he shall say unto you.

Q. 7. What is the first instruction from hence?

A. None need be discouraged at their natural weakness, if Christ be their teacher; Matthew 11:25. At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Psalms 19:7. The testimonies of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple.

Q. 8. What is the second instruction?

A. That it is a dreadful judgment to be spiritually blinded under the gospel; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Q. 9. What is the third instruction?

A. That prayer is the best expedient to obtain saving knowledge; James 1:5. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

Q. 10. What is the last instruction?

A. Learn hence the transcendent excellency of the knowledge of Christ above all other knowledge; Php 3:8. Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.

S. Of Christ's wonderful Person.

Sermon 5. Of Christ's wonderful Person.

John 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, &c.

You have heard the covenant of redemption opened. The work therein propounded by the Father, and consented to by the Son, is such as infinitely exceeds the power of any mere creature to perform. He that undertakes to satisfy God, by obedience for man's sin, must himself be God; and he that performs such a perfect obedience, by doing, and suffering all that the law required, in our room, must be man. These two natures must be united in one person, else there could not be a concourse or co-operation of either nature in his mediatory works. How these natures are united, in the wonderful person of our Emmanuel, is the first part of the great mystery of godliness: a subject studied and adored by angels! and the mystery thereof is wrapped up in this text. Wherein we have, First, The incarnation of the Son of God plainly asserted.

Secondly, That assertion strongly confirmed.

(1.) In the assertion we have three parts.

1. The Person assuming, "ho Logos", the Word, i. e. the second Person or Subsistent in the most glorious Godhead, called the Word, either because he is the scope or principal matter, both of the prophetical and promissory word; or because he expounds and reveals the mind and will of God to men, as John 1:18. The only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared or expounded him.

2. The nature assumed, "sarks", Flesh, i. e. the entire human nature, consisting of a true human soul and body. For so this word "sarks", in Romans 3:20, and the Hebrew word "basar" which answers to it, by a usual Metonymy of a part for the whole, is used, Genesis 6:12. And the word Flesh is rather used here, than Man, on purpose to enhance the admirable condescension and abasement of Christ; there being more of vileness, weakness, and opposition to spirit in this word, than in that, as is pertinently noted by some. Hence the whole nature is denominated by that part, and called flesh.

3. The assumption itself, "egeneto", he was made; not fuit, he was, (as Socinus would render it, designing thereby to overthrow the existence of Christ's glorified body now in heaven) but factus est, it was made, i. e. he took or assumed the true human nature (called flesh, for the reason before rendered) into the unity of his divine person, with all its integral parts and essential properties; and so was made, or became a true and real man, by that assumption. The apostle speaking; of the same act, Hebrews 2:16. uses another word, He took on him, "epilambanetai", fitly rendered he took on him, or he assumed; which assuming, though; inchoative, it was the work of the whole Trinity, God the Father, in the Son, by the Spirit, forming or creating that nature; as if three sisters should make a garment betwixt them, which only one of them wears: yet, terminative, it was the act of the Son only; it was he only that was made flesh. And when it is said, he was

made flesh, misconceive not, as if there was a mutation of the Godhead into flesh; for this was performed, “not by changing what he was, but by assuming what he was not,” as Augustine well expresseth it. As when the scripture, in a like expression, saith, “He was made sin,” 2 Corinthians 5:21, and made a curse, Galatians 3:13, the nearing is not, that he was turned into sin, or into a curse; no more may we think here the Godhead was turned into flesh, and lost its own being and nature, because it is said he was made flesh. This is the sum of the assertion.

(2.) This assertion [“that the word was made flesh,”] is strongly confirmed. He “dwelt among us,” and we saw his glory. This was no phantasm, but a most real and indubitable thing. For, “eskenosen en hemin”, pitched his tent, or tabernacled with us. And we are eye-witnesses of it. Parallel to that, 1 John 1:1-3. “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life, &c. declare we unto you.” Hence note,

Doct. That Jesus Christ did really assume the true and perfect nature of man, into a personal unions with his divine nature, and still remains true God, and true man, in one person for ever. The proposition contains one of the deepest mysteries of godliness, 1 Timothy 3:16. A mystery, by which apprehension is dazzled, invention astonished, and all expression swallowed up. If ever the tongues of angels were desirable to explicate any word of God, they are so here. Great is the interest of words in this doctrine. We walk upon the brink of danger. The least tread awry may engulf us in the bogs of error. Arius would have been content, if the council of Nice would but have gratified him in a letter, “homousios”, and “homoiousios”. The Nestorians also desired but a letter, “Theodochos”, “theotokos”. These seemed but small and modest requests, but, if granted, had proved no small prejudice to Jesus Christ, and his truths. I desire therefore the reader would, with greatest attention of mind, apply himself to these truths. It is a doctrine hard to understand, and dangerous to mistake. I am really of his mind that said, ‘It is better not touch the bottom, than not keep within the circle:’ Melius est nescire centrum, quam non tenere circulum. He did assume a true human body; that is plainly asserted, Php 2:7-8, &c. Hebrews 2:14, Hebrews 2:16. In one place it is called taking on him the seed of Abraham, and in the text, flesh. He did also assume a true human soul, this is undeniable by its operations, passions, and expiration at last, Matthew 26:38 and Matthew 27:50. And that both these natures make but one person, is as evident from Romans 1:3-4. “Jesus Christ was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” So Romans 9:5, “Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.” But that you may have a sound and clear understanding of this mystery, I will (1.) Open the nature; (2.) The effects; and (3.) The reasons or ends of this wonderful union.

First, The nature of this union. There are three illustrious and dazzling unions in scripture: that of three persons in one God, Essentially. That of two distinct natures, and persons; by one spirit Mystically: and this of two distinct natures in one person, Hypostatically. This is my task to open at this time: and, for the more distinct and perspicuous management thereof, I shall speak to it both negatively and positively.

1. Negatively. Think not when Christ assumed our nature, that it was united consubstantially, so as the three persons in the Godhead are united among themselves. They all have but one and the same nature and will; but in Christ are two distinct natures and wills, though but one person.

2. Nor yet that they are limited Physically, as soul and body are united in one person; for death actually dissolves that; but this is indissoluble. So that when his soul expired, and his body was interred, both soul and body were still united to the second person as much as ever.

3. Nor yet is it such a mystical union, as is between Christ and believers. Indeed that is a glorious union; but though believers are said to be in Christ, and Christ in them, yet they are not one person with him. They are not christed into Christ, or godded into God, as blasphemous Familists speak.

Secondly, Positively. But this assumption of which I speak, is that whereby the second Person in the Godhead did take the human nature into a personal union with himself, by virtue whereof the manhood subsists in the second person, yet without confusion, both making but one person, “Theanthropos”, or Immanuel, God with us. So that though we truly ascribe a two-fold nature to Christ, yet not a double person; for the human nature of Christ never subsisted separately and distinctly, by any personal subsistence of its own, as it does in all other men, but from the first moment of conception, subsisted in union with the second person. To explicate this mystery more particularly, let it be considered;

First, The human nature was united to the second person miraculously and extraordinarily, being supernaturally framed in the womb of the Virgin, by the overshadowing power of the Highest, Luke 1:34-35. By reason whereof it may truly and properly be said to be the fruit of the womb, not of the loins of men, nor by man. And this was necessary to exempt the assumed nature from the stain and pollution of Adam’s sin, which it wholly escaped; inasmuch as he received it not, as all others do, in the way of ordinary generation, wherein original sin is propagated: but this being extraordinarily produced, was a most pure and holy thing, Luke 1:35. And indeed this perfect shining holiness, in which it was produced, was absolutely necessary, both in order to its union with the divine Person, and the design of that union; which was both to satisfy for, and to sanctity us. The two natures could not be conjoined in the person of Christ, had there been the least taint of sin upon the human nature. For God can have no fellowship with sin, much less be united to it. Or, supposing such a conjunction with one sinful nature, yet he being a sinner himself, would never satisfy for the sins of others; nor could any unholy thing ever make us holy. “Such an High-priest therefore became us as is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, Hebrews 7:26. And such an one he must needs be, whom the Holy Ghost produces in such a peculiar way, “to hagion”, that holy thing.

Secondly, As it was produced miraculously, so it was assumed integrally; that is to say, Christ took a complete and perfect human soul and body, with all and every faculty and member pertaining to it. And this was necessary (as both Austin and Fulgentius have well observed) that thereby he might heal the whole nature of that leprosy of sin, which has seized and infected every member and faculty. “Panta anelaben hina panta hagiaze”. “He assumed all, to sanctify all;” as Damascen expresseth it. He designed a perfect recovery, by sanctifying us wholly in soul, body, and spirit; and therefore assumed the whole in order to it.

Thirdly, He assumed our nature, as with all its integral parts, so with all its sinless infirmities. And therefore it is said of him, Hebrews 2:17. “That it behaved him,” “kata panta homoiotenai”, according to all things (that is, all things natural, not formally sinful, as it is limited by the same apostle, Hebrews 4:15.) to be made like into his brethren. But here our divines so carefully distinguish infirmities into personal and natural. Personal infirmities are such as befall particular

persons, from particular causes, such as dumbness, blindness, lameness, leprosies, monstrosities, and other deformities. These it was no way necessary that Christ should, nor did he at all assume; but the natural ones, such as hunger, thirst, weariness, sweating, bleeding, mortality, &c., which though they are not in themselves formally and intrinsically sinful; yet are they the effects and consequent of sin. They are so many marks, that sin has left of itself upon our natures. And on that account Christ is said to be sent “in the likeness of sinful flesh”, Romans 8:3. Wherein the gracious condescension of Christ for us is marvellously signalised, that he would not assume our innocent nature, as it was in Adam before the fall, while it stood in all its primitive glory and perfection; But after sin had quite defaced, ruined, and spoiled it.

Fourthly, The human nature is so united with the divine, as that each nature still retains its own essential properties distinct. And this distinction is not, nor can be lost by that union. So that the two understandings, wills, powers &c. viz. The divine and human are not confounded; but a line of distinction runs betwixt them still in this wonderful person. It was the heresy of the Eutychians, condemned by the council of Chalcedon, to affirm, that there was no distinction betwixt the two natures in Christ. Against whom that council determined, that they were united “asunochutos”, without any immutation or confusion.

Fifthly, The union of the two natures in Christ, as an inseparable union; so that from the first moment thereof, there never was, nor to eternity shall be, any separation of them.

Doubt. If you ask how the union remained betwixt them, when Christ’s human soul and body were separated from each other upon the cross? Is not death the dissolution of the union betwixt soul and body?

Resolution. True, the natural union betwixt his soul and body was dissolved by death for a time, but this hypostatical union remained even then as entire and firm as ever: for, though his soul and body were divided from each other, yet neither of them from the divine nature. Divines assist our conception of this mystery, by an apt illustration. A man that holds in his hand a sword sheathed, when he pleaseth, draws forth the sword; but still holds that in one hand, and the sheath in the other, and then sheaths it again, still holding it in his hand: so when Christ died, his soul and body retained their union with the divine nature, though not (during, that space) one with another. And thus you are to form and regulate your conceptions of this great mystery. Some adumbrations and imperfect similitudes of it may be found in nature. Among which some commend that union which the soul and body have with each other; they are of different natures, yet both make one individual man. Others find fault with this, because both these united make but one complete human nature; whereas, in Christ’s person, there are two natures, and commend to us a more perfect emblem, viz., That of the Cyon and the tree or stock, which have two natures, yet make but one tree. But then we must remember that the Cyon wants a root of its own, which is an integral part, but Christ assumed our nature integrally. This defect is by others supplied in the Misletoe and the Oak, which have different natures; and the Misletoe subsists in union with the Oak, still retaining the difference of nature; and though making but one tree, yet bears different fruits. And so much to the first thing, namely, the nature of this union.

Secondly, For the effects, or immediate results of this marvellous union, let these three be well considered.

1. The two natures being thus united in the person of the Mediator, by virtue whereof the properties of each nature are attributed, and do truly agree in the whole person; so that it is proper to say, the Lord of glory was crucified, 1 Corinthians 2:8, and the blood of God redeemed the Church, Acts 20:28, that Christ was both in heaven, and in the earth at the same time, John 3:13.

Yet we do not believe that one nature does transfuse or impart its properties to the other, or that it is proper to say the divine nature suffered, bled, or died; or the human is omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent; but that the properties of both natures, are so ascribed to the person, that it is proper to affirm any of them of him in the concrete, though not abstractly. The right understanding at this would greatly assist, in teaching the true sense of the forenamed, and many other dark passages in the scriptures.

2. Another fruit of this hypostatical union, is the singular advancement of the human nature in Christ, far beyond and above what it is; capable of in any other person, it being hereby replenished and filled with an unparalleled measure of divine graces and excellencies; in which respect he is said to be “anointed above, or before his fellows,” Gal. 14: 8, and so becomes the object of adoration and divine worship, Acts 7:59. This the Socinians oppugn with this argument: He that is worshipped with a divine worship, as he is Mediator, is not so worshipped as God; but Christ is worshipped as Mediator. But we say, that to be worshipped as Mediator, and as God, are not opposite, but the one is necessarily included in the other; and therein is further included the ratio formalis sub qua of that divine religious worship.

3. Hence, in the last place, follows, as another excellent fruit of this union, The concourse and co-operation of each nature to his mediatory works; for in them he acts according to both natures: the human nature doing what is human, viz. suffering, sweating, bleeding, dying; and his divine nature stamping all these with infinite value; and so both sweetly concur unto one glorious work and design of mediation. Papists generally deny that he performs any of these mediatory works as God, but only as man; but how boldly do they therein contradict these plain scriptures? See 2 Corinthians 5:10. Hebrews 9:14-15. And so much as to the second thing propounded, viz. the fruits of this union.

Thirdly, The last thing to be opened is the grounds and reasons of this assumption. And we may say, touching that, (1.) That the human nature was not assumed to any intrinsical perfection of the Godhead, not to make that human nature itself perfect. The divine did not assume the human nature necessarily, but voluntarily; not out of indigence, but bounty; not because it was to be perfected by it, but to perfect it, by causing it to lie as a pipe, to the infinite all filling fountain of grace and glory, of which it is the great receptacle. And so, consequently, to qualify and prepare him for a full discharge of his mediatorship, in the offices of our Prophet, Priest, and King. Had he not this double nature in the unity of his person, he could not have been our Prophet: For, as God, he knows the mind and will of God, John 1:18 and John 3:13, and as man he is fitted to impart it suitably to us, Deuteronomy 18:15-18, compared with Acts 3:22. As Priest, had he not been man, he could have shed no blood; and if not God, it had been no adequate value for us, Hebrews 2:17. Acts 3:2-8. As King, had he not been man, he had been an heterogeneous, and so no fit head for us. And if not God, he could neither rule nor defend his body the Church.

These then were the designs and ends of that assumption.

Use 1. Let all Christians rightly inform their minds in this truth of so great concernment in religion, and hold it fast against all subtle adversaries, that could wrest it from them. The learned Hooker observes, that the dividing of Christ's person, which is but one, and the confounding of his natures, which are two, has been the occasion of those errors, which have so greatly disturbed the peace of the church. The Arians denied his deity, levelling him with other mere men. The Apollinarians maimed his humanity. The Sabellians affirmed, that the Father and Holy Ghost were incarnated as well as the Son; and were forced, upon that absurdity, by another error, viz. denying the three distinct persons in the Godhead, and affirming they were but three names. The Eutychians confounded both natures in Christ, denying any distinction of them. The Seleusians affirmed, that he unclothed himself of his humanity when he ascended, and has no human body in heaven. The Nestorians so rent the two names of Christ asunder, as to make two distinct persons of them. But ye (beloved) have not so learned Christ. Ye know he is, (1.) True and very God; (2.) True and very man; that, (3.) these two natures make but one person, being united inseparately; (4.) that they are not confounded or swallowed up one in another, but remain still distinct in the person of Christ. Hold ye the sound words which cannot be condemned. Great things hang upon all these truths. O suffer not a stone to be loosed out of the foundation.

Use 2. Adore the love of the Father, and the Son, who bid so high for your souls, and at this rate were contented you should be recovered.

1. The love of the Father is herein admirably conspicuous, who so vehemently willed our salvation, that he was content to degrade the darling of his soul to so vile and contemptible a state, which was, upon the matter, an undoing to him, in point of reputation; as the apostle intimates, Php 2:7. If two persons be at a variance, and the superior, who also is the wronged person, begin to stoop first, and say, you have deeply wronged me, yea, your blood is not able to repair the wrongs you have done me: however, such is my love to you, and willingness to be at peace with you, that I will part with what is most dear to me in all the world, for peace-sake; yea, though I stoop below myself, and seem, as it were, to forget my own relation and endearments to my own son, I will not suffer such a breach betwixt me and you. John 3:16. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son."

2. And how astonishing is the love of Christ, that would make such a stoop as this to exalt us! Oh, it is ravishing to think, he should pass by a more excellent and noble species of creatures, refusing the angelic nature, Hebrews 2:16, to take flesh; and not to solace and disport himself in it neither, nor experience sensitive pleasures in the body, for, as he needed them not, being at the fountain-head of the highest joys, so it was not at all in his design, but the very contrary, even to make himself a subject capable of sorrows, wounds, and tears. It was, as the apostle elegantly expresseth it, in Hebrews 2:9, "hopos huper pantos geusetai tanatou"; that he might sensibly taste what relish death has, and what bitterness is in those pangs and agonies. Now, Oh that you would get your hearts suitably impressed and affected with these high impressures of the love both of the Father and the Son! How is the courage of some noble Romans celebrated in history, for the brave adventures they made for the commonwealth; but they could never stoop as Christ did, being so infinitely below him in personal dignity.

Use 3. And here infinite wisdom has also left a famous and everlasting mark of itself; which invites, yea, even chains the eyes of angels and men to itself. Had there been a general council of angels,

to advise upon a way of recovering poor sinners, they would all have been in an everlasting demur and loss about it. It could not have entered their thoughts, (though they are intelligencers, and more sagacious creatures) that ever mercy, pardon, and grace, should find such a way as this to issue forth from the heart of God to the hearts of sinners. Oh, how wisely is the method of our recovery laid! So that Christ may be well called, “the power and wisdom of God,” 1 Corinthians 1:24; forasmuch as in him the divine wisdom is more glorified than in all the other works of God, upon which he has impressed it. Hence it is, that some of the schoolmen affirm, (though I confess myself unsatisfied with it) that the incarnation of Christ was in itself so glorious a demonstration of God’s wisdom and power, and thereupon so desirable in itself, that though man had not sinned, yet Christ would have been made man.

Use 4. Hence also we infer the incomparable sweetness of the Christian religion, that shows poor sinners such a fair foundation to rest their trembling consciences upon. While poor distressed souls look to themselves, they are perpetually puzzled. That is the cry of a distressed natural conscience, Micah 6:6 “Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?” The Hebrew is ”‘akadem Jehova” how shall I prevent or anticipate the Lord? And so Montanus renders it, in quo praeoccupabo Dominum? Conscience sees God arming himself with wrath, to avenge himself for sin; cries out, Oh, how shall I prevent him; if he would accept the fruit of my body, (those dear pledges of nature,) for the sin of my soul, he should have them. But now we see God coming down in flesh, and so intimately united our flesh to himself, that it has no proper subsistence of its own, but is united with the divine person: hence it is easy to imagine what worth and value must be in that blood; and how eternal love, springing forth triumphantly from it, flourishes into pardon, grace, and peace. Here is a way in which the sinner may see justice and mercy kissing each other, and the latter exercised freely, without prejudice to the former. All other consciences through the world, lie either in a deep sleep in the devil’s arms or else are rolling (sea sick) upon the waves of their own fears and dismal presages. Oh, happy are they that have dropped anchor on this ground, and not only know they have peace, but why they have it!

Use 5. Of how great concernment is it, that Christ should have union with our particular persons, as well as with our common nature? For by this union with our nature alone, never any man was, or can be saved. Yea, let me add, that this union with our natures, is utterly in vain to you, and will do you no good, except he have union with your persons by faith also. It is indeed infinite mercy, that God is come so near you, as to dwell in your flesh; and that he has fixed upon such an excellent method to save poor sinners. And has he done all this? is he indeed come home, even to your own doors, to seek peace? does he vail his unsupportable glory under flesh, that he might treat the more familiarly? and yet do you refuse him, and shut your hearts against him? Then hear one word, and let thine ears tingle at the sound of it: Thy sin is hereby aggravated beyond the sin of devils, who never sinned against a mediator in their own nature; who never despised, or refused, because indeed, they were never offered terms of mercy, as you are. And I doubt not but the devils themselves, who now tempt you to reject, will, to all eternity, upbraid your folly for rejecting this great salvation, which in this excellent way is brought down, even to your own doors.

Use 6. If Jesus Christ has assumed our nature, then he is sensibly touched with the infirmities that attend it, and so has pity and compassion for us, under all our burdens. And indeed this was one end of his assuming it, that he might be able to have compassion on us, as you read, Hebrews 2:17-18. “Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be

a merciful and faithful High-priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself has suffers, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." O what a comfort is this to us, that he who is our High-Priest in heaven, has our nature on him, to enable him to take compassion on us!

Use 7. Hence we see, to what a height God intends to build up the happiness of man, in that he has laid the foundation thereof so deep, in the incarnation of his own Son.

They that intend to build high, use to lay the foundation low. The happiness and glory of our bodies, as well as souls, are founded in Christ's taking our flesh upon him: for, therein, as in a model or pattern, God intended to show what in time he resolves to make of our bodies; for he will "metaschematidzein", transform our vile bodies, and make them one day conformable to the glorious body of Jesus Christ, Php 3:21. This flesh was therefore assumed by Christ, that in it might be shown, as in a pattern, how God intends to honour and exalt it. And indeed, a greater honour cannot be done to the nature of man, than what is already done, by this grace of union; nor are our persons capable of higher glory, than what consists in their conformity to this glorious head. Indeed the flesh of Christ will ever have a distinct glory from ours in heaven, by reason of this union; for being the body which the Word assumed, it is two ways advanced singularly above the flesh and blood of all other men, viz. subjectively, and objectively: Subjectively, it is the flesh and blood of God, Acts 20:28, and so has a distinct and incommunicable glory of its own. And objectively, it is the flesh and blood which all the angels and saints adore. But though in these things it be supereminently exalted, yet it is both the medium and pattern of all that glory which God designs to raise us to.

Use 8. Lastly, How wonderful a comfort is it, that he who dwells in our flesh is God? What joy may not a poor believer make out of this? what comfort one made out of it, I will give you in his own words, "I see it a work of God, (saith he) that experiences are all lost, when summonses of improbation, to prove our charters of Christ to be counterfeit, are raised against poor souls in their heavy trials. But let me be a sinner, and worse than the chief of sinners, yea, a guilty devil, I am sure my well-beloved is God, and my Christ is God. And when I say my Christ is God, I have said all things, I can say no more. I would I could build as much on this, My Christ is God, as it would bear: I might lay all the world upon it."

God and man in one person! Oh! thrice happy conjunction! As man, he is full of experimental sense of our infirmities, wants, and burdens; and, as God, he can support and supply them all. The aspect of faith upon this wonderful Person, how relieving, how reviving, how abundantly satisfying is it? God will never divorce the believing soul, and its comfort, after he has married our nature to his own Son, by the hypostatical, and our persons also, by the blessed mystical union.

S. Of Divine Providence

Of Divine Providence.

Q. 11. What are God's works of Providence?

A. God's works of Providence, are his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his Creatures and all their Actions.

Q. 1. How doth it appear there is a Divine Providence?

A. It appears by plain Scripture testimonies. Hebrews 1:3. Upholding all things by the word of his power. Colossians 1:17. By him all things consist. Luke 12:6-7. Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God; but even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

Q. 2. How else is Providence evidenced?

A. By Scripture Emblems, as Jacob's Ladder. Genesis 28:12-13. And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; behold the Angels of God ascended and descended on it: And Ezekiel's wheels. Ezekiel 1:20. Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither was their spirit to go, and the wheels were lifted up over against them, for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels.

Q. 3. What further Scripture evidence is there?

A. The sure accomplishment of Scripture Predictions, as Israel's Captivity, and Deliverance from Egypt and Babylon, Christ's Incarnation, the Rise and Ruin of the four Monarchies. Daniel 2:3. Thou, O King sawest, and behold a great Image, whose brightness was excellent, stood and before the, and the form thereof was terrible. Daniel 7:3. And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from the other.

Q. 4. What is its first act about the Creatures?

A. It sustains, preserves, provides for them. Psalms 145:15-16. The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season; thou openest thine hand, and satisfieth the deisre of every living thing, and defendest them from danger. Psalms 36:6. Thy righteousness is like the great mountains, thy judgments are a great deep, O Lord, thou preservest man and beast.

Q. 5. What is the second act of Providence about the Creature?

A. It rules and governs the Creature and their actions. Psalms 66:7. He ruleth by his power for ever, his eyes behold the nations: let not the rebellious exalt themselves.

Q. 6. How manifold is divine Providence?

A. It is common and general over all, or special and peculiar to some men. 1 Timothy 4:10. Who is the saviour of all men, especially of those that believe.

Q. 7. How is providence exercised about sinful actions?

A. In permitting them. Acts 4:16. In restraining them. Psalms 76:10. Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee, and the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain. And over-ruling them to good. Genesis 50:20. But as for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

Q. 8. What are the Properties of Providence?

A. It is 1. Holy. Psalms 145:17. The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.

2. Wise. Psalms 104:24. O Lord how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all.

3. Powerful. Daniel 4:35. And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing, and he doth according to his will, in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what dost thou?

Q. 9. What is the first Instruction from it?

A. That God's people are safe amidst all their enemies and dangers. 2 Chronicles 16:9. For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose hearts are perfect towards him?

Q. 10. What is the second Instruction?

A. That Prayer is the best expedient to Prosperity, and success of our lawful affairs. Psalms 145:18. The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth.

Q. 11. What is the third Instruction from it?

A. That God's People should rest quietly in the care of his Providence for them in all their straits. Matthew 6:26. Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet our heavenly father feedeth them; are ye not much better than they?

Q. 12. What is the last Instruction from it?

A. That it is no small privilege to be adopted Children of God, and the members of Christ, for all is ordered for their eternal Good. Ephesians 1:22-23. And he hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the Church, which is his Body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

S. Of God's Holiness

An Exposition of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism by John Flavel Of God's Holiness Q. 1. How manifold is the Holiness of God?

A. The Holiness of God is twofold: Communicable, or Incommunicable; of his communicable holiness the Apostle speaks. Hebrews 12:10. But he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Of his incommunicable holiness that Scripture speaks. 1 Samuel 2:2. There is none holy as the Lord.

Q. 2. What is the essential and incommunicable Holiness of God?

A. It is the infinite purity of his Nature, whereby he delights in his own holiness, and the resemblance of it in his Creatures, and hates all impurity. Habakkuk 1:13. Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.

Q. 3. What is the first property of God's Holiness?

A. He is essentially Holy. Holiness is not a separable quality in God, as it is in Angels and Men: but his Being and his Holiness are one thing.

Q. 4. What is the second property of God's Holiness?

A. God is essentially Holy, the author and fountain of all communicated Holiness. Leviticus 20:8. I am the Lord which sanctifieth you.

Q. 5. What is the third property?

A. That the holiness of God is the perfect rule and pattern of holiness to all Creatures. 1 Peter 1:16. Be ye holy, for I am holy.

Q. 6. What is the first Instruction?

A. That the holiest of men have cause to be ashamed and humbled when the come before God. Isaiah 6:3, Isaiah 6:5. And one cried unto another, saying, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory. Then said I, Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, etc.

Q. 7. What is the second Instruction from God's holiness?

A. That there is no coming near to God without a Mediator; for our God is a consuming fire.

Q. 8. What is the third Instruction from God's holiness?

A. That holiness is indispensably necessary, to all those which shall dwell with him in Heaven. Hebrews 12:14. And, holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.

Q. 9. What is the fourth Instruction from hence?

A. That the Gospel is of inestimable value, as it is the instrument of conveying the Holiness of God to us. 2 Corinthians 3:18. But we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord. John 17:17. Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth.

Q. 10. What is the last instruction from God's holiness?

A. That all the despisers and scoffers of holiness, are despisers of God; for holiness is the very Nature of God; and in the Creature it is his represented Image.

S. Of Three Persons in the Godhead

An Exposition of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism by John Flavel Of three person in the Godhead.

Q. 6. How many Persons are there in the Godhead?

A. There are three Persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in Power and Glory.

Q. 1. What mean you by the word Godhead?

A. It is the Nature, Essence, or Being of God, as the Apostle speaks. Acts 17:29. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art, and man's device.

Q. 2. What is a Person in the Godhead?

A. It is the Godhead distinguished by personal properties; each Person having his distinct personal Properties. Hebrews 1:3. Who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, upholding all things by the word of his power.

Q. 3. How doth it appear there are three persons, and no more?

A. First, from Christ's Baptism. Matthew 3:16-17. And Jesus when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water, and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him, and lo a voice from heave, saying, This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.

Q. 4. How else, in the second place doth it appear?

A. From the Institution of our Baptism. Matthew 28:19. Go ye therefore, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the father, of the son, and of the holy Ghost.

Q. 5. What is the third Proof from Scripture?

A. From the Apostolic Benediction. 2 Corinthians 3:14. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all, Amen. Where three distinct blessings are wished from the three divine Persons in the Godhead; Grace from Christ, Love from the Father, and Communion with the Spirit.

Q. 6. What further evidence is there of it in the Scripture?

A. From plain, positive assertions of the Scripture, asserting, First, A Trinity of Persons. Secondly, A Unity of Essence. 1 John 5:7. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the father, the word, and the holy Ghost, and these three are one.

Q. 7. What is the first Instruction from the Trinity?

A. That the Doctrine of the Gospel concerning Christ, is fully confirmed and ratified by three witnesses from Heaven, who are above all exceptions. 1 John 5:6. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the father, the word, and the Holy Ghost.

Q. 8. What is the second Inference from the Trinity?

A. Hence we learn the true order and manner of worshipping God the Son. John 6:23. Whatsoever ye shall ask the father in my name, he will give it you. And by the Spirit. Ephesians 6:18. Praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the spirit.

Q. 9. What is the third Inference from the Trinity?

A. That the Covenant of grace conveys a rich portion to Believers, in making over all three persons to them. Jeremiah 31:33. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Q. 10. What is the fourth Instruction from the Trinity?

A. That as it is the duty of all the Saints to give distinct Glory to the three Persons in the Godhead; so it will be a special part of their blessedness in Heaven, to contemplate the distinct benefits received from them all. Revelation 1:5. And from Jesus Christ who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the Kings of the earth; unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.

Chapter 126

S. Of the Authority by which CHRIST, as Mediator, acted. Joh_6:27

SERMON VI. Of the Authority by which CHRIST, as Mediator, acted. John 6:27 For him hath God the Father seated.

You have heard Christ's compact, or agreement with the Father, in the covenant of redemption; as also what the Father did, in pursuance of the ends thereof, in giving his Son out of his bosom, &c. also what the Son hath done towards it, in assuming flesh. But though the glorious work be thus far advanced, yet all he should act in that assumed body, had been invalid and vain, without a due call, and commission from the Father, so to do: which is the import of the words now before you. This scripture is a part of Christ's excellent reply to a self-ended generation, who followed him, not for any spiritual excellencies that they saw in him, or soul-advantages they expected by him, but for bread Instead of making his service their meat and drink, they only served him, that they might eat and drink Self is a thing may creep into the best hearts and actions; but it only predominates in the hypocrite. These people had sought Christ from place to place, and having at last found him, they salute him with an impertinent compliment, "Rabbi, whence camest thou hither?" verse 25. Christ's reply is partly dissuasive, and partly directive. He dissuades them from putting the secondary and subordinate, in the place of the principal and ultimate end; not to prefer their bodies to their souls, their fleshly accommodations to the glory of God. "Labour not for the meat that perisheth." Wherein he doth not take them off from their lawful labours and callings; but he dissuades them, first, from minding those things too intently: and, secondly he dissuades them from that odious sin of making religion but a pretence for the belly. And it is partly directive, and that in the main end and business of life. "But labour for that meat which endureth to eternal life;" to get bread for your souls to live eternally by. And, that he might engage their diligence in seeking it to purpose, he shews them not only where they may have it, ["which the Son of man shall give you"] but also how they may be fully satisfied, that he hath it for them, in the clause I have pitched on; "For him hath God the Father sealed." In these words are three parts observable.

1. The Person sealing or investing Christ with authority and power; which is said to be God the Father. Though all the persons in the Godhead are equal in nature, dignity and power, yet in their operation there is an order observed among them; the Father sends the Son, the Son is sent by the Father, the Holy Ghost is sent by both.

2. The subject in which God the Father lodges this authority, [Him] that is, the Son of man. Jesus Christ, he is the prw'ton, the first receptacle of it; and he must here be understood exclusively. God the Father hath so sealed him, as he never sealed any other before him, or that shall arise after him. No name is given in heaven, or earth, but this name by which we are saved, Acts 4:12 "The government is upon his shoulders," Isaiah 9:1-21.

3. Here is farther observable, the way and manner of the Father's delegating and committing this authority to Christ; and that is, by sealing him. Where we have both a metonymy, the symbol of

authority being put for the authority itself, and a metaphor, sealing, which is a human act, for the ratifying and confirming an instrument, or grant, being here applied to God. Like as princes, by sealed credentials, confirm the authority of those that are sent by them; as the Dutch Annotators well express the meaning of it. Hence we note,

Doct. That Jesus Christ did not of himself undertake the work of our redemption, but was solemnly sealed unto that work by God the Father. When I say, he did not of himself undertake this work, I mean not that he was unwilling to go about it, for his heart was as fully and ardently engaged in it, as the Father's was: so he tells us, Psalms 40:7. "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God; thy law is in my heart." But the meaning is, he came not without a due call, and full commission from his Father. And so it is to be understood in opposition to intrusion, not voluntary susception; and this is the meaning of that scripture, John 8:24 "I proceeded and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me." And this the apostle plainly expresseth, and fully clear; Hebrews 5:4-5. "And no man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron: so also, Christ glorified not himself to be made an High-priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son." And on the account of these sealed credentials, he received from the Father, he is called the Apostle and High-priest of our profession, Hebrews 3:1. one called and sent forth by the Father's authority. Our present business, then, is to open Christ's commission, and to view the great seal of heaven by which it was ratified.

And, to preserve a clear method in the explication of this great truth, into which your faith and comfort is resolved, I shall, First, Shew what was the work and office to which the Father sealed him.

Secondly, What his sealing to this work doth imply.

Thirdly, How, and by what acts, the Father sealed him to it.

Fourthly, Why it was necessary that he should be thus sealed and authorized by his Father; and then improve it in its proper uses.

First, What was that office, or work, to which his Father sealed him? I answer, more generally, he was sealed to the whole work of mediation for us, thereby to recover and save all the elect, whom the Father had given him; so John 17:2. "It was to give eternal life to as many as were given him: it was to bring Jacob again to him," Isaiah 49:5. or as the apostle expresses it, 1 Peter 3:18. "That he might bring us to God." More particularly, in order to the sure, and full effecting of this most glorious design, he was sealed to the offices of a Prophet, Priest, and King, that so he might bring about and compass this work.

1. God sealed him a commission to preach the glad tidings of salvation to sinners. This commission Christ opened and read in the audience of the people, Luke 4:17-21. " And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, &c. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears."

2. He also sealed him to the priesthood, and that the most excellent; authorizing him to execute both the parts of it, viz. obligatory and intercessory. He called him to offer up himself a sacrifice for us. "I have power (saith he) to lay down my life; this commandment have I received of my Father," John 10:18. And upon that account, his offering up of his blood is, by the apostle, stiled an act of obedience, as it is, Php 2:8. "He became obedient unto death." He also called him to intercede for us; Hebrews 7:21, Hebrews 7:24-25. "These priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath; by him that said unto him, The Lord " sware, and will not repent, thou art a priest for ever:" because his sacrifice is virtually continued, in his living for ever to make intercession, as it is, verse 24. Yea,

3. He called him to his regal office; he was set upon the highest throne of authority by his Father's commission, as it is, Matthew 28:18. "All power in heaven and earth is given to me." To all this was Christ sealed and authorized by his Father.

Secondly, What doth the Father's sealing of Christ to this work and office imply? There are divers things implied in it: As,

1. The validity and efficacy of all his mediatory acts. For, by virtue of this his sealing whatever he did was fully ratified. And in this very thing lies much of a believer's comfort and security; forasmuch as all acts done without commission and authority (how great, or able soever the person that doth them is, yet) are in themselves null and void. But what is done by commission and authority, is authentic, and most allowable among men. Had Christ come from heaven, and entered upon his mediatory work without a due call, our faith had been stumbled at the very threshold; but this greatly satisfies.

2. It imports the great obligation lying upon Jesus Christ to be faithful in the work he was sealed to: for, the Father, in this commission, devolves a great trust upon him, and relies upon him for his most faithful discharge thereof And, indeed, upon this very account Christ reckons himself specially obliged to pursue the Father's design and end, John 9:4. "I must work the works of him that sent me." And John 5:30. "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me." Still his eye is upon that work and will of his Father. And he reckons himself under a necessity of punctual and precise obedience to it; and, as a faithful servant, will have his own will swallowed up in his Father's will.

3. It imports Christ's complete qualification, or instrumental fitness to serve the Father's design and end of our recovery. Had not God known him to be every way fit, and qualified for the work, he would never have sealed him a commission for it. Men may, but God will not seal an unfit, or incapable person, for his work. And, indeed, whatever is desirable in a servant, was eminently found in Christ: for faithfulness, none like him. Moses indeed was faithful to a pin, but still as a servant: but Christ as a Son, Hebrews 3:2. He is the faithful and true witness, Revelation 1:5. For zeal, none like him. The zeal of God's house did eat him up, John 2:16-17. He was so intent upon his Father's works that he forgot to eat bread, counting his work his meat and drink, John 4:32. Yea, and love to his Father carried him on through all his work, and made him delight in the hardest piece of his service; for he served him as a Son, Hebrews 3:5-6. All that ever he did was done in love. For wisdom, none like him, The Father knew him to be most wise, and said of him before he was employed, "Behold my servant shall deal prudently," Isaiah 52:13. To conclude, for self-denial, never any like him; he sought not his own glory, but the glory of him that sent him, John

8:50. Had he not been thus faithful, zealous, full of love, prudent, and self-denying, he had never been employed in this great affair.

4. It implies Christ's sole authority in the church, to appoint and enjoin what he pleaseth; and this is his peculiar prerogative. For, the commission God sealed him in the text, is a single, not a joint commission; he hath sealed him, and none beside him. Indeed there were some that pretended a call and commission from God; but all that were before him were thieves and robbers, that came not in at the door, as he did, John 10:8. And he himself foretels, that after him some should arise, and labour to deceive the world with a feigned commission, and a counterfeit seal, Matthew 24:24. "There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders: insomuch, that if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect." But God never commissioned any besides him, neither is there any other name under heaven, Acts 4:12. Thus you see how the validity of his acts, his obligation to be faithful, his complete qualifications, and sole authority in the church, are imported in his sealing.

Thirdly, Let us enquire how God the Father' sealed Jesus Christ to this work, and we shall find that he was sealed by four acts of the Father.

1. By solemn designation to this work. He singled him out and set him apart for it: and therefore the prophet Isaiah, chap. xlii. 1. calls him God's elect. And the apostle Peter, 1 Peter 2:4. Chosen of God. This word which we render Elect, doth not only signify one that in himself is eximious, worthy, and excellent, but also one that is set apart and designed, as Christ was, for the work of mediation. And so much is included in John 10:36. where the Father is said to sanctify him, 1. e. to separate, and devote him to this service.

2. He was sealed, not only by solemn designation, but also super-eminent and unparalleled sanctification. He was anointed, as well as appointed to it. The Lord filled him with the Spirit, and that without measure, to qualify him for this service. So Isaiah 41:1-3. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach," &c. Yea, the Spirit of the Lord was not only upon him, but he was full of the Spirit, Luke 4:1. and so full as was never any beside him; for God "anointed him with the oil of gladness, above his fellows," Psalms 45:7. Believers are his fellows, or co-partners of this Spirit: they have an anointing also, but not as Christ had; in him it dwelt in its fulness, in them according to measure, It was poured out on Christ, our Head, abundantly, and ran down to the hem of his garment. "God gave not the Spirit to him by measure," John 3:34. God filled Christ's human nature, to the utmost capacity, with all fulness of the Spirit of knowledge, wisdom, love, &c. beyond all creatures, for the plenary and more effectual administration of his mediatorship: he was full extensively, with all kinds of grace; and full intensively, with all degrees of grace. "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell, Colossians 1:19. as light in the sun, or water in a fountain, that he might not only fill all things, as the apostle speaks, Ephesians 1:22. but that he might be prompt, expedite, and every way fit to discharge his own work, which was the next and immediate end of it so that the holy oil that was poured out upon the head of kings and priests, whereby they were consecrated to their offices, was but typical of the Spirit, by which Christ was consecrated, or sealed, to his offices. Exodus 30:23-25, Exodus 30:30-32.

3. Christ was sealed by the Father's immediate testimony from heaven, whereby he was declared to be the person whom the Father had solemnly designed and appointed to this work. And God gave this extraordinary testimony of him at two remarkable seasons; the one was just at his

entrance on his public ministry, Mat. iii. ult. the other but a little before his sufferings, Matthew 17:5. This voice was not formed by such organs and instruments of speech, as ours are, but by creating a voice in the air which the people heard sounding therein: by this God owned, approved, and as by a seal ratified his work.

4. Christ was sealed by the Father, in all those extraordinary miraculous works wrought by him, in which the Father gave yet more full and convincing testimonies to the world, that this was whom he had appointed to be our Mediator. These were convictive to the world, that God had sent him, and that his doctrine was of God. "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and power, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him," Acts 10:38. And so, John 5:36. "I have a greater witness than that of John; for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." Therefore he still referred those that doubted of him, or of his doctrine, to the seal of his Father, even the miraculous works he wrought in the power of God, Matthew 11:3-5. And thus the Father sealed him.

Fourthly and lastly, We will enquire why it was necessary Christ should be sealed by his Father to this work and there are these three weighty reasons for it. I. Else he had not corresponded with the types which prefigured him, and in him it was necessary that they should be all accomplished. You know, under the Law, the kings and high priests had their inaugurations by solemn unctions; in all which this consecration, or sealing of Christ to his work, was shadowed out: and therefore you shall find, Hebrews 5:4-5. "No man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron:" so also (mark the necessary correspondency betwixt Christ and them) "Christ glorified not himself to be made an High Priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son."

2. Moreover, hereby the hearts of believers are the more engaged to love the Father, inasmuch as it appears hereby that the Father’s love, and good will to them, was the original and spring of their redemption. For had not the Father sealed him such a commission, he had not come; but now he comes in the Father’s name, and in the Father’s love, as well as his name; and so all men are bound to ascribe equal glory and honour to them both, as it is, John 5:23.

3. And especially Christ would not come without a commission, because, else you had no ground for your faith in him. How should we have been satisfied that this is indeed the true Messiah, except he had opened his commission to the world, and shewed his Father’s seal annexed to it? If he had come without his credentials from heaven, and only told the world that God had sent him, and that they must take his bare word for it, who could have rested his faith on that testimony? And that is the true meaning of that place, John 5:31. "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true." How so? You will say, doth not that contradict what he saith, John 8:14. "Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true." Therefore you must understand truth, not as it is opposed to reality; but the meaning is, if I had only given you my bare word for it, and not brought other evidence from my Father, my testimony had not been authentic and valid, according to human laws; but now all doubtings are precluded. Let us next improve this.

Inf. 1. Hence we infer the unreasonableness of infidelity, and how little rejecters of Christ can have to pretend for their so doing. You see he hath opened his commission in the gospel, shewn the world his Father’s hand and seal to it, given as ample satisfaction as reason itself could desire, or expect; yet even his own received him not, John 1:11. And he knew it beforehand, and therefore

complained by the prophet, Isaiah 53:1. "Who hath believed our report?" &c. Yea, and that he is believed on in the world, is by the apostle put among the great mysteries of godliness, 1 Timothy 3:16. A man that well considers with what convincing evidence Christ comes, would rather think it a mystery, that any should not believe. But, Oh the brutish obstinacy, and devilish enmity, that is in nature to Jesus Christ! Devilish did I say? You must give me that word again, for he compelled the devil's assent; "We know thee, whom thou art." And it is equally as wonderful to see the facility that is in nature to comply (meanwhile) with any, even the most foolish imposture. Let a false Christ arise, and he shall deceive many, as it is, Matthew 24:24. Of this Christ complains, and not without great reason, John 5:43. "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not; If another come in his own name, him will ye receive," q. d. You are incredulous to none but me: every deceiver, every pitiful cheat, that hath but wit, or rather wickedness, enough to tell you the Lord hath sent him, though you must take his own single word for it, he shall obtain and get disciples; but though I come in my Father's name, i.e. shewing you a commission signed and sealed by him, doing those works which none but a God can do, yet ye receive me not. But in all this, we must adore the justice of God, permitting it to be so, giving men up to such unreasonable obstinacy and hardness. It is a sore plague that lies upon the world, and a wonder that we all are not ingulphed in the same infidelity.

Inf. 2. If Christ was sealed to his work by his Father, then how great is the sin of those that reject and despise such as are sent and sealed by Jesus Christ? For look, as he came to us in his Father's name, so he hath sent forth, by the same authority, ministers in his name; and as he acts in his Father's, so they in his, authority. "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world," John 17:18. And so, John 20:21. "As my Father hath sent me, so have I sent you." You may think it a small matter to despise or reject a minister of Christ, (a sin, in the guilt whereof, I think no age hath been plunged deeper than this;) but hear, and let it be a warning to you for ever: in so doing you despise, and put the slight both upon the Father that sent Jesus, and upon Christ that sent them: so that it is a rebellion, that however it seems to begin low in some small piques against their persons, or some little quarrels at their parts and utterance, tones, methods or gestures; yet it runs high, even to the fountain-head of the most supreme authority. You that set yourselves against a minister of Christ, set yourselves against God the Father, and God the Son; Luke 10:16. "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me." God expects that you behave yourselves, under the word spoken by us, as if he himself spake it; yea, he expects submission to his word in the mouths of his ministers from the greatest on earth. And therefore it was that God so severely punished Zedekiah, "because he humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet, speaking from the mouth of the Lord," 2 Chronicles 36:12. God was angry with a great king for not humbling himself before a poor prophet. Yet here you must distinguish both of Persons, and of Acts. This reverence and submission is not due to them as men, but as men in office, as Christ's ambassadors; and must involve that respect still in it. Again, we owe it not to them, commanding or forbidding in their own names, but in Christ's, not in venting their own spleen, but the terrors of the Lord; and then to resist is a high rebellion and affront to the sovereign authority of heaven. And, by the way, this may instruct ministers, that the way to maintain that veneration and respect that is due to them, in the consciences of their hearers, is by keeping close to their commission.

Inf. 3. Hence also we infer, how great an evil it is to intrude into the office of the ministry without a due call. It is more than Christ himself would do; he glorified not himself: the honours and advantages attending that office, have invited many, to run before they were sent. But surely this is an insufferable violation of Christ's order. Our age hath abounded with as many church-levellers as state-levellers. I wish the ministers of Christ might at last see and consider, what they were once warned of by a faithful watchman: 'I believe (saith he, Mr. Strong) God hath permitted so many to intrude into the ministers' calling, because ministers have too much meddled with, and intruded into other men's callings.'

Inf. 4. Hence be convinced of the great efficacy that is in all gospel ordinances duly administered: For Christ having received full commission from his Father, and by virtue thereof having instituted and appointed these ordinances in the church, all the power in heaven is engaged to make them good, to back and second them, to confirm and ratify them. Hence, in the censures of the church, you have that great expression, Matthew 18:18. "Whatsoever ye bind or loose on earth, shall be bound or loosed in heaven." And so, for the word and sacraments, Matthew 28:18-20. "All power in heaven and earth is given unto me: Go therefore," &c. They are not the appointments of men; your faith stands not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. That very power, God the Father committed to Christ, is the fountain whence all gospel institutions flow. And he hath promised to be with his officers, not only the extraordinary officers of that age, but with his ministers, in succeeding ages, to the end of the world. O therefore, when we come to an ordinance, come not with slight thoughts, but with great reverence, and great expectations, remembering Christ is there to make all good.

Inf. 5. Again, here you have another call to admire the grace and love, both of the Father and Son to your souls: It is not lawful to compare them, but it is duty to admire them. Was it not wonderful grace in the Father to seal a commission for the death of his Son, for the humbling him as low as hell, and in that method to save you, when you might have expected he should have scaled your Mittimus for hell, rather than a commission for your salvation? He might rather have set his irreversible seal to the sentence of your damnation, than to a commission for his Son's humiliation for you. And no less is the love of Christ to be wondered at, that would accept such a commission, as this for us, and receive this seal, understanding fully (as he did) what were the contents of that commission, that the Father delivered him thus sealed, and knowing that there could be no reversing of it afterwards.

O then, love the Lord Jesus, all ye his saints, for still you see more and more of his love breaking out upon you. I commend to you a sealed Saviour this day; O that every one that reads these lines might, in a pang of love, cry out with the enamoured spouse, Song of Solomon 8:6. "Set me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm for love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave; the coals thereof are coals of fire, which have a most vehement flame."

Inf. 6. Once more; Hath God sealed Christ for you? Then draw forth the comfort of his sealing for you, and be restless till ye also be sealed by him.

1. Draw out the comfort of Christ's sealing for you. Remember that hereby God stands engaged, even by his own seal, to allow and confirm whatever Christ hath done in the business of our salvation And on this ground you may thus plead with God: Lord thou hast sealed Christ to this office, and therefore I depend upon it, that thou allowest all that he hath done, and all that he hath

suffered for me, and wilt make good all that he hath promised me. If men will not deny their own seals, much less wilt thou.

2. Get your interest in Christ sealed to you by the Spirit, else you cannot have the comfort of Christ's being sealed for you. Now the Spirit seals two ways, Objectively and Effectually; the first is by working those graces in us, which are the conditions of the promises the latter is by shining upon his own work, and helping the soul to discern it, which follows the other, both in order of nature, and of time. And these sealings of the Spirit are to be distinguished, both ex parte subjecti, or the quality of the person sealed which always is a believer, Ephesians 1:13. for there can be no reflex, till there have been a direct Act of faith; and ex parte materioe, by the matter of which that comfort is made: which if it be of the Spirit, is ever consonant to the written word, Isa. viii. And partly ab effectis, by its effects: for it commonly produces in the sealed soul, great care and caution to avoid sin, Ephesians 4:30. Great love to God, John 14:22. Readiness to suffer anything for Christ, Romans 5:3-5. Confidence in addresses to God, 1 John 5:13-14. and great humility and self-abasement; in Abraham, who lay on his face when God sealed the covenant him, Genesis 17:1-3. This, O this brings home the sweet and good of all, when this seal is super-added to that.

Chapter 127

S. Of the Manner of Christ's Incarnation

Westminster Shorter Catechism Project An Exposition of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism by John Flavel Of the manner of Christ's Incarnation.

Quest. 1. Was Christ's incarnation a voluntary act in him?

A. Yes, it was; for though he had a command to die for us, John 10:18. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. Yet he came willingly; Psalms 40:6-7. Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire, mine ears hast thou opened; burnt-offerings and sin-offerings hast thou not required; lo, I come; in the volume of thy book, it is written of me. Ver. 8. 1 delight to do thy will, O my God, yea, thy law is within my heart.

Q. 2. Was the body of Christ a real and true human body?

A. Yes, it was a true and real body, not the appearance and shape of a body only; Luke 25:58. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Ver. 89. Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as you see me have.

Q. 3. Had he a true human soul as well as a body?

A. Yes, he had a real human soul also, and all the natural faculties and powers thereof; Matthew 26:38. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.

Q. 4. Was he then in all respects like to other men?

A. No, his conception was not like others; Isaiah 7:14. Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his name EMMANUEL. And he had no sin in him as others have; Hebrews 7:26. For such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.

Q. 5. Did Christ put off the human nature at his ascension?

A. No, he did not,, but carried it up to glory, and now is in our nature in heaven; 1 Timothy 3:16. Received up into glory.

Q. 6. Why did he assume our nature?

A. That he might die in it for our salvation; Hebrews 2:15. And deliver them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Q. 7. Why did he rise in it after death?

A. He raised it from the dead for your justification; Romans 4:25. Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

Q. 8. Why did he ascend in our nature into heaven?

A. To be a Mediator of intercession in our nature; Hebrews 7:25. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Q. 9. What is the first instruction from hence?

A. That the body of Christ is not every where, but is contained in heaven; Acts 3:21. Whom the heaven must receive, until the times of restitution of all things.

Q. 10. What is the second instruction?

A. That Christ is full of tender compassion to his peoples infirmities; Hebrews 4:15. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Q. 11. What is the third instruction?

A. That great and admirable is the glory designed for the bodies of believers; Php 3:21. Who shall change your vile bodies, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

Q. 12. What is the last instruction?

A. That the bodily eyes of believers after the resurrection, shall see Christ in glory; Job 19:26-27. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.

S. Of the NATURE of CHRIST's MEDIATION. 1Ti_2:5.

SERMON VIII Of the NATURE of CHRIST's MEDIATION. 1 Timothy 2:5. And one Mediator betwixt God and Man, the man Christ Jesus.

GREAT and long preparations bespeak the solemnity and greatness of the work for which they are designed; A man that had but seen the heaps of gold, silver and brass, which David amassed in his time, for the building of the temple, might easily conclude before one stone of it was laid, that it would be a magnificent structure. But lo, here is a design of God as far transcending that, as the substance doth the shadow. For, indeed, that glorious temple was but the type and figure of Jesus Christ, John 2:19, John 2:21. and a weak adumbration of that living, spiritual temple which he was to build, cementing the lively stones thereof together with his own blood, 1 Peter 2:5-6. that the great God might dwell and walk in it, 2 Corinthians 6:16. The preparations for that temple were but of few years, but the consultations and preparations for this were from eternity, Proverbs 8:31. And as there were preparations for this work (which Christ dispatched in a few years before the world began; so it will be matter of eternal admiration and praise, when this world shall be dissolved. What this astonishing glorious work is, this text will inform you, as to the general nature of it: it is the work of mediation betwixt God and man, managed by the sole hand of the man Christ Jesus. In this scripture (for I shall not spend time to examine the words in their contexture) you have a description of Jesus the Mediator: and he is here described four ways, viz. by his work or office, a Mediator; by the singularity of his mediation, one Mediator; and by the nature and quality of his person, employed in this singular way of mediation, the man; and lastly, his name Jesus Christ.

1. He is described by the work, or office he is employed about Mesivth" a Mediator, a middle person. So the word imports a fit, indifferent, and equal person, that comes between two persons that are at variance, to compose the difference and make peace. Such a middle, equal, indifferent person is Christ; a days man, to lay his hand upon both; to arbitrate and award justly and give God his due, and that without ruin to poor man.

2. He is described by the singularity of his mediation, one Mediator, and but one. Though there be many mediators of reconciliation among men, and many intercessors in a petitionary way, betwixt God and man; yet but eijs mesivta", one only mediator of reconciliation betwixt God and man: and it is as needless and impious to make more mediators than one, as to make more Gods than one. There is one God, and one Mediator betwixt God and men.

He is described by the nature and quality of his person, a[nqrwvpo", crivto", &c. the man Christ Jesus. This description of him by one nature, and that the human nature also (wherein, as you shall see anon, the Lord especially consulted our encouragement and comfort); I say, his being so described to us, hath, through the corruption of men, been improved to the great dishonour of Jesus Christ, both by the Arians and Papists. The former took occasion from hence to affirm, that he was but yivlo" ajnqrwvpo" a mere man. The latter allow him to be the true God, but on this weak

ground affirm, that he performed not the work of mediation as God, but only as man. Thus what the Spirit ordered for our comfort, is wickedly retorted to Christ's dishonour; for I doubt not but he is described by his human nature in this place; not only because in this nature he paid that ransom (which he speaks of in the words immediately following) but especially for the drawing of sinners to him; seeing he is the man Christ Jesus, one that clothed himself in their own flesh; and to encourage the faith of believers, that he tenderly regards all their wants and miseries, and that they may safely trust him with all their concerns, as one that will carefully mind them as his own, and will be for them a merciful and faithful High Priest, in things pertaining to God.

4. He is described by his names; by his appellative name Christ and his proper name Jesus. The name Jesus, notes his work about which he came; and Christ, the offices to which he was anointed; and in the execution of which he is our Jesus. "In the name Jesus, the whole gospel is contained, it is the light, the food, the medicine of the soul," as one speaks. The note from hence is, Doct. That Jesus Christ is the true and only Mediator betwixt God and men.

"Ye are come to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant," Hebrews 12:24. "And for this cause he is the Mediator of the New Testament," &c. Hebrews 9:14. I might shew you a whole vein of scriptures running this way; but to keep a profitable and clear method, I shall shew, First, What is the sense of this word Mesivth", a Mediator.

Secondly, What it implies, as it is applied to Christ.

Thirdly, How it appears that he is the true and only Mediator betwixt God and men.

Fourthly, In what capacity he performed his mediatory work.

First, What is the sense and import of this word Mesivth", a Mediator? The true sense and importance of it, is a middle Person, or one that interposes betwixt two parties at variance, to make peace betwixt them. So that as Satan is medium disjungens, a medium of discord; so Christ is medium conjungens, a medium of concord and peace. And he is such a Mediator, both in respect of his person and office; in respect of his person, he is a Mediator; i.e. one that hath the same nature both with God and us, true God, and true man; and in respect of his Office or work, which is to interpose, to transact the business of reconciliation between us and God. The former some call his substantial, the latter his energetical, or operative mediation: Though I rather conceive that which is called his substantial mediation, is but the aptitude of his person to execute the mediatorial function; and that it doth not constitute two kinds of mediation. His being a middle person, fits and capacitates him to stand in the midst betwixt God and us. This, I say, is the proper sense of the word; though Mesivth", a Mediator, is rendered variously; sometimes an umpire or arbitrator; sometimes a messenger that goes betwixt two persons; sometimes an interpreter, imparting the mind of one to another; sometimes a reconciler or peace-maker. And in all these senses Christ is the Mesivth", the middle person in his mediation of reconciliation or intercession; 1. e. either in his mediating, by suffering to make peace, as he did on earth; or to continue, and maintain peace, as he doth in heaven, by meritorious intercession. Both these ways he is the only Mediator. And he manageth this his mediation,

1. As an umpire or arbitrator; one that layeth his hands upon both parties, as Job speaks, chap. 9:33. So doth Christ, he layeth his hands (speaking after the manner of men) upon God, and saith, Father, wilt thou be at peace with them, and re-admit them into thy favour? if thou wilt, thou shalt

be fully satisfied for all that they have done against thee. And then he layeth his hand upon man and saith, Poor sinner, be not discouraged, thou shalt be justified and saved.

2. As a messenger or ambassador, so he came to impart the mind of God to us, and so he presents our desires to God; and in this sense only Socinus would allow Christ to be Mediator. But therein he endeavours to undermine the foundation, and to exclude him from being Mediator by a suretiship; which is,

3. The third way of his mediation. So the apostle speaks, Heb. vii. he is e[gguo", the surety, or pledge. Which, as the learned David Pareus well expresseth it, is one that engageth to satisfy another, or gives caution or security by a pledge in the hand for it. And indeed, both these ways, Christ is our mediator by suretiship, viz. in a way of satisfaction, coming under our obligation to answer the law; this he did on the cross and in a way of caution, a surety for the peace, or good behaviour. But to be more explicit and clear, I shall,

Secondly, In the next place enquire, what it implies and carries in it, for Christ to be a Mediator betwixt God and us. And there are, mainly, these five things in it.

1. At the first sight, it carries in it a most dreadful breach and jar betwixt God and men; else no need of a Mediator of reconciliation. There was indeed a sweet league of amity once between them, but it was quickly dissolved by sin; the wrath of the Lord was kindled against man, pursuing him to destruction, Psalms 5:5. "Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity." And man was filled with unnatural enmity against his God, Romans 1:30. Qeostugei'", haters of God; this put an end to all friendly commerce and intercourse between him and God. Reader, say not in thy heart, that it is much, that one sin, and that seemingly so small, should make such a breach as this, and cause the God of mercy and goodness so to abhor the works of his hands, and that as soon as he had made man: for it was a heinous and aggravated evil. It was upright, perfect man, created in the image of God, that thus sinned: he sinned when his mind was most bright, clear and apprehensive; his conscience pure and active; his will free, and able to withstand any temptation: his conscience pure and undefiled; he was a public as well as a perfect man, and well knew that the happiness or misery of his numberless offspring was involved in him. The condition he was placed in, was exceeding happy: no necessity or want could arm and edge temptation: he lived amidst all natural and spiritual pleasures and delights, the Lord most delightfully conversing with him; yea, he sinned while as yet his creation-mercy was fresh upon him; and in this sin was most horrible ingratitude: yea, a casting off the yoke of obedience almost as soon as God had put it on. God now saw the work of his hands spoiled, a race of rebels now to be propagated, who, in their successive generations would be fighting against God: he saw it, and his just indignation sparkled against man, and resolves to pursue him to the bottom of hell.

2. It implies, a necessity of satisfaction and reparation to the justice of God. For the very design and end of this mediation was to make peace, by giving full satisfaction to the party that was wronged. The Photinians, and some others, have dreamed of a reconciliation with God, founded not upon satisfaction, but upon the absolute mercy, goodness, and freewill of God "But concerning that absolute goodness and mercy of God, reconciling sinners to himself, there is a deep silence throughout the scriptures:" and whatever is spoken of it, upon that account, is as it works to us through Christ, Ephesians 1:3-6; 2 John 1:6. And we cannot imagine, either how God could exercise mercy to the prejudice of his justice, which must be, if we must be reconciled without full

satisfaction; or how such a full satisfaction should be made by any other than Christ, indeed, moved in the heart of God to poor man; but from his heart it found no way to vent itself for us, but through the heart-blood of Jesus Christ: and in him the justice of God was fully satisfied, and the misery of the creature fully cured And so, as Augustine speaks, "God neither lost the severity of his justice in the goodness of mercy, nor the goodness of his mercy in the exactness of his severity." But if it had been possible God could have found out a way to reconcile us without satisfaction, yet it is past doubt now, that he hath pitched and fixed on this way. And for any now to imagine to reconcile themselves to God by any thing but faith in the blood of this Mediator, is not only most vain in itself, and destructive to the soul, but most insolently derogatory to the wisdom and grace of God. And to such I would say, as Tertullian to Marcion, whom he calls the murderer of truth, "spare the only hope of the whole world, O thou who destroyest the most necessary glory of our faith!" All that we hope for is but a phantasm without this. Peace of conscience can be rationally settled on no other foundation but this; for God having made a law to govern man, and this law violated by man; either the penalty must be levied on the delinquent, or satisfaction made by his surety. As good no law, as no penalty for disobedience; and as good no penalty, as no execution. He therefore that will be made a mediator of reconciliation betwixt God and man, must bring God a price in his hand, and that adequate to the offence and wrong done him, else he will not treat about peace; and so did our Mediator.

3. Christ being a Mediator of reconciliation and intercession, implies the infinite value of his blood and sufferings, as that which in itself was sufficient to stop the course of God’s justice, and render him not only placable, but abundantly satisfied and well pleased, even with those that before were enemies. And so much is said of it. 1 Chronicles 1:21-22. "And ye that were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your minds by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled, in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy, and unblameable, and unreproveable in his sight." Surely, that which can cause the holy God, justly incensed against sinners, to lay aside all his wrath, and take an enemy into his bosom, and establish such an amity as can never more be broken, but to rest in his love, and to joy over him with singing, as it is, Zephaniah 3:17. this must be a most excellent and efficacious thing.

4. Christ’s being a Mediator of reconciliation, implies the ardent love and large pity that filled his heart towards poor sinners. For he doth not only mediate by way of entreaty, going betwixt both, and persuading and begging peace; but he mediates, (as you have heard) in the capacity of a surety, by putting himself under an obligation to satisfy our debts. O how compassionately did his heart work towards us, that when he saw the arm of justice lifted up to destroy us, would interpose himself, and receive the stroke, though he knew it would smite him dead! Our Mediator, like Jonah his type, seeing the stormy sea of God’s wrath working tempestuously, and ready to swallow us up, cast in himself to appease the storm. I remember how much that noble act of Marcus Curtius is celebrated in the Roman history, who being informed by the oracle, that the great breach made by the earthquake could not be closed, except something of worth were cast into it, heated with love to the commonwealth, he went and cast in himself. This was looked upon as a bold and brave adventure. But what was this to Christ?

5. Christ being a Mediator betwixt God and man, implies as the fitness of his person, so his authoritative call to undertake it. And indeed the Father, who was the wronged person, called him to be the umpire and arbitrator, trusting his honour in his hands. Now Christ was invested with this

office and power virtually, soon after the breach was made by Adam's fall; for we have the early promise of it, Genesis 3:15. Ever since, till his incarnation, he was a virtual and effectual Mediator; and, on that account, he is called, "the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world," Revelation 13:8. And actually, from the time of his incarnation. But having discussed this more largely in a former discourse, I shall dismiss it here, and apply myself to the third thing proposed, which is,

Thirdly, How it appears that Jesus Christ is the true and only Mediator betwixt God and men. I reply, it is manifest he is so,

1. Because he, and no other, is revealed to us by God. And if God reveal him, and no other, we must receive him, and no other as such. Take but two scriptures at present, that in 1 Corinthians 8:5. "The heathen have many gods, and many lords," i.e. many great gods, supreme powers and ultimate objects of their worship; and lest these great gods should be defiled by their immediate and unhallowed approaches to them, they therefore invented heroes, demigods, intermediate powers, that they were as agents, or lord-mediators betwixt the gods and them, to convey their prayers to the gods, and the blessings of the gods back again to them. "But unto us (saith he) there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we by him;" 1. e. one supreme essence, the first spring and fountain of blessings, and one Lord, 1. e. one Mediator, "by whom are all things, and we by him." By whom are all things which come from the Father to us, and by whom are all our addresses to the Father: So Acts 4:12. "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." No other name, 1. e. no other authority, or rather, no other person authorized under heaven, 1. e. the whole world: for heaven is not here opposed to earth, as though there were other intercessors in heaven besides Christ: no, no, in heaven and earth God hath given him, and none but him, to be our Mediator. One sun is sufficient for the whole world; and one Mediator for all men in the world. So that the scriptures affirm this is he, and exclude all others.

2. Because he, and no other, is fit for, and capable of this office. Who but he that hath the divine and human nature united in his single person, can be a fit day's-man to lay his hand upon both? Who but he that was God, could support under such sufferings, as were, by divine justice, exacted for satisfaction! Take a person of the greatest spirit, and put him an hour in the case Christ was in, when he sweat blood in the garden, or uttered that heart-rending cry upon the cross, and he had melted under it as a moth.

3. Because he is alone sufficient to reconcile the world to God by his blood, without accessions from any other. The virtue of his blood reached back as far as Adam, and reaches forward to the end of the world; and will be as fresh, vigorous, and efficacious then, as the first moment it was shed. The sun makes day before it actually rises, and continues day sometimes after it is set: so do doth Christ, who is the same yesterday, today, and for ever; so that he is the true and only mediator betwixt God and men: no other is revealed in scripture; no other is sufficient for it; no other needed beside him.

Fourthly, The last thing to be explained is, in what capacity he executed his mediatory work.

About which we affirm, according to scripture, that he performs that work as God-man, in both natures. Papists, in denying Christ to act as Mediator, according to his divine nature, do at once spoil the whole mediation of Christ of all its efficacy, dignity and value, which arise from that

nature, which they deny to co-operate, and exert its virtue in his active and passive obedience. They say, the apostle, in my text, distinguishes the Mediator from God, in saying, "there is one God and one Mediator." We aptly reply, that the same Apostle distinguishes Christ from man, Galatians 1:1. "Not by man, but by Jesus Christ." Doth it thence follow that Christ is not true man? Or that according to his divine nature only, he called Paul? But what need I stay my reader here; Had not Christ, as Mediator, power to lay down his life, and power to take it up again? John 10:17-18. Had he not, as Mediator, all power in heaven and earth to institute ordinances, and appoint officers? Matthew 28:18. to baptize men with the Holy Ghost and fire? Matthew 3:11. to keep those his Father gave him in this world? John 22:12. to raise up the saints again in the last day? John 6:54. Are these, with many more I might name, the effects of the mere human nature? Or, were they not performed by him as God-man? and besides, how could he, as Mediator, be the object of our faith, and religious adoration, if we are not to respect him as God-man? But I long flow to be at the application of this: and the first inference from it, is this,

Inference 1. That it is a dangerous thing to reject Jesus Christ the only Mediator betwixt God and man. Alas! there is no other to interpose and screen thee from the devouring fire, the everlasting burnings! O it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God! And into his hands you must needs fall, without an interest in the only Mediator. Which of us can dwell with devouring fire? Who can endure the everlasting burnings? Isaiah 33:14. You know how they singed and scorched the green tree, but what would they do to the dry tree? Luke 23:31. Indeed, if there were another plank to save after the shipwreck; any other way to he reconciled to God, besides Jesus the Mediator, somewhat might be said to excuse this folly; but you are shut up to the faith of Christ, as to your last remedy, Galatians 3:23. You are like starving beggars, that are come to the last door. O take heed of despising, or neglecting Christ if so, there's none to intercede with God for you; the breach betwixt him and you can never be composed. I remember, here, the words of Eli, to his profane sons, who caused men to abhor the offerings of the Lord,1 Samuel 2:25. "If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him; but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall intreat for him?" The meaning is, common trespasses betwixt men, the civil magistrate takes cognizance of it, and decides the controversy by his authority, so that there is an end of that strife; but if man sin against the Lord, who shall intreat or arbitrate in that case? Eli's sons had despised the Lord's sacrifices, which were sacred types of Christ, and the stated way that men had then to act faith on the Mediator in. Now, (saith he) if a man thus sin against the Lord, by despising Christ shadowed out in that way, who shall intreat for him? what hope, what remedy remains?

I remember, it was the saying of Luther, and he spake it with deep resentment, Nolo Deum absolutum, "I will have nothing to do with an absolute God," 1. e. with God without a Mediator. Thus the Devils have to do with God: but will ye, in whose nature Christ is come, put yourselves into their state and case? God forbid!

Inference. 2. Hence also be informed, how great an evil it is to join any other Mediators, either of reconciliation, or meritorious intercession with Jesus Christ. O this is a horrid sin, and that which both pours the greatest contempt upon Christ, and brings the surest and sorest destruction upon the sinner! I am ashamed my pen should English what mine eyes have seen in the writings of Papists, ascribing as much, yea, more to the mediation of Mary than to Christ, with no less than blasphemous impudence, thus commenting upon scripture: "What is that which the Lord saith, I have trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there was no man with me? True Lord, there

was no man with thee, but there was a woman with thee, who received all these wounds in her heart which thou receivedst in thy body." I will not blot my paper with more of this, but refer the learned reader as under, where he may (if he have a mind to see more) be informed, not only what blasphemy hath dropped from single pens but even from councils, to the reproach of Jesus Christ, and his blood.

How do they stamp their own sordid works with the peculiar dignity and value of Christ's blood; and therein seek to enter at the gate which God hath shut to all the world, because Jesus Christ the prince entered in thereby, Ezekiel 44:2-3. He entered into heaven in a direct immediate way, even in his own name, and for his own sake; this gate, saith the Lord, shall be shut to all others; and I wish men would consider it, and fear, lest while they seek entrance into heaven at the wrong door, they do not for ever shut against themselves, the true and only door of happiness.

Inference 3. If Jesus Christ be the only Mediator of reconciliation betwixt God and men; then reconciled souls should thankfully ascribe all the peace, favours, and comforts they have from God, to their Lord Jesus Christ. Whenever you have had free admission, and sweet entertainment with God in the more public ordinances, or private duties of his worship; when you have had his smiles, his seals, and with hearts warmed with comfort, are returning from those duties, say, O my soul, thou mayest thank thy good Lord Jesus Christ for all this! had not he interposed as a Mediator of reconciliation, I could never have had access to, or friendly communion with God to all eternity.

Immediately upon Adam's sin, the door of communion with God was locked, yea, chained up, and no more coming nigh the Lord not a soul could have any access to him, either in a way of communion in this world, or of enjoyment in that to come. It was Jesus the Mediator that opened that door again, and in him it is that we have boldness, and access with confidence, Ephesians 3:12. "We can now come to God by a new and living way, consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, his flesh," Hebrews 10:20. The vail had a double use, as Christ's flesh answerably hath: it hid the glory of the Sanctum Sanctorum, and also gave entrance into it. Christ's incarnation rebates the edge of the divine glory and brightness, that we may he able to hear it and converse with it; and it gives admission into it also. O thank your dear Lord Jesus for your present and future heaven! these are mercies which daily emerge out of the ocean of Christ's blood, and come swimming in it to our doors. Blessed be God for Jesus Christ!

Inference 4. If Jesus Christ be the true and only Mediator, both of reconciliation and meritorious intercession betwixt God and men, how safe and secure then is the condition and state of believers? Surely, as his mediation, by sufferings, hath fully reconciled, so his mediation, by intercession, will everlastingly maintain that state of peace betwixt them and God, and prevent all future breaches. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ," Romans 5:1. It is a firm and lasting peace, and the Mediator that made it, is now in heaven to maintain it for ever, and prevent new jars, Hebrews 9:24. "There to appear in the presence of God for us;" according to the custom of princes and states, who, being confederated, have their agents residing in each others courts, who upon all occasions appear in the presence of the prince, in the name and behalf of those whom they represent, and negociate for. And here it is proper to reflect upon the profound and incomprehensible wisdom of God, who hath made an advantage to us, even out of our sin and misery. Come, see and adore the wisdom of our God, that hath so

improved, reduced, and disposed the fall of Adam, as to make a singular advantage thereby to advance his offspring to a better state! It was truly said by one of the ancients upon this account, "That Job was a happier man on the dunghill, than Adam was in paradise." His holiness indeed was perfect, his happiness was great: but neither of them permanent and indefeasible, as our happiness by the Mediator is. So that, in the same sense some divines call Judas's treason, foelix scelus, a happy wickedness: we may call Adam's fill, foelix lapsus, a happy fail, because ordered and over-ruled by the wisdom of God, to such an advantage for us. And to that purpose Austin somewhere sweetly speaks, "O how happily did I fail in Adam, who rose again more happy in Christ!" Thus did the Lord turn a poison into an antidote, thus did that dreadful fall make way for a more blessed and fixed state. Now are we so confirmed, fixed, and established in Christ, by the favour of God, that there can be no more such fatal breaches, and dreadful jars betwixt God and his reconciled ones for ever. The bone that is well set, is stronger where it is knit, than it was before. Blessed be God for Jesus Christ!

Inference 5. Did Jesus Christ interpose betwixt us and the wrath of God, as a Mediator of reconciliation? did he rather chuse to receive the stroke upon himself, than to see us ruined by it? How well then doth it become the people of God, in a thankful sense of this grace, to interpose themselves betwixt Jesus Christ and the evils they see like to fall upon his name and interest in the world? O that there were but such a heart in the people of God! I remember it is a saying of Jerom, when he heard the revilings and blasphemings of many against Christ, and his precious truths, "O (said he) that they would turn their weapons from Christ to me, and he satisfied with my blood!" And much to the same sense is that sweet one of Bernard, "Happy were I, if God would vouchsafe to use me as a shield." And David could say, "The reproaches of them that reproached thee, fell on me, Psalms 69:9. Ten thousand of our names are nothing to Christ's name: his name is kalovn onomav, a worthy name; and no man that gives up his name as a shield to Christ, but shall thereby secure and increase the true honour of it. And though wicked men, for the present may bespatter them, yet Jesus Christ will take it out of the dirt, (as one speaks), wipe it clean, and give it us again . Oh, it is the least one can do, to interpose ourselves and all that is dear to us, betwixt Christ and the wrath of men, when he (as you hear) interposed himself betwixt you and the eternal wrath of God!

Chapter 129

S. Of the Solemn CONSECRATION of the MEDIATOR Joh_17:19.

SERMON VII. Of the Solemn CONSECRATION of the MEDIATOR John 17:19. And for their sakes I sanctify myself.

JESUS Christ being fitted with a body, and authorized by a commission, now actually devotes, and sets himself apart to his work. In the former sermon you heard what the Father did; in this you shall hear what the Son hath done towards the farther advancement of that glorious design of our salvation: He sanctified himself for our sakes. Wherein observe, (1.) Christ's sanctifying of himself. (2.) The end or design of his so doing.

1. You have Christ's sanctifying of himself. The word ajgiavzw is not here to be understood for the cleansing, purifying, or making holy that which was before unclean and unholy, either in a moral tense, as we are cleansed from sin by sanctification; or in a ceremonial sense, as persons and things were sanctified under the law; though here is a plain allusion to those legal rites; But Christ's sanctifying himself, imports, (1.) His separation, or setting apart to an oblation or sacrifice. So Beza, nempe ut sacerdos et victima, as the priest and sacrifice. I sanctify myself, imports, (2.) His consecration, or dedication of himself to this holy use and service. So the Dutch Annotations, I sanctify myself, (i.e.) I give up myself for a holy sacrifice. And so our English Annotations, I sanctify, (i. e.) I consecrate and voluntarily offer myself a holy and unblemished sacrifice to thee for their redemption. And thus under the Law, when any day, person, or vessel, was consecrated and dedicated to the Lord, it was so entirely for his use and service, that to use it afterward in any common service, was to profane and pollute it, as you see Daniel 5:3.

2. The end of his so sanctifying himself [for their sakes, and that they might be sanctified] where you have the Finis cujus, the end for whom, for their (i. e.) for the elect's sake, for them whom thou gavest me; and the Finis cui, the end for which, that they might he sanctified. Where you also see that the death of Christ wholly respects us; he offered not for himself as other priests did, but for us, that we may be sanctified. Christ is so in love with holiness, that at the price of his blood he will buy it for us. Hence the observation is;

Doct. That Jesus Christ did dedicate, and wholly set himself apart to the work of a Mediator, for the elects sake. This point is a glass, wherein the eye of your faith may see Jesus Christ preparing himself to be offered up to God for us, fitting himself to die. And to keep a clear method, I shall open these two things, in the doctrinal part; First, what his sanctifying himself implies: Secondly, How it respects us.

First, What is implied in this phrase, "I sanctify myself," And there are seven things carried in it.

1. This phrase ["I sanctify myself"] implies the personal union of the two natures in Christ; for what is that which he here calls himself, but the same that was consecrated to be a sacrifice, even his human nature? This was the sacrifice. And this also was himself: So the apostle speaks, Hebrews

9:14. "He through the eternal Spirit, offered up himself to God, without spot." So that our nature, by that assumption, is become himself. Greater honour cannot be done it, or greater ground of comfort proposed to us. But having spoken of that union in the former sermon, shall remit the reader thither.

2. This sanctifying, or consecrating himself to be a sacrifice for us, implies, the greatness and dreadfulness of that breach which sin made betwixt God and us. You see no less a sacrifice than Christ himself must be sanctified to make atonement. Judge of the greatness of the wound by the breadth of the plaister. "Sacrifice and offering, and burnt-offering for sin, thou wouldest not; but a body hast thou prepared me," Hebrews 10:5. All our repentance, could we shed as many tears for sin, as there have fallen drops of rain since the creation, could not have been our atonement: "But God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself." And had he not sanctified Christ to this end, he would have sanctified himself upon us, in judgment and fury for ever.

3. This his sanctifying himself, implies his free and voluntary undertaking of the work. It is not, I am sanctified, as if he had been merely passive in it, as the lambs that typed him out were, when pluckt from the fold; but it is an active verb he useth here, Egw ajgiavzw e;mantovn, I sanctify myself; he would have none think that he died out of a necessity of compulsion, but out of choice: therefore he is said to "offer up himself to God," Hebrews 10:14. And John 9:18. "I lay down my life of myself; no man taketh it from me." And although it is often said his Father sent him, and gave him; yet his heart was as much set on that work, as if there had been nothing but glory, ease, and comfort in it; he Was under no constraint, but that of his own love. Therefore, as when the scripture would set forth the willingness of the Father to this work, it saith, God sent his Son, and God gave his Son; so when it would set forth Christ's willingness to it, it saith, he offered up himself, gave himself, and, here in the text, sanctified himself. The sacrifice that struggled, and came not without force to the altar, was reckoned ominous and unlucky by the Heathen: our Sacrifice dedicated himself; he died out of choice, and was a free-will offering.

4. His sanctifying himself implies his pure and perfect holiness; that he had no spot or blemish in him. Those beasts that prefigured him, were to be without blemish, and none else were consecrated to that service. So, and more than so, it behoved Christ to be, Hebrews 7:26. "Such an High-Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners:" And what it became him to be, he was. Therefore in allusion to the lambs offered under the law, the apostle calls him a Lamb without blemish, or spot, 1 Peter 1:19. Every other man hath a double spot on him, the heart-spot, and the life-spot; the spot of original, and the spots of actual sins. But Christ was without either, he had not the spot of original sin, for he was not by man; he came in a peculiar way into the world, and so escaped that nor yet of actual sins; for, as his nature, so his life was spotless and pure, Isaiah 53:9. "He did no iniquity." And though tempted to sin externally, yet he was never defiled in heart or practice; he came as near as he could for our sakes, yet still without sin, Hebrews 4:15. If he sanctifies himself for a sacrifice, he must be as the law required, pure and spotless.

5. His sanctifying himself for our sakes, speaks the strength of his love, and largeness 9f his heart to poor sinners, thus to set himself wholly and entirely apart for us: so that what he did and suffered, must all of it have a respect and relation to us. He did not (when consecrated for us) live a moment, do an act, or speak a word, but it had some tendency to promote the great design of

our salvation. He was only and wholly, and always doing your work, when consecrated for your sakes. His incarnation respects you; Isaiah 9:6. "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given." And he would never have been the son of man, but to make you the sons and daughters of God. God would not have come down in the likeness of sinful flesh, in the habit of a man, but to raise up sinful man unto the likeness of God. All the miracles he wrought were for you, to confirm your faith. When he raised up Lazarus, John 11:42. "Because of the people which stand by, I said it, that they might believe that thou hadst sent me." While he lived on earth, he lived as one wholly set apart for us: and when he died, he died for us, Galatians 3:13. "he was made a cure for us." When he hanged on that cursed tree, he hanged there in our room, and did but fill our place. When he was buried, he was buried for us: for the end of it was, to perfume our graves, against we come to lie down in them. And when he rose again, it was, as the apostle saith, "for our justification," Romans 4:25. When be ascended into glory, he protested it was about our business, that he went to prepare places for us: and if it had not been so, he would have told us, John 14:2. And now he is there, it is for us that he there lives; for he "ever lives to make intercession for us," Hebrews 7:25. And when he shall return again to judge the world, he will come for us too. "He comes (whenever it be) to be glorified in his saints, and admired in them that believe," 2 Thessalonians 1:10. He comes to gather his saints home to himself, that where he is, there they all may be in soul and body with him for ever. Thus you see how, as his consecration for us doth speak him set apart for our use; so he did wholly bestow himself, time, life, death, and all upon us; living and dying for no other end, but to accomplish this great work of salvation for us.

6. His sanctifying himself for us plainly speaks the vicegerency of his death, that it was in our room or stead. When the priest consecrated the sacrifice, it was set apart for the people. So it is said of the scape-goat; "And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness," Leviticus 16:21. Thus Isaiah 53:6-7. He stood in our room, to bear our burden. And as Aaron laid the iniquities of the people upon the goat, so were ours laid on Christ; it was said to him in that day, on thee be their pride, their unbelief, their hardness of heart, their vain thoughts, their earthly-mindedness, &c. Thou art consecrated for them, to be the sacrifice in their room. His death was in our stead, as well as for our good. And so much his sanctifying himself [for us] imports.

7. His sanctifying himself, imports the extraordinariness of his person: for it speaks him to be both Priest, Sacrifice, and Altar, all in one: a thing unheard of in the world before. So that this name might well be called Wonderful. I sanctify myself: I sanctify, according to both natures; myself, 1. e. my human nature, which was the sacrifice upon the altar of my divine nature; for it is the altar that sanctifies the gift. As the three offices never met in one person before, so these three things never met in one priest before. The priests indeed consecrated the bodies of beasts for sacrifices, but never offered up their own souls and bodies as a whole burnt-offering, as Christ did. And thus you have the import of this phrase, I sanctified myself for their sakes.

Secondly, I shall shew you briefly the habitude and respect that all this hath to us; for unto us the scriptures every where refer it. So in 1 Corinthians 5:7. "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." Ephesians 5:2. "He loved the church, and gave himself for it." See Titus 2:14. This will be made out, by a threefold consideration of Christ's death. And,

1. Let it be considered, that he was not offered up to God for his own sins; for he was most holy. Isaiah 53:9. No iniquity was found in him. Indeed, the priests under the law offered for themselves, as well as the people; but Christ did not so, Hebrews 7:27. "He needed not daily, as those High-priests, to offer up sacrifice, "first for his own sins, and then for the people's." And indeed had he been a sinner, what value or efficacy could have been in his sacrifice? He could not have been the sacrifice, but would have needed one. Now, if Christ were most holy, and yet put to death, and cruel sufferings, either his death or sufferings must be an act of injustice and cruelty, or it must respect others, whose persons and cause he sustained in that suffering capacity. He could never have suffered or died by the Father's hand, had he not been a sinner by imputation. And in that respect, as Luther speaks, he was the greatest of sinners; or, as the prophet Isaiah speaks, all our sins were made to meet upon him; not that he was intrinsically, but was made so, so, by imputation, as is clear from 2 Corinthians 5:21. "He was made sin for us, who knew no sin." So that hence it is evident, that Christ's death, or sacrifice, is wholly a respective or relative thing.

2. It is not to be forgotten here, that the scriptures frequently call the death of Christ a price, 1 Corinthians 6:20. and a ransom, Matthew 20:28. or counterprice, luvtro", avntiluvtron. To whom then doth it relate, but to them that were, and are in bondage and captivity? If it was to redeem any, it must be captives: but Christ himself was never in captivity; he was always in his Father's bosom, as you have heard; but we were in cruel bondage and thraldom, under the tyranny of sin and Satan: and it is we only that have the benefit of this ransom.

3. Either the death of Christ must relate to believers, or else he must die in vain. As for the angels, those that stood in their integrity needed no sacrifice, and those that fell, are totally excluded from any benefit by it: he is not a Mediator for them. And among men that have need of it, unbelievers have no share in it, they reject it; such have no part in it. If then he neither died for himself, as I proved before, nor for angels, nor unbelievers; either his blood must be shed with respect to believers, or, which is most absurd, and never to be imagined, shed as water upon the ground, and totally cast away; so that you see by all this, it was for our sakes, as the text speaks, that he sanctified himself And now we may say, Lord, the condemnation was thine, that the justification might be mine; the agony thine, that the victory might be mine; the pain was thine, and the ease mine; the stripes thine, and the healing balm issuing from them mine; the vinegar and gall were thine, that the honey and sweet might be mine; the curse was thine, that the blessing might be mine; the crown of thorns was thine, that the crown of glory might be mine; the death was thine, the life purchased by it mine; thou paidst the price that I might enjoy the inheritance.

We come next to the inferences of truth deducible from this point, which follow,

Inference 1. If Jesus Christ did wholly set himself apart for believers, how reasonable is it that believers should consecrate and set themselves apart wholly for Christ? Is he all for us, and shall we be nothing for him? What he was, he was for you? Whatever he did, was done for you; and all that he suffered, was suffered for you. O then, "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, present your bodies," 1. e. your whole selves, (for so body is there synecdochically put to signify the whole person) I say, present "your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service," Romans 12:1. As your good was Christ's end, so let his glory be your end. Let Christ be the "end of your conversation," Hebrews 13:7. As Christ could say, To me to live is you; so do you say, "For us to live is Christ" Php 1:21. O that all who profess faith in Christ,

could subscribe cordially to that profession, Romans 14:8 "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself; but whether we live, we "live to the Lord; and whether we die, we die to the Lord; so then whether we live or die, we are the Lord's." This is to be a Christian indeed. What is a Christian, but an holy dedicated thing to the Lord? And what greater evidence can there be, that Christ set himself apart for you, than your setting yourselves apart for him? This is the marriage covenant, Hosea 3:3. "Thou shalt be for me, and not for another; so will I be for thee." Ah, what a life is the life of a Christian; Christ all for you, and you all for him. Blessed exchange! Soul, (saith Christ) all I have is thine, Lord, (saith the soul) and all I have is thine. Soul, (saith Christ) my person is wonderful, but what I am, I am for thee: my life was spent in labour and travail, but lived for thee. And Lord, (saith the believer), my person is vile, and not worth thy accepting; but such as it is, it is thine; my soul, with all and every faculty; my body, and every member of it, my gifts, thine, and all my talents are thine. And see that as Christ bequeathed and made over himself to you, so ye, in like manner, bestow and make over yourselves to him. He lived not, neither died (as you hear) for himself; but you. O that you, in like manner, would down with self, and exalt Christ in the room of it. 'Wo, wo is me, (saith one) that the holy profession of Christ is made a shewy garment by many to bring home a vain fame; and Christ is made to serve men's ends. This is to stop an oven with a king's robes. Except men martyr and slay the body of sin, in sanctified self-denial, they shall never be Christ's martyrs and faithful witnesses. O if I could be master of that house-idol, myself; mine own, mine own wit, will, credit, and ease, how blessed were I! O but we have need to be redeemed from ourselves, rather than from the devil and the world. Learn to put out yourselves, and to put in Christ for yourselves. I should make a sweet bargain, and give old for new, if I could shuffle out self, and substitute Christ my Lord in place of myself; to say, not I, but Christ; not my will, but Christ's; not my ease, not my lusts, not my credit, but Christ, Christ. —O wretched idol, myself, when shalt I see thee wholly decourted, and Christ wholly put in thy room? O if Christ had the full place and room of myself; that all my aims, purposes, thoughts and desires would coast and land upon Christ, and not upon myself.'

He set himself apart for you believers, and no others; no, not for angels, but for you: Will ye also set yourselves apart peculiarly for Christ? be his, and no others? Let not Christ and the world share and divide your hearts in two halves betwixt them let not the world step in and say, half mine. You will never do Christ right, nor answer this grace, till you can say, as it is, Psalms 73:25. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and on earth there is none that I desire in comparison of thee." None but Christ, none but Christ, is a proper motto for a Christian.

He left the highest and best enjoyments, even those in his Father's bosom, to set himself apart for death and suffering for you: Are you ready to leave the bosom of the best and sweetest enjoyments, you have in this world, to serve him? If you stand not habitually ready to leave father, mother, wife, children, lands, yea, and life too, to serve him, you are not worthy of him, Matthew 10:37.

He was so wholly given up to your service, that he refused not the worst and hardest part of it, even bleeding, groaning, dying work; his love to you sweetened all this to him; Can you say so too; do you "account the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, as Moses did?" Hebrews 11:26.

He had so entirely devoted himself to your work, that he could not be at rest till it was finished: he was so intent upon it, that he "forgot to eat bread," John 4:31-32. So it should be with you; his service should be meat and drink to you. To conclude:

He was so wholly given up to your work and service, that he would not suffer himself to be in the least diverted, or taken off from it: and if Peter himself counsel him to favour himself, he shall hear, "Get thee behind me, Satan. O happy were it if our hearts were but so engaged for Christ! In Galen's time it was proverbial, when they would express the impossibility of a thing, You might as soon take off a Christian from Christ. Thus you see what use you should make of Christ's sanctifying himself for you.

Inference. 2. If Christ hath sanctified or consecrated himself for us; learn hence, what a horrid evil it is, to use Christ or his blood, as a common and unsanctified thing. Yet so some do, as the apostle speaks, Hebrews 10:29. The apostate is said to tread upon the Son of God, as if he were no better than the dirt under is feet, and to count his blood an unholy (or common) thing. But wo to them that do so, they shall be counted worthy of something worse than dying without mercy, as the apostle there speaks. And as this is the sin of the apostate, so it is also the sin of all those that without faith approach, and so profane the table of the Lord, unbelievingly and unworthily handling those awful things. Such "eat and drink judgment to themselves, not discerning the "Lord's body," 1 Corinthians 11:29. Whereas the body of Christ was a thing of the deepest sanctification that ever God created; sanctified (as the text tells us) to a far more excellent and glorious purpose than ever any creature in heaven or earth was sanctified. It was therefore the great sin of those Corinthians, not to discern it, and not to behave themselves towards it, when they saw and handled the signs of it, as became so holy a thing. And as it was their great sin, so God declared his just indignation against it, in those sore strokes inflicted for it. As they discerned not the Lord's body, so neither did the Lord discern their bodies from others in the judgments that were inflicted. And, as one well observes, God drew the model and platform of their punishment, from the structure and proportion of their sin. And truly, if the moral and spiritual seeds and originals of many of our outward afflictions and sicknesses were but duly sifted out, possibly we might find a great part of them in the bowels of this sin. The just and righteous God will build up the breaches we make upon the honour of his Son, with the ruins of that beauty, strength and honour which he hath given our bodies. O then, when you draw nigh to God in that ordinance, take heed to sanctify his name, by a spiritual discerning of this most holy, and most deeply sanctified body of the Lord; sanctified beyond all creatures, angels or men, not only in respect of the Spirit which filled him, without measure with inherent holiness, but also in respect of its dedication to such a service as this, it being set apart by him to such holy, solemn ends and uses, as you have heard. And let it, for ever, be a warning to such as have lifted up their hands to Christ in a holy profession, that they never lift up their heel against him afterwards by apostasy. The apostate treads on God's dear Son, and God will tread upon him for it. "Thou hast trodden down all that err from thy statutes," Psalms 119:118.

Inference. 3. What a choice pattern of love to saints have we here before us! Calling all that are in Christ to an imitation of him, even to give up ourselves to their service, as Christ did; not in the same kind, so none can give himself for them, but as we are capable. You see here how his heart was affected to them, that he would sanctify himself as a sacrifice for them. See to what a height of duty the apostle improves this example of Christ, 1 John 3:16. "Hereby perceive we the love of

God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren." Some Christians came up fairly to this pattern in primitive times; Priscilla and Aquila laid down their necks for Paul, Romans 16:4. Romans 16:1. e. eminently hazarded their lives for him; and he himself could "rejoice, if he were offered up upon the sacrifice and service of their faith," Php 2:17. And in the next times, what more known, even to the enemies of Christianity, than their fervent love one to another? Ecce quam mutuo se disligunt, et mori volunt pro alterutris! See how they love one another, and are willing to die one for another! But alas! the primitive spirit is almost lost in this degenerate age: instead of laying down life, how few will lay down twelve pence for them? I remember, it is the observation of a late Worthy, upon Matthew 5:44. That he is persuaded there is hardly that man to be found this day alive, that fully understands and fully believes that scripture. O, did men think what they do for them, is done for Christ himself, it would produce other effects than are yet visible.

Inference. 4. Lastly, If Christ sanctified himself, that we might he sanctified by [or in] the truth; then it will follow, by sound consequence, That true sanctification is a good evidence that Christ set apart himself to die for us. In vain did he sanctify himself (as to you) unless you be sanctified. Holy souls only can claim the benefit of the great Sacrifice. O try then, whether true holiness (and that is only to be judged by its conformity to its pattern, 1 Peter 1:15. "As he that called you is holy, so he ye holy"); whether such a holiness as is, and acts (according to its measure) like God's holiness, in the following particulars, be found in you.

1. God is universally holy in all his ways; so Psalms 145:17. "His works are all holy:" whatever he doth, it is still done as becomes a holy God: he is not only holy in all things, but at all times unchangeably holy. Be ye therefore holy in all things and at all times too, if ever you expect the benefit of Christ's sanctifying himself to die for you.

O brethren, let not the feet of your conversation be as the feet of a lame man, which are unequal, Proverbs 20:7. Be not sometimes hot, and sometimes cold; at one time careful, at another time careless; one day in a spiritual rapture, and the next in a fleshly frolic: but be ye holy evn pavsh/ avnastrofh''/ 1 Peter 1:15. "in all manner of conversation," in every creek and turning of your lives: and let your holiness hold out to the end. "Let him that is holy, be holy still," Revelation 21:11. Not like the hypocrite's paint, but as a true natural complection.

2. God is exemplarily holy, Jesus Christ is the great pattern of holiness. Be ye examples of holiness too, unto all that are about you. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see "your good works," Matthew 5:16. As wicked men infect one another by their examples, and diffuse their poison and malignity, wherever they come; so do ye disseminate godliness in all places and companies; and let those that frequently converse with you, especially those of your own families, receive a deeper dye and tincture of heavenliness every time they come nigh you, as the cloth doth by every new dipping into the vat.

3. God delights in nothing but holiness, and holy ones; he hath set all his pleasure in the saints. Be ye holy herein, as God is holy. Indeed, there is this difference betwixt God's choice and yours; he chuses not men, because they are holy, but that they may be so; so you are to chuse them for your delightful companions, that God hath chosen and made holy "Let all your delights be in the saints, even them that excel in virtue," Psalms 16:3.

4. God abhors and hates all unholiness; do ye so likewise that ye may be like your Father which is in heaven. And when the spirit of holiness runs down this upon you, a sweeter evidence the world cannot give, that Christ was sanctified for you. Holy ones may confidently lay the hand of their faith on the head of this great sacrifice, and say, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."

Chapter 130

S. Opens the Covenant of Redemption

Sermon 3. Opens the Covenant of Redemption betwixt the Father and the Redeemer.

Isaiah 53:12.

Therefore will I divide him [a portion] with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. In this chapter, the gospel seems to be epitomised; the subjectmatter of it is the death of Christ, and the glorious issue thereof: by reading of it, the Eunuch of old, and many Jews since, have been converted to Christ. Christ is here considered absolutely, and relatively; Absolutely, and so his innocence is industriously vindicated, Isaiah 53:9. Though he suffered grievous things, yet not for his own sins, “for he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth;” but relatively considered in the capacity of a surety for us: so the justice of God is so fully vindicated in his sufferings; Isaiah 53:6. “The Lord has laid upon him the iniquity of us all.” How he came to sustain this capacity and relation of a surety for us, is in these verses plainly asserted to be by his compact and agreement with his Father, before the worlds were made, Isaiah 53:10-12. In this verse we have, 1. His work. 2. His reward. 3. The respect or relation of each to the other. (1.) His work, which was indeed a hard work, to pour out his soul unto death, aggravated by the companions, with whom, being numbered with transgressors; the capacity in which, bearing all the sins of the elect, “he bare the sins of many in and by the manner of his bearing it, viz. meekly, and forgivingly, “he made intercession for the transgressors;” This was his work. (2.) The reward or fruit which is promised him for this work, “therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he will divide the spoil with the strong;” wherein is a plain allusion to conquerors in war, for whom are reserved the richest garments, and most honourable captives to follow the conqueror, as an addition to his magnificence and triumph; these were wont to come after them in chains, Isaiah 45:14. see Judges 5:3 (3.) The respect or relation betwixt that work and this triumph: some will have this work to have no other relation to that glory, than a mere antecedent to a consequent: others give it the respect and relation of a meritorious cause to a reward. It is well observed by Dr. Featly, that the Hebrew particle “lachen”, which we render therefore, noting order, is not worth so much contention about it, whether it be the order of casualty, or mere antecedence; neither do I foresee any absurdity in calling Christ’s exaltation the reward and fruit of his humiliation: however, it is plain, whether one or other, it is that the Father here agrees and promises to give him, if he will undertake the redemption of the elect, by pouring out his soul unto death; of all which this is the plain result:

Doct. That the business of man’s salvation was transacted upon covenant terms, betwixt the Father and the Son, from all eternity.

I would not here be mistaken, as though I were now to treat of the covenant of grace, made in Christ betwixt God and us; it is not the covenant of grace, but of redemption, I am now to speak to, which differs from the covenant of grace, in regard of the federates in this, it is God the Father, and

Jesus Christ, that mutually covenant; in that, it is God and man: they differ, also in the receptive part, in this it is required of Christ that he should shed his blood, in that it is required of us that we believe. They also differ in their promises; in this, God promises to Christ a name above every name, ample dominion from sea to sea; in that, to us, grace and glory: so that these are two distinct covenants. The substance of this covenant of redemption is, dialogue-wise, expressed to us in Isaiah 49:1-26, where, (as divines have well observed) Christ begins, at the first and second verses, and shows his commission, telling his Father, how he had both called, and prepared him for the work of redemption; “The Lord has called me from the womb - he has made my mouth like a sharp sword, and made me a polished shaft”, &c. q. d. by reason of that superabundant measure of the spirit of wisdom and power wherewith I am anointed and filled; my doctrine shall, as a sword, pierce the hearts of sinners; yea, like an arrow, drawn to the head, strike deep into souls standing at a great distance from God and godliness.

Having told God how ready, and fit he was for his service, he will know of him what reward he shall have for his work, for he resolves his blood shall not be undervalued; hereupon, Isaiah 49:3, the Father offers him the elect of Israel for his reward, bidding low at first (as they that make bargains use to do) and only offers him that small remnant, still intending to bid higher: But Christ will not be satisfied with these, he values his blood higher than so: therefore, in Isaiah 49:4 he is brought in complaining, “I have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for nought,” q. d. This is but a small reward for so great a suffering, as I must undergo; my blood is much more worth than this comes to, and will be sufficient to redeem all the elect dispersed among the isles of the Gentiles, as well as the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Hereupon the Father comes up higher, and tells him, he intends to reward him better than so; and therefore, Isaiah 49:6 says, “It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth.” Thus is the treaty carried on betwixt them, transacting it after the manner of men.

Now, to open this great point, we will here consider, (1.) The persons transacting one with another. (2.) The business transacted. (3.) The quality and manner of the transaction, which is federal. (4.) The articles to which they agree. (5.) How each person performs his engagement to the other. And, Lastly, The antiquity or eternity of this covenant transaction.

(1.) The persons transacting and dealing with each other in this covenant; and indeed they are great persons, God the Father, and God the Son, the former as a Creditor, and the latter as a Surety. The Father stands upon satisfaction, the Son engages to give it. If it be demanded, why the Father and the Spirit might not as well have treated upon our redemption, as the Father and Son! It is answered, Christ is the natural Son of God, and therefore fittest to make us the adopted sons of God. Christ also is the middle person in the Trinity, and therefore fittest to be the mediator and middle person betwixt us and God. The Spirit has another office assigned him, even to apply, as Christ’s vicegerent, the redemption designed by the Father, and purchased by the Son for us.

(2.) The business transacted betwixt them; and that was the redemption and recovery of all God’s elect: our eternal happiness lay now before them, our dearest and everlasting concerns were now in their hands: the elect (though not yet in being) are here considered as existent, yea, and as fallen, miserable, forlorn creatures: How these may again be restored to happiness (salva justitia Dei) without prejudice to the honour, justice and truth of God; this, this is the business that lay

before them.

(3.) For the manner, or quality of the transaction, it was federal, or of the nature of a covenant; it was by mutual engagements and stipulations, each person undertaking to perform his part in order to our recovery.

We find each person undertaking for himself by solemn promise; the Father promiseth that he will "hold his hand, and keep him," Isaiah 42:6. The Son promiseth, he will obey his Father's call to suffering, and not "be rebellious," Isaiah 50:5. And, having promised, each holds the other to his engagement. The father stands upon the satisfaction promised him; and, when the payment was making, he will not abate him one earthing, Romans 8:32. "God spared not his own Son," i. e. he abated nothing of the full price he was to have at his hands for us. And as the Father stood strictly upon the terms of the covenant, so did Christ also; John 17:4-5. "I have glorified thee on earth, (saith he to the Father) I have finished the work thou gavest me to do; and now, Father, glorify me with thine own self." As if he had said, Father, the work is done, now where is the wages I was promised? I call for glory as my due, as much my due as the hire of the labourer is his due, when his work is done.

4. More particularly; we will next consider the articles to which they do both agree; or, what it is that each person does for himself promise to the other. And, to let us see how much the Father's heart is engaged in the salvation of poor sinners, there are five things which he promiseth to do for Christ, if he will undertake that work.

First, He promiseth to invest him, and anoint him to a threefold office, answerable to the misery that lay upon the elect as so many bars to all communion with, and enjoyment of God; for, if ever man be restored to that happiness, the blindness of his mind must be cured, the guilt of sin expiated, and his captivity to sin led captive: answerably, Christ must, "of God, be made unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption," 1 Corinthians 1:30. And he is made so to us as our Prophet, Priest, and King; but he could not put himself into either of these; for if so, he had acted without commissions and consequently all he did had been invalid; Hebrews 5:5. "Christ glorified not himself to be made an High-Priest, but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son". A commission therefore to act authoritatively, in these offices, being necessary to our recovery, the Father engages to him to seal him such a threefold commission.

He promiseth to invest him with an eternal and royal Priesthood, Psalms 110:4. "The Lord has sworn, and will not repent; Thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchisedec." This Melchisedec being King of Righteousness, and king of Salem, that is, Peace, had a royal priesthood; and his descent not being reckoned, it had an adumbration of eternity in it, and so was more apt to type and shadow forth the priesthood of Christ than Aaron's was, Hebrews 7:16-17, Hebrews 7:24-25, as the apostle accommodates them there.

He promiseth moreover to make him a Prophet, and that an extraordinary one, even the Prince of prophets; the chief Shepherd, as much superior to all others, as the sun is to the lesser stars; so you have it, Isaiah 42:6-7. "I will give thee for a light to the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes," &c. And not only so, but to make him king also, and that of the whole empire of the world; so Psalms 2:6-8. "Ask of me, and I will give thee the Heathen for thine inheritance, and the utmost ends of the earth for thy possession." Thus he promiseth to qualify and furnish him completely for the work, by

his investiture with this threefold office.

Secondly, And forasmuch as he knew it was a hard and difficult work his Son was to undertake, a work that would have broken the backs of all the angels in heaven, and men on earth, had they engaged in it; therefore he promiseth to stand by him, and assist and strengthen him for it: so, Isaiah 42:5-7. “I will hold thy hand,” or take hold of thee with my hands, for so it may be rendered, i. e. I will underprop and support thy humanity, when it is even overweighted with the burden that is to come upon it, and ready to sink down under it; for so you know the case stood with him, Mark 14:34, and so it was foretold of him, Isaiah 53:7. “He was oppressed,” &c. and indeed the humanity needed a prop of no less strength than the infinite power of the Godhead: the same promise you have in the first verse also, “Behold my servant whom I uphold.”

Thirdly, He promiseth to crown his work with success, and bring it to an happy issue, Isaiah 53:10. “He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.” He shall not begin, and not finish; he shall not shed his invaluable blood upon hazardous terms; but shall see and reap the sweet fruits thereof; as the joyful mother forgets her pangs, when she delightfully embraces and kisses her living child.

Fourthly, The Father promiseth to accept him in his work, though millions should certainly perish, Isaiah 49:4. “Surely (saith he) my work is with the Lord.” And, Isaiah 49:5. “I shall be glorious in the eyes of the Lord.” His faith has therein respect to this compact and promise. Accordingly the Father manifests the satisfaction he had in him, and in his work, even while he was about it upon the earth, when there came such a “voice from the excellent glory, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

Fifthly, As he engaged to reward him highly for his work, by exalting him to singular and super-eminent glory and honour, when he should have dispatched and finished it. So you read, Psalms 2:7. “I will declare the decree; the Lord has said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.” It is spoken of the day of his resurrection, when he had just finished his sufferings. And so the apostle expounds and applies it, Acts 13:32-33. For then did the Lord wipe away the reproach of his cross, and invested him with such glory, that he looked like himself again. As if the Father had said, now thou hast again recovered thy glory, and this day is to thee as a new birth-day.

These are the encouragements and rewards proposed and promised to him by the Father. This was the “joy set before him”, (as the apostle phraseth it in Hebrews 12:2.) which made him so patiently to “endure the cross, and despise the shame.” And in like manner Jesus Christ restipulates, and gives his engagement to the Father; that, upon these terms, he is content to be made flesh, to divest, as it were, himself of his glory, to come under the obedience and malediction of the law, and not to refuse any, the hardest sufferings it should please his Father to inflict on him. So much is implied in Isaiah 50:5-7. “The Lord has opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back; I gave my back to the smilers, and my cheeks to them that pulled off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting: For the Lord God will help me, therefore shall I not be confounded; I have set my face as a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.” When he saith, I was not rebellious, “mariti”, he meaneth, I was most heartily willing, and content to accept the terms; for there is a Meiosis in the words, and much more is intended than expressed. And the sense of this place is well delivered to us in other terms, Psalms 40:6-10. “Then said I, Lo I come, I

delight to do thy will, O God, thy law is within my heart." O see with what a full consent the heart of Christ closeth with the Father's offers and proposals; like some echo, that answers your voice twice or thrice over. So does Christ here answer his Father's call, "I come, I delight to do thy will; yea, thy law is in my heart." And thus you see the articles to which they both subscribed, or the terms they agreed on.

(5.) I will briefly show how these articles, and agreements were on both parts, performed, and that precisely and punctually. For, (1.) The Son having thus consented, accordingly he applies himself to the discharge of his work. He took a body, in it fulfilled all righteousness, even to a little, Matthew 3:15. And at last his out was made an offering for sin, so that he could say as it is, John 17:4. "Father, I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work thou gavest me to do." He went through all the parts of his active, and passive obedience, cheerfully and faithfully. (2.) The Father made good his engagements to Christ, all along, with no less faithfulness than Christ did his. He promised to assist, and hold his hand, and so he did; Luke 22:43, "And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him." That was one of the sorest brunts that ever Christ met with; this was seasonable aid and succour. He promised to accept him in his work, and that he should be glorious in his eyes; so he did: for he not only declared it by a voice from heaven, Luke 3:22!. "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased:" But it was fully-declared in his resurrection and ascension, which were a full discharge and justification of him. He promised him that "He should see his seed," and so he did; for his very birth-dew was as the dew of the morning; and ever since his blood has been fruitful in the world. He promised gloriously to reward and exalt him; and so he has, Php 2:9-11, and that highly and super-eminently, "giving him a name above every name in heaven and earth." Thus were the articles performed.

(6.) Lastly, When was this compact made betwixt the Father and the Son? I answer, it bears date from eternity. Before this world was made, then were his delights in us, while as yet we had no existence, but only in the infinite mind and purpose of God, who had decreed this for us in Christ Jesus, as the apostle speaks, 2 Timothy 1:9. What grace was that which was given us in Christ before the world began, but this grace of redemption, which was from everlasting thus contrived and designed for us, in that way which has been here opened? Then was the council, or consultation of peace betwixt them both, as some take that scripture, Zechariah 6:13.

Next let us apply it to ourselves.

Use 1. The first use that offers itself to us from hence, is the abundant security that God has given the elect for their salvation, and that not only in respect of the covenant of grace made with then, but also of this covenant of redemption made with Christ for them; which indeed is the foundation of the covenant of grace. God's single promise is security enough to our faith, his covenant of grace adds, ex abundanti, farther security; but both these viewed as the effects and fruits of this covenant of redemption, make all fast and sure. In the covenant of grace, we question not the performance on God's part, but we are often stumbled at the grand defects on our parts. But when we look to the covenant of redemption there is nothing to stagger our faith, both the federates being infinitely able and faithful to perform their parts; so that there is no possibility of a failure there. Happy were it, if puzzled and perplexed Christians would turn their eyes from the defects that are in their obedience, to the fulness and completeness of Christ's obedience; and see themselves complete in him, when most lame and defective in themselves.

Use 2. Hence also to be informed, that God the Father, and God the Son, do mutually rely and trust to one another in the business of our redemption. The Father relies upon the Son for the performance of his part; as it is, Isaiah 42:1, " Behold my servant, whom I uphold." Montanus turns it, on whom I lean or depend. As if the Father had said, behold what a faithful servant I have chosen, in whom my soul is at rest: I know he will go through with his work, I can depend upon him. And, to speak plain, the Father so far trusted Christ, that upon the credit of his promise to come into the world, and in the fulness of time to become a sacrifice for the elect, he saved all the Old Testament saints, whose faith also respected a Christ to come; with reference whereto, it is said, Hebrews 11:39-40. "That they received not the promises, God having provided some better things for us, that they without us should not be made perfect," i. e. without Jesus Christ manifested in the flesh, in our times, though believed on, as to come in the flesh, in their times. And as the Father trusted Christ, so does Christ, in like manner, depend upon, and trust his Father. For, having performed his part, and left the world again, he now trusteth his Father for the accomplishment of that promise made him, Isaiah 53:10. "That he shall see his seed," &c. He depends upon his Father for all the elect that are left behind, yet unregenerated, as well as those already called, that they shall be all preserved unto the heavenly kingdom, according to that, John 17:11. "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world; and I come unto thee: holy Father, keep, through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me." And can it be imagined, that the Father will fail in his trust, who every way acquitted himself so punctually to the Son? It cannot be.

Use 3. Moreover, hence we infer the validity and unquestionable success of Christ's intercession in heaven for believers. You read, Hebrews 7:25. "That he ever lives to make intercession; and, Hebrews 12:24. "That his blood speaks for good things for them." Non, that his blood shall obtain what it pleads in heaven for, is undoubted, and that from the consideration of this covenant of redemption. For here you see that the things he now asks of his Father, are the very same which his Father promised him, and covenanted to give him, before this world was. So that, besides the interest of the person, the very equity of the matter speaks its success, and requires performance. Whatever he asks for us, is as due to him as the wages of the hireling, when the work is ended; if the work be done, and done faithfully, as the Father has acknowledged it is, then the reward is due, and due immediately; and no doubt but he shall receive it from the lands of a righteous God.

Use 4. Hence, in like manner, you may be informed of the consistency of grace with full satisfaction to the justice of God. The apostle, 2 Timothy 1:9. tells us, "We are saved according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Jesus Christ before the world began." i. e. According to the gracious terms of this covenant of redemption; and yet you see notwithstanding, how strictly God stands upon satisfaction from Christ; so then, grace to us, and satisfaction to justice, are not so inconsistent as the Socinian adversaries would make them; what was debt to Christ, is grace to us: when you hear men cry out, Here is grace indeed! pay me all, and I will forgive you; remember, how all mouths are stopped with that one text, Romans 3:24. "Being justified freely by his grace;" and yet he adds, "through the redemption that is in Christ."

Use 5. Again, Hence judge of the antiquity of the love of God to believers! what an ancient friend he has been to us; who loved us, provided for us, and contrived all our happiness, before we were, yea, before the world was. We reap the fruits of this covenant now, the seed whereof was sown from eternity; yea, it is not only ancient, but also most free: no excellencies of ours could engage

the love of God; for as yet we were not.

Use 6. Hence judge, How reasonable it is that believers should embrace the hardest terms of obedience unto Christ, who complied with such hard terms for their salvation: they were hard and difficult terms indeed, on which Christ received you from the Father's hand: it was, as you have heard, to pour out his soul unto death, or not to enjoy a soul of you. Here you may suppose the Father to say, when driving his bargain with Christ for you:

Father. My son, here is a company of poor miserable souls, that have utterly undone themselves, and now lie open to my justice! Justice demands satisfaction for them, or will satisfy itself in the eternal ruin of them: What shall be done for these souls And thus Christ returns.

Son. O my Father, such is my love to, and pity for them, that rather than they shall perish eternally, I will be responsible for them as their Surety; bring in all thy bills, that I may see what they owe thee; Lord, bring them all in, that there may be no after-reckonings with them; at my hand shalt thou require it. I will rather choose to suffer thy wrath than they should suffer it: upon me, my Father, upon me be all their debt.

Father. But, my Son, if thou undertake for them, thou must reckon to pay the last mite, expect no abatements; if I spare them, I will not spare thee.

Son. Content, Father, let it be so; charge it all upon me, I am able to discharge it: and though it prove a kind of undoing to me, though it impoverish all my riches, empty all my treasures, (for so indeed it did, 2 Corinthians 8:9. "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor") yet I am content to undertake it. Blush, ungrateful believers, O let shame cover your faces; judge in yourselves now, has Christ deserved that you should stand with him for trifles, that you should shrink at a few petty difficulties, and complain, this is hard, and that is harsh? O if you knew the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in this his wonderful condescension for you, you could not do it.

Use 7. Lastly, How greatly are we all concerned, to make it sure to ourselves, that we are of this number which the Father and the Son agreed for before the world was; that we were comprehended in Christ's engagement and compact with the Father?

Obj. Yea, but you will say, who can know that, there were no witnesses to that agreement.

Sol. Yes, We may know, without ascending into heaven, or prying into unrevealed secrets, that our names were in that covenant, if, (1.) You are believers indeed; for all such the Father then gave to Christ, John 17:8. "The men that thou gavest me (for of them he spake immediately before) they have believed that thou didst send me." (2.) If you savingly know God in Jesus Christ, such were given him by the Father, John 17:6. "I have manifested thy name unto the men thou gavest me." By this they are discriminated from the rest, John 17:25. "The world has not known thee, but these have known," &c. (3.) If you are men and women of another world; John 17:16, "They are not of the world, as I am not of the world." May it be said of you, as of dying men, that you are not men and women for this world, that you are crucified and dead to it, Galatians 6:14, that you are strangers in it? Hebrews 11:13-14. (4.) If you keep Christ's word, John 17:6. "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word." By keeping his word, understand the receiving of the word, in its sanctifying effects and influences into your hearts, and your perseverance in the profession and practice of it to the end, John 17:17, "Sanctify them through

thy truth, thy word is truth". John 15:7, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will." Blessed and happy is that soul upon which these blessed characters appear, which our Lord Jesus has laid so close together, within the compass of a few verses, in John 17:1-26. These are the persons the Father delivered unto Christ, and he accepted from the Father, in this blessed covenant.

Chapter 131

S. Opens the Covenant of Redemption betwixt the Father and the Redeemer. Isa_53:12.

SERMON III.

Opens the Covenant of Redemption betwixt the Father and the Redeemer. Isaiah 53:12.

Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

_____ IN this chapter, the gospel seems to be epitomized; the subject-matter of it is the death of Christ, and the glorious issue thereof: by reading of it, the Eunuch of old, and many Jews since, have been converted to Christ. Christ is here considered absolutely, and relatively; Absolutely, and so his innocency is industriously vindicated, Isaiah 53:9. Though he suffered grievous things, yet not for his own sins, "for he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth;" but relatively considered in the capacity of a surety for its: so the justice of God is so fully vindicated in his sufferings; Isaiah 53:6. "The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all." How he came to sustain this capacity and relation of a surety for us, is in these verses plainly asserted to be by his compact and agreement with his Father, before the worlds were made, Isaiah 53:10-12. In this verse we have, 1. His work. 2. His reward. 3. The respect or relation of each to the other. (1.) His work, which was indeed a hard work, to pour out his soul unto death, aggravated by tile companions, with whom, being numbered with transgressors; the capacity in which, bearing all the sins of the elect, "he bare the sins of many;" and by the manner of his bearing it, viz. meekly, and forgivingly, "be made intercession for the transgressors; This was his work. (2.) The reward or fruit which is promised him for this work, "therefore will I divide him a portion with " the great, and he will divide the spoil with the strong;" wherein is a plain allusion to conquerors in war, for whom are reserved the richest garments, and most honourable captives to follow the conqueror, as an addition to his magnificence and triumph; these were wont to come after them in chains, Isaiah 45:14. see Judges 5:14. (3.) The respect or relation betwixt that work and this triumph: some will have this work to have no other relation to that glory, than a mere antecedent to a consequent: others give it the respect and relation of a meritorious cause to a reward. It is well observed by Dr. Featly, that the Hebrew particle wkl which we render therefore, noting order, is not worth so much contention about it, whether it be the order of casualty, or mere antecedency; neither do I foresee any absurdity in calling Christ's exaltation the reward and fruit of his humiliation: however, it is plain, whether one or other, it is that the Father here agrees and promises to give him, if he will undertake the redemption of the elect, by pouring out his soul unto death; of all which this is the plain result:

Doct. That the business of man's salvation was transacted upon covenant terms, betwixt the Father and the Son, from all eternity.

I would not here be mistaken, as though I were now to treat of the covenant of grace, made in Christ betwixt God and us; it is not the covenant of grace, but of redemption, I am now to speak to, which differs from the covenant of grace, in regard of the federates; in this, it is God the Father, and Jesus Christ, that mutually covenant; in that, it is God and man they differ, also in the preceptive part; in this it is required of Christ that he should shed his blood, in that it is required of us that we believe. They also differ in their promises; in this, God promises to Christ a name above every name, ample dominion from sea to sea; in that, to us, grace and glory: so that these are two distinct covenants. [The author writes in the popular style of the last age. However, later writers, for very important reasons, have rejected the distinction as not only inaccurate, but as pregnant with consequences highly inimical to the sovereignty of grace. Editor.] The substance of this covenant of redemption is, dialogue-wise, expressed to us in Isa. xlix. where, (as divines have well observed) Christ begins, at the first and second verses, and shews his commission, telling his Father, how he had both called, and prepared him for the work of redemption; The Lord hath called me from the womb-he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword, and made me a polished shaft, &c. q. d. by reason of that superabundant measure of the spirit of wisdom an power wherewith I am anointed and filled; doctrine shall, as a sword, pierce the hearts of sinners; yea, like an arrow, drawn to the head, strike deep into souls standing It a great distance from God and godliness.

Having told God how ready, and fit he was for his service, he will know of him what reward he shall have for his work, for he resolves his blood shall not be undervalued; hereupon, verse 3. the Father offers him the elect of Israel for his reward, bidding low at first (as they that make bargains use to do) and only offers him that small remnant, still intending to bid higher: But Christ will not be satisfied with these, he values his blood higher than so: therefore, in verse 4. he is brought in complaining, "I. have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for nought," q. d. This is but a small reward for so great a suffering, as I must undergo; my blood is much more worth than this comes to, and will he sufficient to redeem all the elect dispersed among the isles of the Gentiles, as well as the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Hereupon the Father comes up higher, and tells him, he intends to reward him better than so; and therefore, verse 6. says, "It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of " Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give "thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth." Thus is the treaty carried on betwixt them, transacting it after the manner of men.

Now, to open this great point, we will here consider, (1.) The persons transacting one with another. (2.) The business transacted. (3.) The quality and manner of the transaction, which is federal. (4.) The articles to which they agree. (5.) How each person performs his engagement to the other. And, Lastly, The antiquity or eternity of this covenant transaction.

(1.) The persons transacting and dealing with each other in this covenant; and indeed they are great persons, God the Father, and God the Son; the former as a Creditor, and the latter as a Surety. The Father stands upon satisfaction, the Son engages to give it. If it be demanded, why the Father and the Spirit might not as well have treated upon our redemption, as the Father and Son! It is answered, Christ is the natural Son of God, and therefore fittest to make us the adopted sons of God. Christ also is the middle person in the Trinity, and therefore fittest to be the mediator and middle person betwixt us and God. The Spirit hath another office assigned him, even to apply, as Christ’s vicegerent, the redemption designed by the Father, and purchased by the Son for us.

(2.) The business transacted betwixt them; and that was the redemption and recovery of all God's elect: our eternal happiness lay now before them, our dearest and everlasting concerns were now in their hands: the elect (though not yet in being) are here considered as existent, yea, and as fallen, miserable, forlorn creatures: How these may again be restored to happiness (salva justitia Dei) without prejudice to the honour, justice and truth of God; this, this is the business that lay before them.

(3.) For the manner, or quality of the transaction, it was federal, or of the nature of a covenant; it was by mutual engagements and stipulations, each person undertaking to perform his part in order to our recovery.

We find each person undertaking for himself by solemn promise; the Father promiseth that he will "hold his hand, and "keep him," Isaiah 42:6. The Son promiseth, he will obey his Father's call to suffering, and not be rebellious," Isaiah 1:5. And, having promised, each holds the other to his engagement. The Father stands upon the satisfaction promised him; and, when the payment was making, he will not abate him one farthing, Romans 8:32. "God spared not his own Son," 1. e. he abated nothing of the full price be was to have at his hands for us. And as the Father stood strictly upon the terms of the covenant, so did Christ also; John 17:45. "I have glorified thee "on earth, (saith he to the Father) I have finished the work thou gavest me to do; and now, Father, glorify me with thine own self." As if he had said, Father, the work is done, now where is the wages I was promised? I call for glory as my due, as much my due as the hire of the labourer is his due, when his work is done.

(4.) More particularly; we will next consider the articles to which they do both agree; or, what it is that each person doth for himself promise to the other. And, to let us see how much the Father's heart is engaged in the salvation of poor sinners, there are five things which he promiseth to do for Christ, if he will undertake that work.

First, He promiseth to invest him, and anoint him to a three-fold office, answerable to the misery that lay upon the elect as so many bars to all communion with, and enjoyment of God; for, if ever man be restored to that happiness, the blindness of his mind must be cured, the guilt of sin expiated, and his captivity to sin led captive: answerably, Christ must, "of God, be made unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption," 1 Corinthians 1:30. And he is made so to us as our Prophet, Priest, and King; but he could not put himself into either of these; for if so, he had acted without commission, and consequently all he did had been invalid; Hebrews 5:5. "Christ glorified not himself to he made an High-Priest, but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son." A commission therefore to act authoritatively, in these offices, being necessary to our recovery, the Father engages to him to seal him such a threefold commission.

He promiseth to invest him with an eternal and royal Priesthood, Psalms 110:4. "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent; Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec." This Melchisedec being King of Righteousness, and king of Salem, that is, Peace, had a royal priesthood; and his descent not being reckoned, it had an adumbration of eternity in it, and so was more apt to type and shadow forth the priesthood of Christ than Aaron's was, Hebrews 7:16-17, Hebrews 7:24-25. as the apostle accommodates them there.

He promiseth moreover to make him a Prophet, and that an extraordinary one, even the Prince of prophets; the chief Shepherd, as much superior to all others, as the sun is to the lesser stars; so you have it, Isaiah 42:6-7. "I will give thee for a light to the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes," &c. And not only so, but to make him king also, and that of the whole empire of the world; so Psalms 2:6-8. "Ask of me, and I will give thee the Heathen for thine inheritance, and the utmost ends of the earth for thy possession." Thus he promiseth to qualify and furnish him completely for the work, by his investiture with this threefold office,

Secondly, And forasmuch as he knew it was a hard and difficult work his Son was to undertake, a work that would have broken the backs of all the angels in heaven, and men on earth, had they engaged in it; therefore he promiseth to stand by him, and assist and strengthen him for it: so, Isaiah 42:5-7. "I will hold thy hand," or take hold of thee with my hands, for so it may be rendered, i.e. I will underprop and support thy humanity, when it is even overweighted with the burden that is to come upon it, and ready to sink down under it; for so you know the case stood with him, Mark 14:34. and so it was foretold of him, Isaiah 53:7. "He was oppressed," &c. and indeed the humanity needed a prop of no less strength than the infinite power of the Godhead: the same promise you have in the first verse also, "Behold my servant whom I uphold."

Thirdly, He promiseth to crown his work with success, and bring it to an happy issue, Isaiah 53:10. "He shall see his seed, he "shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." He shall not begin, and not finish; he shall not shed his invaluable blood upon hazardous terms; but shall see and reap the sweet fruits thereof; as the joyful mother forgets her pangs, when she delightfully embraces and kisses her living child.

Fourthly, The Father promiseth to accept him in his work, though millions should certainly perish, Isaiah 49:4. "Surely (saith he) "my work is with the Lord." And, Isaiah 49:5. "I shall he glorious in the eyes of the Lord." His faith hath therein respect to this compact and promise. Accordingly, the Father manifests the satisfaction he had in him, and in his work, even while he was about it upon the earth, when there came such a "voice from the "excellent glory, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am "well pleased."

Fifthly, As he engaged to reward him highly for his work, by calling him to singular and super-eminent glory and honour, when he should have dispatched and finished it. So you read, Psalms 2:7. "I will declare the decree; the Lord hath said unto me, Thou "art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." It is spoken of the day of his resurrection, when he had just finished his sufferings. And so the apostle expounds and applies it, Acts 13:32-33. For then did the Lord wipe away the reproach of his cross, and invested him with such glory, that he looked like himself again. As if the Father had said, now thou hast again recovered thy glory, and this day is to thee as a new birth-day.

These are the encouragements and rewards proposed and promised to him by the Father. This was the joy set before him," (as the apostle phraseth it in Hebrews 12:2.) which made him so patiently to "endure the cross, and despise the shame." And in like manner Jesus Christ restipulates, and gives his engagement to the Father; that, upon these terms, he is content to made flesh, to divest, as it were, himself of his glory, to come under the obedience and malediction of the law, and not to refuse any, the hardest sufferings it should please his Father to inflict on him. So much is implied in Isaiah 1:5-7. "The Lord hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious,

neither turned away back; I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that pulled off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting: For the Lord God will help me, therefore shall I not he confounded; I have set my face as a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." When he saith, I was not rebellious, ytyrm he meaneth, I was most heartily willing, and content to accept the terms; for there is a Meiosis in the words, and much more is intended than expressed. And the sense of this place is well delivered to us in other terms, Psal. xl. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. "Then said I, Lo I come, I delight to do thy will, O God, thy law is within my heart." O see with what a full consent the heart of Christ closeth with the Father's offers and proposals; like some echo, that answers your voice twice or thrice over. So doth Christ here answer his Father's call, "I come, I delight to do thy will; yea, thy law is in my heart." And thus you see the articles to which they both subscribed, or the terms they agreed on.

(5.) I will briefly shew how these articles, and agreements were on both parts, performed, and that precisely and punctually. For, (1.) The Son having thus consented, accordingly he applies himself to the discharge of his work. He took a body, in it fulfilled all righteousness, even to a tittle, Matthew 3:15. And at last his soul was made an offering for sin, so that he could say as it is, finished, John 17:4. "Father, I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work thou gavest me to do." He went through all the parts of his active, and passive obedience, cheerfully and faithfully. (2.) The Father made good his engagements to Christ, all along, with no less faithfulness than Christ did his. He promised to assist, and hold his hand, and so he did; Luke 22:23. "And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him." That was one of the sorest brunts that ever Christ met with; this was seasonable aid and succour. He promised to accept him in his work, and that he should be glorious in his eyes; so he did: for he not only declared it by a voice from heaven, Luke 3:22. "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased:" But it was fully declared in his resurrection and ascension, which were a full discharge and justification of him. He promised him that "He should see his seed," and so he did; for his very birth-dew was as the dew of the morning; and ever since his blood has been fruitful in the world. He promised gloriously to reward and exalt him; and so he hath, Php 2:9-11. and that highly and super-eminently, "giving him a name "above every name in heaven and earth." Thus were the articles performed.

(6.) Lastly, When was this compact made betwixt the Father and the Son? I answer, it bears date from eternity. Before this world was made, then were his delights in us, while as yet we had no existence, but only in the infinite mind and purpose of God, who had decreed this for us in Christ Jesus, as the apostle speaks, 1 Timothy 1:9. What grace was that which was given us in Christ before the world began, but this grace of redemption, which was from everlasting thus contrived and designed for us, in that way which hath been here opened? Then was the council, or consultation of peace betwixt them both, as some take that scripture, Zechariah 6:13.

Next let us apply it to ourselves.

Use 1. The first use that offers itself to us from hence, is the abundant security that God hath given the elect for their salvation, and that not only in respect of the covenant of grace made with them, but also of this covenant of redemption made with Christ for them; which indeed is the foundation of the covenant of grace. God's single promise is security enough to our faith, his covenant of grace adds, ex abundanti, farther security; but both these viewed as the effects and fruits of this covenant of redemption, make all fast and sure. In the covenant of grace, we question not the

performance on God’s part, but we are often stumbled at the grand defects on our parts. But when we look to the covenant of redemption there is nothing to stagger faith, both the federates being infinitely able and faithful to perform their parts; so that there is no possibility of a failure here. Happy were it, if puzzled and perplexed Christians would turn their eyes from the defects that are in their obedience, to the fulness and completeness of Christ’s obedience; and see themselves complete in him, when most lame and defective in themselves.

(2.) Hence also to be informed, that God the Father, and God the Son, do mutually rely and trust to one another in the business of our redemption. The Father relies upon the Son for the performance of his part; as it is, Isaiah 42:1. "Behold my servant, whom I uphold." Montanus turns it, on whom I lean or depend. As if the Father had said, behold what a faithful servant I have chosen, in whom my soul is at rest: I know he will go through with his work, I can depend upon him. And, to speak plain, the Father so far trusted Christ, that upon the credit of his promise to come into the world, and in the fulness of time to become a sacrifice for the elect, he saved all the Old-Testament saints, whose faith also respected a Christ to come; with reference whereto, it is said, Hebrews 11:39-40. "That they received not the promises, God having provided "some better things for us, that they without us should not be made perfect," i.e. without Jesus Christ manifested in the flesh, our times; though believed on, as to come in the flesh, in their times. And as the Father trusted Christ, so doth Christ, in like manner, depend upon, and trust his Father. For, having performed his part, and left the world again, he now trusteth his Father for the accomplishment of that promise made him, Isaiah 53:10. "That he shall see his seed," &c. He depends upon his Father for all the elect that are left behind, yet unregenerated, as well as those already called, that they shall be all preserved unto the heavenly kingdom, according to that, John 17:11. "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world; and I come unto thee: holy Father, keep, through thine own name, "those whom thou hast given me." And can it be imagined, that the Father will fail in his trust, who every way acquitted himself so punctually to the Son? It cannot be.

Use 3. Moreover, hence we infer the validity and unquestionable success of Christ’s intercession in heaven for believers. You read, Hebrews 7:25. "That he ever lives to make intercession; and, Hebrews 12:24. "That his blood speaks for good things for them." Now, that his blood shall obtain what it pleads in heaven for, is undoubted, and that from the consideration of this covenant of redemption. For here you see that the things he now asks of his Father, are the very same which his Father promised him, and covenanted to give him, before this world was. So that, besides the interest of the person, the very equity of the matter speaks its success, and requires performance. Whatever he asks for us, is as due to him as the wages of the hireling, when the work is ended; if the work be done, and done faithfully, as the Father hath acknowledged it is, then the reward is due, and due immediately; and no doubt but he shall receive it from the hands of a righteous God.

Use 4. Hence, in like manner, you may be informed of the consistency of grace with full satisfaction to the justice of God. The apostle, 2 Timothy 1:9. tells us, "We are saved according to his own "purpose and grace, which was given us in Jesus Christ before the "world began." 1. e. According to the gracious terms of this covenant of redemption; and yet you see notwithstanding, how strictly God stands upon satisfaction from Christ; so then, grace to us, and satisfaction to justice, are not so inconsistent as the Socinian adversaries would make them; what was debt to Christ, is grace to us: when you hear men cry out, Here is grace indeed! pay me all, and I will

forgive you; remember, how all mouths are stopt with that one text, Romans 3:24. "Being justified freely by his grace;" and yet he adds, "through the redemption that is in Christ."

Use 5. Again, Hence judge of the antiquity of the love of God to believers! what an ancient friend he hath been to us; who loved us, provided for us, and contrived all our happiness, before we were, yea, before the world was. We reap the fruits of this covenant now, the seed whereof was sown from eternity; yea, it is not only ancient, but also most free: no excellencies of ours could engage the love of God; for as yet we were not.

Use 6. Hence judge, How reasonable it is that believers should embrace the hardest terms of obedience unto Christ, who complied with such hard terms for their salvation: they were hard and difficult terms indeed, on which Christ received you from the Father's hand: it was, as you have heard, to pour out his soul unto death, or not to enjoy a soul of you. Here you may suppose the Father to say, when driving his bargain with Christ for you

Father. My Son, here is a company of poor miserable souls, that have utterly undone themselves, and now lie open to my justice! Justice demands satisfaction for them, or will satisfy itself in the eternal ruin of them: What shall be done for these souls? And thus Christ returns.

Son. O my Father, such is my love to, and pity for them, that rather than they shall perish eternally, I will be responsible for them as their Surety; bring in all thy bills, that I may see what they owe thee; Lord, bring them all in, that there may be no after-reckonings with them; at my hand shalt thou require it. I will rather choose to suffer thy wrath than they should suffer it: upon me, my Father, upon me be all their debt.

Father. But, my Son, if thou undertake for them, thou must reckon to pay the last mite, expect no abatements; if I spare them, I will not spare thee.

Son. Content, Father, let it be so; charge it all upon me, I am able to discharge it: and though it prove a kind of undoing to me, though it impoverish all my riches, empty all my treasures, (for so indeed it did, 2 Corinthians 8:9. "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor") yet I am content to undertake it. Blush, ungrateful believers, O let shame cover your faces; judge in yourselves now, hath Christ deserved that you should stand with him for trifles, that you should shrink at a few petty difficulties, and complain, this is hard, and that is harsh? O if you knew the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in this his wonderful condescension for you, you could not do it.

Use 7 Lastly, How greatly are we all concerned to make it sure ourselves, that we are of this number which the Father and the Son agreed for before the world was; that we were comprehended in Christ's engagement and compact with the Father?

Obj. Yea, but you will say, who can know that, there were no witnesses to that agreement.

Sol. Yes, We may know, without ascending into heaven, or prying into unrevealed secrets, that our names were in that covenant, if, (1.) You are believers indeed; for all such the Father gave to Christ, John 17:8. "The men that thou gavest me (for of them he spake immediately before) they have believed "that thou didst send me." (2.) If you savingly know God in Jesus Christ, such were given him by the Father, John 17:6. "I have manifested thy name unto the men thou gavest me." By this they are discriminated from the rest, verse 25. "The world hath not known thee, but these have known," &c. (3.) If you are men and women of another world; John 17:16. "They are not of

the world, as I am not of the world." May it be said of you, as of dying men, that you are not men and women for this world, that you are crucified and dead to it, Galatians 6:14. that you are strangers in it? Hebrews 11:13-14. (4.) If you keep Christ's word, John 17:6. "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word." By keeping his word, understand the receiving of the word, in its sanctifying effects and influences into your hearts, and your perseverance in the profession and practice of it to the end, John 17:17. "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." John 15:7. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will." Blessed and happy is that soul upon which these blessed characters appear, which our Lord Jesus hath laid so close together, within the compass of a few verses, in this xvii. chapter of John. These are the persons the Father delivered unto Christ, and he accepted from the Father, in this blessed covenant.

Chapter 132

S. Opens the Covenant of Redemption betwixt the Father and the Redeemer. Isa_53:12.

SERMON IV.

Opens the admirable love of GOD in giving his own SON for us. John 3:16. For GOD so loved the world that he gave his only begotten SON, &c.

YOU have heard of the gracious purpose and design of God, to recover poor sinners to himself by Jesus Christ, an how this design of love was laid and contrived in the covenant of redemption, whereof we last spake.

Now, according to the terms of that covenant, you shall hear from this scripture, how that design was by one degree advanced towards its accomplishment, in God's actual giving or parting with his own Son for us: "God so loved the world, that he gave," &c. The whole precedent context spent in discovering the nature and necessity of regeneration, and the necessity thereof is in this text urged and inferred from the peculiar respect and eye God had upon believers, in giving Christ for them; they only reaping all the special and saving benefits and advantages of that gift: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish." In the words are to be considered,

1. The original spring or fountain of our best mercies, the love of God. The love of God is, either benevolent, beneficent, or complacential. His benevolent love, is nothing else but his desire and purpose of saving, and doing us good; so his purpose and grace to Jacob is called love, Romans 9:13. "Jacob have I loved;" but this being before Jacob was, could consist in nothing else but the gracious purpose of God towards him. His beneficent love, is his actual doing good to the persons beloved, or his bestowing the effects of his love upon us, according to that purpose. His complacential love, is nothing else but that delight and satisfaction he finds in beholding the fruits and workings of that grace in us, which he first intended for us, and then actually collated or bestowed on us. This love of benevolence, is that which I have opened to you, under the former head, God's compact with Christ about us, or his design to save us on the articles and terms therein specified. The love of beneficence, is that which this scripture speaks of; out of this fountain Christ flowed to us, and both ran into that of complacency; for therefore he both purposed and actually bestowed Christ on us, that he might everlastingly delight in beholding the glory and praise of all this reflected on himself, by his redeemed ones. This then is the fountain of our mercies.

2. The mercy flowing out of this fountain, and that is Christ; The mercy, as he is emphatically called, Luke 1:72. The marrow, kernel, and substance of all other mercies. He gave his only begotten Son: This was the birth of that love, the like whereunto never brought forth before, therefore it is expressed with a double emphasis in the text, the one is the particle o{utw" so; "he

loved the world;" here is a sic without a sicut: How did he love it? Why, he so loved it; but how much, the tongues of angels cannot declare. And moreover, to enhance the mercy, he is stiled his only begotten Son: to have given a Son had been wonderful; but to give his only begotten Son, that is love inexpressible, unintelligible.

3. The objects of this love, or the persons to whom the eternal Lord delivered Christ, and that is the [World.] This must respect the elect of God in the world, such as do, or shall actually believe, as it is exigetically expressed in the next words, "That whosoever believes in him should not perish:" Those whom he calls the world in that, he stiles believers in this expression; and the word [World] is put to signify the elect, because they are scattered through all parts, and are among all ranks of men in the world; these are the objects of this love; it is not angels, but men, that were so loved; he is called filanqrwvpo" a Lover, a Friend of Men, but never filagelo" or filokiso" the Lover or Friend of Angels, or creatures of another species.

4. The manner in which this never-enough celebrated mercy flows to us, from the fountain of divine love, and that is most freely and spontaneously. He gave, not he sold, or barely parted from, but gave. Nor yet doth the Father's giving imply Christ to be merely passive; for as the Father is here said to give him, so the apostle tells us, Galatians 2:20. That he gave himself, "who loved me, and gave himself for me: "The Father gave him out of good will to men, and he as willingly bestowed himself on that service. Hence the note is,

DOCT. That the gift of Christ is the highest and fullest manifestation of the love of God to sinners, that ever was made from eternity to them.

How is this gift of God to sinners signalized in that place of the apostle, 1 John 4:10, "Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins?" Why doth the apostle so magnify this gift in saying, "Herein is love," as if there were love in nothing else? May we not say, that to have a being, a being among the rational creatures, therein is love? To have our life carried so many years like a taper in the hand of Providence, through so many dangers, and not yet put out in obscurity, therein is love? To have food and raiment, convenient for us, beds to lie on, relations to comfort us, in all these is love? Yea, but if you speak comparatively, in all these there is no love, to the love expressed in sending or giving Christ for us: These are great mercies in themselves; but compared to this mercy, they are all swallowed up, as the light of candies when brought into the sun-shine. No, no, herein is love, that God gave Christ for us. And it is remarkable, that when the apostle would shew us, in Romans 5:8. what is the noblest fruit that most commends to men the root of divine love that bears it, he shews us this very fruit of it that I am now opening; "But God, saith he, commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us:" this is the very flower of that love. The method into which I will cast this precious point, shall be this: (1.) To shew how Jesus Christ was given by the Father. (2.) How that gift is the fullest and richest manifestation of the love of God that was ever made to the world. (3.) And then draw forth the uses of it.

1. How was Jesus Christ given by the Father, and what is implied therein.

You are not so to understand it, as though God parted with his interest and property in his Son, when he is said to give him; he was as much his own as ever. When men give, they transfer property to another; but when God had given him, he was, I say, still as much his own as ever: but

this giving of Christ implies,

(1.) His designation and appointment unto death for us; for so you read, that it was done "according to the determinate counsel of God," Acts 2:23. Look, as the Lamb under the Law was separated from the flock, and set appart for a sacrifice; though it were still living, yet it was intentionally, and preparatively given, and consecrated to the Lord: so Jesus Christ was, by the counsel and purpose of God, thus chosen, and set apart for his service: and therefore in Isa. xlii. 1. God calls him his Elect, or chosen One, (2.) His giving Christ, implies a parting with him, or setting him (as the French hath it) at some distance from himself for a time. There was a kind of parting betwixt the Father and the Son, when he came to tabernacle in our flesh: so he expresseth it, John 16:28. "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again I leave the world and go to the Father." This distance that this incarnation and humiliation set him at, was properly as to his humanity, which was really distant from the glory into which it is now taken up, and in respect of manifestation of delight and love, the Lord seemed to carry it as one at a distance from him. Oh! this was it that so deeply pierced, and wounded his soul, as is evident from that complaint, Psalms 22:1-2, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not," &c.

(3.) God's giving of Christ, implies his delivering him into the hands of justice to be punished; even as condemned persons are, by sentence of law, given or delivered into the hands of executioners. So Acts 2:23. "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have slain:" and so he is said, Romans 8:32 "To deliver him up to death for us all." The Lord, when the time was come that Christ must suffer, and, as it were, say, O all ye roaring waves of my incensed justice, now swell as high as heaven, and go over his soul and body; sink him to the bottom; let him go, like Jonah, his type, into the belly of hell, unto the roots of the mountains. Come all ye raging storms, that I have reserved for this day of wrath, beat upon him, beat him down, that he may not be able to look up, Psalms 40:12. Go justice, put him upon the rack, torment him in every part, till all his "bones be out of joint, and his "heart within him be melted as wax in the midst of his bowels," Psalms 22:14. And ye assembly of the wicked Jews and Gentiles, that have so long gaped for his blood, now he is delivered into your hands; you are permitted to execute your malice to the full: I now loose your chain, and into your hand and power is he delivered.

(4.) God's giving of Christ, implies his application of him, with all the purchase of his blood, and settling all this upon us, as an inheritance and portion, John 6:32-33. "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven; for the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth light to the world." God hath giveth him as bread to poor starving creatures, that by faith they might eat and live. And so he told the Samaritaness, John 4:10. "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." Bread and water are the two necessaries for the support of natural life; God hath given Christ, you see, to be all that, and more, to the spiritual life.

2. How this gift of Christ was the highest, and fullest manifestation of the love of God, that ever the world saw: and this will be evidenced by the following particulars:

(1.) If you consider how near and dear Jesus Christ was to the Father; he was his Son, "his only Son," saith the text; the Son of his love, the darling of his Soul: His other Self, yea, one with

himself; the express image of his person; the brightness of his Father's Glory: In parting with him, he parted with his own heart, with his very bowels, as I may say. "Yet to us a Son is given," Isaiah 9:6. and such a Son as he calls "his dear Son," Colossians 1:13. A late writer tells us, that he hath been informed, that in the famine in Germany, a poor family being ready to perish with famine, the husband made a motion to the wife, to sell one of the children for bread, to relieve themselves and the rest: The wife at last consents that it should be so; but then they began to think which of the four should be sold; and when the eldest was named, they both refused to part with that, being their first-born, and the beginning of their strength. Well, then they came to the second, but could not yield that he should be sold, being the very picture and lively image of his father. The third was named, but that also was a child that best resembled the mother. And when the youngest was thought on, that was the Benjamin, the child of their old age; and so were content rather to perish altogether in the famine, than to part with a child for relief And you know how tenderly Jacob took it, when his Joseph and Benjamin were rent from him. What is a child, but a piece of the parent wrapt up another skin? And yet our dearest children are but as strangers to us, in comparison of the unspeakable dearness that was betwixt the Father and Christ.——Now, that he should ever be content to part with a Son, and such an only One, is such a manifestation of love, as will be admired to all eternity. And then,

(2.) Let it be considered, To what he gave him, even to death, and that of the cross; to be made a curse for us; to be the scorn and contempt of men; to the most unparalleled sufferings that ever were inflicted or borne by any. It melts our bowels, it breaks our heart, to behold our children striving in the pangs of death: but the Lord beheld his Son struggling under agonies that never any felt before him. He saw him falling to the ground, groveling in the dust, sweating blood, and amidst those agonies turning himself to his Father, and, with a heart-rending cry, beseeching him, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass," Luke 22:42. To wrath, to the wrath, of an infinite God without mixture; to the very torments of hell was Christ delivered, and that by the hand of his own Father. Sure then that love must needs want a name, which made the Father of mercies deliver his only Son to such miseries for us.

(3.) It is a special consideration to enhance the love of God in giving Christ, that in giving him he gave the richest jewel in his cabinet; a mercy of the greatest worth, and most inestimable value, Heaven itself is not so valuable and precious as Christ is: He is the better half of heaven; and so the saints account him, Psalms 73:25. "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" Ten thousand thousand worlds, saith one, as many worlds as angels can number, and then as a new world of angels can multiply, would not all be the bulk of a balance, to weigh Christ's excellency, love, and sweetness. O what a fair One! what an only One! what an excellent, lovely, ravishing One, is Christ! Put the beauty of ten thousand paradises, like the garden of Eden, into one; put all trees, all flowers, all smells, all colours, all tastes, all joys, all sweetness, all loveliness in one; O what a fair and excellent thing would that be? And yet it should be less to that fair and dearest well-beloved Christ, than one drop of rain to the whole seas, rivers, lakes, and fountains of ten thousand earths. Christ is heaven's wonder, and earth's wonder.

Now, for God to bestow the mercy of mercies, the most precious thing in heaven or earth, upon poor sinners; and, as great, as lovely, as excellent as his Son was, yet not to account him too good to bestow upon us, what manner of love is this!

(4.) Once more, let it be considered on whom the Lord bestowed his Son: upon angels? No, but upon men. Upon man his friend? No, but upon his enemies. This is love; and on this consideration the apostle lays a mighty weight, in Romans 5:8-10. "But God (saith he) commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,—When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." Who would part with a son for the sake of his dearest friends? but God gave him to, and delivered him for enemies: O love unspeakable!

(5.) Lastly, Let us consider how freely this gift came from him: It was not wrested out of his hand by our importunity; for we as little desired as deserved it: It was surprising, preventing, eternal love, that delivered him to us: "Not that we loved him, but he first loved us," 1 John 4:19. Thus as when you weigh a thing, you cast in weight after weight, till the scales break; so doth God, one consideration upon another, to overcome our hearts, and make us admiringly to cry, what manner of love is this! And thus I have shewed you what God's giving of Christ is, and what matchless love is manifested in that incomparable gift.

Next we shall apply this, in some practical corollaries.

Corollary 1. Learn hence, The exceeding preciousness of souls, and at what high rate God values them, that he will give his Son, his only Son out of his bosom, as a ransom for them. Surely this speaks their preciousness: God would not have parted with such a Son for small matters: all the world could not redeem them; gold and silver could not be their ransom; so speaks the apostle, 1 Peter 1:18. "You were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ." Such an esteem God had for them, that rather than they should perish, Jesus Christ shall be made a man, yea, a curse for them. Oh then, learn to put a due value upon your own souls: do not sell that cheap, which God hath paid so dear for: Remember what a treasure you carry about you; the glory that you see in this world is equivalent in worth to it. Matthew 16:26. "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Corollary 2. If God has given his own Son for the world, then it follows, that those for whom God gave his own son, may warrantably expect any other temporal mercies from him. This is the a apostle's inference, Romans 8:32. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered: him up for us all; how shall he not, with him, freely give us all things?" And so 1 Corinthians 3:21-22. "All is yours, for ye are Christ's." i.e. They hold all other things in Christ, who is the capital, and most comprehensive mercy. To make out the grounds of this comfortable deduction, let these four things be pondered, and duly weighed in your thoughts.

(1.) No other mercy you need or desire, is, or can be so dear to God, as Jesus Christ is: he never laid any other thing in his bosom as he did his Son. As for the world, and the comforts of it, it is the dust of his feet, he values it not; as you see by his providential disposals of it; having given it to the worst of men. "All the Turkish empire," saith Luther, "as great and glorious as it is but a crumb which the master of the family throws to the dogs." Think upon any other outward enjoyment that is valuable in your eyes, and there is not so much comparison betwixt it and Christ, in the esteem of God, as is betwixt your dear children and the lumber of your houses, in your esteem. If then God has parted so freely from that which was infinitely dearer to him than these; how shall he deny these, when they may promote his glory and your good? (2.) As Jesus Christ was nearer the heart of God than all these; so Christ is, in himself, much greater and more excellent than all of them: Ten thousand worlds, and the glory of them all, is but the dust of the balance, if weighed with

Christ These things are but poor creatures, but he is over all, God blessed for ever, Romans 9:5. They are common gifts, but he is the Gift of God, John 4:10. They are ordinary mercies, but he is The mercy, Luke 1:72. As one pearl, or precious stone is greater in value than ten thousand common pebbles. Now, if

God has So freely given the greater, how can you suppose he should deny the lesser, mercies? Will a man give to another a large inheritance, and stand with him for a trifle? how can it be? (3.) There is no other mercy you want, but you are entitled to it by the gift of Christ; it is, as to right, conveyed to you with Christ. So, in the fore-cited 1 Corinthians 3:21-23. "the world is yours, yea, all is yours; for ye are Christ's. So 2 Corinthians 1:20. "For all the promises of God in Christ, in him they are yea, and in him, amen." With him he hath given you all things, eiv" avpolauvsin, 1 Timothy 6:17. richly to enjoy: the word signifies rem aliquam cum loetitia percipere, to have the sweet relish and comfort of an enjoyment. So have we in all our mercies, upon the account of our title to them in Christ. (4.) Lastly, If God has given you this nearer, greater, and all-comprehending mercy, when you were enemies to him, and alienated from him; it is not imaginable he should deny you any inferior mercy, when you are come into a state of reconciliation and amity with him. So the apostle reasons, Romans 5:8-10. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God, by the death of his Son; much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." And thus you have the second inference with its grounds.

Corollary 3. if the greatest love hath been manifested in giving Christ to the world, then it follows, that the greatest evil and wickedness is manifested in despising, slighting, and rejecting Christ. It is sad to abuse the love of God manifested in the lowest gift of providence; but, to slight the richest discoveries of it, even in that peerless gift, wherein God commends his love in the most taking and astonishing manner; this is sin with a witness. Blush, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth; yea, be ye horribly afraid! No guilt like this. The most flagitious wretches among the barbarous nations are innocent, in comparison of these. But, are there any such in the world? Dare any slight this gift of God? Indeed, if men's words might be taken, there are few or none that dare do so; but if their lives and practices may be believed this, this is the sin of the far greater part of the of the christianized world. Witness the lamentable stupidity and supineness; witness the contempt of the gospel; witness the hatred and persecution of his image, laws and people. What is the language of all this, but a vile esteem of Jesus Christ? And now, let me a little expostulate with those ungrateful souls, that trample under foot the Son of God, that value not this love that gave him forth. What is that mercy which you so contemn and undervalue? is it so vile and cheap a thing as your entertainment speaks it to be? is it indeed worth no more than this in your eyes? Surely you will not be long of that opinion! Will you be of that mind, think you when death and judgment shall have thoroughly awakened you! Oh, no: Then a thousand worlds for a Christ! as it is storied of our crooked-backed Richard, when he lost the field, and was in great danger by his enemies that pressed upon him; Oh now, (said he) a kingdom for a horse! Or think ye, that any beside you in the world are of your mind? you are deceived, if you think so, "To them that believe he is precious," through all the world, 1 Peter 2:7. and in the other world they are of a quite contrary mind. Could you but hear what is said of him in heaven, in what a dialect the saved of the Lord do extol their Saviour; or could you but imagine the self-revenges, the self-torments, which the damned suffer for their folly, and what a value they would set upon one tender of Christ, if it might but again be hoped for; you would see that such as you are the only despisers of Christ. Beside, methinks it is

astonishing, that you should despise a mercy in which your own souls are so dearly, so deeply, so everlastingly concerned, as they are in this gift of God. If it were but the soul of another, nay, less, if but the body of another, and yet less than that, if but another's beast, whose life you could preserve, you are obliged to do it; but when it is thyself, yea, the best part of thyself, thine own invaluable soul, that thou ruinest and destroyest thereby, Oh, what a monster art thou, to cast it away thus! What! will you slight your own souls? care you not whether they be saved, or whether they be damned? is it indeed an indifferent thing with you which way they fall at death? have you imagined a tolerable hell? is it easy to perish? are you not only turned God's enemies, but your own too? Oh see what monsters sin can turn men and women into! Oh the stupifying, besotting, intoxicating power of sin! But perhaps you think that all these are but uncertain sounds, with which we alarm you; it may be thine own heart will preach such doctrine as this to thee: Who can assure thee of the reality of these things? why shouldest thou trouble thyself with an invisible world, or be so much concerned for what thine eyes never saw, nor didst ever receive the report from any that have seen them? Well, though we cannot now shew you these things, yet shortly they shall be shewn you; and your own eyes shall behold them. You are convinced and satisfied that many other things are real which you never saw: but be assured, That "if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation, which at first began to be spoken to us by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by them that heard him, God also bearing them witness?" Hebrews 2:2-4. But if they be certain, yet they are not near; it will be a long time before they come. Poor soul! how dost thou cheat thyself? It may be not by twenty parts so long a time as thy own fancy draws it forth for thee; thou art not certain of the next moment. And suppose what thou imaginest: What are twenty or forty years when they are past? yea, what are a thousand years to vast eternity? Go trifle away a few days more, sleep out a few nights more, and then lie down in the dust; it will not be long ere the trump of God shall awaken thee, and thine eyes shall behold Jesus coming in the clouds of heaven, and then you will know the price of this sin. Oh, therefore, if there be any sense of eternity upon you, any pity or love for yourselves in you; if you have any concernments more than the beasts that perish, despise not your own offered mercies, slight not the richest gift that ever was yet opened to the world; and a sweeter cannot be opened to all eternity.

Chapter 133

S. Opens the Excellency of the Subject.

Sermon 1 Opens the Excellency of the Subject.

1 Corinthians 2:2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. The former verse contains an apology for the plain and familiar manner of the apostle's preaching, which was not (as he there tells them) with excellency of speech, or of wisdom; i. e. he studied not to gratify their curiosity with rhetorical strains, or philosophical niceties. In this he gives the reason, "for I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ," &c.

"I determined not to know." The meaning is not, that he simply despised, or condemned all other studies and knowledge; but so far only as they stand in competition with, or opposition to the study and knowledge of Jesus Christ. And it is as if he should say, it is my stated, settled judgement; not a hasty, inconsiderate censure, but the product and issue of my most serious and exquisite enquiries. After I have well weighed the case, turned it round, viewed it exactly on every side, balanced all advantages and disadvantages, pondered all things, that are fit to come into consideration about it; this is the result and final determination, that all other knowledge, how profitable, how pleasant soever, is not worthy to be named in the same day with the knowledge of Jesus Christ. This, therefore, I resolve to make the scope and end of my ministry, and the end regulates the mean; such pedantic toys, and airy notions as injudicious ears affect, would rather obstruct than promote my grand design among you; therefore, wholly waving that way, I applied myself to a plain, popular, unaffected dialect, fitted rather to pierce the heart, and convince the conscience, than to tickle the fancy. This is the scope of the words, in which three things fall under consideration;

First, The subject matter of his doctrine, to wit, Jesus Christ. "I determined to know nothing," i. e. to study nothing myself, to teach nothing to you, but "Jesus Christ." Christ shall be the centre to which all the lines of my ministry shall be drawn. I have spoken and written of many other subjects in my sermons and epistles, but it is all reductively the preaching and discovery of Jesus Christ: of all the subjects in the world, this is the sweetest; if there be any thing on this side heaven, worthy our time and studies, this is it. Thus he magnifies his doctrine, from the excellency of its subject-matter, accounting all other doctrines but airy things, compared with this.

Secondly, We have here that special respect or consideration of Christ, which he singled out from all the rest of the excellent truths of Christ, to spend the main strength of his ministry upon; and that is, Christ as crucified: and the rather, because hereby he would obviate the vulgar prejudice raised against him upon the account of his cross; "For Christ crucified was to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness," 1 Corinthians 1:23. This also best suited his end, to draw them on to Christ; as Christ above all other subjects, so Christ crucified above all things in Christ. There is, therefore, a great emphasis in this word, "and him crucified."

Thirdly, The manner in which he discoursed this transcendent subject to them, is also remarkable; he not only preached Christ crucified, but he preached him assiduously and plainly. He preached

Christ frequently; “and whenever he preached of Christ crucified, he preached him in a crucified stile.” This is the sum of the words; to let them know that his spirit was intent upon this subject, as if he neither knew, nor cared to speak of any other. All his sermons were so full of Christ, that his hearers might have thought he was acquainted with no other doctrine. Hence observe,

Doct. That there is no doctrine more excellent in itself or more necessary to be preached and, studied, than the doctrine of Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

ALL other knowledge, how much soever it be magnified in the world, is, and ought to be esteemed but dross, in comparison of the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, Php 3:8 “In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,” Colossians 2:3; Isaiah 53:11. “By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many;” and hence, John 6:40, seeing and believing are made the same thing. Would a man exercise hope in God? that he can never do without the knowledge of Christ, for he is the author of that hope, 1 Peter 1:3, he is also its object, Hebrews 6:19. its ground-work and support, Colossians 1:27. And as you cannot believe or hope, so neither can you pray acceptably without a competent degree of this knowledge. The very Heathen could say, Non loquendum de Deo sine lumine, i. e. Men must not speak of God without light: the true way of conversing with, and enjoying God in prayer, is by acting faith on him through a Mediator: so much comfort and true excellency there is in it, and no more. O then, how indispensable is the knowledge of Christ, to all that do address themselves to God in any duty.

(3.) It is fundamental to all comforts: all the comforts of believers are streams from this fountain. Jesus Christ is the very object matter of a believer’s joy, Php 3:3. “Our rejoicing is in “Christ Jesus.” Take away the knowledge of Christ, and a Christian is the most sad and melancholy creature in the world: again, let Christ but manifest himself, and dart the beams of his light into their souls, it will make them kiss the stakes, sing in flames, and shout in the pangs of death, as men that divide the spoil.

Lastly, This knowledge is fundamental to the eternal happiness of souls: as we can perform no duty, enjoy no comfort, so neither can we be saved without it, John 17:3. “This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” And, if it be life eternal to know Christ, then it is eternal damnation to be ignorant of Christ: as Christ is the door that opens heaven, so knowledge is the key that opens Christ. The excellent gifts, and renowned parts of the moral Heathens, though they purchased to them great esteem and honour among men, yet left them in a state of perdition, because of this great defect, they were ignorant of Christ, 1 Corinthians 1:21. Thus you see how fundamental the knowledge of Christ is, essentially necessary to all the graces, duties, comforts and happiness of souls.

3dly, The knowledge of Christ is profound and large; all other sciences are but shadows; this is a boundless, bottomless ocean; no creature has a line long enough to fathom the depth of it; there is height, length, depth and breadth ascribed to it, Ephesians 3:18, yea, it passeth knowledge. There is “a manifold wisdom of God in Christ,” Ephesians 3:10. It is of many sorts and forms, of many folds and plates: it is indeed simple, pure and unmixed with any thing but itself, yet it is manifold in degrees, kinds and administrations; though something of Christ be unfolded in one age, and something in another, yet eternity itself cannot fully unfold him. I see something, said Luther, which blessed Austin saw not; and those that come after me, will see that which I see not. It is in the studying of Christ, as in the planting of a new discovered country; at first men sit down by the

sea-side, upon the skirts and borders of the land; and there they dwell, but by degrees they search farther and farther into the heart of the country. Ah, the best of us are yet but upon the borders of this vast continent!

4thly, The study of Jesus Christ is the most noble subject that ever a soul spent itself upon; those that rack and torture their brains upon other studies, like children, weary themselves at a low game; the eagle plays at the sun itself. The angels study this doctrine, and stoop down to look into this deep abyss. What are the truths discovered in Christ, but the very secrets that from eternity lay hid in the bosom of God? Ephesians 3:8-9. God's heart is opened to men in Christ, John 1:18. This makes the gospel such a glorious dispensation, because Christ is so gloriously revealed therein, 2 Corinthians 3:9. and the studying of Christ in the gospel, stamps such a heavenly glory upon the contemplating soul, 2 Corinthians 3:18.

5thly, It is the most sweet and comfortable knowledge; to be studying Jesus Christ, what is it but to be digging among all the veins and springs of comfort? And the deeper you dig, the more do these springs flow upon you. How are hearts ravished with the discoveries of Christ in the gospel? what ecstasies, meltings, transports, do gracious souls meet there? Doubtless, Philip's ecstasy, John 1:25. "eurekamen Iesoun", "We have found Jesus," was far beyond that of Archimedes. A believer could sit from morning to night, to hear discourses of Christ; "His mouth is most sweet", Son 5:16.

Secondly, Let us compare this knowledge with all other knowledge, and thereby the excellency of it will farther appear.

1. All other knowledge is natural, but this wholly supernatural, Matthew 11:27. "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father", neither knoweth any the Father, save the Son, and he to whom soever the Son will reveal him." The wisest Heathens could never make a discovery of Christ by their deepest searches into nature; the most eagle-eyed philosophers were but children in knowledge, compared with the most illiterate Christians.

2. Other knowledge is unattainable by many. All the helps and means in the world would never enable some Christians to attain the learned arts and languages; men of the best wits, and most pregnant parts, are most excellent in these; but here is the mystery and excellency of the knowledge of Christ, that men of most blunt, dull and contemptible parts attain, through the teaching of the Spirit, to this knowledge, in which the more acute and ingenious are utterly blind. Matthew 11:25, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." 1 Corinthians 1:26-27. "You see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God has chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise," &c.

3. Other knowledge, though you should attain the highest degree of it, would never bring you to heaven, being defective and lame both in the integrity of parts, the principal thing, viz. Christ, being wanting; and in the purity of its nature: for the knowing Heathens grew vain in their imaginations, Romans 1:21, and in the efficacy and influence of it on the heart and life, They held the truth in unrighteousness; their lusts were stronger than their light, Romans 1:18. But this knowledge has potent influences, changing souls, into its own image, 2 Corinthians 3:18, and so proves a saving knowledge unto men, 1 Timothy 2:4. And thus I have in a few particulars pointed out the

transcendence of the knowledge of Christ. The use of all this I shall give you in a few inferences, on which I shall not enlarge, the whole being only preliminary to the doctrine of Christ; only for the present I shall hence infer,

Inference 1. The sufficiency of the doctrine of Christ, to make men wise unto salvation. Paul desired to know nothing else; and, indeed, nothing else is of absolute necessity to be known. A little of this knowledge, if saving and effectual upon thy heart, will do thy soul more service, than all the vain speculation and profound parts that others so much glory in. Poor Christian, be not dejected, because thou sees thyself out-stript and excelled by so many in other parts of knowledge; if thou know Jesus Christ, thou knowest enough to comfort and save thy soul. Many learned philosophers are now in hell, and many illiterate Christians in heaven.

Inference 2.

If there be such excellency in the knowledge of Christ, let it humble all, both saints and sinners, that we have no more of this clear and effectual knowledge in us, notwithstanding the excellent advantages we have had for it. Sinners, concerning you I may sigh and say with the apostle, 1 Corinthians 15:34. “Some have not the knowledge of Christ, I speak this to your shame”. This, O this is the condemnation. And even for you that are enlightened in this knowledge, how little do you know of Jesus Christ, in comparison of what you might have known of him? What a shame is it, that you should need to be taught the very first truths, “when for the time you might have been teachers of others?” Hebrews 5:12-14. “That your ministers cannot speak unto you as spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ,” 1 Corinthians 3:1-2. O how much time is spent in other studies, in vain discourses, frivolous pamphlets, worldly employments? How little is the search and study of Jesus Christ.

Inference 3.

How sad is their condition that have a knowledge of Christ, and yet as to themselves it had been better they had never had it! Many there be that content themselves with an unpractical, ineffectual, and merely notional knowledge of him; of whom the apostle saith, “It had been better for them not to have known,” 2 Peter 2:21. It serves only to aggravate sin and misery; for though it be not enough to save them, yet it puts some weak restraints upon sin, which their impetuous lusts breaking down, exposes them thereby to a greater damnation.

Inference 4.

Fourthly, This may inform us by what rule to judge both ministers and doctrine. Certainly that is the highest commendation of a minister, to be an able minister of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the Spirit, 2 Corinthians 3:6. He is the best artist, that can most lively and powerfully display Jesus Christ before the people, evidently setting him forth as crucified among them; and that is the best sermon, that is most full of Christ, not of art and language. I know that a holy dialect well becometh Christ’s ministers, they should not be rude and careless in language or method; but surely the excellency of a sermon lies not in that, but in the plainest discoveries and liveliest applications of Jesus Christ.

Inference 5.

Let all that mind the honour of religion, or the peace and comfort of their own souls, wholly sequester and apply themselves to the study of Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Wherefore spend we ourselves upon other studies, when all excellency, sweetness, and desirableness is concentered in this one? Jesus Christ is fairer than the children of men, the chiefest among ten thousands, “as the apple-tree among the trees of the wood;” Quae faciunt divisa beatum, in hoc mixta fluunt. These things which singly ravish and delight the souls of men, are all found conjunctly in Christ. O what a blessed Christ is this! whom to know is eternal life. From the knowledge of Jesus Christ do bud forth all the fruits of comfort, and that for all seasons and conditions. Hence Revelation 22:2, he is called “the tree of life, which bears twelve manner of fruits, and yields its fruit every month; and the very leaves of this tree are for healing.” In Christ souls have, (1.) All necessaries for food and physic. (2.) All varieties of fruits, twelve manner of fruits; a distinct sweetness in this, in that, and in the other attribute, promise, ordinance. (3.) In him are these fruits at all times, he bears fruit every month; there is precious fruit in Jesus Christ, even in the black month; winter fruits as well as summer fruits. O then study Christ, study to know him more extensively. There be many excellent things in Christ, that the most eagle-eyed believer has not yet seen: Ah! ‘tis pity that any thing of Christ should lie hid from his people. Study to know Christ more intensively, to get the experimental taste and lively power of his knowledge upon your hearts and affections: This is the knowledge that carries all the sweetness and comfort in it. Christian, I dare appeal to thy experience, whether the experimental taste of Jesus Christ, in ordinances and duties, has not a higher and sweeter relish than any created enjoyment thou ever tasted in this world? O then separate, devote, and wholly give thyself, thy time, thy strength to this most sweet transcendent study.

Inference 6.

Lastly, Let me close the whole with a double caution; one to ourselves, who by our callings and professions are the ministers of Christ; another to those that sit under the doctrine of Christ daily.

First, If this doctrine be the most excellent, necessary, fundamental, profound, noble, and comfortable doctrine, let us then take heed lest, while we study to be exact in other things, we be found ignorant in this. Ye know it is ignominious, by the common suffrage of the civilised world, for any man to be unacquainted with his own calling, or not to attend the proper business of it: it is our calling, as the Bridegroom’s friends, to woo and win souls to Christ, to set him forth to the people as crucified among them, Galatians 3:1, to present him in all his attractive excellencies, that all hearts may be ravished with his beauty, and charmed into his arms by love: we must also be able to defend the truths of Christ against undermining heretics, to instil his knowledge into the ignorant, to answer the cases and scruples of poor doubting Christians. How many intricate knots have we to untie? What pains, what skill is requisite for such as are employed about our work? And shall we spend our precious time in frivolous controversies, philosophical niceties, dry and barren scholastic notions? Shall we study every thing but Christ? Revolve all volumes but the sacred ones? What is observed even of Bellarmine, that he turned with loathing from school divinity, because it wanted the sweet juice of piety, may be convictive to many among us, who are often too much in love with worse employment than what he is said to loathe. O let the knowledge of Christ dwell richly in us.

Secondly, Let us see that our knowledge of Christ be not a powerless, barren, unpractical knowledge: O that, in its passage from our understanding to our lips, it might powerfully melt, sweeten, and ravish our hearts! Remember, brethren, a holy calling never saved any man, without a holy heart; if our tongues only be sanctified, our whole man must be damned. “We and our people must be judged by the same gospel, and stand at the same bar, and be sentenced to the same terms, and dealt with as severely as any other men: We cannot think to be saved by our clergy, or to come off with a Legit ut clericus, when there is wanting the Credit et vixit ut Christianus; as an eminent Divine speaks. O let the keepers of the vineyard look to, and keep their own vineyard: we have a heaven to win or lose, as well as others.

Thirdly, Let us take heed that we withhold not our knowledge of Christ in unrighteousness from the people. O that our lips may disperse knowledge and feed many. Let us take heed of the napkin, remembering the day of account is at hand. Remember, I beseech you, the relations wherein you stand, and the obligations resulting thence: Remember, the great Shepherd gave himself for, and gave you to the flock; your time, your gifts are not yours, but God’s; remember the pinching wants of souls, who are perishing for want of Christ; and if their tongues do not, yet their necessities do bespeak us, as they did Joseph, Genesis 47:15. “Wherefore should we die in thy presence? Give us food, that we may live and not die.” Even the sea monsters draw forth their breasts to their young ones, and shall we be cruel! Cruel to souls! Did Christ not think it too much to sweat blood, yea, to die for them? And shall we think it much to watch, study, preach, pray, and do what we can for their salvation? O let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ!

Secondly, To the people that sit under the doctrine of Christ daily, and have the light of his knowledge shining round about them.

First, Take heed ye do not reject and despise this light. This may be done two ways: First, When you despise the means of knowledge by slight and low esteems of it. Surely, if you thus reject knowledge, God will reject you for it, Hosea 4:6. It is a despising of the richest gift that ever Christ gave to the church; and however it be a contempt and slight that begins low, and seems only to vent itself upon the weak parts, in artificial discourses, and untaking tones and gestures of the speakers; yet, believe it, it is a daring sin that flies higher than you are aware, Luke 10:16 “He that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me”. Secondly, You despise the knowledge of Christ, When you despise the directions and loving constraints of that knowledge; when you refuse to be guided by your knowledge, your light and your lusts contest and struggle within you. O it is sad when your lusts master your light. You sin not as the heathens sin, who know not God; but when you sin, you must slight and put by the notices of your own consciences, and offer violence to your own convictions. And what sad work will this make in your souls? How soon will it lay your consciences waste?

Secondly, Take heed that you rest not satisfied with that knowledge of Christ you have attained, but grow on towards perfection. It is the pride and ignorance of many professors, when they have got a few raw and undigested notions, to swell with self-conceit of their excellent attainments. And it is the sin, even of the best of saints, when they see (veritas in profundo) how deep the knowledge of Christ lies, and what pains they must take to dig for it, to throw by the shovel of duty, and cry, Dig we cannot. To your work, Christians, to your work; let not your candle go out: sequester yourselves to this study, look what intercourses, and correspondence are betwixt the

two world; what communion soever God and souls maintain, it is in this way; count all, therefore, but dross in comparison of that excellency which is in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

S. Opens the admirable love of God in

Sermon 4. Opens the admirable love of God in giving his own Son for us.

John 3:16. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

You have heard of the gracious purpose and design of God, to recover poor sinners to himself by Jesus Christ, and how this design of love was laid and contrived in the covenant of redemption, whereof we last spake.

Now, according to the terms of that covenant, you shall hear from this scripture, how that design was by one degree advanced towards its accomplishment, in God's actual giving or parting with his own Son far us: "God so loved the world, that he gave," &c. The whole precedent context is spent in discovering the nature and necessity of regeneration, and the necessity thereof is in this text urged and inferred from the peculiar respect and eye God had upon believers, in giving Christ for them; they only reaping all the special and saving benefits and advantages of that gift: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish." In the words are to be considered,

1. The original spring or fountain of our best mercies, the love of God. The love of God is, either benevolent, beneficent, or complacential. His benevolent love, is nothing else but his desire and purpose of saving, and doing us good; so his purpose and grace to Jacob is called love, Romans 9:13. "Jacob have I loved;" but this being before Jacob was, could consist in nothing else but the gracious purpose of God towards him. His beneficent love, is his actual doing, good to the persons beloved, or his bestowing the effects of his love upon us, according to that purpose. His complacential love, is nothing else but that delight and satisfaction he finds in beholding the fruits and workings of that grace in us, which he first intended for us, and then actually collated or bestowed on us. This love of benevolence, is that which I have opened to you, under the former head, God's compact with Christ about us, or his design to save us on the articles and terms therein specified. The love of beneficence, is that which this scripture speaks of; out of this fountain Christ flowed to us, and both ran into that of complacency, for therefore he both purposed and actually bestowed Christ on us, that he might everlastingly delight in beholding the glory and praise of all this reflected on himself, by his redeemed ones. This then is the fountain of our mercies.

2. The mercy flowing out of this fountain, and that is Christ; The mercy, as he is emphatically called, Luke 1:72. The marrow, kernel, and substance of all other mercies. He gave his only begotten Son: This was the birth of that love, the like whereunto it never brought forth before, therefore it is expressed with a double emphasis in the text, the one is the particle "houtos", so; "he so loved the world;" here is a sic without a sicut: How did he love it? Why, he so loved it; but how much, the tongues of angels cannot declare. And moreover, to enhance the mercy, he is stiled his only begotten Son: to have given a Son had been wonderful; but to give his only begotten Son,

that is love inexpressible, unintelligible.

3. The objects of this love, or the persons to whom the eternal Lord delivered Christ, and that is the [world.] This must respect the elect of God in the world, such as do, or shall actually believe, as it is exegetically expressed in the next words, “That whosoever believes in him should not perish:” Those whom he calls the world in that, he stiles believers in this expression; and the word [world] is put to signify the elect, because they are scattered through all parts, and are among all ranks of men in the world; these are the objects of this love; it is not angels, but men, that were so loved; he is called “filantropos”, a Lover, a Friend of Men, but never “filangelos” or “filokisos”, the Lover or Friend of Angels, or creatures of another species.

4. The manner in which this never-enough celebrated mercy flows to us, from the fountain of divine love, and that is most freely and spontaneously. He gave, not he sold, or barely parted from, but gave. Nor yet does the Father’s giving imply Christ to be merely passive; for as the Father is here said to give him, so the apostle tells us, Galatians 2:20. That he gave himself; “who loved me, and gave himself for me:” The Father gave him out of good will to men, and he as willingly bestowed himself on that service. Hence the note is,

Doct. That the gift of Christ is the highest and fullest manifestation of the love of God to sinners, that ever was made from eternity to them.

How is this gift of God to sinners signalised in that place of the apostle, 1 John 4:10, “Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins?” Why does the apostle so magnify this gift in saying, “Herein is love,” as if there were love in nothing else! May we not say, that to have a being, a being among the rational creatures, therein is love? To have our life carried so many years like a taper in the hand of Providence, through so many dangers, and not yet put out in obscurity, therein is love? To have food and raiment, convenient for us, beds to lie on, relations to comfort us, in all these is love? Yea, but if you speak comparatively, in all these there is no love, to the love expressed in sending or giving Christ for us: These are great mercies in themselves, but compared to this mercy, they are all swallowed up, as the light of candles when brought into the sun-shine. No, no, herein is love, that God gave Christ for us. And it is remarkable, that when the apostle would show us, in Romans 5:8, what is the noblest fruit that most commends to men the root of divine love that bears it, he shows us this very fruit of it that I am now opening; “But God, saith he, commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us:” this is the very flower of that love. The method into which I will cast this precious point, shall be this: (1.) To show how Jesus Christ was given by the Father. (2.) How that gift is the fullest and richest manifestation of the love of God that was ever made to the world. (3.) And then draw forth the uses of it.

1. How was Jesus Christ given by the Father, and what is implied therein.

You are not so to understand it, as though God parted with his interest and property in his Son, when he is said to give him; he was as much his own as ever. When men give, they transfer property to another; but when God had given him, he was, I say, still as much his own as ever: but this giving of Christ implies,

(1.) His designation and appointment unto death for us; for so you read, that it was done “according to the determinate counsel of God,” Acts 2:23. Look, as the Lamb under the Law was

separated from the flock, and set apart for a sacrifice; though it were still living, yet it was intentionally, and preparatively given, and consecrated to the Lord: so Jesus Christ was, by the counsel and purpose of God, thus chosen, and set apart for his service: and therefore in Isaiah 42:1. God calls him his Elect, or chosen One.

(2.) His giving Christ, implies a parting with him, or setting him (as the French has it) at some distance from himself for a time. There was a kind of parting betwixt the Father and the Son, when he came to tabernacle in our flesh: so he expresseth it, John 16:28. “I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world and go to the Father”. This distance that this incarnation and humiliation set him at, was properly as to his humanity, which was really distant from the glory into which it is now taken up, and in respect of manifestation of delight and love, the Lord seemed to carry it as one at a distance from him. Oh! this was it that so deeply pierced, and wounded his soul, as is evident from that complaint, Psalms 32:1-2. “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the day time, but thou hearest not,” &c.

(3.) God’s giving of Christ, implies his delivering him into the hands of justice to be punished; even as condemned persons are, lay sentence of law, given or delivered into the hands of executioners. So Acts 2:23. “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel at God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have slain:” and so he is said, Romans 8:32 “To deliver him up to death for us all.” The Lord, when the time was come that Christ must suffer, did, as it were, say, O all ye roaring waves of my incensed justice, now swell as high as heaven, and go over his soul and body; sink him to the bottom; let him go, like Jonah, his type, into the belly of hell, unto the roots of the mountains. Come all ye raging storms, that I have reserved for this day of wrath, beat upon him, beat him down, that he may not be able to look up, Psalms 60:12. Go justice, put him upon the rack, torment him in every part, till all his “bones be out of joint, arid his heart within him be melted as wax; in the midst of his bowels,” Psalms 22:14. And ye assembly of the wicked Jews and Gentiles, that have so long gaped for his blood, now he is delivered into your hands; you are permitted to execute your malice to the full: I now loose your chain, and into your hand and power is he delivered.

(4.) God’s giving of Christ, implies his application of him, with all the purchase of his blood, and settling, all this upon us, as an inheritance and portion, John 6:32-33, “My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven; for the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth light to the world.” God has giveth him as bread to poor starving creatures, that by faith they might eat and live. And so he told the Samaritaness, John 4:10. “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.” Bread and water are the two necessaries for the support of natural life; God has given Christ, you see, to be all that, and more, to the spiritual life.

2. How this gift of Christ was the highest, and fullest manifestation of the love of God, that ever the world saw: and this will be evidenced by the following particulars:

(1.) If you consider how near and dear Jesus Christ was to the Father; he was his Son, “his only Son,” saith the text; the Son of his love, the darling of his Soul: His other Self, yea, one with himself; the express image of his person; the brightness of his Father’s Glory: In parting with him, he parted with his own heart, with his very bowels, as I may say. “Yet to us a Son is given,” Isaiah

9:6, and such a Son as he calls “his dear Son,” Colossians 1:13. A late writer tells us, that he has been informed, that in the famine in Germany, a poor family being ready to perish with famine, the husband made a motion to the wife, to sell one of the children for bread, to relieve themselves and the rest: The wife at last consents it should be so; but then they began to think which of the four should be sold; and when the eldest was named, they both refused to part with that, being their first born, and the beginning of their strength. Well, then they came to the second, but could not yield that he should be sold, being the very picture and lively image of his father. The third was named, but that also was a child that best resembled the mother. And when the youngest was thought on, that was the Benjamin, the child of their old age; and so were content rather to perish altogether in the famine, than to part with a child for relief. And you know how tenderly Jacob took it, when his Joseph and Benjamin were rent from him. What is a child, but a piece of the parent wrapt up in another skin? And yet our dearest children are but as strangers to us, in comparison of the unspeakable dearness that was betwixt the Father and Christ. Now, that he should ever be content to part with a Son, and such an only One, is such a manifestation of love, as will be admired to all eternity. And then,

(2.) Let it be considered, To what he gave him, even to death, and that of the cross; to be made a curse for us; to be the scorn and contempt of men; to the most unparalleled sufferings that ever were inflicted or borne by any. It melts our bowels, it breaks our heart, to behold our children striving in the pangs of death: but the Lord beheld his Son struggling under agonies that never any felt before him. He saw him falling to the ground, grovelling in the dust, sweating blood, and amidst those agonies turning himself to his Father, and, with a heart rending cry, beseeching him, “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass,” Luke 22:42. To wrath, to the wrath, of an infinite God without mixture; to the very torments of hell was Christ delivered, and that by the hand of his own Father. Sure then that love must needs want a name, which made the Father of mercies deliver his only Son to such miseries for us.

(3.) It is a special consideration to enhance the love of God in giving Christ, that in giving him he gave the richest jewel in his cabinet; a mercy of the greatest worth, and most inestimable value, Heaven itself is not so valuable and precious as Christ is: He is the better half of heaven; and so the saints account him, Psalms 73:25, “Whom have I in heaven but thee?” Ten thousand thousand worlds, saith one, as many worlds as angels can number, and then as a new world of angels can multiply, would not all be the bulk of a balance, to weigh Christ’s excellency, love, and sweetness. O what a fair One! what an only One! what an excellent, lovely, ravishing One, is Christ! Put the beauty of ten thousand paradises, like the garden of Eden, into one; put all trees, all flowers, all smells, all colours, all tastes, all joys, all sweetness, all loveliness in one; O what a fair and excellent thing would that be? And yet it should be less to that fair and dearest well-beloved Christ, than one drop of rain to the whole seas, rivers, lakes, and fountains of ten thousand earths. Christ is heaven’s wonder, and earths wonder.

Now, for God to bestow the mercy of mercies, the most precious thing in heaven or earth, upon poor sinners; and, as great, as lovely, as excellent as his Son was, yet not to account him too good to bestow upon us, what manner of love is this!

(4.) Once more, let it be considered on whom the Lord bestowed his Son: upon angels? No, but upon men. Upon man his friend? No, but upon his enemies. This is love; and on this consideration

the apostle lays a mighty weight, in Romans 5:8-10. “But God (saith he) commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us, - When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.” Who would part with a son for the sake of his dearest friends? but God gave him to, and delivered him for enemies: O love unspeakable!

(5.) Lastly, Let us consider how freely this gift came from him: It was not wrested out of his hand by our importunity; for we as little desired as deserved it: It was surprising, preventing, eternal love, that delivered him to us: “Not that we loved him, but he first loved us,” 1 John 4:19. Thus as when you weigh a thing, you cast in weight after weight, till the scales break; so does God, one consideration upon another, to overcome our hearts, and make us admiringly to cry, what manner of love is this! And thus I have shewed you what God’s giving of Christ is, and what matchless love is manifested in that incomparable gift.

Next we shall apply this, in some practical corollaries.

Corollary 1. Learn hence, The exceeding preciousness of souls, and at what a high rate God values them that he will give his Son, his only Son out of his bosom, as a ransom for them. Surely this speaks their preciousness: God would not have parted with such a Son for small matters: all the world could not redeem them; gold and silver could not be their ransom; so speaks the apostle, 1 Peter 1:18. “You were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ.” Such an esteem God had for them, that rather than they should perish, Jesus Christ shall be made a man, yea, a curse for them. Oh then, learn to put a due value upon your own souls: do not sell that cheap, which God has paid so dear for: Remember what a treasure you carry about you; the glory that you see in this world is not equivalent in worth to it. Matthew 16:26. “What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”

Corollary 2. If God has given his own Son for the world, then it follows, that those for whom God gave his own Son, may warrantably expect any other temporal mercies from him. This is the apostle’s inference, Romans 8:32. “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all; how shall he not, with him, freely give us all things?” And so 1 Corinthians 3:21-22. “All is yours, for ye are Christ’s” i. e. They hold all other things in Christ, who is the capital, and most comprehensive mercy. To make out the grounds of this comfortable deduction, let these four things be pondered, and duly weighed in your thoughts. (1.) No other mercy you need or desire, is, or can be so dear to God, as Jesus Christ is: he never laid any other thing in his bosom as he did his Son. As for the world, and the comforts of it, it is the dust of his feet, he values it not; as you see by his providential disposals of it; having given it to the worst of men. “All the Turkish empire,” saith Luther, “as great and glorious as it is, is but a crumb which the master of the family throws to the dogs.” Think upon any other outward enjoyment that is valuable in your eyes, and there is not so much comparison betwixt it and Christ, in the esteem of God, as is betwixt your dear children and the lumber of your houses, in your esteem. If then God has parted so freely from that which was infinitely dearer to him than these; how shall he deny these, when they may promote his glory, and your good? (2.) As Jesus Christ was nearer the heart of God than all these; so Christ is, in himself, much greater and more excellent than all of them: Ten thousand worlds, and the glory of them all, is but the dust of the balance, if weighed with Christ. These things are but poor creatures, but he is over all, God blessed for ever, Romans 9:5. They are common gifts, but he is the Gift of God, John 4:10. They are ordinary mercies, but he is The mercy, Luke 1:72. As one pearl, or

precious stone is greater in value than ten thousand common pebbles. Now, if God has so freely given the greater, how can you suppose he should deny the lesser, mercies? Will a man give to another a large inheritance, and stand with him for a trifle? how can it be? (3.) There is no other mercy you want, but you are entitled to it by the gift of Christ; it is, as to right, conveyed to you with Christ. So, in the fore cited 1 Corinthians 3:21-23. “the world is yours, yea, all is yours; for ye are Christ’s.” So 2 Corinthians 1:20. “For all the promises of God in Christ, in him they are yea, and in him, amen.” With him he has given you all things, “eis apolausin”, 1 Timothy 6:17. richly to enjoy: the word signifies rem aliquam cum laetitia percipere, to have the sweet relish and comfort of an enjoyment. So have we in all our mercies, upon the account of our title to them in Christ. (4.) Lastly, If God has given you this nearer, greater, and all comprehending mercy, when you were enemies to him, and alienated from him; it is not imaginable he should deny you any inferior mercy, when you are come into a state of reconciliation and amity with him. So the apostle reasons, Romans 5:8-10. “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God, by the death of his Son; much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life”. And thus you have the second inference with its grounds.

Corollary 3. If the greatest love has been manifested in giving Christ to the world, then it follows, that the greatest evil and wickedness is manifested in despising, slighting, and rejecting Christ. It is sad to abuse the love of God manifested in the lowest gift of providence; but, to slight the richest discoveries of it, even in that peerless gift, wherein God commends his love in the most taking and astonishing manner; this is sin with a witness. Blush, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth; yea, be ye horribly afraid! No guilt like this. The most flagitious wretches among the barbarous nations are innocent, in comparison of these. But, are there any such in the world? Dare any slight this gift of God? Indeed, if men’s words might be taken, there are few or none that dare do so; but if their lives and practices may be believed, this, this is the sin of the far greater part of the christianised world. Witness the lamentable stupidity and supineness; witness the contempt of the gospel; witness the hatred and persecution of his image, laws and people. What is the language of all this, but a vile esteem of Jesus Christ? And now, let me a little expostulate with those ungrateful souls, that trample under foot the Son of God, that value not this love that gave him forth. What is that mercy which you so condemn and undervalue? is it so vile and cheap a thing as your entertainment speaks it to be? Is it indeed worth no more than this in your eyes? Surely you will not be long of that opinion! Will you be of that mind, think on, when death and judgement shall have thoroughly awakened you! Oh, no: Then a thousand worlds for a Christ! as it is storied of our crooked-backed Richard, when he lost the field, and was in great danger by his enemies that pressed upon him; Oh now, (said he) a kingdom for a horse! Or think we, that any beside you in the world are of your mind? you are deceived, if you think so, “To them that believe he is precious,” through all the world, 1 Peter 2:7. and in the other world they are of a quite contrary mind. Could you but hear what is said of him in heaven, in what a dialect the saved of the Lord do extol their Saviour; or could you but imagine the self-revenges, the self torments, which the damned suffer for their folly, and what a value they would set upon one tender of Christ, if it might but again be hoped for; you would see that such as you are the only despisers of Christ. Beside, methinks it is astonishing, that you should despise a mercy in which your own souls are so dearly, so deeply, so everlastingly concerned, as they are in this gift of God. If it were but the soul of another, nay, less, if but the body of another, and yet less than that, if but another’s beast, whose life you could preserve, you are obliged to do it; but when it is thyself, yea, the best part of thyself, thine own

invaluable soul, that thou ruinest and destroyest thereby, Oh, what a monster art thou, to cast it away thus! What! will you slight your own souls? care you not whether they be saved, or whether they be damned? is it indeed an indifferent thing with you which way they fall at death? have you imagined a tolerable hell? is it easy to perish? are you not only turned God's enemies, but your own too? Oh see what monsters sin can turn men and women into! Oh the stupefying, besetting, intoxicating power of sin! But perhaps you think that all these are but uncertain sounds, with which we alarm you; it may be thine own heart will preach such doctrine as this to thee: Who can assure thee of the reality of these things? why shouldest thou trouble thyself with an invisible world, or be so much concerned for what thine eyes never saw, nor midst ever receive the report from any that have seen them? Well, though we cannot now show you these things, yet shortly they shall be shown you; and your own eyes shall behold them. You are convinced and satisfied that many other things are real which you never saw: but be assured, That "if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation, which at first began to be spoken to us by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by them that heard him, God also bearing them witness?" Hebrews 2:2-4. But if they be certain, yet they are not near; it will be a long time before they come. Poor soul! how dost thou cheat thyself? It maybe not by twenty parts so long a time as thy own fancy draws it forth for thee; thou art not certain of the next moment. And suppose what thou imagines: What are twenty or forty years when they are past? yea, what are a thousand years to vast eternity? Go trifle away a few days more, sleep out a few nights more, and then lie down in the dust; it will not be long ere the trump of God shall awaken thee, and thine eyes shall behold Jesus coming in the clouds of heaven, and then you will know the price of this sin. Oh, therefore, if there be any sense of eternity upon you, any pity or love for yourselves in you; if you have any concernments more than the beasts that perish, despise not your own offered mercies, slight not the richest gift that ever was yet opened to the world; and a sweeter cannot be opened to all eternity,

S. Sets forth CHRIST in his essential and primeval GLORY.

SERMON II.

Sets forth CHRIST in his essential and primeval GLORY.

Proverbs 8:30.

Then was I by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.

THESE words are a part of that excellent commendation of wisdom, by which in this book Solomon intends two things; first, Grace or holiness, Proverbs 4:7. "Wisdom is the principal "thing." Secondly, Jesus Christ, the fountain of that grace: and look, as the former is renowned for its excellency, Job 28:14, Job 28:15. so the latter, in this context, wherein the Spirit of God describes the most blessed state of Jesus Christ, the wisdom of the Father, from those eternal delights he had with his Father, be fore his assumption of our nature: "Then was I by him," &c. that long Evum was wholly swallowed up, and spent in unspeakable delights and pleasures. Which delights were twofold, (1.) The Father and Son delighted one in another (from which delights the Spirit is not here excluded) without communicating that their joy to any other, for no creature did then exist save in the mind of God, Proverbs 8:30. (2.) They delighted in the salvation of men, in the prospect of that work, though not yet extant, Proverbs 8:30. My present business lies in the former, viz. the mutual delights of the Father and Son, one with and in another; the account whereof we have in the text; wherein consider,

1. The glorious condition of the non-incarnated Son of God, described by the person with whom his fellowship was, "Then " was I by him," or with him; so with him as never was any, in his very bosom, John 1:18. the only begotten Son was in the bosom of the Father; an expression of the greatest dearness and intimacy in the world; as if he should say, wrapt up in the very soul of his Father, embosomed in God.

2. This fellowship is illustrated by a metaphor, wherein the Lord will stoop to our capacities, (as "One brought up with "him") the Hebrew word noma [Amon] is sometimes rendered a cunning workman, or curious artist, as in Song of Solomon 7:1. which is the same word. And indeed Christ shewed himself such an artist in the creation of the world; "For all things were made by him, "and without him there was nothing made, that was made," John 1:3. But Montanus, and others, render it nutricius; and so Christ is here compared to a delightful child, sporting before its Father: the Hebrew root qhc [Skachak,] which our translation renders "rejoicing before him," signifies to laugh, play, or rejoice; so that, look as parents delight to see their children sporting before them, so did the Father delight in beholding this darling of his bosom.

3. This delight is farther amplified by the perpetuity, and uninterruptedness thereof; "I was day by day his delights, rejoicing always before him." These delights of the Father and the Son one in

another, knew not a moment's interruption, or diminution: thus did these great and glorious persons mutually let forth their fullest pleasure and delight, each into the heart of the other; they lay as it were embosomed one in another, entertaining themselves with delights and pleasures ineffable, and unconceivable. Hence we observe,

Doct. That the condition and state of Jesus Christ before his incarnation, was a state of the highest and most unspeakable delight and pleasure, in the enjoyment of his Father.

John tells us he was in the bosom of his Father: to lie in the bosom is the posture of dearest love, John 13:23. "Now there "was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples whom Jesus "loved:" but Christ did not lean upon the Father's bosom, as that disciple did in his, but lay in it: and therefore in Isaiah 43:1. the Father calls him, "Mine elect in whom my soul delighteth;" which is variously rendered; the Septuagint, quen suscepit, whom my soul takes, or wraps up: others, complacuit, one that highly pleases and delights my very soul: and 2 Corinthians 8:9. he is said, in this estate, wherein I am now describing him, to be rich: and, Php 2:7. "To be equal with God, and to be in the form of "God," (i.e.) to have all the glory and ensigns of the majesty of God; and the riches which he speaks of, was no less than all that God the Father hath, John 16:14. "All that the Father hath is "mine:" and what he now hath in his exalted state, is the same he had before his humiliation, John 17:5. Now to sketch out (as we are able) the unspeakable felicity of that state of Christ, whilst he lay in that blessed bosom, I shall consider it three ways, negatively, positively, and comparatively.

1. Let us consider that state negatively, by removing from it all those degrees of abasement and sorrow which his incarnation brought him under: as,

First, He was not then abased to the condition of a creature, which was a low step indeed, and that which upon the matter undid him in point of reputation; for by this (saith the apostle) "he "made himself of no reputation," Php 2:7. it emptied him of his glory, For God to be made man, is such an abasement as none can express: but then not only to appear in true flesh, but also in the likeness of sinful flesh, as, Romans 8:3. O what is this!

Secondly, Christ was not under the law in this estate. I confess it was no disparagement to Adam in the state of innocency, to angels in their state of glory, to be under law to God; but it was an unconceivable abasement to the absolute independent Being to come under law: yea, not only under the obedience, but also under the malediction and curse of the law, Galatians 4:4. "But when the "fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a "woman, made under the law."

Thirdly, In this state he was not liable to any of those sorrowful consequents and attendants of that frail and feeble state of humanity, which he afterwards assumed, with the nature. As, (1.) He was unacquainted with griefs; there was no sorrowing or sighing in that bosom where he lay, though afterwards he became "a man "of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," Isaiah 53:3. "A man of "sorrows," as if he had been constituted and made up of pure and unmixed sorrows; every day conversing with griefs, as with his intimate companions and acquaintance. (2.) He was never pinched with poverty and wants, while he continued in that bosom, as he was afterwards, when he said, "The foxes have holes, "and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath "not where to lay his head,' Matthew 8:20. Ah blessed Jesus! thou needest not to have wanted a place

to have lain thine head, hadst thou not left that bosom for my sake. (3.) He never underwent reproach and shame in that bosom, there was nothing but glory and honour reflected upon him by his Father, though afterwards he was despised, and rejected of men, Isaiah 53:3. His Father never looked upon him without smiles and love, delight and joy, though afterwards he became a reproach of men, and despised of the people, Psalms 22:6. (4.) His holy heart was never offended with an impure suggestion or temptation of the Devil; all the while he lay in that bosom of peace and love, he never knew what it was to be assaulted with temptations, to be besieged and battered upon by unclean spirits, as he did afterwards, Matthew 4:1. "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness "to be tempted of the Devil." It was for our sakes that he submitted to those exercises of spirit, "to be in all points tempted like as we are, that he might be unto us a merciful and faithful High-priest," Hebrews 4:15. (5.) He was never sensible of pains and tortures in soul or body, there were no such things in that blessed bosom where he lay, though afterwards he groaned and sweat under them, Isaiah 53:5. The Lord embraced him from eternity, but never wounded him till he stood in our place and room. (6.) There were no hidings or withdrawings of his Father from him; there was not a cloud from eternity upon the face of God, till Jesus Christ had left that bosom. It was a new thing to Christ to see frowns in the face of his Father; a new thing for him to cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Matthew 27:46. (7.) There were never any impressions of his Father's wrath upon him, as there were afterwards: God never delivered such a bitter cup into his hands before, as that was, Matthew 26:39. Lastly, There was no death, to which he was subject, in that bosom. All these things were new things to Christ; he was above them all, till for our sakes he voluntarily subjected himself unto them. Thus you see what that state was not.

2. Let us consider it positively, what it was, and guess by some particular considerations (for indeed we can but guess) at the glory of it; as, (1.) We cannot but conceive it to be a state of matchless happiness, if we consider the persons enjoying and delighting in each other: he was with God, John 1:1. God, you know, is the fountain, ocean and centre of all delights and joys: Psalms 16:11. "In thy presence is fulness of joy." To be wrapt up in the soul and bosom of all delights, as Christ was, must needs be a state transcending apprehension; to have the fountain of love and delight letting out itself so immediately, and fully, and everlastingly, upon this only begotten darling of his soul, so as it never did communicate itself to any; judge what a state of transcendent felicity this must he. Great persons have great delights.

(2.) Or if we consider the intimacy, dearness, yea, oneness of those great persons one with another: the nearer the union, the sweeter the communion. Now Jesus Christ was not only near and dear to God, but one with him; "I and my Father are one," John 10:30. one in nature, will, love and delight. There is indeed a moral union of souls among men by love, but this was a natural oneness; no child is so one with his father, no husband so one with the wife of his bosom, no friend so one with his friend, no soul so one with its body, as Jesus Christ and his Father were one. O what matchless delights must necessarily flow from such a blessed union!

(3.) Consider again the purity of that delight with which the blessed Father and Son embraced each other; the best creature delights one in another, are mixed, debased, and allayed; if there be something ravishing and engaging, there is also something cloying and distasting. The purer any delight is, the more excellent. Now, there are no chrystal streams flowing so purely from the fountain, no beams of light so unmixed from the sun, as the loves and delights of these holy and glorious persons were: the holy, holy, holy Father embraced the thrice holy Son with a most holy

delight and love.

(4.) Consider the constancy of this delight; it was from everlasting, as in verse 23. and from eternity; it never suffered one moment's interruption. The overflowing fountain of God's delight and love never stopped its course, never ebbed; but as he speaks in the text, "I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before "him." Once more, consider the fulness of that delight, the perfection of that pleasure; I was delights: so the word is in its original; not only plural, delights, all delights, but also in the abstract, delight itself: as afterwards from the abundance of his sorrows, he was stiled, a man of sorrows; so here, from the fulness of his delights: as though you should say, even constituted and made up of pleasure and delight.

3. Once more, let us consider it comparatively, and this state will yet appear more glorious, comparing it with either the choicest delights that one creature takes in another, or that God takes in the creature, or that the creatures take in God: measure these immense delights, betwixt the Father and his Son, by either of these lines, and you shall find them infinitely short: For, (1.) Though the delights that creatures take in each other, be sometimes a great delight; such was Jacob's delight in Benjamin, whose life is said to be bound up in the lad's life, a dear and high expression, Genesis 44:30. Such was that of Jonathan in David, whose soul was knit with his soul, "and he loved him as his own soul," 1 Samuel 13:1. and such is the delight of one friend in another: "there is a friend that is as a man's own soul," Deuteronomy 13:6. yet all this is but creature-delight, and can in no particular equal the delights betwixt the Father and the Son; for this is but a finite delight, according to the measure and abilities of creatures, but that is infinite, suitable to the infinite perfection of the divine Being; this is always mixed, that perfectly pure. (2.) Or if you compare it with the delight that God takes in the creatures, it is confessed that God takes great delight in some creatures. "The Lord "takes pleasure in his saints, he rejoices over them with singing! "And resteth in his love," Zephaniah 3:17., Isaiah 42:5. But yet there is a great difference betwixt his delight in creatures, and his delights in Christ; for all his delight in the saints is secondary, and for Christ's sake; but his delights in Christ are primary, and for His own sake: we are accepted in the beloved, Ephesians 1:6. he is beloved, and accepted for himself. (3.) To conclude, compare it once more with the delights that the best of creatures take in God, and Christ, and it must be confessed that is a choice delight, and a transcendent love, with which they love and delight in him; Psalms 73:25. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and on "earth there is none I desire besides thee." What pangs of love, what raptures of delight did the spouse express to Christ? "O thou "whom my soul loveth!" But surely our delight in God is no perfect rule to measure his delight in Christ by: for our love to God (at the best) is still imperfect; that is the burden and constant complaint of saints, but this is perfect; ours is inconstant, up and down, ebbing and flowing, but this is constant. So then, to conclude, the condition and state of Jesus Christ before his incarnation, was a state of the highest and matchless delight, in the enjoyment of his Father. The uses follow.

Use of Information.

INFERENCE 1.

What an astonishing act of love was this then, for the Father to give the delight, the darling, of his soul, out of his very bosom, for poor sinners! all tongues must needs pause and falter, that attempt the expressions of his grace, expressions being here swallowed up: "God so loved the world, that

he gave his only begotten "Son," John 3:16. Here is a sic without a sicut; so loved them: how did he love them? nay, here you must excuse the tongues of angels; which of us would deliver a child, the child of our delights, an only child, to death for the greatest inheritance in the world? what tender parent can endure a parting pull with such a child? when Hagar was taking her last leave (as she thought) of her Ishmael, Genesis 21:16. the text saith, "she went and sat "her down over against him, a good way off: for she said, Let "me not see the death of the child. And she sat over-against "him, and lift up her voice, and wept:" though she were none of the best of mothers, nor he the best of children, yet she could not give up the child. O it was hard to part! what an outcry did David make, even for an Absalom! wishing he had died for him. What a hole (as I may say) hath the death of some children made in the hearts of some parents, which will never be closed up in this world! yet surely, never did any child lie so close to a parent's heart as Christ did to his Father's; and yet he willingly parts with him, though his only one, the Son of his delights, and that to death, a cursed death, for sinners, for the worst of sinners. O miranda Dei philanthropia! O the admirable love of God to men! matchless love! a love past finding out! Let all men, therefore, in the business of their redemption, give equal glory to the Father with the Son, John 5:23. if the Father had not loved thee, he had never parted with such a Son for thee.

INFERENCE 2. From one wonder let our souls turn to another, for they are now in the midst of wonders adore, and be for ever astonished at the love of Jesus Christ to poor sinners; that ever he should consent to leave such a bosom, and the ineffable delights that were there, for such poor worms as we are. O the heights, depths, lengths, and breadths of unmeasurable love! O see, Romans 5:6-8 read, and wonder; how is the love of Christ commended in ravishing circumstances to poor sinners! You would be loth to leave a creature's bosom, a comfortable dwelling, a fair estate for the best friend in the world; your souls are loth to leave their bodies, though they have no such great content there; but which of you, if ever you found by experience what it is to be in the be in the bosom of God by divine communion, would be persuaded to leave such a bosom for all the good that is in the world? and yet Jesus Christ who was embraced in that bosom after another manner than ever you were acquainted with, freely left it, and laid down the glory and riches he enjoyed there, for your sakes; and as the Father loved him; even so (believers) hath he loved you, John 17:22. What manner of love is this! Who ever loved as Christ loves? Who ever denied himself for Christ, as Christ denied himself for us?

INFERENCE 3.

Hence we are informed, That interest in Jesus Christ is the true way to all spiritual preferment in heaven. Do you covet to be in the heart, in the favour and delight of God? Get interest in Jesus Christ, and you shall presently be there. What old Israel said of the children of his beloved Joseph, Thy children are my children; the same God saith of all the dear children of Christ, Genesis 48:5, Genesis 48:9. You see among men, all things are carried by interest: persons rise in this world as they are befriended; preferment goes by favour: So it is in heaven, persons are preferred according to their interest in the beloved, Ephesians 1:9. Christ is the great favourite in heaven: his image upon your souls, and his name in your prayers, makes both accepted with God.

INFERENCE 4.

How worthy is Jesus Christ of all our love and delights? You see how infinitely the Father delighteth in him, how he ravishes the heart of God; and shall he not ravish our hearts? I present

you a Christ this day, able to ravish any soul that will but view and consider him. O that you did but see this lovely Lord Jesus Christ! Then would you go home sick of love: surely he is a drawing Saviour, John 12:32. Why do ye lavish away your precious affections upon vanity: None but Christ is worthy of them: when you spend your precious affections upon other objects, what is it but to dig for dross with golden mattocks? The Lord direct our hearts into the Love of Christ. O that our hearts, loves and delights did meet and concentre with the heart of God in this most blessed object! O let him that left God's bosom for you, be embosomed by you, though yours be nothing to God's; he that left God's bosom for you, deserves yours.

INFERENCE 5.

If Christ be the beloved darling of the Father's soul, think what a grievous and insufferable thing it is to the heart of God, to see his dear Son despised, slighted, and rejected by sinners verily, there is no such cut to the heart of God in the whole world. Unbelievers trample upon God's darling, tread under foot him that eternally lay in his bosom, Hebrews 10:29. Smite the Apple of his eye, and how God will bear this, that parable, Matthew 21:37, to , will inform you; surely he will miserably destroy such wretched sinners. If you would study to do God the greatest despight, there is none like this. What a dismal word is that; 1 Corinthians 16:22. "If any "man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha," (i. e.) let the great curse of God lie upon that man till the Lord come. O sinners! you shall one day know the price of this sin; you shall feel what it is to despise a Jesus, that is able to compel love from the hardest heart. O that you would slight him no more! O that this day your hearts might fall in love with him! I tell you, if you would set your love to sale, none bids so fair for it as Christ.

Use of Exhortation

1. To saints: If Christ lay eternally in this bosom of love, and yet was content to forsake and leave it for your sakes; then, (1.) Be you ready to forsake and leave all the comforts you have on earth for Christ: famous Galleacius left all for this enjoyment. Moses left all the glory of Egypt: Peter, and the other Apostles left all, Luke 18:28. But what have we to leave for Christ in comparison of what he left for us? Surely Christ is the highest pattern of self-denial in the world. (2.) Let this confirm your faith in prayer: If he, that has such an interest in the heart of God, intercede with the Father for you, then never doubt of audience and acceptance with him; surely you shall be accepted through the beloved, Ephesians 1:6. Christ was never denied any thing that he asked, John 11:42. the Father hears him always; though you are not worthy, Christ is, and he ever lives to make intercession for you, Hebrews 7:25.

(3.) Let this encourage thy heart, O saint, in a dying hour, and not only make thee patient in death, but in a holy manner impatient till thou be gone; for whither is thy soul now going, but to that bosom of love whence Christ came? John 17:24. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am:" and where is he but in that bosom of glory and love where he lay before the world was? ver. 5. O then let very believer encourage his soul; comfort ye one another with. these words, I am leaving the bosom of a creature, I am going to the bosom of God.

2. To sinners, exhorting them to embrace the bosom-son of God: Poor Wretches! Whatever you are, or have been; whatever guilt or discouragement at present you lie under; embrace Christ, who is freely offered to you, and you shall be as dear to God as the holiest and most eminent believer

in the world: but if you still continue to despise and neglect such a Saviour, sorer wrath is treasured up for you than other sinners, even something worse than dying without mercy, Hebrews 10:28. O that these discoveries and overtures of Christ may never come to such a fatal issue with any of your souls, in whose eyes his glory hath been this day opened!

S. Sets forth Christ in his essential en

Sermon 2. Sets forth Christ in his essential en primeval Glory.

Proverbs 8:30 Then I was by him, [as] one brought up [with him]: and I was daily [his] delight, rejoicing always before him;

These words are a part of that excellent commendation of wisdom, by which in this book Solomon intends two things; first, Grace or holiness, Proverbs 4:7. " Wisdom is the principal thing." Secondly, Jesus Christ, the fountain of that grace: and look, as the former is renowned for its excellency, Job 28:14-15, so the latter, in this context, wherein the Spirit of God describes the most blessed state of Jesus Christ, the wisdom of the Father, from those eternal delights he had with his Father, before his assumption of our nature: "Then was I by him," &c. that long Evum was wholly swallowed up, and spent in unspeakable delights and pleasures. Which delights were twofold, (1.) The Father and Son delighted one in another (from which delights the Spirit is not here excluded) without communicating that their joy to any other, for no creature did then exist save in the mind of God, Proverbs 8:30. (2.) They delighted in the salvation of men, in the prospect of that work, though not yet extant, Proverbs 8:31. My present business lies in the former, viz. the mutual delights of the Father and Son, one with and in another; the account whereof we have in the text; wherein consider,

1. The glorious condition of the non-incarnated Son of God, described by the person with whom his fellowship was, "Then was I by him," or with him; so with him as never was any, in his very bosom, John 1:18, the only begotten Son was in the bosom of the Father, an expression of the greatest dearness and intimacy in the world; as if he should say, wrapt up in the very soul of his Father, embosomed in God.

2. This fellowship is illustrated by a metaphor, wherein the Lord will stoop to our capacities, (as "One brought up with him"), the Hebrew word "amon" is sometimes rendered a cunning workman, or curious artist, as in Song of Solomon 7:1, which is the same word. And indeed Christ shewed himself such an artist in the creation of the world; "For all things were made by him, and without him there was nothing made, that was made," John 1:3. But Montanus, and others, render it nutricius; and so Christ is here compared to a delightful child, spotting before its Father: the Hebrew root "shachak", which our translation renders "rejoicing before him," signifies to laugh, play, or rejoice; so that, look as parents delight to see their children sporting before them, so did the Father delight in beholding this darling of his bosom.

3. This delight is farther amplified by the perpetuity, and uninterruptedness thereof; "I was day by day his delight, rejoicing always before him." These delights of the Father and the Son one in another, knew not a moment's interruption, or diminution: thus did these great and glorious persons mutually let forth their fullest pleasure and delight, each into the heart of the other; they lay as it were embosomed one in another, entertaining themselves with delights and pleasures ineffable, and inconceivable. Hence we observe,

Doct. That the condition and state of Jesus Christ before his incarnation, was a state of the highest and most unspeakable delight and pleasure, in the enjoyment of his Father.

John tells us he was in the bosom of his Father: to lie in the bosom is the posture of dearest love, John 13:23. “Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of his disciples whom Jesus loved:” but Christ did not lean upon the Father’s bosom, as that disciple did in his, but lay in it: and therefore in Isaiah 42:1, the Father calls him, “Mine elect in whom my soul delighteth;” which is variously rendered; the Septuagint, quem suscepit, whom my soul takes, or wraps up: others, complacuit, one that highly pleases and delights my very soul: and 2 Corinthians 8:9, he is said, in this estate, wherein I am now describing him, to be rich: and, Php 2:7. “To be equal with God, and to be in the form of God,” (i. e.) to have all the glory and ensigns of the majesty of God; and the riches which he speaks of, was no less than all that God the Father has, John 16:14. “All that the Father has is mine:” and what he now has in his exalted state, is the same he had before his humiliation, John 17:5. Now to sketch out (as we are able) the unspeakable felicity of that state of Christ, whilst he lay in that blessed bosom, I shall consider it three ways, negatively, positively, and comparatively.

1. Let us consider that state negatively, by removing from it all those degrees of abasement and sorrow which his incarnation brought him under: as,

First, He was not then abased to the condition of a creature, which was a low step indeed, and that which upon the matter undid him in point of reputation; for by this (saith the apostle) “he made himself of no reputation,” Php 2:7, it emptied him of his glory. For God to be made man, is such an abasement as none can express: but then not only to appear in true flesh, but also in the likeness of sinful flesh, as. Romans 8:3. O what is this!

Secondly, Christ was not under the law in this estate. I confess it was no disparagement to Adam in the state of innocence, to angels in their state of glory, to be under law to God; but it was an inconceivable abasement to the absolute independent Being to come under law: yea, not only under the obedience, but also under the malediction and curse of the law, Galatians 4:4. “But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.”

Thirdly, In this state he was not liable to any of those sorrowful consequent and attendants of that frail and feeble state of humanity, which he afterwards assumed, with the nature. As, (1.) He was unacquainted with griefs; there was no sorrowing or sighing in that bosom where he lay, though afterwards he became a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,” Isaiah 53:3. “A man of sorrows,” as if he had been constituted and made up of pure and unmixed sorrows; every day conversing with griefs, as with his intimate companions and acquaintance. (2.) He was never pinched with poverty and wants, while he continued in that bosom, as he was afterwards, when he said, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has not where to lay his head,” Matthew 8:20. Ah blessed Jesus! thou needest not to have wanted a place to have lain thine head, hadst thou not left that bosom for my sake. (3.) He never underwent reproach and shame in that bosom, there was nothing but glory and honour reflected upon him by his Father, though afterwards he was despised, and rejected of men, Isaiah 53:3. His Father never looked upon him without smiles and love, delight and joy, though afterwards he became a reproach of men, and despised of the people, Psalms 22:6. (4.) His holy heart was never offended with an impure suggestion or temptation of the Devil; all the while he lay in that bosom of peace

and love, he never knew what it was to be assaulted with temptations to be besieged and battered upon by unclean spirits, as he did afterwards, Matthew 4:1, “Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil.” It was for our sakes that he submitted to those exercises of spirit, “to be in all points tempted like as we are, that he might be unto us a merciful and faithful high-priest, Hebrews 4:15. (5.) He was never sensible of pains and tortures in soul or body, there were no such things in that blessed bosom where he lay, though afterwards he groaned and sweat under them, Isaiah 53:5. The Lord embraced him from eternity, but never wounded him till he stood in our place and room (6.) There were no hidings or withdrawings of his Father from him; there was not a cloud from eternity upon the face of God, till Jesus Christ had left that bosom. It was a new thing to Christ to see frowns in the face of his Father; a new thing for him to cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Matthew 27:46. (7.) There were never any impressions of his Fathers wrath upon him, as there were afterwards: God never delivered such a bitter cup into his hands before, as that was, Matthew 26:39. Lastly, There was no death, to which he was subject, in that bosom. All these things were new things to Christ; he was above them all, till for our sakes he voluntarily subjected himself unto them. Thus you see what that state was not.

2. Let us consider it positively, what it was, and guess by some particular considerations (for indeed we can but guess) at the glory of it; as, (1.) We cannot but conceive it to be a state of matchless happiness, if we consider the persons enjoying and delighting in each other: he was with God, John 1:1. God, you know, is the fountain, ocean and centre of all delights and joys: Psalms 16:11, “In thy presence is fulness of joy.” To be wrapt up in the soul and bosom of all delights, as Christ was, must needs be a state transcending apprehension; to have the fountain of love and delight letting out itself so immediately, and fully, and ever lastingly, upon this only begotten darling of his soul, so as it never did communicate itself to any; judge what a state of transcendent felicity this must be. Great persons have great delights.

(2.) Or if we consider the intimacy, dearness, yea, oneness of those great persons one with another: the nearer the union, the sweeter the communion. Now Jesus Christ was not only near and dear to God, but one with him; I and my Father are one,” John 10:30, one in nature, will, love and delight. There is indeed a moral union of souls among men by love, but this was a natural oneness, no child is so one with his father, no husband so one with the wife of his bosom, no friend so one with his friend, no soul so one with its body, as Jesus Christ and his Father were one. O what matchless delights must necessarily flow from such a blessed union!

(3.) Consider again the purity of that delight with which the blessed Father and Son embraced each other; the best creature delights one in another, are mixed, debased, and allayed; if there be something ravishing and engaging, there is also something cloying and distasting. The purer any delight is, the more excellent. Now, there are no crystal streams flowing so purely from the fountain, no beams of light so unmixed from the sun, as the loves and delights of these holy and glorious persons were: the holy, holy, holy Father embraced the thrice holy Son with a most holy delight and love.

(4.) Consider the constancy of this delight; it was from everlasting, as in John 10:23, and from eternity; it never suffered one moment’s interruption. The overflowing fountain of God’s delight and love never stopped its course, never ebbed; but as he speaks in the text, “I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.” Once more, consider the fulness at that delight, the perfection of that

pleasure; I was delights: so the word is in its original; not only plural, delights, all delights, but also in the abstract, delight itself: as afterwards from the abundance of his sorrows, he was stiled, a man of sorrows, so here, from the fulness of his delights: as though you should say, even constituted and made up of pleasure and delight.

3. Once more, let us consider it comparatively, and this state still yet appear more glorious, comparing it with either the choicest delights that one creature takes in another, or that God takes in the creature, or that the creatures take in God: measure these immense delights, betwixt the Father and his Son, by either of these lines, and you shall find them infinitely short: For, (1.) Though the delights that creatures take in each other, be sometimes a great delight; such was Jacob's delight in Benjamin, whose life is said to be bound up in the lad's life, a dear and high expression, Genesis 44:30. Such was that of Jonathan in David, whose soul was knit with his soul, "and he loved him as his own soul," 1 Samuel 13:1, and such is the delight of one friend in another: "there is a friend that is as a man's own soul," Deuteronomy 13:6, yet all this is but creature-delight, and can in no particular equal the delights betwixt the Father and the Son; for this is but a finite delight, according to the measure and abilities of creatures, but that is infinite, suitable to the infinite perfection of the divine Being; this is always mixed, that perfectly pure. (2.) Or if you compare it with the delight that God takes in the creatures, it is confessed that God takes great delight in some creatures. "The Lord takes pleasure in his saints, he rejoices over them with singing! and resteth in his love," Zephaniah 3:17; Isaiah 62:5. But yet there is a great difference betwixt his delight in creatures, and his delights in Christ; for all his delight in the saints is secondary, and for Christ's sake; but his delights in Christ are primary, and for his own sake: we are accepted in the beloved, Ephesians 1:6, he is beloved, and accepted for himself. (3.) To conclude, compare it once more with the delights that the best of creatures take in God, and Christ, and it must be confessed that is a choice delight, and a transcendent love, with which they love and delight in him; Psalms 73:25. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and on earth there is none I desire besides thee." What pangs of love, what raptures of delight did the spouse express to Christ? "O thou whom my soul loveth!" But surely our delight in God is no perfect rule to measure his delight in Christ by: for our love to God (at the best) is still imperfect; that is the burden and constant complaint of saints, but this is perfect; ours is inconstant, up and down, ebbing and flowing, but this is constant. So then, to conclude, the condition and state of Jesus Christ before his incarnation, was a state of the highest and matchless delight, in the enjoyment of his Father. The uses follow.

Use of Information.

Inference 1.

What an astonishing act of love was this then, for the Father to give the delight, the darling, of his soul, out of his very bosom, for poor sinners! all tongues must needs pause and falter, that attempt the expressions of his grace, expressions being here swallowed up: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," John 3:16. Here is a "sic" without a "sicut"; so loved them: how did he love them? nay, here you must excuse the tongues of angels; which of us would deliver a child, the child of our delights, an only child, to death for the greatest inheritance in the world? what tender parent can endure a parting pull with such a child? when Hagar was taking her last leave (as she thought) of her Ishmael, Genesis 21:16. the text saith, "she went and sat over against him,

a good way off: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over-against him, and lift up her voice, and wept:" though she were none of the best of mothers, nor he the best of children, yet she could not give up the child. O it was hard to part! what an outcry did David make, even for an Absalom! wishing he had died for him. What a hole (as I may say) has the death of some children made in the hearts of some parents, which will never be closed up in this world! yet surely, never did any child lie so close to a parent's heart, as Christ did to his Father's; and yet he willingly parts with him, though his only one, the Son of his delights, and that to death, a cursed death, for sinners, for the worst of sinners. O miranda Dei philanthropic! O the admirable love of God to men! matchless love! a love past finding out! Let all men, therefore, in the business of their redemption, give equal glory to the Father with the Son, John 5:23. If the Father had not loved thee, he had never parted with such a Son for thee.

Inference 2. From one wonder let our souls turn to another, for they are now in the midst of wonders: adore, and be forever astonished at the love of Jesus Christ to poor sinners; that ever he should consent to leave such a bosom, and the ineffable delights that were there, for such poor worms as we are. O the heights, depths, lengths, and breadths of unmeasurable love! O see, Romans 5:6-8. Read, and wonder; how is the love of Christ commended in ravishing circumstances to poor sinners! You would be loth to leave a creature's bosom, a comfortable dwelling, a fair estate for the best friend in the world; your souls are loth to leave their bodies, though they have no such great content there; but which of you, if ever you found by experience what it is to be in the bosom of God by divine communion, would be persuaded to leave such a bosom for all the good that is in the world? And yet Jesus Christ who was embraced in that bosom after another manner than ever you were acquainted with, freely left it, and laid down the glory and riches he enjoyed there, for your sakes; and as the Father loved him; even so (believers) has he loved you, John 17:22. What manner of love is this! Who ever loved as Christ loves? Who ever denied himself for Christ, as Christ denied himself for us?

Inference 3.

Hence we are informed, That interest in Jesus Christ is the true way to all spiritual preferment in heaven. Do you covet to be in the heart, in the favour and delight of God? Get interest in Jesus Christ, and you shall presently be there. What old Israel said of the children of his beloved Joseph, Thy children are my children; the same God saith of all the dear children of Christ, Genesis 48:5, Genesis 48:9. You see among men, all things are carried by interest: persons rise in this world as they are befriended; preferment goes by favour: So it is in heaven, persons are preferred according to their interest in the beloved, Ephesians 1:9. Christ is the great favourite in heaven: his image upon your souls and his name in your prayers, makes both accepted with God.

Inference 4.

How worthy is Jesus Christ of all our love and delights? You see how infinitely the Father delighteth in him, how he ravishes the heart of God; and shall he not ravish our hearts? I present you a Christ this day, able to ravish any soul that will but view and consider him. O that you did but see this lovely Lord Jesus Christ! Then would you go home sick of love: surely he is a drawing Saviour, John 12:32. Why do ye lavish away your precious affections upon vanity: None but Christ is worthy of them: when you spend your precious affections upon other objects, what is it but to dig for dross with golden mattocks? The Lord direct our hearts into the love Of Christ. O that our

hearts, loves and delights did meet and concentre with the heart of God in this most blessed object! O let him that left God's bosom for you, be embosomed by you, though yours be nothing to God's; he that left God's bosom for you, deserves yours.

Inference 5.

If Christ be the beloved darling of the Father's soul, think what a grievous and insufferable thing it is to the heart of God, to see his dear Son despised, slighted, and rejected by sinners: verily, there is no such cut to the heart of God in the whole world. Unbelievers trample upon God's darling, tread under foot him that eternally lay in his bosom, Hebrews 10:29. Smite the Apple of his eye, and how God will bear this, that parable, Matthew 21:37-40, will inform you, surely he will miserably destroy such wretched sinners. If you would study to do God the greatest despight, there is none like this. What a dismal word is that; 1 Corinthians 16:22. "If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha," (i. e.) let the great curse of God lie upon that man till the Lord come. O sinners! you shall one day know the price of this sin; you shall feel what it is to despise a Jesus, that is able to compel love from the hardest heart. O that you would slight him no more! O that this day your hearts might fall in love with him! I tell you, if you would set your love to sale, none bids so fair for it as Christ.

2. Use of Exhortation

1. To saints: If Christ lay eternally in this bosom of love, and yet was content to forsake and leave it for your sakes; then, (1.) Be you ready to forsake and leave all the comforts you have on earth for Christ: famous Galleacius left all for this enjoyment. Moses left all the glory of Egypt: Peter, and the other Apostles left all, Luke 18:28. But what have we to leave for Christ in comparison of what he left for us? Surely Christ is the highest pattern of self-denial in the world. (2.) Let this confirm your faith in prayer: If he, that has such an interest in the heart of God, intercede with the Father for you, then never doubt of audience and acceptance with him; surely you shall be accepted through the beloved, Ephesians 1:6. Christ was never denied any thing that he asked, John 11:42. The Father hears him always; though you are not worthy, Christ is, and he ever lives to make intercession for you, Hebrews 7:25.

(3.) Let this encourage thy heart, O saint, in a dying hour, and not only make thee patient in death, but in a holy manner impatient till thou be gone; for whither is thy soul now going, but to that bosom of love whence Christ came? John 17:24. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am:" and where is he but in that bosom of glory and love where he lay before the world was? John 17:5. O then let every believer encourage his soul; comfort ye one another with these words, I am leaving the bosom of a creature, I am going to the bosom of God.

2. To sinners, exhorting them to embrace the bosom-son of God: Poor Wretches! Whatever you are, or have been; whatever guilt or discouragement at present you lie under; embrace Christ, who is freely offered to you, and you shall be as dear to God as the holiest and most eminent believer in the world: but if you still continue to despise and neglect such a Saviour, sorer wrath is treasured up for you than other sinners, even something worse than dying without mercy, Hebrews 10:28. O that these discoveries and overtures of Christ may never come to such a fatal issue with any of your souls, in whose eyes his glory has been this day opened!

S. THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE.

THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE.

SERMON I.

Opens the EXCELLENCY of the SUBJECT.

1 Corinthians 2:2 For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

_____ THE former verse contains an apology for the plain and familiar manner of the apostle's preaching, which was not (as he there tells them) with excellency of speech, or of wisdom; i.e. he studied not to gratify their curiosity with rhetorical strains, or philosophical niceties. In this he gives the reason, "for I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ," &c.

"I determined not to know." The meaning is not, that he simply, despised, or contemned all other studies and knowledge; but so far only as they stand in competition with, or opposition to the study and knowledge of Jesus Christ. And it is as if he should say, it is my stated, settled judgment; not a hasty, inconsiderate censure, but the product and issue of my most serious and exquisite enquiries. After I have well weighed the case, turned it round, viewed it exactly on every side, balanced all advantages and disadvantages, pondered all things, that are fit to come into consideration about it; this is the result and final determination, that all other knowledge, how profitable, how pleasant soever, is not worthy to be named in the same day with the knowledge of Jesus Christ. This, therefore, I resolve to make the scope and end of my ministry, and the end regulates the mean; such pedantic toys, and airy notions as injudicious ears affect, would rather obstruct than promote my grand design among you; therefore, wholly waving that way, I applied myself to a plain, popular, unaffected dialect, fitted rather to pierce the heart, and convince the conscience, than to tickle the fancy. This is the scope of the words, in which three things fall under consideration;

First, The subject matter of his doctrine, to wit, Jesus Christ. "I determined to know nothing," 1. e. to study nothing myself, to teach nothing to you, but "Jesus Christ." Christ shall be the centre to which all the lines of my ministry shall be drawn. I have spoken and written of many other subjects in my sermons and epistles, but it is all reductively the preaching and discovery of Jesus Christ: of all the subjects in the world, this is the sweetest; if there be any thing on this side heaven, worthy our time and studies, this is it. Thus he magnifies his doctrine, from the excellency of its subject-matter, accounting all other doctrines but airy things, compared with this.

Secondly, We have here that special respect or consideration of Christ, which he singled out from all the rest of the excellent truths of Christ, to spend the main strength of his ministry upon; and that is, Christ as crucified: and the rather, because hereby he would obviate the vulgar prejudice raised against him upon the account of his cross; "For Christ crucified was to the Jews a

stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness," 1 Corinthians 1:23. This also best suited his end, to draw them on to Christ; as Christ above all other subjects, so Christ crucified above all things in Christ There is, therefore, a great emphasis in this word, and "him crucified."

Thirdly, The manner in which he discoursed this transcendent subject to them, is also remarkable; he not only preached Christ crucified, but he preached him assiduously and plainly. He preached Christ frequently; "and whenever he preached of Christ "crucified, he preached him in a crucified stile." This is the sum of the words; to let them know that his spirit was intent upon this subject, as if he neither knew, nor cared to speak of any other. All his sermons were so full of Christ, that his hearers might have thought he was acquainted with no other doctrine. Hence observe,

Doct. That there is no doctrine more excellent in itself, or more necessary to be preached and studied, than the doctrine of Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

All other knowledge, how much soever it be magnified in the world, is, and ought to be esteemed but dross, in comparison of the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, Php 3:8. "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," Colossians 2:3.

Eudoxus was so affected with the glory of the sun, that he thought he was born only to behold it; much more should a Christian judge himself born only to behold and delight in the glory of the Lord Jesus. The truth of this proposition will be made out by a double consideration of the doctrine of Christ.

First, Let it be considered absolutely, and then these lovely properties with which it is naturally clothed, will render it superior to all other sciences and studies.

1st, The knowledge of Jesus Christ is the very marrow and kernel of all the scriptures; the scope and centre of all divine revelations: both Testaments meet in Christ. The ceremonial law is full of Christ, and all the gospel is full of Christ: the blessed lines of both Testaments meet in him; and how they both harmonize, and sweetly concentre in Jesus Christ, is the chief scope of that excellent epistle to the Hebrews, to discover; for we may call that epistle the sweet harmony of both Testaments. This argues the unspeakable excellency of this doctrine, the knowledge whereof must needs therefore be a key to unlock the greatest part of the sacred scriptures. For it is in the understanding of scripture, much as it is in the knowledge men have in logic and philosophy if a scholar once come to understand the bottom-principle, upon which, as upon its hinge, the controversy turns the true knowledge of that principle shall carry him through the whole controversy, and furnish him with a solution to every argument. Even so the right knowledge of Jesus Christ, like a clue, leads you through the whole labyrinth of the scriptures.

2ndly, The knowledge of Jesus Christ is a fundamental knowledge; and foundations are most useful, though least seen. The knowledge of Christ is fundamental to all graces, duties, comforts, and happiness.

(1.) It is fundamental to all graces; they all begin in knowledge; Colossians 3:10. "The new man is renewed in knowledge." As the old, so the new creation begins in light; the opening of the eyes is the first work of the Spirit; and as the beginning of grace, so all the after-improvements thereof depend upon this increasing knowledge, 2 Peter 3:18. "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour." See how these two, grace and knowledge, keep equal pace in the soul of a

Christian; what degree the one increases, the other increases answerably.

(2.) The knowledge of Christ is fundamental to all duties; the as well as the graces of all Christians, are all founded in the knowledge of Christ. Must a Christian believe? That he can never do without the knowledge of Christ: faith is so much dependent in his knowledge, that it is denominated by it, Isaiah 53:11. By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many;" and hence, John 6:40. seeing and believing are made the same thing. Would a man exercise hope in God? that he can never do without the knowledge of Christ, for he is the author of that hope, 1 Peter 1:3. he is also its object, Hebrews 6:19. its ground-work and support, Colossians 1:27. And as you cannot believe or hope, so neither can you pray acceptably without a competent degree of this knowledge. The very Heathen could say, Non loquendum de Deo sine lumine, i.e. Men must not speak of God without light: the true way of conversing with, and enjoying God in prayer, is by acting faith on him through a Mediator so much comfort and true excellency there is in it, and no more. O then, how indispensible is the knowledge of Christ, to all that do address themselves to God in any duty!

(3.) It is fundamental to all comforts: all the comforts of believers are streams from this fountain. Jesus Christ is the very object matter of a believer's joy, Php 3:3. "Our rejoicing is in "Christ Jesus." Take away the knowledge of Christ, and a Christian is the most sad an melancholy creature in the world: again, let Christ but manifest himself, and dart the beams of his light in their souls, it will make them kiss the stakes, sing in flames and shout in the pangs of death, as men that divide the spoil.

Lastly, This knowledge is fundamental to the eternal happiness of souls: as we can perform no duty, enjoy no comfort, so neither can we be saved without it, John 17:3. "This is life eternal, to "know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast "sent." And, if it be life eternal to know Christ, then it is eternal damnation to be ignorant of Christ: as Christ is the door that opens heaven, so knowledge is the key that opens Christ. The excellent gifts, and renowned parts of the moral Heathens, though they purchased to them great esteem and honour among men, yet left them in a state of perdition, because of this great defect, they were ignorant of Christ, 1 Corinthians 1:21. Thus you see how fundamental the knowledge of Christ is, essentially necessary to all the graces, duties, comforts and happiness of souls.

3dly. The knowledge of Christ is profound and large; all other sciences are but shadows; this is a boundless, bottomless ocean; no creature hath a line long enough to fathom the depth of it; there is height, length, depth and breadth ascribed to it, Ephesians 3:14. yea, it passeth knowledge. There is "a manifold wisdom of God in Christ," Ephesians 3:10. It is of many sorts and forms, of many folds and plates: it is indeed simple, pure and unmixed with any thing but itself, yet it is manifold in degrees, kinds and administrations; though something of Christ he unfolded in one age, and something in another, yet eternity itself cannot fully unfold him. I see something, said Luther, which blessed Austin saw not; and those that come after me, will see that which I see not. It is in the studying of Christ, as in the planting of a new discovered country; at first men sit down by the sea-side, upon the skirts and borders of the land; and there they dwell, but by degrees they search farther and farther into the heart of the country. Ah, the best of us are yet but upon the borders of this vast continent.

4thly, The study of Jesus Christ is the most noble subject that ever a soul spent itself upon; those that rack and torture their brains upon other studies, like children, weary themselves at a low

game; the eagle plays at the sun itself The angels study this doctrine, and stoop down to look into this deep abyss. What are the truths discovered in Christ, but the very secrets that from eternity lay hid in the bosom of God? Ephesians 3:8-9. God's heart is opened to men in Christ, John 1:18. this makes the gospel such a glorious dispensation, because Christ is so gloriously revealed therein, 1 Corinthians 3:9. and the studying of Christ in the gospel, stamps such a heavenly glory upon the contemplating soul, 1 Corinthians 3:18.

5thly, It is the most sweet and comfortable knowledge; to be studying Jesus Christ, what is it but to be digging among all the veins and springs of comfort? and the deeper you dig, the more do these springs flow upon you. How are hearts ravished with the discoveries of Christ in the gospel? what ecstasies, melting's, transports, do gracious souls meet there? Doubtless, Philip's ecstasy, John 1:25. eurhkamen Ihsen, "We have found Jesus," was far beyond that of Archimedes. A believer could sit from morning to night, to hear discourses of Christ; "His mouth is most sweet," Song of Solomon 5:16.

Secondly, Let us compare this knowledge with all other knowledge, and thereby the excellency of it will farther appear.

1. All other knowledge is natural, but this wholly supernatural, Matthew 11:27. "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; "neither knoweth any the Father, save the Son, and he to whom soever the Son will reveal him." The wisest Heathens could never make a discovery of Christ by their deepest searches into nature; the most eagle-eyed philosophers were but children in knowledge, compared with the most illiterate Christians.

2. Other knowledge is unattainable by many. All the helps and means in the world would never enable some Christians to attain the learned arts and languages; men of the best, wits, and most pregnant parts, are most excellent in these; but here is the mystery and excellency of the knowledge of Christ, that men of most blunt, dull and contemptible parts attain, through the teaching of Spirit, to this knowledge, in which the more acute and ingenious are utterly blind, Matthew 11:25 "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things "from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." 1 Corinthians 1:26-27. "You see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble "called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, "to confound the wise," &c.

3. Other knowledge, though you should attain the highest degree of it, would never bring you to heaven, being defective and lame both in the integrity of parts, the principal thing, viz. Christ, being wanting; and in the purity of its nature: for the knowing Heathens grew vain in their imaginations, Romans 1:21. and in the efficacy and influence of it on the heart and life, They held the truth in unrighteousness; their lusts were stronger than their light, Romans 1:18. But this knowledge hath potent influences, changing souls into its own image, 2 Corinthians 3:18. and so proves a saving knowledge unto men, 1 Timothy 2:4. And thus I have in a few particulars pointed out the transcendency of the knowledge of Christ. The use of all this I shall give you in a few inferences, on which I shall not enlarge, the whole being only preliminary to the doctrine of Christ; only for the present I shall hence infer,

INFERENCE 1. The sufficiency of the doctrine of Christ, to make men wise unto salvation. Paul desired to know nothing else; and, indeed, nothing else is of absolute necessity to be known. A little of this knowledge, if saving and effectual upon thy heart, will do thy soul more service, than all the vain speculation and profound parts that others so much glory in. Poor Christian, be not dejected, because thou seest thyself out-stript and excelled by so many in other parts of knowledge; if thou know Jesus Christ, thou knowest enough to comfort and save thy soul. Many learned philosophers are now in hell, and many illiterate Christians in heaven.

INFERENCE 2.

If there be such excellency in the knowledge of Christ, let it humble all, both saints and sinners, that we have no more of this clear and effectual knowledge in us, notwithstanding the excellent advantages we have had for it. Sinners, concerning you I may sigh and say with the apostle, 1 Corinthians 15:34. "Some have not the "knowledge of Christ, I speak this to your shame." This, O this is the condemnation. And even for you that are enlightened in this knowledge, how little do you know of Jesus Christ, in comparison of what you might have known of him? What a shame is it, that you should need to be taught the very first truths, "when "for the time you might have been teachers of others?" Hebrews 5:12-14. "That your ministers cannot speak unto you as "spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ," 1 Corinthians 3:1-2. O how much time is spent in other studies, in vain discourses, frivolous pamphlets, worldly employments? how little in the search and study of Jesus Christ.

INFERENCE 3.

How sad is their condition that have a knowledge of Christ, and yet as to themselves it had been better they had never had it! Many there be that content themselves with an unpractical, ineffectual, and merely notional knowledge of him; of whom the apostle saith, "It had been better for them not to have known," 2 Peter 2:21. It serves only to aggravate sin and misery; for though it be not enough to save them, yet it puts some weak restraints upon sin, which their impetuous lusts breaking down, exposes them thereby to a greater damnation.

INFERENCE 4.

Fourthly, This may inform us by what rule to judge both ministers and doctrine. Certainly that is the highest commendation of a minister, to be an able minister of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the Spirit, 2 Corinthians 3:6. He is the best artist, that can most lively and powerfully display Jesus Christ before the people, evidently setting him forth as crucified among them; and that is the best sermon, that is most full of Christ, not of art and language. I know that a holy dialect well becometh Christ’s ministers, they should not be rude and careless in language or method; but surely the excellency of a sermon lies not in that, but in the plainest discoveries and liveliest applications of Jesus Christ.

INFERENCE 5.

Let all that mind the honour of religion, or the peace and comfort of their own souls, wholly sequester and apply themselves to the study of Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Wherefore spend we ourselves upon other studies, when all excellency, sweetness, and desirableness is concentered in this one? Jesus Christ is fairer than the children of men, the chiefest among ten

thousands, "as "the apple-tree among the trees of the wood;" Quoe faciunt divisa beatum, in hoc mixta fluunt: These things which singly ravish and delight the souls of men, are all found conjunctly in Christ. O what a blessed Christ is this! whom to know is eternal life. From the knowledge of Jesus Christ do bud forth all the fruits of comfort, and that for all seasons and conditions. Hence Revelation 22:2. he is called "the tree of life, which bears twelve "manner of fruits, and yields its fruit every month; and the "very leaves of this tree are for healing." In Christ souls have, (1.) All necessaries for food and physic. (2.) All varieties of fruits, twelve manner of fruits; a distinct sweetness in this, in that, and in the other attribute, promise, ordinance. (3.) In him are these fruits at all times, he bears fruit every month; there is precious fruit in Jesus Christ, even in the black month; winter fruits as well as summer fruits. O then study Christ, study to know him more extensively. There be many excellent things in Christ, that the most eagle-eyed believer hath not yet seen: Ah! ’tis pity that any thing of Christ should lie hid from his people. Study to know Christ more intensively, to get the experimental taste and lively power of his knowledge upon your hearts and affections: This is the knowledge that carries all the sweetness and comfort in it. Christian, I dare appeal to thy experience, whether the experimental taste of Jesus Christ, in ordinances and duties, has not a higher and sweeter relish than any created enjoyment thou ever tastedst in this world? O then separate, devote, and wholly give thyself, thy time, thy strength to this most sweet transcendent study.

INFERENCE 6.

Lastly, Let me close the whole with a double caution; one to ourselves, who by our callings and professions are the ministers of Christ; another to those that sit under the doctrine of Christ daily.

First, If this doctrine be the most excellent, necessary, fundamental, profound, noble, and comfortable doctrine, let us then take heed lest, while we study to be exact in other things, we be found ignorant in this. Ye know it is ignominious, by the common suffrage of the civilized world, for any man to be unacquainted with his own calling, or not to attend the proper business of it: it is our calling, as the Bridegroom’s friends, to woo and win souls to Christ, to set him forth to the people as crucified among them, Galatians 3:1. to present him in all his attractive excellencies, that all hearts may be ravished with his beauty, and charmed into his arms by love we must also be able to defend the truths of Christ against undermining heretics, to instil his knowledge into the ignorant, to answer the cases and scruples of poor doubting Christians. How many intricate knots have we to untie? What pains, what skill is requisite for such as are employed about our work? And shall we spend our precious time in frivolous controversies, philosophical niceties, dry and barren scholastic notions? Shall we study every thing but Christ? revolve all volumes but the sacred ones? What is observed even of Bellarmine,: that he turned with loathing from school divinity, because it wanted the sweet juice of piety, may be convictive to many among us, who are often too much in love with worse employment than what he is said to loathe. O let the knowledge of Christ dwell richly in us.

Secondly, Let us see that our knowledge of Christ be not a powerless, barren, § unpractical knowledge: O that, in its passage from our understanding to our lips, it might powerfully melt, sweeten, and ravish our hearts! Remember, brethren, a holy calling never saved any man, without a holy heart; if our tongues only be sanctified our whole man must be damned. "We and our people must "be judged by the same gospel, and stand at the same bar, and be "sentenced to the

same terms, and dealt with as severely as any "other men: We cannot think to be saved by our clergy, or to "come off with a Legit ut clericus, when there is wanting the "Credit et vixit ut Christianus;" as an eminent Divine speaks. O let the keepers of the vineyard look to, and keep their own vineyard; we have a heaven to win or lose, as well as others.

Thirdly, Let us take heed that we withhold not our knowledge of Christ in unrighteousness from the people. O that our lips may disperse knowledge and feed many. Let us take heed of the napkin, remembering the day of account is at hand. Remember, I beseech you, the relations wherein you stand, and the obligations resulting thence: Remember, the great Shepherd gave himself for, and gave you to the flock; your time, your gifts are not yours, but God's; remember the pinching wants of souls, who are perishing for want of Christ; and if their tongues do not, yet their necessities do bespeak us, as they did Joseph, Genesis 47:15. "Wherefore should we die in thy presence? Give us food, that we may live "and not die." Even the sea monsters draw forth their breasts to their young ones, and shall we be cruel! cruel to souls! Did Christ not think it too much to sweat blood, yea, to die for them? and shall we think it much to watch, study, preach, pray, and do what we can for their salvation? O let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ!

Secondly, To the people that sit under the doctrine of Christ daily, and have the light of his knowledge shining round about them.

First, Take heed ye do not reject and despise this light. This may be done two ways: First, When you despise the means of knowledge by slight and low esteems of it. Surely, if you thus reject knowledge, God will reject you for it, Hosea 4:6. It is a despising of the richest gift that ever Christ gave to the church; and however it be a contempt and slight that begins low, and seems only to vent itself upon the weak parts, in artificial discourses, and untaking tones and gestures of the speakers; yet, believe it, it is a daring sin that flies higher than you are aware, Luke 10:16. "He that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me." Secondly, You despise the knowledge of Christ, when you despise the directions and loving constraints of that knowledge; when you refuse to be guided by your knowledge, your light and your lusts contest and struggle within you. O it is sad when your lusts master your light. You sin not as the heathens sin, who know not God; but when you sin, you must slight and put by the notices of your own consciences, and offer violence to your own convictions. And what sad work will this make in your souls? How soon will it lay your consciences waste?

Secondly, Take heed that you rest not satisfied with that knowledge of Christ you have attained, but grow on towards perfection. It is the pride and ignorance of many professors, when they have got a few raw and indigested notions, to swell with self-conceit of their excellent attainments. And it is the sin, even of the best of saints, when they see (veritas in profundo) how deep the knowledge of Christ lies, and what pains they must take to dig for it, to throw by the shovel of duty, and cry, Dig we cannot. To your work, Christians, to your work; let not your candle go out: sequester yourselves to this study, look what intercourses, and correspondences are betwixt the two worlds; what communion soever God and souls maintain, it is in this way; count all, therefore, but dross in comparison of that excellency which is in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 138

S. The Ascension of Christ illustrated

The Ascension of Christ illustrated, and variously

improved, being the Second Step of his Exaltation

"Jesus said unto her--Touch me not; for I have not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." John 20:17 In all the former sermons, we have been following Christ through his humiliation, from the time that he left the blessed bosom of the Father: and now having finished the whole course of his obedience on earth, and risen again from the dead; we must, in this discourse, follow him back again into heaven, and lodge him in that bosom of ineffable delight and love, which for our sakes, he so freely left. For it was not his end in rising from the dead, to live such a low animal life as this is, but to live a most glorious life, as an enthroned King in heaven: upon which state he was now ready to enter, as he tells Mary in the text, and bids her tell it to the disciples, "Go, tell my brethren, that I ascend to my Father," etc. In the former verses you find Mary waiting at Christ's sepulcher, in a very pensive frame: exceedingly troubled, because she knew not what was become of Christ, John 20:15. In the next verse, Christ calls her by her name, Mary; she knowing the voice, turned herself, and answered, Rabboni. And as a soul transported with joy, rushes into his arms, as desirous to clasp and embrace him. But Jesus said, "Touch me not," etc. In which words we have Christ's inhibition, "Touch me not:" Strange that Christ, who rendered himself so kind and tender to all, that not only admitted, but commanded Thomas to put his finger into his wounds, should forbid Mary to touch him, but this was not for want of love to Mary; for he gives another reason for it presently, "I am not yet ascended;" that is say some, the time for embracing will be when we are in heaven. Then and there shall be the place and time, we shall embrace one another for evermore. So Augustin. Or, you dotest too much upon my present state, as if I had now attained the very "akme", culminating point of my exaltation. When as yet I am not ascended, so Cameron and Calvin expound it. Or lastly, Christ would signify hereby that it was not his will and pleasure in so great a juncture of things as this, to spend time now in expressing (this way) her affections to him; but rather to show it by hastening about his service. Which is The second thing observable, namely, his injunction upon Mary, to carry the tidings of his resurrection to the disciples. In which injunction we have,

First, The persons to whom this message was sent, my brethren, so he calls the disciples. A sweet compellation, and full of love. Much like that of Joseph to his brethren, Genesis 45:4. save only that there is much more tenderness in this than that; for he twits them in the same breath with what they had done against him: "I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold;" but in this it is, "Go, tell my brethren," without the least mention of their cowardice or unkindness. And,

Secondly, The message itself; "Tell my brethren, I ascend to my Father, and your Father; to my God, and your God," "anabaino", I ascend. It is put in the present tense, as if he had been ascending; though he did not ascend in some weeks after this; but he so expresses it, to show what was the next part of his work, which he was to act in heaven for them; and how much his

heart was set upon it, and longed to be about it, "I ascend to my Father, and your Father; to my God, and your God." Not our Father, or God in common; but mine and yours in a different manner. Yours by right of donation, mine in a different manner. Yours by right of dominion, mine (in reference to my human nature) not only by right of creation, though so too; but also by special covenant and confederation. By predestination of my manhood, to the grace of personal union, by designation of me, to the glorious office of Mediator. My Father, as I am God, by eternal generation. As man, by collation of the grace of union. And your Father by spiritual adoption and regeneration. Thus he is my God, and your God; my Father, and your Father. This is the substance of that comfortable message, sent by Mary to the pensive disciples. Hence the observation is,

DOCTRINE. That our Lord Jesus Christ, did not only rise from the dead, but also ascended into heaven; there to dispatch all that remained to be done for the completing the salvation of his people. So much the apostle plainly witnesses, Ephesians 4:10. "He who descended, is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens," that is all the aspectable heavens. A full and faithful account whereof the several evangelists have given us, Mark 16:19. Luke 24:51. This is sometimes called his going away, as John 16:7. Sometimes his being exalted, Acts 2:33. Sometimes his being made higher than the heavens, Hebrews 7:26. And sometimes his entering within the veil, Hebrews 6:19-20. All which are but so many synonymous phrases, expressing his ascension, in a very pleasant variety.

Now for the opening this act of Christ, we will bind up the whole in the satisfaction of these six questions. 1. Who ascended? 2. Whence did he ascend? 3. Where? 4. When? 5. How? 6. and lastly, Why did he ascend? And these will take in what is needful for you to be acquainted with in this point.

First, Who ascended? This the apostle answers, Ephesians 4:10. "the same that descended," namely, Christ. And himself tells us in the text, "I ascend." "And though the ascension were of Christ's whole person, yet it was but a figurative and improper expression, with respect to his divine nature, but it agrees most properly to the humanity of Christ, which really changed places and conditions by it." And hence it is that it is said, John 16:28. "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world;" again, I leave the world, and go to my Father." He goes away, and we see him no more. As God, he is spiritually with us still, even to the end of the world. But as man, "the heavens must contain him until the restitution of all things," Acts 3:21.

Secondly, Whence Christ ascended?

I answer, more generally, he is said to ascend from this world, to leave the world. That is the terminus a quo, John 16:28. but more particularly, it was from Mount Olivet, near unto Jerusalem. The very place where he began his last sorrowful tragedy. There, where his heart began to be sadded, there is it now made glad. O, what a difference was there between the frame Christ was in, in that mount before his passion, and this he is now in, at his ascension! But, Thirdly, Where did he ascend?

It is manifest it was into the third heavens: the throne of God, and place of the blessed; where all the saints shall be with him forever. It is said to be far above a11 heavens; that is the heavens which we see, for they are but the pavement of that stately palace of the great King. He is gone

(says the apostle) within the veil, that is into the most holy place. And into his Father's house, John 14:2. And he is also said to go to the "place where he was before," John 6:62. back again to that sweet and glorious bosom of delight and love, from whence at his incarnation he came.

Fourthly, When did Christ ascend? Was it presently as soon as he arose from the dead?

No, not so, for "after his resurrection (says Luke) he was seen of them forty days, speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." And truly the care and love of Christ to his people was very manifest in this his stay with them. He had ineffable glory prepared for him in heaven, and awaiting his coming, but he will not go to possess it, until he had settled all things for the good of his church here. For in this time he confirmed the truth of his resurrection, gave charge to the apostles concerning the discipline and order of his house or kingdom: which was but needful, since he intended that their Acts should be rules to future churches. So long it was necessary he should stay. And when he had set all things in order, he would stay no longer, "lest he should seem to affect a terrene life." And besides, he had work of great concernment to do for us in the other world. He desired to be no longer here, than he had work to do for God and souls. A good pattern for the saints.

Fifthly, How did Christ ascend into heaven?

Here it is worthy our observation, that Christ ascended as a public person or forerunner, in our names, and upon our accounts. So it is said expressly, Hebrews 6:20 speaking of the most holy place within the veil; where (says he) the forerunner is for us entered. His entering into heaven as our forerunner implies both his public capacity and precedence.

First, His public capacity, as one that went upon our business to God. So he himself speaks, John 14:2. "I go before to prepare a place for you". To take possession of heaven in your names. The forerunner has respect to others that were to come to heaven after him, in their several generations; for whom he has taken up mansions, which are kept for them against their coming.

Secondly, It notes precedence, he is our forerunner, but he himself had no forerunner. Never any entered into heaven before him, but such as entered in his name, and through the virtue of his name. He was the first that ever entered into heaven directly, immediately, in his own name, and upon his own account. But all the fathers who died before him entered in his name. To the holiest of them all, God would have said as Elisha to Jehoram, 2 Kings 3:14 Were it not that I had respect to the person of my Son, in whose name and right you come, I would not look upon you . You must go back again, heaven were no place for you. No, not for you, Abraham, nor for you, Moses

Secondly, He ascended triumphantly into heaven. To this good expositors refer that which in the type is spoken of David, when he lodged the ark in its own place, with musical instruments and shootings; but to Christ, in the antitype, when he was received up triumphantly into glory, Psalms 47:5 "God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet; sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises unto our King, sing praises." A cloud is prepared, as a royal chariot, to carry up the King of glory to his princely pavilion. "A cloud received him out of their sight," Luke 24:51. And then a royal guard of mighty angels surrounded the chariot, if not for support, yet for greater state and solemnity of their Lord's ascension. And oh what jubilations of the blessed angels were heard in heaven! How was the whole city of God moved at his coming! For look as when "he brought his first begotten into the world, he said, let all the angels of God worship him," Hebrews

1:6. So at his return there again, when he had finished redemption-work, there were no less demonstrations given by those blessed creatures of their delight and joy in it. The very heavens echoed and resounded on that account. Yes, the triumph is not ended at this day, nor ever shall.

It is said, Daniel 7:13-14. "I saw, (says the prophet) in the night visions, and behold one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near to him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom; that all people, nations and languages should serve him." This vision of Daniel's was accomplished in Christ's ascension, when they, that is the angels, brought him to the Ancient of days, that is to God the Father, who, to express his welcome to Christ, gave him glory and a kingdom. And so it is, and ought to be expounded. The Father received him with open arms, rejoicing exceedingly to see him again in heaven; therefore God is said to "receive him up into glory," 1 Timothy 3:16. For that which, with respect to Christ, is called ascension, is, with respect to the Father, called assumption. He went up, and the Father received him. Yes, received so as none ever was received before him, or shall be received after him.

Thirdly, Christ ascended munificently, shedding forth, abundantly, inestimable gifts upon his church at his ascension. As in the Roman triumphs they did spargere missilia, bestow their largesses upon the people: so did our Lord when he ascended; "therefore he says, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive; and gave gifts unto men." The place to which the apostle refers, is Psalms 68:17-18. where you have both the triumph and munificence with which Christ went up excellently set forth together.

"The chariots of God, (says the Psalmist) are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels; the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. You have ascended on high, you have led captivity captive, you have received gifts for men; yes, for the rebellious also, that God might dwell among them." Which words, in their literal sense, are a celebration of that famous victory and triumph of David over the enemies of God, recorded 2 Samuel 8:1-18. These conquered enemies bring him several sorts of presents, all which he dedicated to the Lord. The spiritual sense is, that just so our Lord Jesus Christ, when he had overcome by his death on the cross, and now triumphed in his ascension, he takes the parts and gifts of his enemies, and gives them, by their conversion to the church, for its use and service: thus he received gifts, even for the rebellious, that is sanctifies the natural gifts and faculties of such as hated his people before, dedicating them to the Lord, in his people's service. Thus, (as one observes) Tertullian, Origin, Austin, and Jerome, came into Canaan, laden with Egyptian gold. Meaning they came into the church richly laden with natural learning and abilities. Austin was a Manichee, Cyprian a magician, learned Bradwardine a scornful, proud naturalist, who once said, when he read Paul's epistles, Dedignar esse parvulus; he scorned such childish things, but afterwards became a very useful man in the church of God. And even Paul himself was as fierce an enemy to the church as breathed on earth, until Christ gave him into his bosom by conversion, and then no mere man ever did the Lord and his people greater service than he. Men of all sorts, greater and smaller lights, have been given to the church. Officers of all sorts were given it by Christ. Extraordinary and temporary, as prophets, apostles, evangelists; ordinary and standing, as pastors, and teachers, which remain to this day, Ephesians 4:8-9. And those stars are fixed in the church heaven by a most firm establishment, 1 Corinthians 12:28. Thousands now in heaven, and thousands on earth also, are blessing Christ at this day for these his ascension-gifts.

Fourthly, Our Lord Jesus Christ ascended most comfortably, for while he was blessing his people, he was parted from them, Luke 24:50-51. Therein making good to them what is said by him, John 13:1. "Having loved his own, he loved them to the end." There was a great deal of love manifested by Christ in this very last act of his in this world. The last sight they had of him in this world was a most sweet and encouraging one. They heard nothing from his lips but love, they saw nothing in his face but love, until he mounted his triumphant chariot, and was taken out of their sight

Surely these blessings at parting were sweet and rich ones. For the matter of them, they were the mercies which his blood had so lately purchased for them. And for their extent, they were not only intended for them who had the happiness to be upon the place with him from whence he ascended; but they reach us as well as them; and will reach the last saint that shall be upon the earth until he come again. For they were but representatives of the future churches, Matthew 28:20. And in blessing them, he blessed us also. And by this we may be satisfied that Christ carried an heart full of love to his people away with him to heaven; since his love so abounded in the last act that ever he did in this world: and left such a demonstration of his tenderness with them at parting.

Fifthly, He ascended, as well as rose again by his own power. He was not merely passive in his ascension, but it was his own act. He went to heaven. Therefore it is said, Acts 1:10. He went up, namely, by his own divine power. And this plainly evinceth him to be God, for no mere creature ever mounted itself from earth, far above all heavens, as Christ did.

Sixthly, and lastly, why did Christ ascend?

I answer: His ascension was necessary upon many and great accounts. For,

First, If Christ had not ascended, he could not have interceded, as now he does in heaven for us. And do but take away Christ's intercession, and you starve the hope of the saints. For what have we to support ourselves with, under the daily surprises of sin, but this, "That if any man sin, we have an advocate [with the Father]" mark that, with the Father; a friend upon the place: one that abides there, on purpose to transact all our affairs, and as a surety for the peace between God and us.

Secondly, If Christ had not ascended, you could not have entered into heaven when you die. For he went to "prepare a place for you," John 14:2. He was, as I said before, the first that entered into heaven directly, and in his own name; and had he not done so, we would not have entered when we die, in his name. The Fore-runner made way for all that are coming on, in their several generations, after him. Nor could your bodies have ascended after their resurrection, but in the virtue of Christ's ascension. For he ascended, as was said before, in the capacity of our head and representative; to his Father and our Father: For us, and himself too.

Thirdly, If Christ had not ascended, he could not have been inaugurated, and installed in the glory he now enjoys in heaven. This world is not the place where perfect felicity and glory dwell. And then, how had the promise of the Father been made good to him? Or our glory, (which consists in being with, and conformed to him), where had it been? "Ought not Christ to suffer, and to enter into his glory?" Luke 24:25.

Fourthly, If Christ had not ascended, how could we have been satisfied, that his payment on the cross made full satisfaction to God, and that now God has no more bills to bring in against us? How is it that the Spirit convinceth the world of righteousness, John 16:9-10. but from Christ's going to the Father, and returning hither no more? which gives evidence of God's full content and satisfaction, both with his person and work.

Fifthly, How should we have enjoyed the great blessings of the Spirit and ordinances, if Christ had not ascended? And surely, we could not have been without either. If Christ had not gone away, "the Comforter had not come," John 16:7. he begins where Christ had finished. For he takes of his, and shows it to us, John 16:14. And therefore it is said, John 17:39. "The Holy Spirit was not given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." He was then given as a sanctifying spirit, but not given in that measure, as afterwards he was, to furnish and qualify men with gifts for service. And indeed, by Christ's ascension, both his sanctifying, and his ministering gifts were shed forth, more commonly and more abundantly upon men. These fell from him when he ascended, as Elijah's mantle did from him, so that whatever good of conversion, edification, support, or comfort you receive from spiritual ordinances, he has shed forth that, which you now see and feel. It is the fruit of Christ's ascension.

Sixthly, and lastly, If Christ had not ascended, how had all the types and prophecies, that prefigured and foretold it, been fulfilled? "And the scriptures cannot be broken," John 10:35. So that, upon all these accounts, it was expedient that he should go away. It was for his glory, and for our advantage. Though we lost the comfort of his bodily presence by it, yet if "we loved him, we would rejoice he went to the Father," John 14:28. We ought to have rejoiced in his advancement, though it had been to our loss; but when it is so much for our benefit, as well as his glory, it is a matter of joy on both sides, that he is ascended to his Father, and our Father: to his God, and to our God. From the several blessings flowing to us out of Christ's ascension, it was that he charged his people not to be troubled at his leaving of them, John 14:1-31. And hence learn,

INFERENCE 1. Did Christ ascend into heaven? Is our Jesus, our treasure indeed there? Where then should the hearts of believers be, but in heaven, where their ord, their life is? Surely saints, it is not good that your love, and your Lord should be in two several countries, said one that is now with him. Up, and hasten after your lover, that he and you may be together. Christians, you ascended with him, virtually, when he ascended; you shall ascend to him, personally, hereafter; Oh that you would ascend to him, spiritually, in acts of faith, love, and desires daily. Sursum corda, up with your hearts, was the form used by the ancient church at the sacrament. How good were it, if we could say with the apostle, Php 3:20. "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for the Savior." An heart ascendant, is the beet evidence of your interest in Christ's ascension.

INFERENCE. 2. Did Christ go to heaven as a forerunner? What haste should we make to follow him? He ran to heaven: he ran there before us. Did he run to glory, and shall we linger? did he flee as an eagle towards heaven, and we creep like snails? Come Christians, "Lay aside every weight, and the sin that so easily besets you, and run with patience the race set before you, looking unto Jesus, Hebrews 12:1-2. The Captain of our salvation is entered within the gates of the new Jerusalem, and calls to us out of heaven to hasten to him; proposing the greatest encouragements to them that are following after him, saying, "He that overcomes shall sit with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne," Revelation 3:22. How tedious

should it seem to us, to live so long at a distance from our Lord Jesus!

INFERENCE. 3. Did Christ ascend so triumphantly, leading captivity captive? How little reason then have believers to fear their conquered enemies? Sin, Satan, and every enemy, were in that day led away in triumph, dragged at Christ's chariot wheels, brought after him as it were in chains. It is a lovely sight to see the necks of those tyrants under the foot of our Joshua. He made at that day, "an open show of them," Colossians 2:15. Their strength is broken forever. In this he showed himself more than a conqueror; for he conquered and triumphed too. Satan was then trod under his feet, and he has promised to tread him under our feet also, and that shortly, Romans 16:20. some power our enemies yet retain, the serpent may bruise our heel, but Christ has crushed his head.

INFERENCE. 4. Did Christ ascend so munificently, shedding forth so many mercies upon his people? mercies of inestimable value reserved on purpose to adorn that day? O then see that you abuse not those precious ascension-gifts of Christ, but value and improve them as the choicest mercies. Now, the ascension gifts, as I told you, are either the ordinances and officers of the church, (for he then gave them pastors and teachers,) or the Spirit that furnished the church with all its gifts. Beware you abuse not either of these.

First, Abuse not the ordinances and officers of Christ. This is a sin that no nation is plunged deeper into the guilt of, than this nation, and no age more than this. Surely God has written to us the great things of his law, and we have accounted them small things. We have been loose, wanton, skeptical professors for the most part, that have had nice and coy stomachs, that could not relish plain, wholesome truths, except so and so modified to our humours. For this the Lord has a controversy with the nation, and by a sore judgement, he has begun to rebuke this sin already. And I doubt not, before he make an end, plain truths will down with us, and we shall bless God for them.

Secondly, But in the next place, see that you abuse not the Spirit, whom God sent from heaven at his ascension, to supply his bodily absence among us, and is the great pledge of his care for, and tender love to his people. Now take heed that you do not vex him by your disobedience; nor grieve him by your unkindnesses; nor quench him by your sinful neglects of duty, or abuse of light. O deal kindly with the Spirit, and obey his voice: comply with his designs, and yield up yourselves to his guidance and conduct. Methinks, to be intreated by the love of the Spirit, Romans 15:30. should be as great an argument as to be intreated for Christ's sake. Now, to persuade all the saints to be tender of grieving the Spirit by sin, let me urge a few considerations proper to the point under hand.

Consid. 1. First, He was the first and principal mercy that Christ received for you at his first entrance into heaven. It was the first thing he asked of God when he came to heaven. So he speaks, John 14:16-17. "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you." No sooner had he set foot upon the place, but the first thing, the great thing that was upon his heart to ask the Father for us was, that the Spirit might forthwith be dispatched, and rent down to his people. So that the Spirit is the first-born of mercies; and deserves the first place in our hearts and esteem.

Consid. Secondly, The spirit comes not in his own name to us, (though, if so, he deserves a dear welcome for his own sake, and for the benefits we receive by him, which are inestimable,) but he comes to us in the name, and in the love, both of the Father, and the Son. As one authorised and delegated by them; bringing his credentials under both their hands and seals, John 15:26. "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send to you from the Father:" Mark, I will send him from the Father; and in John 14:26. the Father is said to "send him in Christ's name." So that he is the messenger that comes from both these great and holy persons. And if you have any love for the God that made you, any kindness for the Christ that died for you, show it by your obedience to the Spirit that comes from them both and in both their names to us, and who will be both offended and grieved, if you grieve him. O therefore give him an entertainment worthy of one that comes to you in the name of the Lord. In the Father's name, and in the Son's name.

Consider. 3 Thirdly, But that is not the only consideration that should cause you to beware of grieving the Spirit, because he is sent in the name of such great and dear persons to you, but he deserves better entertainment than any of the saints give him, for his own sake, and upon his own account, and that upon a double score, namely, of his nature and office.

First, On the account of his nature; for he is God co-equal with the Father and Son in nature and dignity, 2 Samuel 23:23. "The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and his word was in my tongue; the God of Israel said; the Rock of Israel spoke to me." So that you see he is God. The Rock of Israel. God omnipotent, for he created all things, (Genesis 1:2; God omnipresent, filling all things, Psalms 139:7. God omniscient, who knows your hearts, Romans 9:1. Beware of him therefore, and grieve him not, for in so doing you grieve God.

Secondly, Upon the account of his office, and the benefits we receive by him. We are obliged, even on the score of gratitude and ingenuity, to obey him; for he is sent in the quality of an advocate to help us to pray; to indite our requests for us; to teach us what and how to ask of God, Romans 8:26. He comes to us as a Comforter, John 14:16. And none like him. His work is to take of Christ's and show it to us, that is to take of his death, resurrection, ascension, yes, of his very present intercession in heaven, and show it to us. He can be with us in a moment, he can, (as one well observes,) tell you what were the very last thoughts Christ was thinking in heaven about you. It was he that formed the body of Christ in the womb, and so prepared him to be a sacrifice for us. He filled that humanity with his unexampled fullness. So fitting and anointing him for the discharge of his office.

It is he that puts efficacy into the ordinances, and without him they would be a dead letter. It was he that blessed them to your conviction and conversion. For if angels had been the preachers, no conversion had followed without the Spirit. It is he that is the vinculum unionis, bond of union between Christ and your souls, without which you could never have had interest in Christ, or communion with Christ. It was he that so often has helped your infirmities, when you knew not what to say; comforted your hearts when they were overwhelmed within you, and you know not what to do; preserved you many thousand times from sin and ruin, when you have been upon the slippery brink of it in temptations. It is he (in his sanctifying-word) that is the best evidence your souls have for heaven. It where endless to enumerate the mercies you have by him. And now, reader, do you not blush to think how unworthy you have treated such a friend? For which of all these his offices or benefits do you grieve and quench him? O grieve not the Holy Spirit whom

Christ sent as soon as ever he went to heaven, in his Father's name, and in his own name, to perform all these offices for you.

INFERENCE. 5. Is Christ ascended to the Father as our fore-runner? Then the door of salvation stands open to all believers, and by virtue of Christ's ascension, they also will ascend after him, far above all visible heavens. O my friends, what place has Christ prepared and taken up for you! what a splendid habitation has he provided for you! "God is not ashamed to be called your God; for he has prepared for you a city," Hebrews 11:16. In that city Christ has provided mansions, and resting-places for your everlasting abode, John 14:2. and keeps them for you until your coming. O how August and glorious a dwelling is that, where sun, and moon, and stars, shall shine as much below your feet, as they are now above your heads? Yes, such is the love Christ has to the believer, that, as one says, if you only had been the chosen of God, Christ would have built that house for himself and you. Now it is for himself, for you, and for many more, who shall inherit with you. God send us a joyful meeting within the veil with our Fore-runner, and sweeten our passage into it, with many a foresight and foretaste thereof. And, in the meantime, let the love of a Savior inflame our hearts, so that whenever we cast a look towards that place, where our Fore-runner is for us entered, our souls may say, with melting affections, Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ; and again, Blessed be God for his unspeakable gift!

Chapter 139

S. The Ascension of Christ illustrated,

The Session of Christ at God’s right-hand explained and

applied, being the third Step of his glorious Exaltation "When he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Hebrews 1:3

Christ being returned again to his Father, having finished his whole work on earth, is there bid by the Father to sit down in the seat of honor and rest. A seat prepared for him at Gods right hand, that makes it honorable; and all his enemies as a footstool under his feet that makes it easy. How much is the state and condition of Jesus Christ changed in a few days! Here he groaned, wept, labored, suffered, sweat, yes, sweat blood, and found no rest in this world, but when he comes to heaven, there he enters into rest. Sits down forever in the highest and easiest throne, prepared by the Father for him when he had done his work. "When he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down," etc. The scope of this epistle is to demonstrate Christ to be the fullness of all legal types and ceremonies, and that whatever light glimmered to the world through them, yet it was but as the light of the day-star, to the light of the sun. In this chapter, Christ the subject of the epistle, is described; and particularly in this third verse, he is described three ways.

First, By his essential and primeval glory and dignity, he is "ap-augasma", the brightness at his Father’s glory, the very splendor of glory, the very refulgency of that son of glory. "The primary reason of that appellation is with respect to his eternal and ineffable generation, light of light, as the Nicene creed expresses it. As a beam of light proceeding from the sun. And the secondary reason of it, is with respect to men," for look as the sun communicates its light and influence to us by its beams, which it projects; so does God communicate his goodness, and manifest himself to us, by Christ. "Yes, he is the express image, or character of his person. Not as the impressed image of the seal upon the wax, but as the engraving in the seal itself." Thus he is described by his essential glory.

Seconds, He is described by the work he wrought here on earth, in his humbled state, and it was a glorious work, and that wrought out by his own single hand, "When he had by himself purged our sins." A work that all the angels in heaven could not do, but Christ did it.

Thirdly, and lastly, He is described by his glory, the which (as a reward of that work) he now enjoys in heaven. "When he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high," that is the Lord clothed him with the greatest power, and highest honor, that heaven itself could afford; for so much this phrase of "sitting down on the right hand of the Majesty" imports, as will appear in the explication of this point, which is the result of this clause, namely,

DOCTRINE. That when our Lord Jesus Christ has finished his work on earth, he was placed in the seat of the highest honor, and authority; at the right-hand of God in heaven. This truth is transformingly glorious. Stephen had but a glimpse of Christ at his Father’s right hand, and it caused "his face to shine, as it had been the face of an angel", Acts 7:56. This, his high advancement, was foretold and promised before the work of redemption was taken in hand,

Psalms 110:1. "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit you at my right-hand, until I make your enemies your footstool." And this promise was punctually performed to Christ, after his resurrection and ascension, in his supreme exaltation, far above all created beings, in heaven and earth, Ephesians 1:20-22. We shall here open two things in the doctrinal part, namely, What is meant by God's right hand; and what is implied in Christ's sitting there, with his enemies for a footstool.

First, What are we to understand here by God's right hand? It is obvious enough, that the expression is not proper, but figurative and borrowed. God has no hand, right or left; but it is a condescending expression, wherein God stoops to the creature's understanding, and by it he would have us understand honor, power, and nearness.

First, The right hand is the hand of honor, the upper hand, where we place those whom we highly esteem and honor. So Solomon placed his mother in a seat at his right hand, 1 Kings 2:19. So, in token of honor, God sets Christ at his right hand; which, on that account, in the text, is called the right hand of Majesty. God has therein expressed more favor, delight, and honor to Jesus Christ, than ever he did to any creature. "To which of the angels said he at any time, sit you on my right hand?" Hebrews 1:13.

Secondly, The right-hand is the hand of power: we call it the weapon hand, and the working hand. And the setting of Christ there, imports his exaltation to the highest authority, and most supreme dominion. Not that God the Father has put himself out of his authority, and advanced Christ above himself; no, "for in that he says he has put all things under him, it is manifest that he is excepted which did put all things under him," 1 Corinthians 15:27. But to sit as an enthroned king at God's right hand, imports power, yes, the most sovereign and supreme power; and so Christ himself calls the right-hand at which he sits, Matthew 26:64. "Hereafter you shall see the Son of man sitting on the right-hand of power."

Thirdly, And as it signifies honor and power, so nearness in place, as we use to say, at one's elbow, and so it is applied to Christ, in Psalms 110:5. "The Lord at your right hand, shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath," that is the Lord, who is very near you, present with you, he shall subdue your enemies. This then is what we are to understand by God's right-hand, honor, power, and nearness.

Secondly, In the next place let us see what is implied in Christ's sitting at God's right-hand, with his enemies for his footstool. And, if we attentively consider, we shall find that it implies and imports divers great and weighty things in it. As,

First, It implies the perfecting and completing of Christ's work, that he came into the world about. After his work was ended, then he sat down and rested from those labors, Hebrews 10:11-12. "Every priest stands daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices: which can never take away sins: but this man when he had once offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God." Here he assigns a double difference between Christ and the Levitical priests; they stand, which is the posture of servants; he sits, which is the posture of a Lord. They stand daily, because their sacrifices cannot take away sin; he did his work fully, by one offering; and after that, sits or rests forever in heaven. And this (as the accurate and judicious Dr. Reynolds observes) was excellently figured to us in the ark, which was a lively type of Jesus Christ, and particularly in this, it had rings by which it was carried up and down, until at last it

rested in Solomon’s temple, with glorious and triumphal solemnity, Psalms 132:8-9. 2 Chronicles 5:13. So Christ, while he was here on earth, being anointed with the Holy Spirit and wisdom, went about doing good, Acts 10:38. and having ceased from his works, did at last enter into his rest, Hebrews 5:10. which is the heavenly temple, Revelation 11:19.

Secondly, His sitting down at God’s right hand, notes the high content and satisfaction of God the Father in him, and in his work. "The Lord said to my Lord, sit you on my right hand;" the words are brought in as the words of the Father, welcoming Christ to heaven; and (as it were) congratulating the happy accomplishment of his most difficult work. And it is as if he had said," O my Son, what shall be done for you this day? You have finished a great work, and in all the parts of it acquitted yourself as an able and faithful servant to me; what honors shall I now bestow upon you? The highest glory in heaven is not too high for you; come sit at my right hand." O how well is he pleased with Christ, and what he has done! He delighted greatly to behold him here in his work on earth, and by a voice from the excellent glory he told him so, when he spoke from heaven to him, saying, "You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," 2 Peter 1:17. And himself tells us, John 10:17. "Therefore does my Father love me, because I lay down my life," etc. for it was a work that the heart of God had been set upon from eternity. He took infinite delight in it.

Thirdly, Christ’s sitting down at God’s right-hand in heaven, notes the advancement of Christ’s human nature to the highest honor; even to be the object of adoration to angels and men. For it is properly his human nature that is the subject of all this honor and advancement; and being advanced to the right hand of Majesty, it is become an object of worship and adoration. Not simply, as it is flesh and blood, but as it is personally united to the second person, and enthroned in the supreme glory of heaven.

O here is the mystery, that flesh and blood should ever be advanced to the highest throne of majesty, and being there installed in that glory, we may now direct our worship to him as God Man; and to this end was his humanity so advanced, that it might be adored and worshiped by all. "The Father has committed all judgement to the Son, that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." And the Father will accept of no honor divided from his honor. Therefore it is added in the clause, "He that honors not the Son, honors not the Father which has sent him," John 5:22-23. Hence the apostles, in the salutations of their epistles, beg for grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ; and in their valedictions, they desire the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to the churches.

Fourthly, It imports the sovereignty and supremacy of Christ over all. The investiture of Christ, with authority over the empire of both worlds: for this belongs to him that sits down upon his throne. When the Father said to him, Sit at my right-hand, he did therein deliver to him the dispensation and economy of the kingdom. Put the awful scepter of government into his hand, and so the apostle interprets and understands it, 1 Corinthians 15:25. "He must reign until he have put all his enemies under his feet." And to this purpose, the same apostle accommodates, (if not expounds) the words of the Psalmist, "You madest him a little lower than the angels," that is in respect of his humbled state on earth, "you crownedst him with glory and honor, and did set him over the works of your hands, you have put all things in subjection under his feet," Hebrews 2:7-8. He is over the spiritual kingdom, the Church, absolute Lord there, Matthew 28:18-20. He is also Lord over the providential kingdom, the whole world, Psalms 110:2. And this providential kingdom, being

subordinate to his spiritual kingdom; he orders and rules this, for the advantage and benefit thereof, Ephesians 1:22.

Fifthly, To sit at God's right-hand with his enemies for a footstool, implies Christ to be a conqueror over all his enemies. To have his enemies under his feet, notes perfect conquest and complete victory. As when Joshua set his foot upon the necks of the kings: So Tamerlane made proud Bajazet his footstool. They trampled his name, and his saints under their feet, and Christ will tread them under his feet. It is true indeed this victory is incomplete and in consummate; for now "we see not yet all things put under him, (says the apostle) but we see Jesus crowned with glory and honor," and that is enough. Enough to show the power of his enemies is now broken; and though they make some opposition still, yet it is to no purpose at all; for he is so infinitely above them, that they must fall before him; it is not with Christ as it was with Abijah, against whom Jeroboam prevailed, because he was young and tender hearted, and could not withstand them. His incapacity and weakness gave the watchful enemy an advantage over him. I say, it is not so with Christ, he is at God's right hand. And all the power of God stands ready bent to strike through his enemies, as it is, Psalms 110:5.

Sixthly, Christ's sitting in heaven notes to us the great and wonderful change that is made upon the state and condition of Christ, since his ascension into heaven. Ah, it is far otherwise with him now, than it was in the days of his humiliation here on earth. Quantum mutates ab illo! Oh, what a wonderful change has heaven made upon him! It were good (as a worthy of ours speaks), to compare in our thoughts the abasement of Christ, and his exaltation together; as it were in columns, one over against the other. He was born in a stable, but now he reigns in his royal palace. Then he had a manger for his cradle, but now he sits on a chair of state. Then oxen and asses were his companions, now thousands of saints, and ten thousands of angels minister round about his throne. Then in contempt, they called him the carpenter's son, now he obtains a more excellent name than angels. Then he was led away into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, now it is proclaimed before him, "let all the angels of God worship him." Then he had not a place to lay his head on, now he is exalted to be heir of all things. In his state of humiliation, "he endured the contradiction of sinners;" in his state of exaltation, "he is adored and admired by saints and angels." Then "he had no form or loveliness; and when we saw him, there was no beauty, why we should desire him:" Now the beauty of his countenance shall send forth such glorious beams, as shall dazzle the eyes of all the celestial inhabitants round about him, etc.

O what a change is this! Here he sweated, but there he sits. Here he groaned, but there he triumphs. Here he lay upon the ground, there he sits in the throne of glory. When he came to heaven, his Father did as it were thus bespeak him. My dear Son, what an hard travail have you had of it? What a world of woe have you passed through, in the strength of they love to me and mine elect? You have been hungry, thirsty, weary, scourged, crucified, and reproached: Ah, what bad usage have you had in the ungrateful world! Not a day's rest for comfort since you wentest out from me; by now your suffering days are accomplished; now your rest is come, rest for evermore. Henceforth sit at my right-hand. Henceforth you shall groan, weep, or bleed no more. Sit you at my right hand.

Seventhly, Christ's sitting at God's right hand, implies the advancement of believers to the highest honor: For this session of Christ's respects them, and there he sits as our representative, in which

regard we are made to sit with him in heavenly places, as the apostle speaks, Ephesians 2:6. How secure may we be (says Tertullian) who do now already possess the kingdom? meaning in our Head, Christ. This (says another) is all my hope, and all my confidence, namely, that we have a proportion in that flesh and blood at Christ, which is so exalted, and therefore where he reigns, we shall reign; where our flesh is glorified, we shall be glorified. Surely, it is matter of exceeding joy to believe that Christ our Head, our flesh, and blood, is in all this glory at his Father's right-hand. Thus we have opened the sense and importance of Christ's sitting at his Fathers right hand. Hence we infer,

INFERENCE 1. Is this so great an honor to Christ, to sit enthroned at God's right hand? What honor then is reserved in heaven for those that are faithful to Christ, now on the earth? Christ prayed, and his prayer was heard, John 17:24. "That we may be with him to behold the glory that God has given him;" and what heart can conceive the felicity of such a sight? It made Stephen's face shine as the face of an angel, when he had but a glimpse of Christ at his Father's right hand. "Your eyes shall see the king in his beauty," Isaiah 33:17. which respected Hezekiah in the type, Christ in the truth. But this is not all, though this be much, to be spectators of Christ in his throne of glory; we shall not only see him in his throne, but also sit with him enthroned in glory. To behold him is much, but to sit with him is more. I remember it was the saying of a heavenly Christian, now with Christ, I should far rather look but through the hole of Christ's door, to see but one half of his fairest and most lovely face, [for he looks like heaven] suppose I should never win to see his excellency and glory to the full than to enjoy the flower, the bloom, and chief excellency of the glory and riches of ten worlds. And you know how the Queen of the South fainted at the sight of Solomon in his glory. But this sight you shall have of Christ, will change you into his likeness. "We shall be like him (says the apostle) for we shall see him as he is," 1 John 3:2. He will place us as it were in his own throne with him. So runs the promise, Revelation 3:21. "To him that overcomes, I will grant to sit with me in my throne; even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne:" and so 2 Timothy 2:12. "If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him." The Father set Christ on his right hand, and Christ will set the saints on his right hand. So you know the sheep are placed by the angels at the great day, Matthew 25:1-46: and so the church, under the figure of the daughter of Egypt, whom Solomon married, is placed "on the king's right hand, in gold of Ophir," Psalms 45:1-17: This honor have all the saints. O amazing love! What, we set on thrones, while as good as us by nature howl in flames! O what manner of love is this! These expressions indeed do not intend that the saints shall be set in higher glory than Christ; or that they shall have a parity of glory with Christ, for in all things he must have the pre-eminence: But they note the great honor that Christ will put upon the saints; as also, that his glory shall be their glory in heaven. "As the glory of the husband redounds to the wife;" and again, their glory will be his glory, 2 Thessalonians 1:10. and so it will be a social glory. O, it is admirable to think, where free grace has already mounted up poor dust and ashes! To think how nearly related now to this royal, princely Jesus! But how much higher are the designs of grace, that are not yet come to their parturient fullness, they look beyond all this that we now know! "Now are we the sons of God, but it does not yet appear what we shall be," 1 John 3:2. Ah what reason have you to honor Christ on earth, who is preparing such honors for you in heaven.

INFERENCE. 2. Christ Jesus thus enthroned in heaven then how impossible is it, that ever his interest should miscarry or sink on earth? The church has many subtle and potent enemies. True,

but as Haman could not prevail against the Jews, while Esther their friend spoke for them to the king, no more can they while our Jesus sits at his, and our Father's right hand. Will he suffer his enemies that are under his feet, to rise up and pull out his eyes, think you? Surely they that touch his people touch the very apple of his eye," Zechariah 2:8. "He must reign until his enemies are put under his feet," 1 Corinthians 15:25. The enemy under his feet, shall not destroy the children in his arms. He sits in heaven on purpose to manage all to the advantage of his church, Ephesians 1:22. Are our enemies powerful; lo our King sits on the right hand of power: Are they subtle and deep in their contrivance; He that sits on the throne, overlooks all they do. Heaven overlooks hell. "He that sits in heaven beholds," and derides their attempts, Psalms 2:4. He may permit his enemies to straiten then in one place, but it shall be for their enlargement in another: For it is with the church, as it is with the sea: what it loses in one place, it gets it another; and so really loses nothing. He may suffer them also to distress us in outwards, but shall be recompensed with inward and better mercies; and so we shall lose nothing by that. A footstool you know is useful to him that treads on it, and serves to lift him up higher; so shall Christ's enemies be to him and his, albeit they think not so. What singular benefits the oppositions of his enemies, occasion to his people; I have elsewhere discovered, to which I may refer my reader; and pass to

INFERENCE. 3. Is Christ set down on the right hand of the Majesty in heaven? O with what awful reverence should we approach him in the duties of his worship! Away with light and low thoughts of Christ. Away with formal, irreverent, and careless frames in praying, hearing, receiving, yes, in conferring and speaking of Christ. Away with all deadness, and drowsiness in duties; for he is a great King with whom you have to do. A king, to whom the kings of the earth are but as little bits of clay. Lo, the angels cover their faces in his presence. He is an adorable Majesty. When John had a vision of this enthroned King, about sixty veers after his ascension; such was life over-powering glory of Christ, as the sun when it shines in its strength, that when he saw him, he fell at his fleet as dead, and died it is like he had, if Christ had not laid his hand on him, and said, "Fear not, I am the first and the last; I am he that lives, and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore," Revelation 1:17-18. When he appeared to Saul in the way to Damascus, it was in glory above the glory of the sun, which overpowered him also, and laid him as one dead upon the ground.

O that you did but know what a glorious Lord you worship and serve. Who makes the very place of his feet glorious, wherever he comes. Surely He is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all that are round about him. There is indeed a "parresia" boldness or free liberty of speech allowed to the saints, Ephesians 3:12. But no rudeness or irreverence. We may indeed come, as the children of a king come to the father, who is both their awful sovereign, and tender father; which double relation causes a due mixture of love, and reverence in their hearts, when they come before him. You may be free, but not crude, in his presence. Though he be your Father, Brother, Friend; yet the distance between him and you is infinite.

INFERENCE 4. If Christ be so gloriously advanced in the highest throne, then none need to reckon themselves dishonored, by suffering the vilest things for his sake. The very chains and sufferings of Christ have glory in them. Hence Moses "esteemed the very reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt," Hebrews 11:26. He saw an excellency in the very worst things of Christ, his reproaches and sufferings, as made him leap out of his honors and riches, into them. He did not, (as one says) only endure the reproaches of Christ, but counted

them treasures. To be reckoned among his honors and things of value. So Thuanus reports of Ludovicus Marsacus, a noble knight of France, when he was led with other martyrs, that were bound with cords, to execution; and he for his dignity was not bound, he cried, give me any chain too, let me be a knight of the same orders. Disgrace itself is honorable, when it is endured for the Lord of Glory. And surely there is (as one phrases it) a little paradise, a young heaven, in sufferings for Christ. If there were nothing else in it, but that they are endured on his account, it would richly reward all we can endure for him; but if we consider how exceeding kind Christ is to them, that count it their glory to be abased for him; that though he be always kind to his people, (yet if we may so speak) he overcomes himself in kindness, when they suffer for him; it would make men in love with his reproaches.

INFERENCE. 5. If Christ sat not down to rest in heaven, until he had finished his work on earth; then it is in vain for us to think of rest, until we have finished our work, as Christ also did his.

How willing are we to find rest here! To dream of that, which Christ never found in this world, nor any ever found before us. O think not of resting, until you have done working and done sinning. Your life and your labors must end together. "Write (says the Spirit) blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, for they rest from their labors," Revelation 14:13. Here you must have the sweat, and there the sweet. It is too much to have two heavens. Here you must be content to dwell in the tents of Cedar, hereafter you shall be within the curtains of Solomon. Heaven is the place of which it may be truly said, that there the weary be at rest. O think not of sitting down on this side heaven. There are four things will keep the saints from sitting down on earth to rest, namely, grace, corruption, devils and wicked men.

First, Grace will not suffer you to rest here. Its tendencies are beyond this world. It will be looking and longing for the blessed hope. A gracious person takes himself for a pilgrim, seeking a better country, and is always suspicious of danger in every place and state. It is still beating up the sluggish heart with such language as that, Micah 2:10. "Arise, depart, this is not your rest, for it is polluted." Its further tendencies and continual jealousies, will keep you from sitting long still in this world.

Secondly, Your corruptions will keep you from rest here. They will continually exercise your spirits, and keep you upon your watch. Saints have their hands filled with work by their own hearts every day. Sometimes to prevent sin; and sometimes to lament it. And always to watch and fear, to mortify and kill it. Sin will not long suffer you to be quiet, Romans 7:21-24. And if a bad heart will not break your rest here, then,

Thirdly, There is a busy devil will do it. He will find you work enough with his temptations and suggestions, and except you can sleep quietly in his arms as the wicked do, there is no rest to be expected. "Your adversary, the devil, goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist," 1 Peter 5:8.

Fourthly, Nor will his servants and instruments let you be quiet on this side heaven. *Their very name speaks their turbulent disposition. "My soul, (says the holy man) is among lions, and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows," Psalms 57:4. Well then, be content to enter into your rest, as Christ did into his. He sweat, then sat, and so must you!

S. The Authority by which Christ, as

The Authority by which Christ, as Mediator, acted "For him has God the Father sealed." John 6:27

You have heard Christ's compact, or agreement with the Father, in the covenant of redemption; as also what the Father did, in pursuance of the ends thereof, in giving his Son out of his bosom, etc. Also what the Son has done towards it, in assuming flesh. But though the glorious work be thus far advanced, yet all he should act in that assumed body, had been invalid and vain, without a due call, and commission from the Father, so to do: which is the import of the words now before you. This scripture is a part of Christ's excellent reply to a self- ended generation, who followed him, not for any spiritual excellencies that they saw in him, or soul-advantages they expected by him, but for bread. Instead of making his service their treat and drink, they only served him, that they might eat and drink. Self is a thing may creep into the best hearts and actions; but it only predominates in the hypocrite. These people had sought Christ from place to place, and having at last found him, they salute him with an impertinent compliment, "Rabbi, whence came you hither?" John 6:25. Christ's reply is partly dissuasive, and partly directive. He dissuades them from putting the secondary and subordinate, in the place of the principal and ultimate end; not to prefer their bodies to their souls, their fleshly accommodations to the glory of God. "Labor not for the meat that perishes." Wherein he does not take them off from their lawful labors and callings; but he dissuades them, first, from minding those things too intently: and, secondly, he dissuades then from that odious sin of making religion but a pretense for the belly. And it is partly directive, and that in the main end and business of life. "But labor for that meat which endures to eternal life;" to get bread for your souls to live eternally by. And, that he might engage their diligence in seeking it to purpose, he shows them not only where they may have it, ["which the Son of man shall give you"] but also how they may be fully satisfied, that he has it for them, in the clause I have pitched on; "For him has God the Father sealed." In these words are three parts observable.

1. The Person sealing or investing Christ with authority and power; which is said to be God the Father. Though all the persons in the Godhead are equal in nature, dignity and power, yet in their operation there is an order observed among them; the Father sends the Son, the Son is sent by the Father, the Holy Spirit is sent by both.

2. The subject in which God the Father lodges this authority, [Him] that is, the Son of man. Jesus Christ, he is the "proton dektikon" the first receptacle of it, and he must here be understood exclusively. God the Father has so sealed him, as he never sealed any other before him, or that shall arise after him. No name is given in heaven, or earth, but this name by which we are saved, Acts 4:12. "The government is upon his shoulders," Isaiah 9:1-21.

3. Here is farther observable, the way and manner of the Father's delegating and committing this authority to Christ; and that is, by sealing him. Where we have both a metonymy, the symbol of authority being put for the authority itself, and a metaphor, sealing, which is a human act, for the ratifying and confirming an instrument, or grant, being here applied to God. Like as princes, by sealed credentials, confirm the authority of those that are sent by them; as the Dutch Annotators

well express the meaning of it. Hence we note,

DOCTRINE. That Jesus Christ did not of himself undertake the work of our redemption, but was solemnly sealed unto that work by God the Father. When I say, he did not of himself undertake this work, I mean not that he was unwilling to go about it, for his heart was as fully and ardently engaged in it, as the Father's was: so he tells us, Psalms 40:7. "Lo, I come to do your will, O God; your law is in my heart." But the meaning is, he came not without a due call, and full commission from his Father. And so it is to be understood in opposition to intrusion, not voluntary susception; and this is the meaning of that scripture, John 8:24. "I proceeded and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me." And this the apostle plainly expresses, and fully clear; Hebrews 5:4-5 "And no man takes this honor to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron: so also, Christ glorified not himself to be made an High-priest; but he that said unto him, You are my Son." And on the account of these sealed credentials, he received from the Father, he is called the Apostle and High-priest of our profession, Hebrews 3:1 : That is, one called and sent forth by the Father's authority. Our present business, then, is to open Christ's commission, and to view the great seal of heaven by which it was ratified.

And, to preserve a clear method in the explication of this great truth, into which your faith and comfort is resolved, I shall, First, Show what was the work and office to which the Father sealed him.

Secondly, What his sealing to this work does imply.

Thirdly, How, and by what acts, the Father sealed him to it.

Fourthly, Why it was necessary that he should be thus sealed and authorised by his Father; and then improve it in its proper uses.

First, What was that office, or work, to which his Father sealed him? I answer, more generally, he was sealed to the whole work of mediation for us, thereby to recover and save all the elect, whom the Father had given him; so John 17:2 "It was to give eternal life to as many as were given him": it was to "bring Jacob again to him," Isaiah 49:5, or as the apostle expresses it, 1 Peter 3:18 "That he might bring us to God." More particularly, in order to the sure, and full effecting of this most glorious design, he was sealed to the offices of a Prophet, Priest, and King, that so he might bring about and compass this work.

1. God sealed him a commission to preach the glad tidings of salvation to sinners. This commission Christ opened and read in the audience of the people, Luke 4:17-21. "And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, etc. And he began to say unto them, this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears."

2. He also sealed him to the priesthood, and that the most excellent; authorizing him to execute both the parts of it, namely, oblatory and intercessory. He called him to offer up himself a sacrifice for us. "I have power (says he) to lay down my life, this commandment have I received of my Father," John 10:18. And upon that account, his offering up of his blood is, by the apostle, stiled an

act of obedience, as it is, Php 2:8. "He became obedient unto death." He also called him to intercede for us; Hebrews 7:21; Hebrews 7:24-25. "These priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath; by him that said unto him, The Lord swore, and will not repent, you are a priest forever:" because his sacrifice is virtually continued, in his living forever to make intercession, as it is, Hebrews 7:24. Yes,

3. He called him to his regal office; he was set upon the highest throne of authority by his Father's commission, as it is, Matthew 28:18. "All power in heaven and earth is given to me." To all this was Christ sealed and authorised by his Father.

Secondly, What does the Father's scaling of Christ to this work and office imply? There are divers things implied in it: As,

1. The validity and efficacy of all his mediatory acts. For, by virtue of this his sealing whatever he did was fully ratified. And in this very thing lies much of a believer's comfort and security, forasmuch as all acts done without commission and authority (how great, or able soever the person that does them is, yet) are in themselves null and void. But what is done by commission and authority, is authentic, and most allowable among men. Had Christ come from heaven, and entered upon his mediatory work without a due call, our faith had been stumbled at the very threshold; but this greatly satisfies.

2. It imports the great obligation lying upon Jesus Christ to be faithful in the work he was sealed to: for, the Father, in this commission, devolves a great trust upon him, and relies upon him for his most faithful discharge thereof. And, indeed, upon this very account Christ reckons himself specially obliged to pursue the Father's design and end, John 9:4. "I must work the works of him that sent me". And John 5:30. "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which has sent me." Still his eye is upon that work and will of his Father. And he reckons himself under a necessity of punctual and precise obedience to it; and, as a faithful servant, will have his own will swallowed up in his Father's will.

3. It imports Christ's complete qualification, or instrumental fitness to serve the Father's design and end of our recovery. Had not God known him to be every way fit, and qualified for the work, he would never have sealed him a commission for it. Men may, but God will not seal an unfit, or incapable person, for his work. And, indeed, whatever is desirable in a servant, was eminently found in Christ: for faithfulness, none like him. Moses indeed was faithful to a pin, but still as a servant: but Christ as a Son, Hebrews 3:2. He is the faithful and true witness, Revelation 1:5. For zeal, none like him. The zeal of God's house did eat him up, John 2:16-17. He was so intent upon his Fathers works that he forgot to eat bread, counting his work his meat and drink, John 4:32. Yes, and love to his Father carried him on through all his work, and made him delight in the hardest piece of his service; for he served him as a Son, Hebrews 3:5-6. All that ever he did was done in love. For wisdom, none like him. The Father knew him to be most wise, and said of him before he was employed, "Behold my servant shall deal prudently," Isaiah 52:13. To conclude, for self-denial, never any like him; he sought not his own glory, but the glory of him that sent him, John 8:50. Had he not been thus faithful, zealous, full of love, prudent, and self-denying, he had never been employed in this great affair.

4. It implies Christ's sole authority in the church, to appoint and enjoin what he pleases; and this is his peculiar prerogative. For, the commission God sealed him in the text, is a single, not a joint commission; he has sealed him, and none beside him. Indeed there were some that pretended a call and commission from God; but all that were before him were thieves and robbers, that came not in at the door, as he did, John 10:8. And he himself foretells, that after him some should arise, and labor to deceive the world with a feigned commission, and a counterfeit seal, Matthew 24:24. "There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders: insomuch, that if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect." But God never commissioned any besides him, neither is there any other name under heaven, Acts 4:12. Thus you see how the validity of his acts, his obligation to be faithful, his complete qualifications, and sole authority in the church, are imported in his sealing.

Thirdly, Let us enquire how God the Father sealed Jesus Christ to this work, and we shall find that he was sealed by four acts of the Father.

1. By solemn designation to this work. He singled him out and set him apart for it: and therefore the prophet Isaiah, Isaiah 42:1 calls him God's elect. And the apostle Peter, 1 Peter 2:4. Chosen of God. This word which we render Elect, does not only signify one that in himself is imminently, worthy, and excellent, but also one that is set apart and designed, as Christ was, for the work of mediation. And so much is included in John 10:36. where the Father is said to sanctify him, That is, to separate, and devote him to this service.

2. He was sealed, not only by solemn designation, but also super-eminent and unparalleled sanctification. He was anointed, as well as appointed to it. The Lord filled him with the Spirit, and that without measure, to qualify him for this service. So Isaiah 61:1-3 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach," etc. Yes, the Spirit of the Lord was not only upon him, but he was full of the Spirit, Luke 4:1. and so full as was never any beside him, for God "anointed him with the oil of gladness, above his fellows," Psalms 45:7. Believers are his fellows, or co-partners of this Spirit; they have an anointing also, but not as Christ had; in him it dwelt in its fullness, in them according to measure. It was poured out on Christ, our Head, abundantly, and ran down to the hem of his garment. "God gave not the Spirit to him by measure," John 3:34. God filled Christ's human nature, to the utmost capacity, with all fullness of the Spirit of knowledge, wisdom, love, etc. beyond all creatures for the plenary and more effectual administration of his mediator chip: he was full extensively, with all kinds of grace; and full intensively, with all degrees of grace. "It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell, Colossians 1:19. as light in the sun, or water in a fountain, that he might not only fill all things, as the apostle speaks, Ephesians 1:22. but that he might be prompt, expedite, and every way fit to discharge his own work, which was the next and immediate end of it: so that the holy oil that was poured out upon the head of kings and priests, whereby they were consecrated to their offices, was but typical of the Spirit, by which Christ was consecrated, or sealed, to his offices.

3. Christ was sealed by the Father's immediate testimony from heaven, whereby he was declared to be the person whom the Father had solemnly designed and appointed to his work. And God gave this extraordinary testimony of him at two remarkable seasons, the one was just at his entrance on his public ministry, Matthew 3:1-17, and the other but a little before his sufferings, Matthew 17:5. This voice was not formed by such organs and instruments of speech, as ours are,

but by creating a voice in the air which the people heard sounding therein: by this God owned, approved, and as by a seal ratified his work.

4. Christ was sealed by the Father, in all those extraordinary miraculous works wrought by him, in which the Father gave yet more full and convincing testimonies to the world, that this was he whom he had appointed to be our Mediator. These were convictive to the world, that God had sent him, and that his doctrine was of God. "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him," Acts 10:38. And so, John 5:36. "I have a greater witness than that of John; for the works which the Father has given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father has sent me." Therefore he still referred those that doubted of him, or of his doctrine, to the seal of his Father, even the miraculous works he wrought in the power of God, Matthew 11:3-5. And thus the Father sealed him.

Fourthly and lastly, We will enquire why it was necessary Christ should be sealed by his Father to this work: and there are these three weighty reasons for it.

1. Else he had not corresponded with the types which prefigured him, and in him it was necessary that they should be all accomplished. You know, under the Law, the kings and high priests had their inaugurations by solemn unctions; in all which this consecration, or sealing of Christ to his work, was shadowed out: and therefore you shall find, Hebrews 5:4-5. "No man takes this honor to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron:" so also (mark the necessary correspondence between Christ and them) "Christ glorified not himself to be made an High Priest; but he that said unto him, You are my Son."

2. Moreover, here the hearts of believers are the more engaged to love the Father, inasmuch as it appears hereby that the Father's love, and good will to them, was the original and spring of their redemption. For had not the Father sealed him such a commission, he had not come; but now he comes in the Father's name, and in the Father's love, as well as his name; and so all men are bound to ascribe equal glory and honor to them both, as it is, John 5:23.

3. And especially Christ would not come without a commission, because, else you had no ground for your faith in him. How should we have been satisfied that this is indeed the true Messiah, except he had opened his commission to the world, and showed his Father's seal annexed to it? If he had come without his credentials from heaven, and only told the world that God had sent him, and that they must take his bare word for it, who could have rested his faith on that testimony? And that is the true meaning of that place, John 5:31. "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true." How so? You will say, does not that contradict what he said, John 8:14. "Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true." Therefore you must understand truth, not as it is opposed to reality; but the meaning is, if I had only given you my bare word for it, and not brought other evidence from my Father, my testimony had not been authentic and valid, according to human laws; but now all doubtings are precluded. Let us next improve this.

INFERENCE 1. Hence we infer the unreasonableness of infidelity, and how little rejecters of Christ can have to pretend for their so doing. You see he has opened his commission in the gospel, shown the world his Father's hand and seal to it, given as ample satisfaction as reason itself could desire, or expect; yet even his own received him not; John 1:11. And he knew it before hand, and

therefore complained by the prophet, Isaiah 53:1. "Who has believed our report?" etc. Yes, and that he is believed on in the world, is by the apostle put among the great mysteries of godliness, 1 Timothy 3:16. A man that well considers with what convincing evidence Christ comes, would rather think it a mystery, that any should not believe. But, Oh the brutish obstinacy, and devilish enmity, that is in nature to Jesus Christ! Devilish did I say? You must give me that word again, for he compelled the devil's assent; "We know you, whom you are." And it is equally as wonderful to see the facility that is in nature to comply (meanwhile) with any, even the most foolish imposture. Let a false Christ arise, and he shall deceive many, as it is, Matthew 24:24. Of this Christ complains, and not without great reason, John 5:43, "I am come in my Father's name, and you receive me not: If another come in his own name, him will you receive," q. d. You are incredulous to none but me: every deceiver, every pitiful cheat, that has but wit, or rather wickedness, enough to tell you the Lord has sent him, though you must take his own single word for it, he shall obtain and get disciples; but though I come in my Father's name, That is, showing you a commission signed and sealed by him, doing those works which none but a God can do, yet you receive me not. But in all this, we must adore the justice of God, permitting it to be so, giving men up to such unreasonable obstinacy and hardness. It is a sore plague that lies upon the world, and a wonder that we all are not engulfed in the same infidelity.

INFERENCE 2. If Christ was sealed to his work by his Father, then how great is the sin of those that reject and despise such as are sent and sealed by Jesus Christ? For look, as he came to us in his Father's name, so he has sent forth, by the same authority, ministers in his name; and as he acts in his Father's, so they in his, authority. "As you have sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world," John 17:18. And so, John 20:21. "As my Father has sent me, so have I sent you." You may think it a small matter to despise or reject a minister of Christ, (a sin, in the guilt whereof, I think no age has been plunged deeper than this;) but hear, and let it be a warning to you forever: in so doing you despise, and put the slight both upon the Father that sent Jesus, and upon Christ that sent them: so that it is a rebellion, that however it seems to begin low in some small piques against their persons, or some little quarrels at their parts and utterance, tones, methods or gestures; yet it runs high, even to the fountain-head of the most supreme authority. You that set yourselves against a minister of Christ, set yourselves against God the Father, and God the Son; Luke 10:16. "He that hears you, hears me; and he that despises you, despises me; and he that despises me, despises him that sent me." God expects that you behave yourselves, under the word spoken by us, as if he himself spoke it; yes, he expects submission to his word in the mouths of his ministers from the greatest on earth. And therefore it was that God so severely punished Zedekiah, "because he humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet, speaking from the mouth of the Lord," 2 Chronicles 36:12. God was angry with a great king for not humbling himself before a poor prophet. Yet here you must distinguish both of Persons, and of Acts. This reverence and submission is not due to them as men, but as men in office, as Christ's ambassadors; and must involve that respect still in it. Again, we owe it not to them, commanding or forbidding in their own names, but in Christ's, not inventing their own spleen, but the terrors of the Lord; and then to resist is a high rebellion and affront to the sovereign authority of heaven. And, by the way, this may instruct ministers, that the way to maintain that veneration and respect that is due to them, in the consciences of their hearers, is by keeping close to their commission.

INFERENCE. 3. Hence also we infer, how great an evil it is to intrude into the office of the ministry without a due call. It is more than Christ himself would do; he glorified not himself: the honors and advantages attending that office, have invited many, to run before they were sent. But surely this is an insufferable violation of Christ's order. Our age has abounded with as many church-levelers as state-levelers. I wish the ministers of Christ might at last see and consider, what they were once warned of by a faithful watchman: 'I believe (says he) God has permitted so many to intrude into the ministers' calling, because ministers have too much meddled with, and intruded into other men's callings.'

INFERENCE. 4. Hence be convinced of the great efficacy that is in all gospel ordinances duly administered: For Christ having received full commission from his Father, and by virtue thereof having instituted and appointed these ordinances in the church, all the power in heaven is engaged to make them good, to back and second them, to confirm and ratify them. Hence, in the censures of the church, you have that great expression, Matthew 18:18. "Whatever you bind or loose on earth, shall he bound or loosed in heaven." And so, for the word and sacraments, Matthew 18:18-20. "All power in heaven and earth is given unto me: Go therefore, etc. They are not the appointments of men; your faith stands not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. That very power, God the Father committed to Christ, is the fountain whence all gospel institutions flow. And he has promised to be with his officers, not only the extraordinary officers of that age, but with his ministers, in succeeding ages, to the end of the world. O therefore, when we come to an ordinance, come not with slight thoughts, but with great reverence, and great expectations, remembering Christ is there to make all good.

INFERENCE. 5. Again, here you have another call to admire the grace and love, both of the Father and Son to your souls: It is not lawful to compare them, but it is duty to admire them. Was it not wonderful grace in the Father to seal a commission for the death of his Son, for the humbling him as low as hell, and in that method to save you, when you might have expected he should have sealed your Mittimus for hell, rather than a commission for your salvation? He might rather have set his irreversible seal to the sentence of your damnation, than to a commission for his Son's humiliation for you. And no less is the love of Christ to be wondered at, that would accept such a commission, as this for us, and receive this seal, understanding fully (as he did) what were the contents of that commission, that the Father delivered him thus sealed, and knowing that there could be no reversing of it afterwards.

O then, love the Lord Jesus, all you his saints, for still you see more and more of his love breaking out upon you. I commend to you a sealed Savior this day; O that everyone that reads these lines might, in a pang of love, cry out with the enamored spouse, Song of Solomon 8:6. "Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave; the coals thereof are coals of fire, which have a most vehement flame."

INFERENCE. 6. Once more; Has God sealed Christ for you? Then draw forth the comfort of his sealing for you, and be restless until you also be sealed by him.

1. Draw out the comfort of Christ's sealing for you. Remember that hereby God stands engaged, even by his own seal, to allow and confirm whatever Christ has done in the business of our salvation. And on this ground you may thus plead with God: Lord, you have sealed Christ to this office, and therefore I depend upon it, that you allow all that he has done, and all that he has

suffered for me, and will make good all that he has promised me. If men will not deny their own seals, much less will you.

2. Get your interest in Christ sealed to you by the Spirit, else you cannot have the comfort of Christ's being sealed for you. Now the Spirit seals two ways, Objectively and Effectually; the first is by working those graces in us, which are the conditions of the promises: the latter is by shining upon his own work, and helping the soul to discern it, which follows the other, both in order of nature, and of time. And these sealings of the Spirit are to be distinguished, both the quality of the person sealed, which always is a believer, Ephesians 1:13. for there can be no reflex, until there have been a direct Act of faith; and by the matter of which that comfort is made: which if it be of the Spirit, is ever consonant to the written word, Isaiah 8:20. And partly by its effects: for it commonly produces in the sealed soul, great care and caution to avoid sin, Ephesians 4:30. Great love to God, John 14:22. Readiness to suffer anything, for Christ, Romans 5:3-5. Confidence in addresses to God, 1 John 5:13-14, and great humility and self-abasement; as in Abraham, who lay on his face when God sealed the covenant to him, Genesis 17:1-3. This, O this brings home the sweet and good of all, when this seal is super-added to that.

S. The Excellency of our High-Priest's

The Excellency of our High-Priest’s Oblation,

being the first Act or Part of His Priestly Office "For by one offering he has perfected forever, those who are sanctified." Hebrews 10:14

After this more general view and consideration of the priesthood of Christ, method requires that we come to a nearer and more particular consideration of the parts thereof, which are his oblation and intercession, answerable to the double office of the High-priest, offering the blood of the sacrifices without the holy place, which typed out Christ’s oblation, and then once a year bringing the blood before the Lord into the most holy place, presenting it before God, and with it sprinkling the mercy-seat, wherein the intercession of Christ (the other part or act of his priesthood) was in a lively manner typified to us. My present business is to open and apply the oblation of Christ; the efficacy and excellency whereof is excellently illustrated, by a comparison with all other oblations, in the precedent context, and with a singular encomium commended to us in these words, from the singularity of it. It is but one offering; one not only specifically, but one numerically considered; but once offered, and never more to be repeated: for Christ dies no more, Romans 6:9. He also commends it from the efficacy of it; by it he has perfected it, that is not only purchased a possibility of salvation, but all that we need to our full perfection. It brings in a most entire, complete and perfect righteousness: all that remains to make us perfectly happy, is but the full application of the benefits procured by this oblation for us. Moreover, it is here commended from the extensiveness of it; not being restrained to a few, but applicable to all the saints, in all the ages and places of the world: for this indefinite, them that that sanctified, is equivalent to a universal, and is as much as if he had said, To all and every saint, from the beginning to the end of the world. Lastly, He commends it from its perpetuity; it perfects forever, that is, it is of everlasting efficacy: it shall abide as fresh, vigorous and powerful to the end of the world, as it was the first moment it was offered up. All runs into this sweet truth:

DOCTRINE. That the oblation made unto God by Jesus Christ, is of unspeakable value, and everlasting efficacy, to perfect all those who are, or shall be sanctified, to the end of the world.

Out of this fountain flow all the excellent blessings that believers either have, or hope for. Had it not been for this, there had been no such things in rerum natura, as justification, adoption, salvation, etc. peace with God and hopes of glory, pardon of sin, and divine acceptance: these and all other our best mercies, had been but so many entia, rationis, mere conceits. A man, as one says, might have happily imagined such things as these, as he may golden mountains, and rivers of liquid gold, and rocks of diamonds: but these things could never have had any real existence extra mentem, had not Christ offered up himself a sacrifice to God for us. It is "the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered up himself without spot to God, that purges the conscience from dead works," Hebrews 9:14. that is, from the sentence of condemnation and death, as it is reflected by conscience, for our works sake. His appearing before God as our priest, with such an offering for us, is that which removes our guilt and fear together: "He appeared to put away sin by

the sacrifice of himself," Hebrews 9:26. Now, forasmuch as the point before us is of so great weight in itself, and so fundamental to our safety and comfort, I shall endeavor to give you as distinct and clear an account of it, as can consist with that brevity which I must necessarily use. And therefore, reader, apply your mind attentively to the consideration of this excellent Priest that appears before God, and the sacrifices he offers, with the properties and adjuncts thereof; the person before whom he brings, and to whom he offers it; the persons for whom he offers; and the end for which this oblation is made.

First, The Priest that appears before God with an oblation for us, is Jesus Christ, God-man: the dignity of whose person dignified, and derived an inestimable worth to the offering he made. There were many priests before him, but none like unto him, either for the purity of his person, or the perpetuity of his priesthood: they were sinful men, and offered for their own sins, as well as the sins of the people, Hebrews 5:3. "but he was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," Hebrews 7:2. He could stand before God, even in the eye of his justice, as a lamb without spot. Though he made his soul an offering for sin, "yet he had done no iniquity, nor was any guile found in his mouth," Isaiah 53:9. and indeed his offering had done us no good, if the least taint of sin had been found on him. They were mortal men, that "continued not by reason of death," Hebrews 7:25, but Christ is "a Priest forever," Psalms 110:4.

Secondly, The oblation or offering he made, was not the blood of beasts, but his own blood, Hebrews 9:12. And herein he transcended all other priests, that he had something of his own to offer; he had a body given him to be at his own dispose, to this use and purpose, Hebrews 10:10. he offered his body: "yes, not only his body, but his soul was made an offering for sin," Isaiah 53:10. We had made a forfeiture of our souls and bodies by sin, and it was necessary the sacrifice of Christ should be answerable to the debt we owed. And when Christ came to offer his sacrifice, he stood not only in the capacity of a priest, but also in that of a surety: and so his soul stood in the stead of ours, and his body in the stead of our bodies. Now the excellency of this oblation will appear in the following adjuncts and properties of it. This oblation being for the matter of it, the soul and body of Jesus Christ, is therefore,

1. Invaluably precious. So the apostle styles it, 1 Peter 1:19. "You were redeemed "timioi aimati", with the precious blood of the Son of God:" and such it behooved him to offer. For it being offered as an expiatory sacrifice, it ought to be equivalent, in its own intrinsic value to all the souls and bodies that were to be redeemed by it. And so it was, and more also for there was a redundancy of value, an over plus of merit, which went to make a purchase for the redeemed, as will be opened in its place. So that, as one rich diamond is more worth than a thousand pebbles: one piece of gold, than many counters; so the soul and body of one Christ, are much more excellent than all the souls and bodies in the world. And yet I dare not affirm, as some do, that by reason of the infinite preciousness of Christ's blood, one drop thereof had been sufficient to have redeemed the whole world: for if one drop had been enough, why was all the rest, even to the last drop, shed? Was God cruel, to exact more from him than was needful and sufficient: Besides, we must remember, that the passions of Christ, which were inflicted on him as the curse of the law, these only are the passions which are sufficient for our redemption from the curse of the law; now it was not a drop of blood, but death which was contained in the curse: this therefore was necessary to be inflicted. But surely as none but God can estimate the weight and evil of sin, so none but he can comprehend the worth and preciousness of the blood of Christ, shed to expiate it. And being so infinitely

precious a thing which was offered up to God, it must,

2. Needs be a most complete and all-sufficient oblation, fully to expiate the sins of all for whom it was offered, in all ages of the world. The virtue of this sacrifice reaches backward as far as Adam, and reaches forward to the last person of the elect springing from him. That the efficacy of it thus reaches back to Adam, is plain: for, on the account thereof, he is stiled "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," Revelation 13:8. And to the same sense a judicious expositor understands those words of Christ, John 8:58. "Before Abraham was, I am." And, look, as the sun at midday extends his light and influence, not only forward towards the West, but also backward towards the East, where he arose; so did this most efficacious sacrifice reach all the elect in the virtue of it, who died before Christ came in the flesh. It is therefore but a vain cavil, that some make against the satisfaction of Christ, to render it needless, when they say, many were saved without it, even as many as were saved before the death of Christ. For they say, the effect cannot be before the cause, which is true of physical, but not of moral causes; and such was Christ's satisfaction. As for example, a captive is freed out of prison from the time that his surety undertakes for him, and promises his ransom; here the captive is actually delivered, though he ransom that delivered him be not yet actually paid. So it was in this case; Christ had engaged to the Father to satisfy for them, and upon that security they were delivered. And the virtue of this oblation not only reaches those believers, that lived and died before Christ's day, but it extends itself forward to the end of the world. Hence Hebrews 13:8. Christ is said to be "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever;" that is "He is not so a Savior to us that now live, as that he was not their Savior also, that believed in him, before us, from the beginning: yet not so a Savior both to them and us, as that he shall not be the same to all that shall believe on him to the world's end." To the same sense are those words, Hebrews 11:40. rightly paraphrased, "God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect:" q. d. God has appointed the accomplishment of the promise of sending the Messiah, to be in the last times, that they (namely, that lived before Christ, should not be perfected, that is, justified and saved by anything done in their time, but by looking to our time, and Christ's satisfaction made therein; whereby they and we are perfected together. No tract of time can wear out the virtue of this eternal sacrifice. It is as fresh, vigorous, and potent now, as the first hour it was offered. And though he actually offer it no more, yet he virtually continues it by his intercession now in heaven; for there he is still a Priest. And therefore, about sixty years after his ascension, when he gave the Revelation to John, he appears to him in his priestly garment, Revelation 1:13. "Clothed in a garment down to the feet, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle:" in allusion to the priestly ephod, and curious girdle. And as the virtue of this oblation reaches backward and forward, to all ages, and to all believers, so to all the sins of all believers, which are fully purged and expiated by it: this no other oblation could do. The legal sacrifices were no real expiations, but rather remembrances of sins, Hebrews 9:9; Hebrews 9:12. Hebrews 10:3. And all the virtue they had, consisted in their typical relation to this sacrifice, Galatians 3:23. Hebrews 9:13. And, separate from it, were altogether weak, unprofitable, and insignificant things, Hebrews 7:18. But this blood CLEANSES from all sins, 1 John 1:7. and sin, originating, or originated, or actual, flowing from them both. It expiates all fully, without exception, and finally, without revocation. So that by his being made sin for us, we are made not only righteous, but "the righteousness of God in him," 2 Corinthians 5:21.

3. And lastly, to name no more; being so precious in itself, and so efficacious to expiate sin, it must needs be a most grateful oblation to the Lord, highly pleasing and delightful in his eyes. And so indeed it is said, Ephesians 5:2. "He gave himself for us, an offering, and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savor." Not that God took any delight or content in the bitter sufferings of Christ, simply and in themselves considered; but with relation to the end for which he was offered, even our redemption and salvation.

Hence arose the delight and pleasure God had in it; this made him take pleasure in bruising, him, Isaiah 53:10. God smelled a savor of rest in this sacrifice. The meaning is, that as men are offended with a stench, and their stomachs rise at it, and on the contrary delighted with sweet doors and fragrances; so the blessed God speaking after the manner of man, is offended, and filled with loathing, and abhorrence by our sins; but infinitely pleased and delighted in the offering of Christ for them, which came up as an odor of sweet smelling savor to him, Whereof the costly perfumes under the law were types and shadows. This was the oblation.

Thirdly, This oblation he brings before God, and to him he offers it up: So speaks the apostle, Hebrews 9:14. "Through the eternal Spirit he offered himself without spot to God." As Christ sustained the capacity of a surety, so God of a creditor, who exacted satisfaction from him; that is, he required from him, as our surety, the penalty due to us for our sin. And so Christ had to do immediately with God, yes, with a God infinitely wronged, and incensed by sin against us. To this incensed Majesty, Christ our High priest approached, as to a devouring fire, with the sacrifice.

Fourthly, The persons for whom, and in whose stead he offered himself to God, was the whole number of God's elect, which were given him of the Father, neither more nor less: So speak the scriptures. He laid down his life for the sheep, John 10:15. for the church, Acts 20:28. for the children of God, John 11:50-52!. It is confessed, there is sufficiency of virtue in this Sacrifice to redeem the whole world, and on that account some divines affirm he is called the "Savior of the world," John 4:42 et alibi. We acknowledge also, that he purchased the services of others, besides the elect, to be useful to them, as they many ways are. In which sense others take those scriptures that speak so universally of the extent of his death. We also acknowledge that the elect being scattered in all parts, and among all ranks of men in the world, and unknown to those that are to tender Jesus Christ to men by the preaching of the gospel; the stile of the gospel (as it was necessary) is by such indefinite expressions suited to the general tenders they are to make of him: but that the efficacy and saving virtues of this all-sufficient sacrifice, is co-extended with God's election, so that they all, and no others can, or shall reap the special benefits of it, is too clear in the scriptures to be denied, Ephesians 5:23. John 17:2; John 17:9; John 17:19-20. John 10:26-28. 1 Timothy 4:10.

Fifthly, The design and end of this oblation was to atone, pacify, and reconcile God, by giving him a full and adequate compensation or satisfaction for the sins of these his elect: so speaks the apostle, Colossians 1:20. "And having made peace, through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." So 2 Corinthians 5:19. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself." Reconciliation is the making up of that breach caused by sin, between us and God, and restoring us again to his favor and friendship. For this end Christ offered up himself to God; I say, not for this end only, but more especially; hence it is called "hilasmos", a propitiation; and so the Seventy

render that place, Numb. 15, the propitiating ram. But here I would not be mistaken, as though the reconciliation were made only between us and God the Father, by the blood of the cross; for we were reconciled by it to the whole Trinity. Every sin being made against the divine Majesty, it must needs follow, that the three Persons, having the same divine essence, must be all offended by the commission, and so all reconciled by the expiation and remission of the same. But reconciliation is said to be with the Father, because, though the works of the Trinity, ad extra, be undivided, and what one does, all do; and what is done to one, is done to all; yet by this form and manner of expression (as a learned man well observes), the scriptures point out the proper office of each Person. The Father receives us into favor; the Son mediates, and gives the ransom which procures it; the Spirit applies and seals this to the persons and hearts of believers. However, being reconciled to the Father, we are also reconciled to the Son, and Spirit, as they are one God in three Persons. And if it be objected, that then Christ offered up a sacrifice, or laid down a price to reconcile us to himself; I shall more fairly and directly meet with, and satisfy that objection, when I come to speak of Christ's satisfaction, which is one of the principal fruits of this excellent oblation. For the present, this may inform you about the nature and precious worth of Christ's oblation. The uses whereof follow in these five practical inferences.

INFERENCE 1. Hence it follows, That actual believers are fully freed from the guilt of their sins, and shall never more come under condemnation. The obligation of sin is perfectly abolished by the virtue of this sacrifice. When Christ became our sacrifice, he both bare, and bare away our sins. First, They were laid upon him, then expiated by him; so much is imported in that word, Hebrews 9:28. "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many". To bear, the word is a full and emphatical word, signifying not only to bear, but to bear away. So John 1:29. "Behold the Lamb of God, "ho arion", that takes away the sins of the world;" not only declaratively, or by way of manifestation to the conscience; but really, making a purgation of sin, as it is in Hebrews 1:3, "katarismon poiesamenos", word for word, a purgation being made, and not declared only. Now, how great a mercy is this, "that by him, all that believe should be justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses," Acts 13:39. What shall we call this grace? surely, we should do somewhat more than admire it, and faint under the sense of such a mercy. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered," Psalms 32:1-11 : or, O the blessedness or felicities of him that is pardoned! who can express the mercies, comforts, happiness of such a state as this? Reader, let me beg you, if you be one of this pardoned number, to look over the cancelled bonds, and see what vast sums are remitted to you. Remember what you were in your natural estate: possibly you were in that black bill, 1 Corinthians 6:3. What, and yet pardoned! full and finally pardoned, and that freely, as to any hand that you had in the procurement of it! what can't you do less, than fall down at the feet of free grace, and kiss those feet that moved so freely towards so vile a sinner? It is not long since your iniquities were upon you, and you pinedst away in them. Their guilt could by no creature power be separated from your soul. Now they are removed from you, as far as the East from the West, Psalms 103:11. So that, when the East and West, which are the two opposite points of heaven, meet, then your soul and its guilt may meet again together.

O the unspeakable efficacy of Christ's sacrifice, which extends to all sins! 1 John 1:7. "The blood of Christ CLEANSES from all sins, sins past and present, without exception. And some divines of good note affirm, all sins to come also; for, (says Mr. Paul Blains), original sin, in which all future

sins are, as fruits in the root, is pardoned; and if these were not pardoned, they would void and invalidate former pardons. And lastly, it would derogate from the most plenary satisfaction of Christ. But the most say, and I think, truly, that all the past sins of believers are pardoned, without revocation, all their present sins without exception; but not their sins to come by way of anticipation: and yet for them there is a pardon of course, which is applied on their repentance, and application, of Christ's blood; so that none of them shall make void former pardons. O let these things slide sweetly to your melting heart.

INFERENCE. 2. From this oblation Christ made of himself to God for our sins, we infer the inflexible severity of divine Justice, which could be no other way diverted from us, and appeased, but by the blood of Christ. If Christ had not presented himself to God for us, Justice would not have spared us: And if he do appear before God as our surety, it will not spare him; Romans 8:32. "He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to death for us all." If forbearance might have been expected from any, surely it might from God, "who is very pitiful, and full of tender mercy," James 5:11. yet God in this case spared not. If one might have expected sparing mercy and abatement from any, surely Christ might most of all expect it from his own Father; yet you hear, God spared not his own Son. Sparing mercy is the lowest degree of mercy, yet it was denied to Christ: he abated him not a minute of the time appointed for his suffering, nor one degree of wrath he was to bear; nay, though in the garden Christ fell upon the ground, and sweat clodders of blood, and in that unparalleled agony scrued up his spirit to the highest intention, in that pitiful cry, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass;" and though he brake out upon the cross, in that heart-rending complaint, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" yet no abatement; Justice will not bend in the least; but having to do with him on this account, resolves upon satisfaction from his blood. If this be so, what is the case of your soul, reader, if you be a man or woman that has no interest in this sacrifice? For if these things be done in (Christ) the green tree, what will be done to (you) the dry tree? Luke 23:31 "That is, if God so deal with me, that I am not only innocent, but like a green and fruitful tree, full of all delectable fruits of holiness, yet if the fire of his indignation thus seize upon me, what will be your condition, that are both barren and guilty, void of all good fruit, and full of all unrighteousness," and so like dry scary wood, are fitted as fuel to the fire? Consider with yourself, man, how canned you imagine you canned support that infinite wrath that Christ grappled with in the room of God's elect! He had the strength of a Deity to support him, Isaiah 42:1. "Behold my servant whom I uphold." He had the fullness of his Spirit to prepare him, Isaiah 61:11. He had the ministry of an angel, who came post from heaven to relieve him in his agony, Luke 22:43. He had the ear of his Father to hear him, for he cried, "and was heard in that he feared," Hebrews 5:7. He was assured of the victory, before the combat; he knew he should be justified, Isaiah 50:8. and yet for all this he was sore amazed, and sorrowful even to death, and his heart was melted like wax in the midst of his affections. If the case stood thus with Christ, notwithstanding all these advantages he had to bear the wrath of God for a little time; how do you think, a poor worm as you are, to dwell with everlasting burnings, or contend with devouring fire? Luther saw ground enough for what he said, when he cried, out, "I will have nothing to do with an absolute God," That is, with a God out of Christ: for, "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Woe and alas for evermore to that man who meets a just and righteous God without a Mediator! Whoever you are that readest these lines, I beseech you, by the mercies of God, by all the regard and love you have to your own soul, neglect not time, but make quick and sure work of it. Get an interest in this sacrifice quickly, what else will be your state when vast eternity opens to swallow you up? what will

you do, man, when your eye-strings and heart strings are breaking? O what a fearful shriek will your conscience give, when you are presented before the dreadful God, and no Christ to screen you from his indignation! Happy is that man who can say in a dying hour, as one did, who being desired, a little before his dissolution, to give his friends a little taste of his present hopes, and the grounds of them, cheerfully answered, I will let you know how it is with me: then stretching forth his hand, said,

"Here is the grave, the wrath of God, and devouring flame, the just punishment of sin, on the one side: and here am I, a poor sinful soul, on the other side: but this is my comfort, the covenant of grace, which is established upon so many sure promises, has saved all. There is an act of oblivion passed in heaven: I will forgive their iniquities, and their sins will I remember no more. This is the blessed privilege of all within the covenant, among whom I am one." O it is sweet at all times, especially at such a time, to see the reconciled face of God, through Jesus Christ, and hear the voice of peace through the blood of the cross.

INFERENCE. 3. Has Christ offered up himself a sacrifice to God for us? Then let us improve, in every condition, this sacrifice, and labor to get hearts duly affected with such a sight as faith can give us of it. Whatever the condition or complaint of any Christian is, the beholding the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world, may give him strong support, and sweet relief. Do you complain of the hardness of your hearts, and want of love to Christ? Behold him as offered up to God for you; and such a sight, (if any in the world will do it) will melt your hard hearts. Zechariah 12:10. "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn." It is reported of Johannes Milieus, that he was never observed to speak of Christ and his sufferings, but his eyes would drop. Are you too little touched and unaffected with the evil of sin? Is it your complaint, Christian, that you canned not make sin bear so hard upon your heart as you Would? Consider but what you have now read; realize this sacrifice by faith, and try what efficacy there is in it to make sin forever bitter as death to your soul. Suppose your own Father had been stabbed to the heart with such a knife, and his blood were upon it, Would you delight to see, or endure to use that knife any more? sin is the knife that stabbed Christ to the heart; this shed his blood. Surely, you can never make light of that which lay so heavy upon the soul and body of Jesus Christ. Or is your heart pressed down even to despondency, under the guilt of sin, so that you cry, how can such a sinner as I be pardoned? my sin is greater than can be forgiven? "Behold the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world." Remember that no sin can stand before the efficacy of his blood. 1 John 1:7. "The blood of Jesus Christ CLEANSES from all sin." This sacrifice makes unto God full satisfaction. Are you at any time staggering through unbelief filled with unbelieving suspicions of the promises? Look hither, and you shall see them all ratified and established in the blood of the cross, so that hills and mountains shall sooner start from their own basis and centers, than one little of the promise fail. Hebrews 9:17-19. Do you at any time find year hearts fretting, disquieted, and impatient under every petty cross and trial? See how quietly Christ your sacrifice came to the altar, how meekly and patiently he stood under all the wrath of God and men together This will silence, convince, and shame you. In a word, here you will see so much of the grace of God, and love of Christ, in providing and becoming a sacrifice for you: you will see God taking vengeance against sin, but sparing the sinner: you will see Christ standing as the body of sin alone; for, "he was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him:" that whatever corruption burdens, this, in the believing application, will support; whatever grace is defective, this

will revive it.

Blessed be God for Jesus Christ!

S. The Instructiveness of the Death of

The Instructiveness of the Death of Christ, in his

seven last Words; the first of which is here illustrated "Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Luke 23:34 The manner in which Christ died has already been opened in the solitude and patience in which he died. The third, to wit, the instructiveness of his death, now follows, in these seven excellent and weighty sayings, which dropped from his blessed lips upon the tree, while his sacred blood dropped on the earth from his wounded hands and feet; so that on the cross he exercised both his priestly and Prophetic office together, redeeming us by his blood, and instructing us by his words.

These seven words of Christ upon the cross are his last words, with which he breathed out his soul. The last words of a dying man are remarkable; the scripture puts a remark upon them, 2 Samuel 23:1. "Now these be the last words of David." How remarkable are the last words of Christ.

These words are seven in number; three directed to his Father, and four more to those about him. Of the former sort this is one, Father, forgive them, etc. In which we have, First, The mercy desired by Christ, and that is forgiveness. Secondly, The persons for whom it is desired, [Them,] that is, those cruel and wicked persons that were now imbruing their hands in his blood. And, Thirdly, The motive or argument urged to procure that mercy from his Father, for they know not what they do.

First, The mercy prayed for, that is, forgiveness; Father, forgive. Forgiveness is not only a mercy, a spiritual mercy, but one of the greatest mercies a soul can obtain from God, without which, whatever else we have from God, is no mercy to us. So great a mercy is forgiveness, that David calls him blessed, or rather admires the blessedness of him, "whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." This mercy, this best of mercies, he requests for them, Father, forgive them.

Secondly, The persons for whom he requests forgiveness, are the same that with wicked hands crucified him. Their fact was the most horrid that ever was committed by men: they not only shed innocent blood, but the blood of God; the best of mercies is by him desired for the worst of sinners.

Thirdly The motive or argument urged to procure this mercy for them, is this for they know not what they do. As if he should say, Lord, what these poor creatures do, is not so much out of malice to me as the Son of God; but it is from their ignorance. Did they know who, and what I am, they would rather be nailed to the cross themselves, than do it. To the same purpose the apostle says, 1 Corinthians 2:8. "Whom none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." Yet this is not to be extended to all that had an hand in the death of Christ, but to the ignorant multitude, among whom, some of God’s elect were, who afterwards believed in him, whose blood they spilt, Acts 3:17. "And now, brethren, I wet that through ignorance you did it." For them this prayer of Christ was heard. Hence the notes are, DOCTRINE. 1. That ignorance is the usual cause of enmity to Christ.

DOCTRINE. 2. That there is forgiveness with God for such as oppose Christ through ignorance.

DOCTRINE. 3. That to forgive enemies, and beg forgiveness for them is the true character and property of the Christian spirit.

These observations contain so much practical truth, that it would be worth our time to open and apply them distinctly, DOCTRINE. 1. That ignorance is the usual cause of enmity to Christ.

"These things (says the Lord) will they do, because they have "not known the Father, nor me," John 16:3. What thing does he mean? Why, kill and destroy the people of God, and therein suppose they do God good service, (that is) think to oblige and gratify the Father, by their butchering his children. So Jeremiah 9:3. "They proceed from evil to evil; and have not known me, " says the Lord," q.d. Had they the knowledge of God, this would check and stop them in their ways of wickedness? and so Psalms 74:20. "The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty."

Three things must be inquired into, namely, what their ignorance of Christ was. Whence it was. And how it disposed them to such enmity against him.

First. What was their ignorance who crucified Christ? Ignorance is two-fold, simple, or respective. Simple ignorance is not supposable in these persons, for in many things they were a knowing people. But it was respective, particular ignorance, Romans 9:25. "Blindness in part is happened to Israel." They knew many other truths, but did not know Jesus Christ; in that their eyes were held. Natural light they had; yes, and scripture light they had; but in this particular, that this was the Son of God, the Savior of the world, therein they were blind and ignorant. But how could that be! Had they not heard at least of his miraculous works? Did they not see how his birth, life and death, squared with the prophecies, both in time, place, and manner? Whence should this their ignorance be when they saw, or at least might have seen, the scriptures fulfilled in him; and that he came among them in a time when they were big with expectations of the Messiah?

It is true, indeed, they knew the scriptures; and it cannot but be supposed the fame of his mighty works had reached their ears: But yet,

First, Though they had the scriptures among them, they misunderstood them; and did not rightly measure Christ by that right rule. You find, John 7:52. how they reason with Nicodemus against Christ; "Are you also of Galilee? Search, and see: for out of Galilee arises no prophet." Here is a double mistake: First, They supposed Christ to arise out of Galilee, whereas he was of Bethlehem, though much conversant in the parts of Galilee: And, Secondly, They thought, because they could find no prophet had arisen out of Galilee, therefore none should.

Another mistake that blinded them about Christ, was from their conceit that Christ should not die, but live forever, John 12:34. "We have heard out of the law, that Christ abides forever: and how say you, the Son of man must be lifted up? who is the Son of man?" That scripture which probably they urge against the mortality of Christ, is Isaiah 9:7. "Of the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end, upon the throne of David," etc. In like manner, John 7:27. we find them in another mistake; "We know this man whence he is; but when Christ comes, no man knows whence he is." This, likely, proceeded from their misunderstanding of Micah 5:2. "His going forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Thus were they blinded about the person of Christ, by

misinterpretations of scripture-prophecies

Secondly, Another thing occasioning their mistake of Christ, was the outward meanness and despicableness of his condition. They expected a pompous Messiah, one that should come with state and glory, becoming the king of Israel. But when they saw him in the form of a servant, coming in poverty, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, they utterly rejected him: "We hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised and we esteemed him not," Isaiah 53:3. Nor is it any great wonder these should be scandalised at his poverty when the disciples themselves had such carnal apprehensions of his kingdom, Mark 10:37-38.

Thirdly, Add to this, their implicit faith in the learned rabbis and doctors, who utterly misled them in this matter, and greatly prejudiced them against Christ. "Lo, (said they) he speaks boldly, and they say nothing to him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?" They pinned their faith upon the rulers sleeves, and suffered them to carry it whether they would. This was their ignorance, and these its causes.

Thirdly, Let us see, in the next place, how this disposed them to such enmity against Christ. And this it does three ways.

First, Ignorance disposes men to enmity and opposition to Christ, by removing those hindrances that would otherwise keep them from it, as checks and rebukes of conscience, by which they are restrained from evil; but conscience binding and reproving in the authority and virtue of the law of God, where that law is not known, there can be no reproofs; and therefore we truly say, That ignorance is virtually every sin.

Secondly, Ignorance enslaves and subjects the soul to the lusts of Satan; he is "the ruler of the darkness of this world," Ephesians 6:12. There is no work so base and vile, but an ignorant man will undertake it.

Thirdly, Nay, which is more, if a man be ignorant of Christ, his truths, or people, he will not only oppose, and persecute, but he will also do it conscientiously, That is, he will look upon it as his duty so to do, John 16:3. Before the Lord opened Paul's eyes, "he verily thought that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Christ." Thus you have a brief account what, and whence their ignorance was, and how it disposed and prepared them for this dreadful work. Hence we learn,

INFERENCE 1. How falsely is the gospel charged as the cause of discord and trouble in the world. It is not light, but darkness, that makes men fierce and cruel: as light increases, so does peace, Isaiah 11:6; Isaiah 11:9. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them; they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." What a sad condition would the world be in without gospel light! all places would be dens of rapine, and mountains of prey. Certainly we owe much of our civil liberty, and outward tranquility to gospel-light. If a sword, or variance, at any time, follow the gospel, it is but an accidental, not a direct and proper effect of it.

INFERENCE. 2. How dreadful is it to oppose Christ and his truth knowingly, and with open eyes? Christ pleads their ignorance as an argument to procure their pardon. Paul himself was once filled

with rage and madness against Christ and his truths: it was well for him that he did it ignorantly: had he gone against his light and knowledge, there had been little hope of him, 1 Timothy 1:13. "I was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly, and in unbelief." I do not say, it is simply impossible for one that knowingly and maliciously opposes and persecutes Christ and his people, to be forgiven, but it is not usual, Hebrews 6:4-5. There are few instances of it.

INFERENCE. 3. What an awful majesty sits upon the brow of holiness, that few dare to oppose it that see it! There are few or none so daringly wicked, to fight against it with open eyes; 1 Peter 3:13. "Who will harm you while you are followers of that which is good:" q. d. who dare be so hardy to set upon known godliness, or afflict and wrong the known friends of it? The true reason why many Christians speed so bad, is not because they are godly, but be cause they do not manifest the power of godliness more than they do: their lives are so like the lives of others, that they are often mistaken for others. Cyprian brings in the wicked of his time, thus scoffing at professors, "behold, they that boast themselves to be redeemed from the tyranny of Satan, and to be dead to the world, how are they overcome by the lusts of it, as well as other men:" Look as the poverty and meanness of Christ's outward condition was a ground of their mistake of him then, so the poverty and meanness of our love to God, heavenly mindedness, and mortification to this world, is a disguise to professors, and cause why they are not more owned and honored in the consciences of men at this day. For holiness, manifested in its power, is so awfully glorious, that the consciences of the vilest cannot but honor it, and do obeisance to it, Mark 6:20. "Herod feared John, for he was a just man."

INFERENCE. 4. The enemies of Christ are objects of pity. Alas, they're b1ind, and know not what they do. It is pity that any other affection than pity, should stir in our hearts towards them. Were their eyes but open, they would never do as they do: we should look upon them as the physician does upon his sick distempered patient. Did they but see with the same light you do, they would be as far from hating Christ, or his ways, as you are, Simul ac desinunt ignorere, desinunt odisse; as soon as they cease to be ignorant, they cerise to hate, says Tertullian.

INFERENCE. 5. How needful is it before we engage ourselves against any person or way, to be well satisfied and resolved that it is a wicked person or practice that we oppose? You see the world generally runs upon a mistake in this matter. O beware of doing you know not what! for though you do you know not what, Satan knows what he is doing by you: he blinds your eyes, and then sets you to work, knowing that if you should but see what you are doing, you would rather die than do it: you may now do you know not what but you may afterwards have time enough to reflect on, and lament what you have done: you may now do you know not what, and hereafter you may not know what to do. O beware what you now do!

DOCTRINE. 2. That there is forgiveness with God, for such as oppose Christ out of ignorance.

If all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven to men, then this, as well as others, Matthew 12:31. We are not, with Theophilact, to understand that place of the certainty of pardon; much less, with Origin, of the desert of it; nor yet, with Jansenius, of the facility at it, but rather of the possibility of forgiveness: it shall be so to some; it may be so to you; even those whose wicked hands had crucified Christ, may receive remission by that blood they shed, Acts 2:23; Acts 2:38. compared.

I have two things here to do: First, To open the nature of the forgiveness, and show you what it is. Secondly, To evince the possibility of it, for such as, mistakingly, oppose Christ. For the First, Forgiveness is God's gracious discharge of a believing penitent sinner, from the guilt of all his sin, for Christ's sake.

It is Gods discharge: there is indeed fraternal forgiveness, by which one man forgives another; so far as he is interested in the wrong, Luke 6:87. There is also a ministerial forgiveness, whereby the minister of Christ, as his mouth, and in his name, declares the pardon, or ministerially applies the promises of pardon to penitent offenders, John 20:23. But none can absolutely and properly forgive sin, but God only, Mark 2:7. The primary, and principal wrong is done to him; Psalms 51:4. " Against you, and you only" (that is) you mainly or especially, " have I sinned." Hence sins are metonimically called debts, debts to God, Matthew 6:12. Not that we owe them to God, or ought to sin against him; but as financial debts obliges him that owes it to the penalty, if he satisfy not for it; so do our sins. And who can discharge the debtor, but the creditor?

It is gracious act to discharge. "I, even I, am he that blots out your transgression for mine own name sake," Isaiah 43:25. And yet sin is not so forgiven, as that God expects no satisfaction at all; but as expecting none from us, because God has provided a surety for us, from whom he is satisfied, Ephesians 1:7. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." it is a gracious discharge from the guilt of sin. Guilt is that which pardon properly deals with. Guilt is an obligation to punishment. Pardon is the dissolving that obligation. Guilt is a chain with which sinners are bound and fettered by the law. Pardon is that Aquafortis that eats it asunder, and makes the prisoner a free man. The pardoned soul is a discharged soul, Rom. 8:53. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is "God that justifies, who shall condemn? It is Christ that died."

It is God's discharge of a believing penitent sinner. Infidelity and impenitence, are not only sins in themselves, but such sins as bind fast all other sins upon the soul. "By him, all that believe are justified from all things," Acts 10:43. So Acts 3:19. "Repent therefore, that your sins may be blotted out." This is the method in which God dispenseth pardon to sinners.

Lastly, It is for Christ's sake we are discharged; he is the meritorious cause of our remission, "As God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you," Ephesians 4:32. It is his blood alone that meritoriously procures our discharge. This is a brief and true account of the nature of forgiveness.

Secondly, Now to evince the possibility of forgiveness, for such as ignorantly oppose Christ, let these things be weighed:

First, Why should any poor soul, that is now humbled for its enmity to Christ in the days of ignorance, question the possibility of forgiveness, when this effect does not exceed the power of the cause; nay, when there is more efficacy in the blood of Christ, the meritorious cause, than is in this effect of it? There is power enough in that blood, not only to pardon your sins, but the sins of the whole world, were it actually applied, 1 John 2:2. There is not only a sufficiency, but also a redundancy of merit, in that precious blood. Surely then your enmity to Christ, especially, before you know him, may not look like an unpardonable iniquity in your eyes.

Secondly, And as this sin exceeds not the power of the meritorious cause of forgiveness; so neither is it any where excluded from pardon, by any word of God. Nay, such is the extensiveness

of the promise to believing penitents, that this case is manifestly included, and forgiveness tendered to you in the promises, Isaiah 55:7. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Many such extensive promises there are in the scriptures: and there is not one parenthesis in all these blessed pages, in which this case is excepted.

Thirdly, And it is yet more satisfactory; that God has already actually forgiven such sinners; and that which he has done, he may again do: yes, therefore he has done it to some, and those eminent for their enmity to Christ, that others may be encouraged to hope for the same mercy, when they also shall be, in the same manner, humbled for it. Take one famous instance of many; it is that of Paul in 1 Timothy 1:13, 1 Timothy 1:16. "Who was before a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious. But I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. - Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to everlasting life." It is no small encouragement to a sick man, to hear of some that have been recovered out of the same disease, and that prevailing in an higher degree than in himself.

Fourthly, Moreover, it is encouraging to consider, That when God had cut off others in the way of their sin, he has hitherto spared you. What speaks this but a purpose of mercy to your soul? You should account the long-suffering of God your salvation, 2 Peter 3:15. Had he smitten you in the way of your sin and enmity to Christ, what hope had remained! But in that he has not only spared you, but also given you a heart ingenuously ashamed, and humbled for your evils: does not this speak mercy for you; surely it looks like a gracious design of love to your soul.

INFERENCE 1. And is there forgiveness with God for such as have been enemies to Christ, his truths, and gospel? Then certainly there is pardon and mercy for the friends of God, who involuntarily fall into sin, by the surprisals of temptation, and are broken for it, as ingenuous children for offending a good Father. Can any doubt, if God have pardon for such enemies, he has none for children? If he have forgiveness for such as shed the blood of Christ with wicked hands, has he not much more mercy and forgiveness for such as love Christ, and are more afflicted for their sin against him, than all other troubles they have in the word? Doubt it not, but he who receives enemies into his bosom, will much more receive and embrace children, though offending ones.

How pensive do the dear children of God sometimes sit, after their lapse into sin? Will God ever pardon this? will he be reconciled again? May I hope his face shall be to me, as in former times? Pensive soul! if you did but know the largeness, tenderness, freeness of that grace, which yearns over enemies, and has given forth thousands, and ten thousands of pardons to the worst of sinners, you Would not sink at that rate.

INFERENCE. 2. Is there pardon with God for enemies? How inexcusable then are all they that persist and perish in their enmity to Christ! sure their destruction is of themselves. Mercy is offered to them, if they will receive it, Isaiah 55:7. Proclamation is made in the gospel, that if there be any among the enemies of Christ, who repent of that they have been, and done against him, and are now unfeignedly willing to be reconciled, upon the word of a King, they shall find mercy: But "God shall wound the head of the enemies, and the hairy scalp of such a one as goes on still in his trespasses," Psalms 68:21. "If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he has bent his bow, and made

it ready; he has also prepared for him the instruments of death: He ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors," Psalms 7:12. This lays the blood of every man that perishes in his enmity to Christ, at his own door; and vindicates the righteousness of God, in the severest strokes of wrath upon them: This also will be a cutting thought to their hearts eternally: I might once have had pardon, and I refused it: the gospel trumpet sounded a parley: fair and gracious terms were offered, but I rejected them. Is there mercy with God and forgiveness, even for his worst enemies, upon their submission; How unlike to God then are all implacable spirits! Some there are that cannot bring their hearts to forgive an enemy; "to whom revenge is sweeter than life." 1 Samuel 24:16. "If a man find his enemy, will he let him go?" This is hell fire, a fire that never goes out. How little do such poor creatures consider, if God should deal by them, as they do by others, what words could express the misery of their condition! It is a sad sin, and a sad sign, a character of a wretched state, wherever it appears. Those that have found mercy, should be ready to show mercy: and they that expect mercy themselves, should not deny it to others. This brings us upon the third and last observation, namely,

DOCTRINE. 3 That to forgive enemies, and beg forgiveness for them, is the true character and property of the Christian spirit.

Thus did Christ: "Father forgive them." And thus did Stephen, in imitation of Christ, Acts 7:59-60. "And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." This suits with the rule of Christ, Matthew 5:44-45. "But I say unto you, love your enemies; bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that you may be the children of God your Father which is in heaven."

Here I shall first open the nature of this duty, and show you what a forgiving spirit is; and then the excellency of it, how well it becomes all that call themselves Christians.

First, Let us enquire what this Christian forgiveness is. And that the nature of it may the better appear, I shall show you both what it is not, and what it is.

First, It consists not in a Stoical insensibility of wrongs and injuries. God has not made men as insensible, stupid blocks, that have no sense or feeling of what is done to them. Nor has he made a law inconsistent with their very natures that are to be governed by it: but allows us a tender sense of natural evils, though he will not allow us to revenge them by moral evils: nay, the more deep and tender our resentments of wrongs and injuries are, the more excellent is our forgiveness of them; so that a forgiving spirit does not exclude sense of injuries, but the sense of injuries graces the forgiveness of them.

Secondly, Christian forgiveness is not a politic concealment of our wrath and revenge, because it will be a reproach to discover it; or, because we want opportunity to vent it. This is carnal policy, not Christian meekness. So far from being the mark of a gracious spirit, that it is apparently the sign of a vile nature. It is not Christianity to repose, but depose injuries.

Thirdly, Nor is it that moral virtue for which we are beholden to an easier and better nature, and the help of moral rules and documents. There are certain virtues attainable without the change of nature, which they call homilitical virtues, because they greatly adorn and beautify nature; such as temperance, patience, justice, etc. These are of singular use to conserve peace and order in the

world: and without them, (as one aptly speaks) the world would soon break up, and its civil societies disband. But yet, though these are the ornaments of nature, they do not argue the change of nature. All graces, in the exercises of them, involve a respect to God: And for the being of them, they are not by natural acquisition, but supernatural infusion.

Fourthly, and lastly, Christian forgiveness is not an injurious giving up of our rights and properties to the lust of everyone that has a mind to invade them. No; these we may lawfully defend and preserve, and are bound so to do; though, if we cannot defend them legally, we must not avenge our wrongs unchristianly: This is not Christian forgiveness. But, then positively,

It is a Christian lenity, or gentleness of mind, not retaining, but freely passing by the injuries done to us, in obedience to the command of God.

It is a levity, or gentleness of mind. The grace of God demulces the angry stomach; calms the tumultuous passions; new- moulds our sour spirits, and makes them benign, gentle and easy to be entreated; Galatians 5:22. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness," etc. This gracious levity inclines the Christian to pass by injuries; so to pass them by, as neither to retain then revengefully in the mind, or requite them when we have opportunity with the hand: Yes, and that freely, not by constraint, because we cannot avenge ourselves, but willingly. We abhor to do it when we can. So that as a carnal heart thinks revenge its glory, the gracious heart is content that forgiveness should be his glory. I will be even with him, says nature: I will be above him, says grace: it is his glory to pass over transgression, Proverbs 19:11. And this it does in obedience to the command of God: Their own nature inclines them another way. "The spirit that is in us lusts to envy; but he gives more grace," James 4:5. It lusts to revenge, but the fear of God represseth those motions. Such considerations as these God has forbidden me; yes, and God has forgiven me, as well as forbidden me: they prevail upon him when nature urges to revenge the wrong. "Be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake has forgiven you," Ephesians 4:32. This is forgiveness in a Christian sense.

Secondly, And that this is excellent, and singularly becoming the profession of Christ, is evident; inasmuch as, This speaks your religion excellent, that can mold your hearts into that heavenly frame, to which they are so averse, yes, contrarily disposed by nature. It is the glory of Pagan morality, that it can abscondere vitia, hide and cover men’s lusts and passions. But the glory of Christianity lies in this, that it can abscindere vitia, not hide, but destroy, and really mortify the lusts of nature. Would Christians but live up to the excellent principles of their religion, Christianity shall be no more out-vied by heathenish morality. The greatest Christian shall be no more challenged to imitate Socrates, if he can. We shall utterly spoil that proud boast, "that the faith of Christians is out-done by the infidelity of Heathens." 0 Christians yield not to-day to Heathens! Let all the world see the true greatness, heavenliness, and excellency of our represented pattern; and by true mortification of your corrupt natures, enforce an acknowledgment from the world, that a greater than Socrates is here. He that is really a meek, humble, patient, heavenly Christian, wins this glory to his religion, that it can do more than all other principles and rules in the world. In nothing were the most accomplished Heathens more defective than this forgiving of injuries: It was a thing they could not understand, or, if they did, could never bring their hearts to it; witness that rule of their great Tally: "It is the first office of justice, (says he), to hurt no man, except first provoked by an injury." The addition of that exception spoiled his excellent rule. But now Christianity teaches, and

some Christians have attained it, to receive evil, and return good, 1 Corinthians 4:1-21. "Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: being defamed, we entreat." This certainly is that meekness wrought in us by the wisdom that is from above, James 3:17. This makes a man sit sure in the consciences of others, who, with Saul, must acknowledge, when they see themselves so outdone, "You are more righteous than I," 1 Samuel 24:16-17. Had we been so much injured, and had such opportunities to revenge them, we should never have passed them by, as these men did. This impresses and stamps the very image of God upon the creature, and makes us like our heavenly Father, who does good to his enemies, and sends down showers of outward blessings upon them, that pour out floods of wickedness daily to provoke him, Matthew 5:44-45. In a word, this Christian temper of spirit gives a man the true possession and enjoyment of himself. So that our breasts shall be as the Pacific sea, smooth and pleasant, when others are as the raging sea, foaming and casting up mire and dirt.

INFERENCE 1. Hence we clearly infer, That the Christian religion, exalted in its power, is the neatest friend to the peace and tranquility of states and kingdoms. Nothing is more opposite to the true Christian spirit, than implacable fierceness, strife, revenge, tumults and uproars. It teaches men to do good and receive evil: to receive evil, and return good. "The wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated; full of mercy and good fruits; without partiality, and without hypocrisy; and the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace," James 3:17-18. The church is a dove for meekness, Song of Solomon 6:9. When the world grows full of strife, Christians then grow weary of the world, and sigh out the Psalmist's request, "O that I had the wings of a dove! that I might fly away and be at rest." Strigellius desired to die, that he might be freed ab implacabilibus odiis theologorum, "from the implacable strife of contending divines." The rule by which they are to walk, is, "If it be possible, as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay it, says the Lord," Romans 12:18-19. It is not religion, but lusts that make the world so unquiet, James 4:1-2. Not godliness, but wickedness, that makes men bite and devour one another. One of the first effects of the gospel, is to Civilize those places where it comes, and settle order and peace among men. How great a mistake and evil then is it to cry out, when atheism and irreligion have broken the civil peace; this is the fruit of religion! this is the effect of the gospel! Happy would it be if religion did more obtain in all nations. It is the greatest friend in the world to their tranquility and prosperity.

INFERENCE. 2. How dangerous a thing is it to abuse and wrong meek and forgiving Christians? Their patience and easiness to forgive often invites injury, and encourages vile spirits to insult and trample upon them: but if men would seriously consider it, there is nothing in the world should more scare and affright them from such practices than this. You may abuse and wrong them, they must not avenge themselves, nor repay evil for evil: true, but because they do not, the Lord will; even the Lord to whom they commit the matter; and he will do it to purpose, except you repent.

"Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord," James 5:7. Will you stand to that issue? had you rather indeed have to do with God than with men? When the Jews put Christ to death, "he committed himself to him that judges righteously, 1 Peter 2:22-23. And did that people get anything by that: did not the Lord severely avenge the blood of Christ on them and their children? yes, do not they and their children groan under the doleful effects of it to this day? If God undertakes, (as he always does) the cause of his abused, meek, and peaceable people, he will be

sure to avenge it seven fold more than they could. His little finger will be heavier then their loins. You will get nothing by that.

INFERENCE. 3. Lastly, Let us all imitate our pattern Christ, and labor for meek forgiving spirits. I shall only propose two inducements to it: the honor of Christ, and your own peace: two dear things indeed to a Christian. His glory is more than your life, and all that you enjoy in this world. O do not expose it to the scorn and derision of his enemies. Let them not say, How is Christ a lamb, when his followers are lions? How is the church a dove, that smites and scratches like a bird of prey? Consult also the quiet of your own spirits. What is life worth, without the comfort of life? what comfort can you have in all that you do possess in the world, as long as you have not the possession of your own souls? If your spirits be full of tumult and revenge, the spirit of Christ will grow a stranger to you: that dove delights in clean and quiet breasts. O then imitate Christ in this excellency also!

S. The Intercession of Christ our High

The Intercession of Christ our High-priest, being

the second Act or Part of his Priestly Office

"Therefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, all who come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them." Hebrews 7:25

Having dispatched the first part, or act of Christ's priesthood, consisting in his Oblation; we come to the other branch of it, consisting in his Intercession, which is nothing else but the virtual continuation of his offering once made on earth; that being the means of reconciling; this, the way and means of his applying to us the benefits purchased by it. This second part, or branch of his priesthood, was typified by the High-priest's entering with the blood of the sacrifice and sweet incense into the holy place: Leviticus 16:12-14. "And he shall take the censer full of burning coals of fire, from off the altar before the Lord, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the veil. And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy-seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not. And he shall take the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy-seat, eastward."

Christ's offering himself on earth, answered to the killing of the sacrifice without; and his entering into heaven, there to intercede, was that which answered to the priest's going with blood, and his hands full of incense, within the veil. So that this is a part, yes, a special part of Christ's priesthood; and so necessary to it, that if he had not done this, all his work on earth had signified nothing; nor had he been a priest, That is, a complete and perfect priest, if he had remained on earth, Hebrews 8:4. because the very design and end of shedding his blood on earth had been frustrated, which was to carry it before the Lord into heaven. So that this is the principal perfective part of the priesthood: he acted the first part on earth, in a state of deep abasement in the form of a servant; but he acts this in glory, whereto he is taken up, that he may fulfill his design in dying, and give the work of our salvation its last completing act. So much is imported in this scripture, which tells us, by reason hereof, he "is able to save to the uttermost," etc. The words contain an encouragement to believers, to come to God in the way of faith, drawn from the intercession of Christ in heaven for them. In which you may take notice of these principal parts.

1. The quality of the persons here encouraged, who are described by a direct act of faith, as poor recumbents that are going out of themselves to God by faith; but conscious of great unworthiness in themselves, and thence apt to be discouraged.

2. The encouragement propounded to such believers, drawn from the ability of Jesus Christ, in whose name they go to the Father, to save them to the uttermost, that is fully, perfectly, completely; for so this emphatic word signifies, the saving us wholly, thoroughly, completely, and altogether; giving our salvation its last act and completion. The ground or reason of this his saving ability: "Seeing he ever lives to make intercession;" that is he has not only offered up his blood to God upon the tree, as a full price to purchase pardon and grace for believers; but lives in heaven,

and that for every to apply unto us, in the way of intercession, all the fruits, blessings, and benefits, that that precious blood of his deserves, and has procured us a price for them. The words thus opened, the point I shall single out, from among many that lie in them, as most suitable to my design and purpose, is this;

DOCTRINE. That Jesus our High-priest lives forever, in the capacity of a potent Intercessor, in heaven for believers.

Here we will enquire, First, What it is for Christ to be an intercessor. Secondly, By what acts he performs that work in heaven. Thirdly, Whence the potency and prevalence of his intercession is. Fourthly, and lastly, How he lives forever to make intercession for us.

First, What it is for Christ to be an intercessor for us. To intercede in general, is to go between two parties, to entreat, argue, and plead with one for the other. And of this there are two sorts; 1. Ex charitate, ut fratres, that whereby one Christian prays and pleads with God for another, 1 Timothy 2:1-2. Ex officio mediatorio, that whereby Christ, as an act of office, presents himself before God to request for us. Between these two is this difference, that the former is performed not in our own, but in another's name; we can tender no request to God immediately, or for our own sake, either for ourselves, or for others: John 16:23 "Whatever you shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." But the latter, which is proper to Christ, is an intercession with God for us, in his own name, and upon the account of his own proper merit; the one is a private act of charity, the other a public act of office; and so he is our advocate or court friend, as Satan is or accuser or court-adversary. Satan is "ho antidikos", one that charges us before God, 1 Peter 5:8. and continually endeavors to make breaches between us and God. Christ is "ho parakletos", our attorney, or advocate, that pleads for us, and continues peace and friendship between us and God, 1 John 2:2. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And thus to make intercession, is the peculiar and incommunicable prerogative of Jesus Christ, none but he can go in his own name to God. And in that sense we are to understand that place, Ezekiel 44:2-3. "Then said the Lord unto me, This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it, because the Lord the God of Israel has entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut. It is for the prince, the prince he shall sit in it, to eat bread before the Lord," etc. The great broad gate, called here the prince's gate, signifies that abundant and direct entrance that Christ had into heaven by his own merits, and in his own name; this, says the Lord, shall be shut, no man shall enter in by it; all other men must come there, as it were, by collateral or side doors, which looked all towards the altar, namely, by virtue of the Mediator, and through the benefit of his death imputed to them. And yet, though God has forever shut up and barred this way to all the children of men, telling us that no man shall ever have access to him in his own name, as Christ the Prince had; how do some, notwithstanding, strive to force open the Prince's gate? So do they, that found the intercession of saints upon their own works and merits, thereby robbing Christ of his peculiar glory; but all that so approach God, approach a devouring fire; Christ only, in the virtue of his blood, thus comes before him, to make intercession for us.

Secondly, We will enquire wherein the intercession of Christ in heaven consists, or by what acts he performs his glorious office there. And the scriptures place it in three things:

1. In his presenting himself before the Lord in our names, and upon our accounts. So we read in Hebrews 9:28. "Christ is entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."

The apostle manifestly alludes to the High-priest's appearing in the holy of holies, which was the figure of heaven, presenting to the Lord the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, which were on his bosom and shoulders, Exodus 28:9; Exodus 28:12; Exodus 28:28-29. To which the church is supposed to allude in that request, Song of Solomon 8:6. "Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm." Now the very sight of Christ, our High priest in heaven, prevails exceedingly with God, and turns away his displeasure from us. As when God looks upon the rainbow, which is the sign of the covenant, he remembers the earth in mercy: so when he looks on Christ, his heart must needs be towards us, upon his account; and therefore in Revelation 4:3, Christ is compared to a rainbow encompassing the throne.

Christ performs his intercession-work in heaven, not by a naked appearing in the presence of God only, but also by presenting his blood, and all his sufferings to God, as a moving plea on our account. Whether he makes any proper oral intercession there, as he did on earth, is not so clear; some incline to it, and think it is countenanced by Zechariah, Zechariah 1:12-13. Where Christ our Intercessor presents a proper vocal request to the Father, in the behalf of his people; saying "O Lord of hosts, how long will you not have mercy on Jerusalem, and on the cities of Judah, against which you have had indignation these threescore and ten years? And the Lord answered him with good and comfortable words." And so Acts 2:23. as soon as he came to heaven, he is said (and that is the first fruits of his intercession) to obtain the promise of the Holy Spirit. But sure I am, an interceding voice is by an usual prosopopeia attributed to his blood; which in Hebrews 12:24. is said "to speak better things than that of Abel." Now Abel's blood and so Christ's, do cry unto God, as the hire of the laborers unjustly detained, or the whole creation, which is in bondage, through our sins, is said to cry and groan in the ears of the Lord, James 5:4. Romans 8:22. not vocally, but efficaciously. A rare illustration of this efficacious intercession of Christ in heaven, we have in that famous story of Amintas, who appeared as an advocate for his brother AEchylus, who was strongly accused, and very likely to be condemned to die. Now Amintas having performed great services, and merited highly of the common-wealth, in whose service one of his hands was cut off in the field; he comes into the court in his brother's behalf, and said nothing, but only lifted up his arm, and showed them cubitum sine manu, an arm without a hand, which so moved them, that, without a word speaking, they freed his brother immediately. And thus if you look into Revelation 5:6. you shall see in what posture Christ is represented, visionally there, as standing between God and us; "And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, and the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders stood a Lamb as it had been slain;" that is bearing in his glorified body the marks of death and sacrifice. Those wounds he received for our sins on earth, are, as it were, still fresh bleeding in heaven: a moving and prevailing argument it is with the Father, to give out the mercies he pleads for.

3. And lastly, He presents the prayers of his saints to God, with his merits; and desires that they may for his sake be granted. He causes a cloud of incense to ascend before God with them, Revelation 8:3. All these were excellently typified out by the going in of the High-priest before the Lord, with the names of the children of Israel on his bosom, with the blood of the sacrifice, and his hands full of incense, as the apostle explains them in Hebrews 7:1-28 and Hebrews 9:1-28.

Thirdly, And that this intercession of Christ is most potent, successful, and prevalent with God, will be evinced, both from the qualification of this our Advocate, from his great interest in the Father, from the nature of the place he uses with God, and from the relation and interest believers have,

both in the Father to whom, and the Son by whom this intercession is made.

1. Our intercessor in the heavens is every way able and fit for the work he is engaged in there. Whatever is desirable in an advocate, is in him eminently. It is necessary that he who undertakes to plead the cause of another, especially if it be weighty and intricate, should be wise, faithful, tender-hearted, and one that concerns himself in the success of his business. Our Advocate Christ, wants no wisdom to manage his work; he is the wisdom of God, yes, only wise, Jude 1:25. There is much folly in the best of our duties, we know not how to press an argument home with God; but Christ has the are of it. Our business is in a wise hand: he is no less faithful than wise, therefore he is called "a faithful High-priest, in things pertaining to God," Hebrews 2:17. He assures us we may safely trust our concerns with him, John 14:2. "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you;" q. d. Do you think I could deceive you? men may cheat you, but I will not; your own hearts may and daily do deceive you, but so will not I. And for tender heartedness, and sensible feelings for your conditions, there is none like him: Hebrews 4:15. "For we have not an High-priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." We have not one that cannot sympathize, so it is in the Greek: and on purpose that he might the better sympathize with us, he came as near to our conditions, as the holiness of his nature could permit. He suffered himself to be in all points tempted like as we are, sin only excepted. And then for his concernment and interest in the success of his suit; he not only reckons, but has really made it his own interest, yes, more his own than it is ours: For now by reason of the mystical union, all our wants and troubles are his, Ephesians 1:23, yes, his own glory and completeness, as Mediator, is deeply interested in it; and therefore we need not doubt but he will use all care and diligence in that work. If you say, so he may, and yet not speed for all that, for it depends upon the Father's grant: True, but then,

2. Consider the great interest he has in the Father, with whom he intercedes. Christ is his dear Son, Colossians 1:13. the beloved of his soul, Ephesians 1:6. Between him and the Father, with whom, when he intercedes, there is an unity, not only of nature, but will; and so he always hears him, John 11:42. Yes, and he said to his dear Son, when he came first to heaven, "Ask of me, and I will give you," Psalms 2:8. Moreover,

He must needs speed in his suit, if you consider the nature of his intercession, which is just and reasonable for the matter, urgent and continual, for the manner of it. The matter of his requesting most equal: what he desires is not desired gratis, or upon terms unbecoming the holiness and righteousness of God to grant; he desires no more but what he has deserved, and given a valuable consideration to the Father for. And so the justice of God does, not only not oppose, but furthers and pleads for the granting, and fulfilling his requests.

Here you must remember, that the Father is under a covenant tie and bond to do what he asks; for Christ having fully performed the work on his part, the mercies he intercedes for, are as due as the hire of the laborer is, when the work is faithfully done. And as the matter is just, so the manner of his intercession is urgent and continual. How importunate a suitor he is, may be gathered from that specimen, given of it in John 17:1-26, and for the constancy, of it, my text tells us, "he ever lives to make intercession:" It is his great business in heaven, and he follows it close. And to close all,

4. Consider who they are for whom he makes intercession: The friends of God, the children of God; those that the Father himself loves, and his heart is propense and ready enough to grant the

best and greatest of mercies to: which is the meaning of John 15:26-27. "The Father himself loves you." And it must needs be so, for the first corner stone of all these mercies was laid by the Father himself in his most free election. He also delivered his Son for us; and "how shall he not with him freely give us all things?" Romans 8:32. So then there can remain no doubt upon a considering heart, but that Christ is a prevalent and successful intercessor in heaven. There only remains one thing more to be satisfied, and that is,

Fourthly, In what sense he is to live forever to make intercession. Shall he then be always at his work? employed in begging new favors for us to eternity? How then shall the people of God be perfect in heaven, if there be need of Christ's intercession to eternity for them?

I answer, by distinguishing the essence and substance of Christ's offices, from the way and manner of administration. In the first sense it is eternal: for his mediatory kingdom, as to the essence of it, is to abide forever; Christ shall never cease to be a Mediator; the church shall never want a head; for "of his kingdom, there shall be no end," Luke 1:33. However, Christ, as a Mediator, being employed in a kind of subordinate way, 1 Corinthians 3:23, when he shall have accomplished that design for which he became a Mediator, "Then shall he deliver up the kingdom (in the sense we spoke before) to the Father, and so God shall be all in all," 1 Corinthians 15:24. Then shall the divinity of Christ, which was so emptied and obscured in his undertaking this temporary dispensatory kingdom, be more gloriously manifested, by the full possession, use, and enjoyment of that natural, divine, eternal kingdom, which belongs to all the three co-essential and co-equal persons, reigning with the same power, majesty, and glory, in the unity of the Divine Essence, and common acts, in all, and over all, infix nicely and immutably forever. And so Christ continues to be our Mediator; and yet that affords no argument that our happiness shall be incomplete, but rather argues the perfection of the church, which thenceforth shall be governed no more as it now is, nor have any farther use of ordinances, but shall be ruled more immediately, gloriously, triumphantly, and ineffably in the world to come. The substance of his Mediatorship is not changed, but the manner of the administration only.

Use 1. Does Christ live forever in heaven to present his blood to God in the way of intercession for believers? How sad then is their case, that have no interest in Christ's blood; bit instead of pleading for them, it cries to God against then, as the despisers and abusers of it! Every unbeliever despises it: The apostate treads it under foot. He that is an intercessor for some, will be an accuser of others. To be guilty of a man's blood is sad; but to have the blood of Jesus accusing and crying to God against a soul, is unspeakable terrible. Surely when he shall make inquisition for blood, when the day of his vengeance is come, he will make it appear by the judgements he will execute, that this is a sin never to be expiated, but vengeance shall pursue the sinner to the bottom of hell. Oh! what do men and women do, in rejecting the gracious offer of Christ! what, tread upon a Savior! and cast contempt, by unbelief and hardness of heart, upon their only remedy! I remember I have read of a harlot that killed her child, and said that it smiled upon her when she went to stab it. Sinner, does not Christ smile upon you in the gospel? And will you, as it were, stab him to the heart by your infidelity? Woe, and alas for that man, against whom this blood cries in heaven!

Use 2. Does Christ live forever to make intercession? Hence let believers fetch relief, and draw encouragement against all the causes and grounds of their fears and troubles; for surely this

answers them all.

1. Hence let them be encouraged against all their sinful infirmities, and lamented weaknesses. It is confessed these are sad things; they grieve the Spirit of God, sadden your own hearts, cloud your evidences; but having such a High-priest in heaven, can never be your ruin. 1 John 2:1-2. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that you sin not: and if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." [My little children.] Children, especially little children, when first beginning to take the foot, are apt to stumble at every straw; so are raw, young and inexperienced Christians: but what if they do? Why though it must be far from them to take encouragement so to do from Christ and his intercession, yet if by surprisal they do sin, let them not be utterly discouraged: for we have an Advocate, he stops whatever plea may be brought in against us by the Devil, or the law, and answers all by his satisfaction: he gets out fresh pardons for new sins. And this Advocate is with [the Father:] he does not say with his Father, though that had been a singular support in itself, nor yet with our Father, which is a sweet encouragement singly considered, but with [the Father] which takes in both, to make the encouragement full. Remember, you that are cast down, under the sense of sin, that Jesus, your friend, in the court above, "is able to save to the uttermost." Which is, as one calls it, a reaching word, and extends itself so far, that you canned not look beyond it. "Let your soul be set on the highest mount that any creature was ever set on, and enlarged to take in view the most spacious prospect both of sin and misery, and difficulties of being saved, that ever yet any poor humble soul did cast within itself; yes, join to these all the hindrances and objections that the heart of man can invent against itself and salvation: lift up your eyes, and look to the utmost you canned see; and Christ, by his intercession, is able to save you beyond the horizon and utmost compass of your thoughts, even to the utmost."

2. Hence draw abundant encouragement against all heart- straitenings, and deadness of Spirit in prayer. You complain your heart is dead, wandering, and contracted in duty: O, but remember Christ's blood speaks, when you canned not; it can plead for you, and that powerfully, when you are not able to speak a word for yourself: to this sense that scripture speaks, Song of Solomon 3:6. "Who is this that comes out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh, and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?" The duties of Christians go up many times, as pillars or clouds of smoke from them, more smoke than fire, prayers smoked and sullied with their offensive corruptions; but, remember, Christ perfumes them with myrrh, etc. He, by his intercession, gives them a sweet perfume.

3. Christ's intercession is a singular relief to all that come unto God by him, against all sinful damps and slavish fears from the justice of God. Nothing more promotes the fear of reverence; nothing more suppresses unbelieving despondencies, and destroys the spirit of bondage. So you find it, Hebrews 10:19-21. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he has consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having a High priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, 'en pleroforia pisteos', in full assurance of faith": or let us come unto God, as a ship comes with full sail into the harbor. O what a direct and full gale of encouragement does this intercession of Christ give to the poor soul that lay a-ground, or was wind-bound before?

4. The intercession of Christ gives admirable satisfaction and encouragement to all that corns to God, against the fears of de setting him again by apostasy. This, my friends, this is your principal security against these matters of fear. With this he relieved Peter, Luke 22:31-32. "Simon, (says Christ) Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not," q. d. Satan will fan you, not to get out your chaff, but bolt out your flour: his temptations are leveled against your faith; but fear not, my prayer shall break his designs, and secure your faith against all his attempts upon it. Upon this powerful intercession of Christ, the apostle builds his triumph against all that threatens to bring him, or any of the saints, again into a state of condemnation. And see how he drives on that triumph, from the resurrection, and session of Christ at the Father's right hand; and especially from the work of intercession, which he lives there to perform: Romans 8:34-35. "Who is he that condemns. It is Christ that died; yes, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

5. It gives sweet relief against the defects and wants that yet are in our sanctification. We want a great deal of faith, love, heavenly-mindedness, mortification, knowledge. We are short and wanting in all. There are "husteremata", the remains, or things wanting, as the apostle calls them, 1 Thessalonians 3:10. Well, if grace be but yet in its weak beginnings, and infancy in your soul, this may encourage, that by reason of Christ's intercession, it shall live, grow, and expatiate itself in your heart. He is not only the author, but the finisher of it, Hebrews 12:2. He is ever begging new and fresh mercies for you in heaven; and will never cease until all your wants be supplied. He saves "eis to panteles", to the uttermost, that is as I told you before, to the last, perfective, completing act of salvation. So that this is a fountain of relief against all your fears.

Use 3. Does Christ live forever to make intercession? Then let those who reap on earth the fruits of that his work in heaven, draw instruction thence about the following duties, to which it leads them as by the hand.

1. Do not forget Christ in an exalted state. You see though he be in all the glory above, at God's right hand, and enthroned king, he does not forget you: he, like Joseph, remembers his brethren in all his glory. But, alas, how oft does advancement make us forget him? As the Lord complains in Hosea 13:5-6 "I did know you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought: but when they came into Canaan, according to their pastures, so were they filled: they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me." As if he had said, O my people, you and I were better acquainted in the wilderness, when you were in a low condition, left to my immediate care, living by daily faith. O then you gave me many a sweet visit; but now you are filled, I hear no more of you. Good had it been for same saints, if they had never known prosperity.

2. Let the intercession of Christ in heaven for you, encourage you to constancy in the good ways of God. To this duty it sweetly encourages also, Hebrews 4:14. "seeing then that we have a great High-priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the son of God, let us hold fast our profession." Here is encouragement to perseverance on a double account. One is, that Jesus, our head, is already in heaven; and if the head be above water, the body cannot drown. The other is from the business he is there employed about, which is his priesthood; he is passed into the heavens, as our great High-priest, to intercede, and therefore we cannot miscarry.

3. Let it encourage you to constancy in prayer: O do not neglect that excellent duty, seeing Christ is there to present all your petitions to God; yes, to perfume as well as present them. So the apostle, Hebrews 4:16. infers from Christ's intercession; "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

4. Hence be encouraged to plead for Christ on earth, who continually pleads for you in heaven. If any accuse you, he is there to plead for you: and if any dishonor him on earth, see that you plead his interest, and defend his honor. Thus you have heard what his intercession is, and what benefits we receive by it.

S. The Kingly Office of Christ, as it

The Kingly Office of Christ, as it is providentially

executed in the World, for the Redeemed

"And has put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head, over all things to the church." Ephesians 1:22 The foregoing verses are spent in a thankful and humble adoration of the grace of God, in bringing the Ephesians to believe in Christ. This effect of that power that raised their hearts to believe in Christ, is here compared with that other glorious effect of it, even the raising of Christ himself from the dead: both these owe themselves to the same efficient cause. It raised Christ from a low estate, even from the dead, to a high, a very high and glorious state; to be the head both of the world, and of the church; the head of the world by way of dominion, the head of the church by way of union, and special influence, ruling the world for the good of his people in it. "He gave him is be the head over all things to the church." In this scripture let these four things be seriously regarded.

1. The dignity and authority committed to Christ; "He has put all things under his feet;" which implies, full, ample and absolute dominion in him, and subjection in them over whom he reigns. This power is delegated to him by the Father: for besides the essential, native power and dominion over all, which he has as God, and is common to every person in the Godhead, Psalms 22:28. there is a mediatory dispensed authority, which is proper to him as Mediator, which he receives as the reward or fruit of his suffering, Php 2:8.

2. The subject recipient of this authority, which is Christ, and Christ primarily, and only: he is the first receptacle of all authority and power. Whatever authority any creature is clothed with, is but ministerial and derivative, whether it be political, or ecclesiastical. Christ is the only Lord, Jude 1:4. The fountain of all power.

3. The object of this authority, the whole creation; all things are put under his feet: he rules from sea to sea, even to the utmost bounds of God’s creation, "You have given him power over all flesh," John 17:2. all creatures, rational, and irrational animate, and inanimate, angels, devils, men, winds, seas, all obey him.

4. And especially, take notice of the finis cui, the end for which he governs and rules the universal empire; it is for the church, That is, for the advantage, comfort, and salvation of that chosen remnant he died for. He purchased the church; and that he might have the highest security that his blood should not be lost, God the Father has put all things into his hand, to order and dispose all as he pleases. For the furtherance of that his design and end, as he bought the persons of some, so the services of all the rest; and that they might effectually serve the end they are designed to, Christ will order them all in a blessed subordination and subserviency thereunto. Hence the point is,

DOCTRINE. That all the affairs of the kingdom of providence are ordered and determined by Jesus Christ, for the special advantage, and everlasting good of his redeemed people.

John 17:2. "As you have given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as you have given him." Hence it comes to pass, that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose," Romans 8:28. That Jesus Christ has a providential influence upon all the affairs of this world is evident, both from scripture assertions, and rational observations, made upon the acting of things here below The first chapter of Ezekiel contains an admirable scheme or draught of providence. There you see how all the wheels, That is, the motions and revolutions here on earth, are guided by the spirit that is in them. And, ver. 26. it is all run up into the supreme cause; there you find one like the Son of man, which is Jesus Christ, sitting upon the throne, and giving forth orders from thence for the government of all: and if it were not so, how is it that there are such strong combinations, and predispositions of persons and things to such ends and issues, without any communications of councils, or holding of intelligence with one another? As in Israel's deliverance out of Egypt, and innumerable more instances have appeared. Certainly, if ten men, from several places, should all meet at one place, and about one business, without any fore-appointment among themselves, it would argue their motions were secretly over-ruled by some invisible agent. How is it that such marvelous effects are produced in the world by causes that carry no proportion to them? Amos 5:9 and 1 Corinthians 1:27 and as often, the most apt and likely means are rendered wholly ineffectual? Psalms 33:16. In a word, if Christ has no such providential influx, how are his people in all ages preserved in the midst of so many millions of potent and malicious enemies, among whom they live as sheep in the midst of wolves? Luke 10:3. How is it that the bush burns, and yet is not consumed Exodus 3:2. But my business, in this discourse, is not to prove that there is a Providence, which none but Atheists deny. I shall chose rather to show by what acts Jesus Christ administers this kingdom, and in what manner; and what use may be made thereof.

First, He rules and orders the kingdom of Providence, by supporting, permitting, restraining, limiting, protecting, punishing, and rewarding those over whom he reigns providentially.

1. He supports the world, and all creatures in it, by his power. "My Father works hitherto, and I work," John 5:17. "And in him (that is, in Christ) all things consist," Colossians 1:17. It is a considerable part of Christ's glory to have a whole world of creatures owing their being and hourly conservation to him. The parts of the world are not coupled and fastened together as the parts of the house, whose beams are pinned and nailed to each other; but rather as several rings of iron, which hang together by the virtue of a loadstone. This goodly fabric was razed to the foundation when sin entered, and had tumbled into everlasting confusion, had not Christ stept in to shore up the reeling world. For the sake of his redeemed that inhabits it, he does and will prop it by his omnipotent power. And when he has gathered all his elect out of it into the kingdom above, then will he set fire to the four quarters of it, and it shall lie in ashes. Meanwhile, he is "given for a covenant to the people, to establish the earth," Isaiah 49:8.

2. He permits and suffers the worst of creatures in his dominion, to be and act as they do. "The deceived, and the deceiver, are his," Job 12:16. Even those that fight against Christ and his people, receive both power and permission from him. Say not, that it is unbecoming the most Holy to permit such evils, which he could prevent if he pleased. For as he permits no more than he will

overrule to his praise, so that very permission of his, is holy and just. Christ's working is not confounded with the creature's. Pure sun beams are not tainted by the noisome vapors of the dung hill on which they shine. His holiness has no fellowship with their iniquities; nor are their transgressions at all excused by his permissions of them. "He is a rock, his work is perfect, but they have corrupted themselves," Deuteronomy 32:4-5. This holy permission is but the withholding of those restraints from their lusts, and denying those common assistances which he is no way bound to give them. Acts 14:16. "He suffered all nations to walk in their own ways." And yet should he permit sinful creatures to act out all the wickedness that is in their hearts, there would neither remain peace nor order in the world. And therefore,

3. He powerfully restrains creatures by the bridle of providence, from the commission of those things, to which their hearts are propense enough, Psalms 76:10. "The remainder of wrath you will restrain," or gird up; letting forth just so much as shall serve his holy ends, and no more. And truly this is one of the glorious mysteries of Providence, which amazes the serious and considerate soul; to see the spirit of a creature fully set to do mischief; power enough, as one would think, in his hand to do it, and a door of opportunity standing open for it; and yet the effect strangely hindered. The strong propensions of the will are inwardly checked, as in the case of Laban, Genesis 31:24. or a diversion, and rub is strangely cast in their way; as in the case of Sennacherib, 2 Kings 19:7-8. so that their hands cannot perform their enterprises. Julia had two great designs before him, one was to conquer the Persian, the other to root out the Galileans, as he, by way of contempt, called the Christians: but he will begin with the Persian first, and then make a sacrifice of all the Christians to his idols. He does so, and perishes in the first attempt. O the wisdom of Providence!

4. Jesus Christ limits the creatures in their acting, assigning them their boundaries and lines of liberty; to which they may, but beyond it cannot, go. Revelation 2:10. "Fear none at these things that you shall suffer; behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, and you shall have tribulation ten days." They would have cast them into their graves, but it shall only be into prisons: They would have stretched out their hands, upon them all; no, but only some of them shall be exposed: They would have kept them there perpetually; no, it must be but for ten days, Ezekiel 22:6. "Behold, the princes of Israel were in you, everyone to their power to shed blood." They went as far as they had power to go, not as far as they had will to go. Four hundred and thirty years were determined upon the people of God in Egypt; and then, even in that very night, God brought them forth; for then "the time of the promise was come," Acts 7:17.

5. The Lord Jesus providentially protects his people amidst a world of enemies and dangers. It was Christ that appeared unto Moses in the flaming bush, and preserved it from being consumed. The bush signified the people of God in Egypt; the fire flaming on it, the exquisite sufferings they there endured: the safety of the bush, amidst the flames, the Lord's admirable care and protection of his poor suffering ones. None so tenderly careful as Christ. "as birds flying, so he defends Jerusalem," Isaiah 31:5; That is, as they fly swiftly towards their nests, crying when their young are in danger, so will the Lord preserve his. They are "preserved in Christ Jesus", Jude 1:1, as Noah and his family were in the ark. Hear how a Worthy of our own expresses himself on this point.

"That we are at peace in our houses, at rest in our beds; that we have any quiet in our enjoyments, is from hence alone. Whose person would not be defiled, or destroyed? whose habitation would

not be ruined? whose blood almost would not be shed, if wicked men had power to perpetrate all their conceived sin? It may be, the ruin of some of us has been conceived a thousand times. We are beholden to this Providence, of obstructing sin, for our lives, our families, our estates, our liberties, and whatever is or may be dear to us. For may we not say sometimes with the Psalmist, Psalms 57:4. My soul is among lions, and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears, and their tongue a sharp sword? And how is the deliverance of men contrived from such persons? Psalms 8:6. God breaks their teeth in their mouths, even the great teeth at the young lions. He keeps this fire from burning, - some he cuts off and destroys: some he cuts short in their power: some he deprives of the instruments whereby alone they can work: some he prevents in their desired opportunities, or diverts by other objects for their lust; and oftentimes causeth them to spend them among themselves, one upon another. We may say, therefore, with the Psalmist, Psalms 104:24. O Lord, how manifold are your works! in wisdom have you made then all; the earth is full of your riches."

6. He punishes the evil doers, and repays, by providence into their own lap, the mischief they do, or but intend to do, unto them that fear him. Pharaoh, Sennacherib, both the Julians, and innumerable more, are the lasting monuments of his righteous retribution. It is true, a sinner may do evil a hundred times, and his days be prolonged; but oft-times God hangs up some eminent sinners in chains, as spectacles and warnings to others. Many a heavy blow has Providence given to the enemies of God, which they were never able to recover. Christ rules, and that with a rod of iron, in the midst of his enemies, Psalms 110:2.

7. And lastly, He rewards by Providence the services done to him and his people. Out of this treasure of Providence God repays oftentimes those that serve him, and that with a hundredfold reward now in this life, Matthew 19:29. This active, vigilant Providence has its eye upon all the wants, straits, and troubles of the creatures: but especially upon such as religion brings us unto. What huge volumes of experiences might the people of God write upon this subject? and what a pleasant history would it be, to read the strange, constant, wonderful, and unexpected acting of Providence, for them that have left themselves to its care?

Secondly, We shall next enquire how Jesus Christ administers this providential kingdom. And here I must take notice of the means by which, and the manner in which he does it. The means, or instruments, he uses in the governing the providential kingdom, (for he is not personally present with its himself), are either angels or men, "the angels are ministering creatures, sent forth by him for the good of them that shall be heirs of salvation," Hebrews 1:14. Luther tells us, they have two offices, superius canere, et inferius vigilare, "to sing above and watch beneath." These do us many invisible offices of love. They have dear and tender respects and love for the saints. To them, God, as it were, puts forth his children to nurse, and they are tenderly careful of them while they live, and bring them home in their arms to their Father when they die. And as angels, so men are the servants of Providence; yes, bad men as well as good. Cyrus, on that account, is called God’s servant: they fulfill his will, while they are prosecuting their own lusts. "The earth shall help the woman," Revelation 12:16. But good men delight to serve Providence; they and the angels are fellow servants in one house, and to one master, Revelation 19:10. Yes, there is not a creature in heaven, earth, or hell, but Jesus Christ can providentially use it and serve his ends, and promote his designs by it. But whatever the instrument be Christ uses, of this we may be certain, that his providential working is holy, judicious, sovereign, profound, irresistible, harmonious, and to the

saints peculiar.

1. It is holy. Though he permits, limits, orders and overrules many unholy persons and actions, yet he still works like himself, most holily and purely throughout. "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works, Psalms 145:17. it is easier to separate light from a sunbeam, than holiness from the works of God. The best of men cannot escape sin in their most holy actions; they cannot touch, but are defiled. But no sin cleaves to God, whatever he has to do about it.

2. Christ's providential working is not only most pure and ho]y, but also most wise and judicious. Ezekiel 1:20. "The wheels are full of eyes:" They are not moved by a blind impetus, but in deep counsel and wisdom. And, indeed, the wisdom of Providence manifests itself principally in the choice of such states for the people of God, as shall most effectually promote their eternal happiness. And herein it goes quite beyond our understandings and comprehensions. It makes that medicinal and salutiferous, which we judge as destructive to our comfort and good, as poison. I remember, it is a note of Suarez, speaking of the felicity of the other world: "Then (says he) the blessed shall see in God all things and circumstances pertaining to them, excellently accommodated and attempered;" then shall they see that the crossing of their desires was the saving of their souls; and that otherwise they had perished. The most wise Providence looks beyond us. It eyes the end, and suits all things thereto, and not to our fond desires.

3. The providence of Christ is most supreme and sovereign. "Whatever he pleases, that he does in heaven and in earth, and in all places," Psalms 135:6. "He is Lord of lords, and King of kings," Revelation 19:16. The greatest monarchs on earth are but as little bits of clay, as the worms of the earth to him: they all depend on him, Proverbs 8:15-16. "By me kings reign, and princes decree justice; by me princes rule, nobles, even all the judges of the earth."

4. Providence is profound and inscrutable. The judgements of Christ are "a great deep, and his footsteps are not known," Psalms 36:6. There are hard texts in the works as well as in the words of Christ. The wisest heads have been at a loss in interpreting some Providence, Jeremiah 12:1-2. Job 21:7. The angels had the hands of a man under their wings, Ezekiel 1:8. That is, they wrought secretly and mysteriously.

5. Providence is irresistible in its designs and motions; for all providences are but fulfilling and accomplishments of Gods immutable decrees. Ephesians 1:11. "He works all things according to the counsel of his own will." Hence Zechariah 6:1. the instruments by which God executed his wrath, are called "chariots coming from between two mountains of brass," that is "the firm and immutable decrees of God." When the Jews put Christ to death, they did but do what "the hand and counsel of God had before determined to be done," Acts 4:28. so that none can oppose or resist providence. "I will work, and who shall let it?" Isaiah 43:13.

6. The providence of Christ are harmonious. There are secret chains, and invisible connections between the works of Christ. We know not how to reconcile promises and providence together, nor yet providence one with another; but certainly they all work together, Romans 8:28. as adjutant causes, or con-causes standing under, and working by the influence of the first cause. He does not do, and undo; destroy by one providence, what he built by another. But, look, as also seasons of the year, the nipping frosts, as well as the halcyon days of summer, do all conspire and conduce to the harvest; so it is in providence.

7. And lastly, The providence of Christ work in a special and peculiar way for the good of the saints. His providential is subordinated to his spiritual kingdom. "He is the Savior of all men, especially of them that believe," 1 Timothy 4:1. These only have the blessings of providence. Things are so laid and ordered, as that their eternal good shall be promoted and secured by all that Christ does.

INFERENCE 1. If so, See then, in the first place, to whom you are beholden for your lives, liberties, comforts, and all that you enjoy in this world. Is it not Christ that orders all for you? He is, indeed in heaven, out of your sight; but though you see him not, he sees you, and takes care of all your concerns. When one told Silentiarius of a plot laid to take away his life, he answered, Si Deus mei curam non habet, quid vivo? "If God take no care of me, how do I live?" how have I escaped hitherto? "In all your ways acknowledge him," Proverbs 3:6. It is he that has espied out that state you are in, as most proper for you. It is Christ that does all for you that is done. He looks down from heaven upon all that fear him; he sees when you are in danger by temptation, and casts in a providence, you know not how, to hinder it. He sees when you are sad, and orders reviving providence, to refresh you. He sees when corruptions prevail, and orders humbling providence to purge them. Whatever mercies you have received, all along the way you have gone hitherto, are the orderings of Christ for you. And you should carefully observe how the promises and providence have kept equal pace with one another, and both gone by step with you until now.

INFERENCE. 2. Has God left the government of the whole world in the hands of Christ, and trusted him over all? Then do you also leave your particular concerns in the hands of Christ too, and know that the infinite wisdom and love, which rules the world, manages everything that relates to you. It is in a good hand, and infinitely better than if it were in your own. I remember when Melanchton was under some despondencies of spirit about the estate of God’s people in Germany, Luther chides him thus for it, "Let Philip cease to rule the world." It is none of our work to steer the course of providence, or direct its motions, but to submit quietly to him that does. There is an itch in men, yes, in the best of men, to be disputing with God: "Let me talk with you of your judgement," says Jeremiah, Jeremiah 12:1-2. Yes, how apt are we to regret at providence, as if they had no conducency at all to the glory of God, or to our good, Exodus 5:22. yes, to limit providence to our way and time? Thus, the "Israelites tempted God, and limited the holy One," Psalms 78:18; Psalms 78:41. How often also do we, unbelievingly, distrust providence as though it could never accomplish what we profess to expect and believe? Ezekiel 37:11. "Our bones are dry, our hope is lost; we are cut off for our part." So Genesis 18:13-14. Isaiah 40:17. There are but few Abrahams, among believers, who "against hope, believed in hope, giving glory to God," Romans 4:20. And it is but too common for good men to repine and fret at providence, when their wills, lusts, or humours are crossed by it: this was the great sin of Jonah. Brethren, these things ought not to be so; did you but seriously consider, either the design of providence, which is to bring about the gracious designs and purposes of God upon you, which were laid before this world was, Ephesians 1:11. or that it is a lifting up of your wisdom against his, as if you could better order your affairs, if you had but the conduct and management of them; or that you have to do herein faith a great and dreadful God, in whose hands you are as the clay in the potter’s hands, that he may do what he will with you, and all that is yours, without giving you an account of any of his matters, Job 33:13. or whether providence has cast others, as good, by nature, as yourselves, tumbled them down from the top of health, wealthy honors and pleasures, to the bottom of hell; or,

lastly, did you but consider how often it has formerly baffled and befouled yourselves; you would retract, with shame, your rash, headlong censures of it, and enforce you, by the sight of its births and issues, to confess your folly and ignorance, as Asaph did, Psalms 73:22. I say, if such considerations as these could but have place with you in your troubles and temptations, they would quickly mold your hearts into a better and more quiet frame.

O that I could but persuade you to resign all to Christ. He is a cunning workman, as he is called, Proverbs 8:30. and can effect what he pleases. It is a good rule, De operibus Dei non est judicandum, ante quintum actum. "Let God work out all that he intends, but have patience until he has put the last hand to his works and then find fault with it, if you can." You have heard of the patience of Job, "and have seen the end of the Lord," James 5:11.

INFERENCE. 3. If Christ be Lord and king over the providential kingdom, and that, for the good of his people, let none that are Christ's henceforth stand in a slavish fear of creatures. It is a good note that Grotius has upon my text; "It is a marvelous consolation (says he) that Christ has so great an empire, and that he governs it for the good of his people, as a head consulting the good of the body." Our head and husband, is Lord-general of all the hosts of heaven and earth; no creature can move hand or tongue without his leave or order: the power they have is given them from above, John 19:11-12. The serious consideration of this truth will make the feeblest spirit cease trembling, and set it a singing; Psalms 47:7. "The Lord is king of all the earth, sing you praises with understanding,:" that is, (as some well paraphrase it) everyone that has understanding of this comfortable truth. Has he not given you abundant security in many express promises, that all shall issue well for you that fear him? Romans 8:28. "All things shall work together for good, to them that love God," And Ecclesiastes 8:12. verily "it shall be well with them that fear God,: even with them that fear before him. And suppose he had not, yet the very understanding of our relation to such a king, should, in itself, be sufficient security: for, he is the universal, supreme, absolute, meek, merciful, victorious, and immortal king.

He sits in glory, at the Father's right hand; and, to make his seat the easier, his enemies are a footstool for him. His love to his people is unspeakably tender and fervent, he that touches them, "touches the apple of his eye," Zechariah 2:1-13. And, it is hardly imaginable, that Jesus Christ will sit still, and suffer his enemies to thrust out his eyes. Until this be forgotten, the wrath of man is not feared; Isaiah 2:12-13. "He that fears a man that shall die, forgets the Lord his Maker." He loves you too well to sign any order to your prejudice, and without his order, none can touch you.

INFERENCE. 4. If the government of the world be in the hands of Christ, Then our engaging and entitling of Christ to all our affairs and business, is the true and ready way to their success and prosperity. If all depend upon his pleasure, then sure it is your wisdom to take him along with you to every action and business; it is no lost time that is spent in prayer, wherein we ask his leave, and beg his presence with us: and, take it for a clear truth, that which is not prefaced with prayer, will be followed with trouble. How easily can Jesus Christ dash all your designs, when they are at the very birth and article of execution, and break off, in a moment, all the purposes of your hearts? It is a proverb among the Papists, that Mass and meat hinder no man. The Turks will pray five times a day, how urgent soever their business be. Blush you that enterprise your affairs without God: I reckon that business as good as done, to which we have got Christ's leave, and engaged his presence to accompany us.

INFERENCE. 5. Lastly, Eye Christ in all the events of providence; see his hand in all that befall you, whether it be evil or good. "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein," Psalms 111:2.

How much good might we get, by observation of the good or evil that befall us throughout our course!

1. In all the evils of trouble and afflictions that befall you, eye Jesus Christ: and set your hearts to the study of these four things in affliction.

(1.) Study his sovereignty and dominion; for he creates and forms them: they rise not out of the dust, nor do they befall you casually; but he raises them up, and gives them their commission, Jeremiah 18:11. "Behold, I create evil, and devise a device against you." He elects the instrument of your trouble; he makes the rod as afflictive as he pleases; he orders the continuance and end of your troubles; and they will not cease to be afflictive to you, until Christ say, Leave off, it is enough. The Centurion wisely considered this, when he told him, Luke 7:8. "I have soldiers under me, and I say to one, Go, and he goes; to another, Come, and he comes:" meaning, that as his soldiers were at his beck and command, so diseases were at Christ's beck, to come and go as he ordered them.

(2.) Study the wisdom of Christ in the contrivance of your troubles. And his wisdom shines out many ways in them, it is evident in chasing such kinds of trouble for you: this, and not that, because this is more apt to work upon, and purge out the corruption that most predominates in you: In the degrees of your troubles, suffering them to work to such a height, else not reach their end; but no higher, lest they overwhelm you.

(3.) Study the tenderness and compassions of Christ over his afflicted. O think if the devil had but the mixing of my cup, how much more bitter would he make it! There would not be one drop of mercy, no, not of sparing mercy in it, which is the lowest of all sorts of mercy: but here is much mercy mixed with my troubles; there is mercy in this, that it is no worse. Am I afflicted? "It is of the Lord's mercy I am not consumed," Lamentations 3:2. It might have been hell as well as this; there is mercy in his supports under it. Others have, and I might have been left to sink and perish under my burdens. Mercy, in deliverance out of it; this might have been everlasting darkness, that should never have had a morning. O the tenderness of Christ over his afflicted!

(4.) Study the love of Christ to your soul, in affection. Did he not love you, he would not sanctify a rod to humble or reduce you, but let you alone to perish in your sin. Revelation 3:19. "Whom I love, I rebuke and chasten." This is the device of love, to recover you to your God, and prevent your ruin. O what an advantage would it be thus to study Christ, in all your evils that befall you!

2. Eye and study Christ in all the good you receive from the hand of providence. Turn both sides of your mercies, and view them in all their lovely circumstances.

Eye them in their suitableness: how conveniently providence has ordered all things for you. You have a narrow heart, and a small estate suitable to it: Had you more of the world, it would be like a large sail to a little boat, which would quickly pull you under water: you have that which is most suitable to you of all conditions.

(2.) Eye the seasonableness of your mercies, how they are timed to an hour. Providence brings forth all its fruits in due season.

(3.) Eye the peculiar nature of your mercies. Others have common, you special ones; others have but a single, you a double sweetness in your enjoyments, one natural from the matter at it, another spiritual from the way in which, and end for which it comes.

(4.) Observe the order in which providence sends your mercies. See how one is linked strangely to another, and is a door to let in many. Sometimes one mercy is introductive to a thousand.

(5.) And lastly, Observe the constancy of them, "they are new every morning," Lamentations 3:23. How assiduously does God visit your soul and body! Think with yourself, if there be but a suspension of the care of Christ for one hour, that hour would be your ruin. Thousands of evils stand round about you, watching when Christ will but remove his eye from you, that they may rush in and devour you. Could we thus study the providence of Christ in all the good and evil that befall us in the world, then in every state we should be content, Php 4:11. Then we should never be stopped, but furthered in our way by all that falls out; then would our experience swell to great volumes, which we might carry to heaven with us; and then should we answer all Christ's ends in every state he brings us into. Do this, and say, Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ!

S. The Kingly Office of Christ, as it is

The Kingly Office of Christ, as it is executed

spiritually upon the Souls of the Redeemed

"Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." 2 Corinthians 10:5

We now come to the Regal office, by which our glorious Mediator executes and discharges the undertaken design of our redemption. Had he not, as our Prophet, opened the way of life and salvation to the children of men, they could never have known it; and if they had clearly known it, except, as their Priest, he had offered up himself, to impetrate and obtain redemption for them, they could not have been redeemed virtually by his blood; and if they had been so redeemed, yet had he not lived in the capacity of a King, to apply this purchase of his blood to them, they would have had no actual, personal benefit by his death; for what he revealed as a Prophet, he purchased as a Priest; and what he so revealed and purchased as a Prophet and Priest, he applies as a King: first subduing the souls of his elect to his spiritual government; then ruling them as his subjects, and ordering all things in the kingdom of Providence for their good. So that Christ has a twofold kingdom, the one spiritual and internal, by which he subdues and rules the hearts of his people; the other providential and external, whereby he guides, rules, and orders all things in the world, in a blessed subordination to their eternal salvation. I am to speak from this text of his spiritual and internal kingdom.

These words are considered two ways, either relatively or absolutely. Considered relatively, they are a vindication of the apostle from the unjust censures of the Corinthians, who very unworthily, interpreted his gentleness, condescension, and winning affability, to be no better than a fawning upon them for self-ends; and the authority he exercised, no better than pride and imperiousness. But hereby he lets them know, that as Christ needs not, so he never used such carnal artifices: The weapons of our warfare (says he) are not carnal, but mighty, through God, etc.

Absolutely considered, they hold forth the efficacy of the gospel, in the plainness and simplicity of it, for the subduing of rebellious sinners to Christ: and in them we have these three things to consider,

1. The oppositions made by sinners against the assaults of the gospel, namely, imaginations, or reasonings, as the word "logismous" may be fitly rendered. He means the subtleties, slights, excuses, subterfuges, and arguing of fleshly-minded men; in which they fortify and entrench themselves against the convictions of the word: yes, and there are not only such carnal seasonings, but many proud, high conceits with which poor creatures swell, and scorn to submit to the abasing, humble, self denying way of the gospel. These are the fortifications erected against Christ by the carnal mind.

2. We have here the conquest which the gospel obtains over sinners, thus fortified against it; it casts down and overthrows, and takes in these strong holds. Thus Christ spoils Satan of his armor in which he trusted, by showing the sinner that all this can be no defense to his soul against the wrath of God. But that is not all: in the next place,

3. You have here the improvement of the victory. Christ does not only lead away these enemies spoiled, but brings them into obedience to himself, that is makes them, after conversion, subjects of his own kingdom, obedient, useful, and serviceable to himself; and so is more than a conqueror. They do not only lay down their arms, and fight no more against Christ with them; but repair to his camp, and fight for Christ, with those reasons of theirs that were before employed against him: as it is said of Jerome, Origin, and Tertullian, that they came into Canaan, laden with Egyptian gold; that is they came into the church full of excellent learning and abilities, with which they eminently served Jesus Christ. "O blessed victory, where the conqueror, and conquered, both triumph together!" And thus enemies and rebels are subdued, and made subjects of the spiritual kingdom of Christ. Hence the doctrinal note is, DOCTRINE. That Jesus Christ exercises a Kingly power over the souls of all whom the gospel subdues to his obedience. No sooner were the Colossians delivered out of the power of darkness, but they were immediately translated into the kingdom of Christ, the dear Son, Colossians 1:13. This kingdom of Christ, which is our present subject, is the internal spiritual kingdom, which is said to be within the saints, Luke 17:20-21. "The kingdom of God is within you." Christ sits as an enthroned king in the hearts, consciences, and affections of his willing people, Psalms 110:3. And his kingdom consists in "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit," Romans 14:17. and it is properly monarchical, as appears in the margin. In the prosecution of this point, I will speak doctrinally to these three heads.

First, How Christ obtains the throne in the hearts of men.

Secondly, How he rules in it, and by what acts he exercises his kingly authority.

Thirdly, What are the privileges of those souls over whom Christ reigns. And then apply it.

First, We will open the war and manner in which Christ obtains a throne in the hearts of men, and that is by conquest: for though the souls of the elect are his by donation, and right of redemption; the Father gave them to him, and he died for them; yet Satan has the first possession: and so it fares with Christ, as it did with Abraham, to whom God gave the land of Canaan by promise and covenant, but the Canaanites, Perizites, and sons of Anak, had the actual possession of it, and Abraham’s posterity must fight for it, and win it by inches, before they enjoy it. The house is conveyed to Christ by him that built it, but the strong man armed keeps the possession of it, until a stronger than he comes and ejects him, Luke 11:20-22. Christ must fight his way into the soul, though he have a right to enter, as into his dearly purchased possession. And so he does; for when the time of recovering them is come, he sends forth his armies to subdue them; as it is Psalms 110:3. "Your people shall be willing in the day of your power." The Hebrew may as fitly be rendered, and so is by some, "in the day of your armies;" when the Lord Jesus sent forth his armies of prophets, apostles, evangelists, pastors, teachers, under the conduct of his Spirit, armed with that two edged sword, the word of God, which is sharp and powerful, Hebrews 4:12. But that is not all: he causes armies of convictions, and spiritual troubles, to begird and straiten them on every side, so that they know not what to do. These convictions, like a shower of arrows, strike, point blank, into their consciences; Acts 2:37. "When they heard this, they were pricked to the

heart, and said, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Christ's arrows are sharp in the hearts of his enemies, whereby the people fall under him, Psalms 45:5-6. By these convictions he batters down all their loose vain hopes, and levels them with the earth.

Now all their weak pleas and defences, from the general mercy of God, the example of others, etc. prove but as paper walls to them. These shake their hearts, even to the very foundation, and overturn every high thought there, that exalts itself against the Lord. This day, in which Christ sits down before the soul, and summons it by such messengers as these, is a day of distress within: yes, such a day of trouble, that none is like it. But though it be so, yet Satan has so deeply entrenched himself in the mind and will, that the soul yields not at the first summons, until its provisions within are spent, and all its towers of pride, and walls of vain confidence, be undermined by the gospel, and shaken down about its ears: and then the soul desires a parley with Christ. O now it would be glad of terms, any terms, if it may but save its life: let all go as a prey to the conqueror.

Now it sends many such messengers as these to Christ, who is come now to the very gates of the soul; mercy, Lord, mercy, O were I but assured you would receive, spare, and pardon me, I would open to you the next moment! Thus the soul is shut up to the faith of a Christ, as it is, Galatians 3:23. and reduced now to the greatest strait and loss imaginable; and now the merciful King, whose only design is to conquer the heart, hangs forth the white flag of mercy before the soul, giving it hopes it shall be spared, pitied, and pardoned, though so long in rebellion against him, if yet it will yield itself to Christ. Many staggering, hesitations, irresolutions, doubts, fears, scruples, half-resolves, reasonings for and against, there are at the council table of man's own heart, at this time. Sometimes there is no hope; Christ will slay me, if I go forth to him, and then it trembles. But then, who ever found him so that tried him? Other souls have yielded, and found mercy beyond all their expectations. O but I have been a desperate enemy against him. Admit it, yet you have the word of a King for it; "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon him", Isaiah 55:7. But the time of mercy is past, I have stood out too long: yet if it were so, how is it that Christ has not made short sock, and cut me off? set fire, hell fire to my soul, and withdrawn the siege? Still he waits that he may be gracious, and is exalted that he may have compassion. A thousand such debates there are, until, at last, the soul considering, if it abide in rebellion, it must needs perish; if it go forth to Christ, it can but perish: and being somewhat encouraged by the messages of grace sent into the soul, at this time, such as in Heb. 8:25. "Therefore he is able to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him;" and, John 6:37. "He that comes to me, I will in nowise cast out;" and in Matthew 11:28. "Come unto me all you that labor, and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." It is, at last, resolved to open to Christ; and says, "Stand open you everlasting gates, and be you opened you everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in." Now, the will spontaneously opens to Christ: that royal fort submits and yields; all the affections open to him. The will brings Christ the keys of all the rooms in the soul. Concerning the triumphant entrance of Christ into the soul, we may say, as the Psalmist rhetorically speaks concerning the triumphant entrance of Israel into Canaan, Psalms 114:5-6. "The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs; what ails you, O you sea, that you fled? You Jordan, that you were driven back?" So here, in a like rhetorical triumph, we may say, the mountains and hills skipped like rams, and the fixed and obstinate will, starts from its own

basis and center; the rocky heart rends in twain. A poor soul comes into the word, full of ignorance, pride, self-love, desperate hardness, and fixed resolutions to go on in its way: and, by an hour's discourse, the tide turns, Jordan is driven back. What ails you, you stout will, that you surrender to Christ! you hard heart, that you relents, and the waters gush out? And thus the soul is won to Christ; he writes down his terms, and the soul willingly subscribes them. Thus it comes in to Christ by free and hearty submission, desiring nothing more than to come under the government of Christ, for the time to come.

Secondly, Let us see how Christ rules in the souls of such as submit to him. And there are six things in which he exerts his kingly authority over them.

1. He imposes a new law upon them, and enjoins them to be severe and punctual in their obedience to it. The soul was a Belialite before, and could endure no restraint; its lusts gave it laws. "We ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, serving diverse lusts and pleasures," Titus 3:3. Whatever the flesh craved, and the sensual appetite whined after, it must have, cost what it would; if damnation were the price of it, it would have it, provided it should not be present pay. Now, it must not be any longer without law to God; but under law to Christ. Those are the articles of peace which the seal willingly subscribes in the day of its admission to mercy, Matthew 11:29. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me." This "Law of the spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus makes them free from the law of sin and death," Romans 8:2. Here is much strictness, but no bondage; for the law is not only written in Christ's statute-book, the bible, but copied out by his spirit upon the hearts of his subjects, in correspondent principles; which makes obedience a pleasure, and self-denial easy. Christ's yoke is lined with love, so that it never galls the necks of his people:1 John 5:3. "His commandments are not grievous." The soul that comes under Christ's government, must receive law from Christ; and under law every thought of the heart must come.

2. He rebukes and chastises souls for the violations and transgressions of his law. That is another act of Christ's regal authority: "whom he loves he rebukes and chastens," Hebrews 12:6-7. These chastisements of Christ are either by the rod of providence upon their bodies, and outward comforts, or upon their spirits and inward comforts. Sometimes his rebukes are smart upon the outward man, 1 Corinthians 11:30. "for this cause, many among you are weakly and sick, and many sleep." They had not that due regard to his body that became them, and he will make their bodies to smart for it. And he had rather their flesh should smart, than their souls should perish. Sometimes he spares their outward, and afflicts their inner man, which is a much smarter rod. He withdraws peace, and takes away joy from the spirits of his people. The hidings of his face are sore rebukes. however, all is for emendation, not for destruction. And it is not the least privilege of Christ's subjects to have a seasonable and sanctified rod to reduce them from the ways of sin: Psalms 23:3. "Your rod and your staff, they comfort me." Others are suffered to go on stubbornly in the way of their own hearts; Christ will not spend a rod upon them for their good, will not call them to account for any of their transgressions, but will reckon with them for all together in hell.

3. Another regal act of Christ, is the restraining and keeping back his servants from iniquity, and withholding them from those courses which their own hearts would incline, and lead them to; for, even in them, there is a spirit bent to backsliding, but the Lord in tenderness over them, keeps back their souls from iniquity, and that when they are upon the very brink of sin: "My feet were almost gone, my steps were well near slipt," Psalms 73:2. Then does the Lord prevent sin, by

removing the occasion providentially, or by helping them to resist the temptation, graciously assisting their spirits in the trial, so that no temptation shall befall them, but a way of escape shall be opened, that they may be able to bear it, 1 Corinthians 10:13. And thus his people have frequent occasions to bless his name for his preventing goodness, when they are almost in the midst of all evil. And this I take to be the meaning of Galatians 5:16. "This, I say then, walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh;" tempted by them, you may be, but fulfill them you shall not; my spirit shall cause the temptation to die, and wither away in the womb, in the embryo of it, so that it shall not come to a full birth.

4. He protects them in his ways, and suffers them not to relapse from him into a state of sin, and bondage to Satan and more. Indeed, Satan is restless in his endeavors to reduce them again to his obedience; he never leaves tempting and soliciting for their return; and where he finds a false professor he prevails; but Christ keeps his, that they depart not again. John 17:12. "All that you have given me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition." They are "kept by the mighty power of God, through faith unto salvation," 1 Peter 1:5. Kept, as in a garrison, according to the importance of that word. None more solicited, none more safe than the people of God. They are "preserved in Christ Jesus," Jude 1:1. It is not their own grace that secures them, but Christ's care, and continual watchfulness. "Our own graces left to themselves would quickly prove but weights, sinking us to our own ruin," as one speaks. This is his covenant with them, Jeremiah 32:4. "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Thus, as a king he preserves them.

5. As a king he Regards their obedience, and encourages their sincere service. Though all they do for Christ be duty, yet he has united their comfort with their duty; "this I had, because I kept your precepts," Psalms 119:56. They are engaged to take this encouragement with them to every duty, that he whom they seek "is a bountiful rewarder of inch as diligently seek him", Hebrews 11:6. O what a good master do the saints serve! Hear how a king expostulates with his subjects, Jeremiah 2:31. "Have I been a barren wilderness, or a land of darkness to you?" q. d. Have I been such a hard master to you? Have you any reason to complain of my service? To whoever I have been strait-handed, surely I have not been so to you. You have not found the ways or wages of sin like mine.

6. He pacifies all inward troubles, and commands peace when their spirits are tumultuous. This "peace of God rules in their hearts" Colossians 3:15. it does act the part of an umpire, in appeasing strife within. When the tumultuous affections are up, and in a hurry; when anger, hatred, and revenge begin to rise in the soul, this hushes and stills all. "I will hearken (says the church) what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, and to his saints," Psalms 75:8. He that says to the raging sea, be still, and it obeys him; he can only pacify the disquieted spirit. They say of frogs, that if they be croaking never so much in the night, bring but a light among them, and they are all quiet: such a light is the peace of God among our disordered affections. These are Christ's regal acts. And he puts them forth upon the souls of his people, powerfully, sweetly, suitably.

(1.) Powerfully: whether he restrains from sin, or impels to duty, he does it with a soul determining efficacy: for "his kingdom is not in word, but in power," 1 Corinthians 4:20. And those whom his Spirit leads, go bound in the spirit, to the fulfilling and discharge of their duties, Acts 20:22. And

yet,

(2.) He rules not by compulsion, but most sweetly. His law is a law of love, written upon their hearts. The church is the Lamb's wife, Revelation 19:7. "a bruised reed he shall not break, and smoking flax he shall not quench," Isaiah 42:2-3. "I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ," says the apostle, 2 Corinthians 10:1. For he delights in free, not in forced obedience. He rules Children, not slaves; and so his kingly power is mixed with fatherly love. His yoke is not made of iron, but gold.

(3.) He rules them suitably to their natures in a rational way; Hosea 11:4. "I drew them with the cords of man, with bands of love;" that is in a way proper to convince their reason, and work upon their ingenuity. And thus his eternal kingdom is administered by his Spirit, who is his viceregent in our hearts.

Thirdly, and lastly, we will open the privileges pertaining to all the subjects of this spiritual kingdom. And they are such as follow.

1. These souls, over whom Christ reigns, are certainly and fully set free from the curse of the law. "If the Son makes you free, then are you free indeed," John 8:36. I say not, they are free from the law as a rule of life; such a freedom were no privilege to them at all: but free from the rigorous exactions, and terrible maledictions of it; to hear our liberty proclaimed from this bondage, is the joyful sound indeed, the most blessed voice that ever our ears heard. And this all that are in Christ shall hear, "If we be led by the Spirit, we are not under the law," Galatians 5:18. "Blessed are the people that hear this joyful sound," Psalms 89:15.

2. Another privilege of Christ's subjects, is, freedom from the dominion of sin. Romans 6:14. "Sin shall not reign over them; for they are not under the law, but under grace." One heaven cannot bear two suns; nor one soul two kings: when Christ takes the throne, sin quits it. It is true, the being of sin is there still; its defiling and troubling power remains still; but its dominion is abolished. O joyful tidings! O welcome day!

3. Another privilege of Christ's subjects, is, protection in all troubles and dangers to which their souls or bodies are exposed. "This man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land, and when he shall tread in our palaces," Micah 5:5. Kings owe protection to their subjects: none so able, so faithful in that work as Christ; all "you gave me, I have kept, and none is lost," John 17:12.

4. Another privilege of Christ's subjects, is, a merciful and tender bearing of their burdens and infirmities. They have a meek and patient king; "Tell the daughters of Zion, your king comes meek and lowly;" Matthew 21:5. Matthew 11:29. "Take my yoke, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly." The meek Moses could not bear the provocations of the people, Numbers 11:12. but Christ bears them all: "He carries the lambs in his arms, and gently leads them that be with young," Isaiah 42:11. He is one that can have compassion upon the ignorant, and them that are out of the way.

5. Again, Sweet peace, and tranquility of soul, is the privilege of the subjects of this kingdom: for this kingdom "consists in peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit," Romans 14:17. And until souls come under his scepter, they shall never find peace: "Come unto me, you that are weary, I will give you

rest." Yet do not mistake, I say not, they have all actual peace, at all times: no, they often break that peace by sin; but they have the root of peace, the ground work and cause of peace. If they have not peace, yet they have that which is convertible into peace at any time. They also are in a state of peace, Romans 5:11. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." This is a feast every day, a mercy which they only can duly value, that are in the depths of trouble for sin.

6. And lastly, everlasting salvation is the privilege of all over whom Christ reigns. Prince and Savior are joined together, Acts 5:31. He that can say, "you shall guide me with your counsels," may add what follows, "and afterwards bring me to glory," Psalms 73:24. Indeed, the kingdom of grace does but breed up children for the kingdom of glory. And to speak as the thing is, it is the kingdom of heaven here begun. The difference between them is not specifical, but only gradual: and therefore this, as well as that, bears the name of the kingdom of heaven. The king is the same, and the subjects the same. The subjects of this are shortly to be translated to that kingdom. Thus I have named, and indeed but named, some few of those inestimable privileges of Christ's subjects. We next apply it.

INFERENCE 1. How great is their sin and misery who continue in bondage to sin and Satan and refuse the government of Christ! Who had rather sit under the shadow of that bramble, than under the sweet and powerful government of Christ. Satan writes his laws in the blood of his subjects, grinds them with cruel oppression, wears them out with bondage to divers lusts, and rewards their service with everlasting misery. And yet how few are weary of it, and willing to come over to Christ! "Behold (says one of Christ's heralds) Christ is in the fields sent of God to recover his right and your liberty. His royal standard is pitched in the gospel, and proclamation made, that if any poor sinners, weary of the Devil's government, and laden with the miserable chains of his spiritual bondage, (so as these irons of his sins enter into his very soul, to afflict it with the sense of them) shall thus come and repair to Christ, he shall have protection from God's justice, the Devil's wrath, and sin's dominion; in a word, he shall have rest, and that glorious," Isaiah 11:10. And yet how few stir a foot towards Christ, but are willing to have their ears bored, and be perpetual slaves to that cruel tyrant? O when will sinners be weary of their bondage, and sigh after deliverance! If any such poor soul shall read these lines, let them know, and I do proclaim it in the name of my royal Master, and give him the word of a King for it, he shall not be rejected by Christ, John 6:37. Come, poor sinner, come, the Lord Jesus is a merciful King, and never did, nor will hang up that poor penitent, that puts the rope about his own neck, and submits to mercy.

INFERENCE. 2. How much does it concern us to enquire and know whose government we are under, and who is king over our souls; Whether Christ or Satan be in the throne, and sways the scepter over our souls?

Reader, the work I would now engage your soul in, is the same that Jesus Christ will thoroughly and effectually do in the great day. Then will he gather out of his kingdom every thing that offends, separate the tares and wheat, divide the whale world into two ranks or grand divisions, how many divisions and subdivisions soever there be in it now. It nearly concerns you therefore to know who is Lord and King in your soul. To help you in this great work, make use of the following hints; for I cannot fully prosecute these things as I would.

1. "To whom do you yield your obedience? His subjects and servants you are to whom you obey," Romans 6:16. It is but a mockery to give Christ the empty titles of Lord and King, while you give

your real service to sin and Satan. What is this but like the Jews, to bow the knee to him, and say, Hail master, and crucify him? "Then are you his disciples, if you do whatever he commands you," John 15:14. He that is Christ's servant in jest, shall be damned in earnest. Christ does not compliment with you; his pardons, promises, and salvation are real; O let your obedience be so too! Let it be sincere and universal obedience; this will evidence your unfeigned subjection to Christ. Do not dare to enterprise anything, until you know Christ's pleasure and will, Romans 12:2. Enquire of Christ, as David did of the Lord, 1 Samuel 23:9; 1 Samuel 10:11. Lord, may I do this or that? or shall I forbear? I beseech you tell your servant.

2. Have you the power of godliness, or a form of it only? There be many that do but trifle in religion, and play about the skirts and borders of it; spending their time about jejune and barren controversies: but as to the power of religion, and the life of godliness, which consist in communion with God in duties and ordinances, which promote holiness, and mortify their lusts, they concern not themselves about these things. But surely "the kingdom of God is not in words, but in power," 1 Corinthians 4:20. It is not meat and drink, (That is, dry disputes about meats and drinks) "but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit; for he that in these things serves Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of men," Romans 14:17-18. O I am afraid when the great army of professors shall be tried by these rules, they will shrink up into a little handful, as Gideon's army did.

3. Have you the special saving knowledge of Christ? All his subjects are translated out of the kingdom of darkness, Colossians 1:13. The devil, that rules over you in the days of your ignorance, is called the ruler of the darkness of this world; his subjects are all blind, else he could never rule them. As soon as their eyes are opened, they run out of his kingdom, and there is no retaining them in subjection to him any longer. O enquire then whether you are brought out of darkness into this marvelous light! do you see your condition, how sad, miserable, wretched it is by nature? do you see your remedy, as it lies only in Christ, and his precious blood? Do you see the true way of obtaining interest in that blood by faith? does this knowledge run into practice, and put you upon lamenting heartily your misery by sin? thirsting vehemently after Christ and his righteousness? striving continually for a heart to believe and close with Christ? This will evidence you indeed to be translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of Christ.

4. With whom do you delightfully associate yourselves? Who are your chosen companions? You may see to whom you belong by the company you join yourselves to. What do the subjects of Christ among the slaves of Satan? If the subjects of one kingdom be in another king's dominion, they love to be together with their own countrymen rather than the natives of the place; so do the servants of Christ, They are a company of themselves, as it is said, Acts 4:23. "They went to their own company." I know the subjects of both kingdoms are here mingled, and we cannot avoid the company of sinners except we go out of the world, 1 Corinthians 5:10. but yet all your delights should be in the saints and in the excellent of the earth, Psalms 16:3.

5. Do you live holy and righteous lives? If not, you may claim interest in Christ as your King, but he will never allow your claim. "The scepter of his kingdom is a scepter of righteousness," Psalms 45:6. If you oppress, go beyond, and cheat your brethren, and yet call yourselves Christ's subjects, what greater reproach can you study to cast upon him? What is Christ the King of cheats? Does he patronize such things as these? No, no, pull off your masks, and fall into your

own places; you belong to another prince, and not to Christ.

INFERENCE. 3. Does Christ exercise such a kingly power over the souls of all them that are subdued by the gospel to him? O then let all that are under Christ's government walk as the subjects of such a King. Imitate your King; the examples of kings are very influential upon their subjects. Your King has commanded you not only to take his yoke upon you, but also to learn of him, Matthew 11:29. Yes, and "if any man say that he is Christ's, let him walk even as Christ walked," 1 John 2:6. Your King is meek and patient, Isaiah 53:7. as a lamb for meekness: shall his subjects be lions for fierceness? Your King was humble and lowly; Matthew 21:5. "Behold your King comes meek and lowly." Will you be proud and lofty? Does this become the kingdom of Christ? Your King was a self-denying King; he could deny his outward comforts, ease, honor, life, to serve his Father's design, and accomplish your salvation, 2 Corinthians 8:9. Php 2:1-8. shall his servants be self-ended, and self-seeking persons, that will expose his honor, and hazard their own souls for the trifles of time? God forbid. Your king was painful, laborious, and diligent in fulfilling his work, John 9:3. Let not his servants be lazy and slothful. O imitate your King, follow the pattern of your King: this will give you comfort now, and boldness in the day of judgment, if as he was, so you are in this world, 1 John 4:17.

S. The Nature and Quality of Christ

The Nature and Quality of Christ's Death

"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Acts 2:23

Having considered, in order, the preparative acts for the death of Christ, both on his own part, and on his enemies part, we now come to consider the death of Christ itself, which was the principal part of his humiliation, and is the chief pillar of our consolation. Here we shall in order consider, First, The kind and nature of the death he died.

Secondly, The manner in which he bare it, namely, patiently, solitarily, and instructively; dropping divers holy and instructive lessons upon all that were about him, in his seven last words upon the cross.

Thirdly, The funeral solemnities at his burials

Fourthly, and lastly, The weighty ends and great designs of his death. In all which particulars, as we proceed to discuss and open them, you will have an account of the deep debasement and humiliation of the Son of God. In this text, we have an account of the kind and nature of that death which Christ died: as also of the causes of it, both principal and instrumental.

First, The kind and nature of the death Christ died, which is here described more generally, as a violent death, You have slain him: and more particularly, as a most ignominious, cursed, dishonorable death; you have crucified him.

Secondly, The causes of it are here likewise expressed: and that both principal and instrumental. The principal cause, permitting, ordering, and disposing all things about it, was the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God. There was not an action or circumstance but came under this most wise and holy counsel and determination of God. The instruments effecting it were their wicked hands. This fore-knowledge and counsel of God, as it did no way necessitate or enforce them to it; so neither does it excuse their fact from the least aggravation of its sinfulness. It did no more compel or force their wicked hands to do what they did, than the mariner's hoisting up his sails, to take the wind to serve his design, compels the wind. And it cannot excuse their action from one circumstance of sin; because God's end and manner of acting was one thing, their end and manner of acting another. His, most pure and holy; theirs, most malicious and daringly wicked. Idem quod duo faciunt, non est idem. To this purpose a grave divine well expresses it. In respect of God, Christ's death was justice and mercy. In respect of man, it was murder and cruelty. In respect of himself, it was obedience and humility. Hence our note is,

DOCTRINE. That our Lord Jesus Christ was not only put to death, but to the worst of deaths, even the death of the cross. To this the apostle gives a plain testimony, Php 2:8. "He became obedient to death, even the death of the cross;" where his humiliation is both specified; he was humbled to death; and aggravated by a most emphatical reduplication, even the death of the cross. So Acts

5:30. "Jesus whom you slew and hanged on a tree;" q.d. it did not suffice you to put him to a violent death, but you also put him to the most base, vile and ignominious death; "you hanged him on a tree." On this point we will discuss these three particulars, namely, The nature or kind, the manner and reasons of Christ's death upon the tree.

1. I shall open the kind or nature of his death, by showing you that it was a violent, painful, shameful, cursed, slow, and succourless death.

First, It was a violent death that Christ died. Violent in itself, though voluntary on his part. "He was cut off out of the land of the living," Isaiah 53:8. And yet "he laid down his life of himself; no man took it from him," John 10:17. I call his death violent, because he died not a natural death, that is he lived not until nature was consumed with age, as it is in many who live until their, balsamum radicale, "radical moisture," like the oil in the lamp, be quite consumed, and then go out like an expiring lamp. It was not so with Christ: for he was but in the flower and prime of his time when he died. And indeed, he must either die a violent death, or not die at all; partly, because there was no sin in him, to open a door to natural death; as it does in all others. Partly, because else his death had not been a sacrifice acceptable and satisfactory to God for us. That which died of itself was never offered up to God; but that which was slain, when it was in its full strength and health. The temple was a type of the body of Christ, John 2:19. Now, when the temple was destroyed, it did not drop down as an ancient structure decayed by time, but was pulled down by violence, when it was standing in its full strength. Therefore he is said to suffer death, and to be put to death for us in the flesh, 1 Peter 3:18. That is the first thing. It was a violent, though a voluntary death. For violent is not opposed to voluntary, but to natural.

Secondly, The death of the cross was a most painful death. In deed in this death were many deaths, contrived in one. The cross was a rack as well as a gibbet. The pains which Christ suffered upon the cross, are by the apostle emphatically stiled "tas odinas tou tanatou", Acts 2:24. "The pains of death:" but properly they signify the pangs of travail: yes, the birth-pangs, the most acute sorrows of a travailing woman. His soul was in travail, Isaiah 53:1-12, his body in bitter pangs; and being as Aquinas speaks, optime complectionatus, of the most excellent crests, exact and just temperament; his senses were more acute and delicate than ordinate; and all the time of his suffering, so they continued; not in the least blunted, dulled, or rebated, by the pains he suffered.

"The death of Christ, doubtless, contained the greatest and acutest pains imaginable: because these pains of Christ alone, were intended to equalise all that misery which the sin of men deserved," all that pain which the damned shall, and the elect deserve to feel. Now, to have pains meeting at once upon one person, equivalent to all the pains of the damned; judge you what a plight Christ was in.

Thirdly, The death of the cross was a shameful death: not only because the crucified were stripped quite naked, and so exposed as spectacles of shame, but mainly, because it was a kind of death which was appointed for the basest, and vilest of men. The free-men when they committed capital crimes, were not condemned to the cross. No, that was looked upon as the death appointed for slaves. Tacitus calls it servile supplicium, the punishment of a slave: and to the same sense Juvenal speaks, pone crucem servo, put the cross upon the back of a slave. As they had a great esteem of a free man, so they manifested it, even when they had forfeited their lives, in cutting

them off by more honorable kinds of death. This, by hanging on the tree, was always accounted most ignominious. To this day we say of him that is hanged, He dies the death of a dog: and yet it is said of our Lord Jesus, Hebrews 12:2. He not only endured the cross, but also despised the shame. Obedience to his Father's will, and zeal for our salvation, made him digest the shame of it, and despise the baseness that was in it.

Fourthly, The death of the cross was a cursed death. Upon that account he is said to be "made 'katara', a curse for us; For it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree," Galatians 3:13. "His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but you shall in any wise bury him that day; for he that is hanged is accursed of God." The very symbol of lifting them up between heaven and earth carried much shame in it. For it implies this in it, that the person so used, was so execrable, base, and vile, that he deserved not to tread upon the earth or touch the surface of the ground any more. And the command for burying them that day, does not at all mitigate, but rather aggravates this curse: speaking the person to be so abominable, that as he is lifted up into the air, and hanging between heaven and earth, as unworthy ever to set foot more upon the earth; so when dead, they were to hasten to bury him, that such an abominable sight might be removed as soon as might be, from before the eyes of men; and that the earth might not be defiled, by his lying on the surface of it, when taken down.

However, as the learned Junius has judiciously observed, this curse is only a ceremonial curse; for otherwise it is neither in it self, nor by the law of nature, or by civil law, more execrable than any other death. And the main reason why the ceremonial law attached the curse to this, rather than to any other death, was principally with respect to the death Christ was to die. And therefore, reader, see and admire the providence of God, that Christ should die by a Roman, and not by a Judaic law. For crucifying, or hanging on a tree, was a Roman punishment, and not in use among the Jews. But the scriptures cannot be broken.

Fifthly, The death of the cross was a very slow and lingering death. They died leisurely. Which still increaseth and aggravateth the misery of it. If a man must die a violent death, it is a favor to be dispatched: as they that are pressed to death, beg for more weight. And it is a favor to those that are hanged, to be smitten on the bosom, or plucked by the heels by their friends. On the contrary, to hang long in the midst of tortures, to have death coming upon us with a slow pace, that we may feel every tread of it, as it comes on, is a misery. The tyrant that heard the poor martyr was dead under his first torments, said, as one disappointed, Evasit, "He has escaped me." For he intended to have kept him much longer under torments. And it was the cruel counsel of another to his executioner; "Let him die so as he may feel himself how he dies." And surely in this respect it was worse for Christ, than any other that ever was nailed to the tree. For all the while he hanged there, he remained full of life and acute sense. His life departed not gradually, but was whole in him to the last. Other men die gradually, and, towards their end, their sense of pain is much blunted. They falter, and expire by degrees, but Christ stood under the pains of death in his full strength. His life was whole in him. This was evident by the mighty out-cry he made when he gave up the Spirit, which argued him to be full of strength, contrary to the experience of all other men. Which made the centurion when he heard it, to conclude, "Surely this was the Son of God," Mark 15:37; Mark 15:39.

Sixthly, It was a succourless and helpless death to Christ. Sometimes they gave to malefactors amidst their torments, vinegar and myrrh, to blunt, dull, and stupefy their senses. And if they hanged long, would break their bones to dispatch them out of their pains. Christ had none of this favor. Instead of vinegar and myrrh, they gave him vinegar and gall to drink, to aggravate his torments. And for the breaking of his bones he prevented it, by dying before they came to break his legs. For the scriptures must be fulfilled, which say, Not a bone of him shall be broken. This now was the kind and nature of that death he died. Even the violent, painful, shameful, cursed, slow, and succourless death of the cross. An ancient punishment both among the Romans and Carthaginians. But in honor of Christ, who died this death, Constantine the Great abrogated it by law, ordaining that none should ever be crucified any more, because Christ died that death.

Secondly, As to the manner of the execution. They that were condemned to the death of the cross, (says a learned Antiquary of our own) bare their cross upon their own shoulders, to the place of execution. They were stripped of all their clothes, for they suffered naked. And then were fastened to the cross with nails. The manner how that was done, one gives us in these swords, They stretched him out (meaning Christ) like another Isaac upon his own burden, the cross; that so they might take measure of the holes. And though the print of his blood upon it, gave them the true length of his body; yet how strictly do they take it longer than the truth. Thereby at once to crucify and rack him. Then being nailed, like as Moses lifted up the serpent, so was the Son of man lifted up. And when the cross, with the Lord fastened on it, fell into its socket, or basis, it jerked the whole, and every part of his sacred body. And the whole weight hanging upon his nailed hands, the wounds by degrees grew wider and wider: until at last he expired in the midst of those tortures. And that the equity of their proceedings might the better appear to the people, the cause of the punishment was written in capital letters, and fixed to the tree over the head of the malefactor. Of this appendant to this kind of death, I shall speak distinctly in the next sermon, before I come to handle the manner of his death: there being so much of providence in that circumstance, as invites us to spend more than a few transient thoughts upon it. Meanwhile, in the next place,

Thirdly, We will enquire briefly into the reasons why Christ died this, rather than any other kind of death. And among others, these three are obvious.

First, Because Christ must bear the curse in his death, and a curse by law was affixed to no other kind of death, as it was to this. The learned Masius upon Joshua 2:29. commenting upon the death of king Ai, who was hanged upon the tree, until the evening, tells us, "That the principal reason of the malediction and execrableness of his death was, because the death of Christ was prefigured in that mystery." Christ came to take away the curse from us by this death; and so must be made a curse. On him must all the curses of the moral law lie, which were due to us. And that nothing might be wanting to make it a full curse, the very death he died, must also have a ceremonial curse upon it.

Secondly, Christ died this, rather than any other kind of death; to fulfill the types, and prefiguration that of old were made with respect to it. All the sacrifices were lifted up from the earth, upon the altar. But especially the brazen serpent prefigured this death, Numbers 19:9. Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole. And, says Christ, John 3:14. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up," that so he might correspond with that lively type, made of him in the wilderness.

Thirdly, Christ died this, rather than any other death, because it was predicted of him, and in him must all the predictions, as well as types, be fully accomplished. The psalmist spoke in the person of Christ, of this death, as plainly as if he had rather been writing the history of what was done, than a prophecy of what was to be done, so many years afterwards, Psalms 22:16-17. "For dogs have compassed me about, the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and feet; I may tell all my bones; they look and stare upon me." Which has a manifest reference to the distension of all his members upon the tree, which was a rack to him. So Zechariah 12:10. "They shall look upon me, whom they have pierced." Yes, Christ himself had foretold the death he should die, in the forecited, John 3:14. saying, "He must be lifted up," that is hanged between heaven and earth. And the scriptures must be fulfilled.

Thus you have a brief account both of the kind, manner, and reasons of this death of Christ. The improvement of it, you have in the following inferences of truth, deducible from it.

INFERENCE 1. Is Christ dead? and did he die the violent, painful, shameful, cursed, slow, and succourless death of the cross? Then surely there is forgiveness with God, an plenteous redemption for the greatest of sinners, that by faith apply the blood of the cross to their poor guilty souls. So speaks the apostle, Colossians 1:14. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." And 1 John 1:7. "The blood of Christ CLEANSES us from all sin." Two things will make this demonstrable.

First, That there is a sufficient efficacy in this blood of the cross, to expiate the greatest sins.

Secondly, That the efficacy of it is designed and intended by God for believing sinners. How clearly do both these propositions lie in the word?

First, That there is sufficient efficacy in the blood of the cross, to expiate and wash away the greatest sins. This is manifest, for it is precious blood, as it is called, 1 Peter 1:18. "You were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of the Son of God." This preciousness of the blood of Christ rises from the union it has with that person, who is over all, God blessed forever. And on that account is stiled the blood of God, Acts 20:28: and so it becomes royal, princely blood: Yes, such for the dignity, and efficacy of it, as never was created, or shall ever run in any other veins but his. The blood of all the creatures in the world, even a sea of human blood bears no more proportion to the precious. and excellent blood of Christ, than a dish of common water, to a river of liquid gold. On the account of its invaluable preciousness, it becomes satisfying and reconciling blood to God. So the apostle speaks, Colossians 1:20. "And (having made peace through the blood of his cross) by him to reconcile all things to himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." The same blood which is redemption to them that dwell on earth, is confirmation to them that dwell in heaven. Before the efficacy of this blood, guilt vanishes, and shrinks away as the shadow before the glorious sun. Every drop of it has a voice, and speaks to the soul that sits trembling under its guilt better things than the blood of Abel, Hebrews 10:24. It sprinkles us from all evil, that is an unquiet and accusing conscience, Hebrews 10:22. For having enough in it to satisfy God, it must needs have enough in it to satisfy conscience.

Conscience can demand no more for its satisfaction, nor will it take less than God demands for his satisfaction. And in this blood is enough to give both satisfaction.

Secondly, As there is sufficient efficacy in this blood to expiate the greatest guilt; so it is as manifest, that the virtue and efficacy of it, is intended and designed by God for the use of believing sinners. Such blood as this washed, without doubt, for some weighty end, that some might be the better for it. Who they are for whom it is intended, is plain enough from Acts 13:39. "And by him all that believe, are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." That the remission of the sins of believers was the great thing designed in the pouring out of this precious blood of Christ, appears from all the sacrifices that figured it to the ancient church. The shedding of that typical blood, spoke a design of pardon. And the putting of their hands upon the head of the sacrifice, spoke the way and method of believing, by which that blood was then applied to them in that way; and is still applied to us in a more excellent way. Had no pardon been intended, no sacrifices had been appointed.

Moreover, let it be considered, this blood of the cross is the blood of a surety; that came under the same obligations with us, and in our name or stead shed it: and so of course frees and discharges the principal offender, or debtor, Hebrews 7:22. Can God exact satisfaction from the blood and death of his own Son, the surety of believers, and yet still demand it from believers? It cannot be. "Who (says the apostle) shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who shall condemn? It is Christ that died," Romans 8:33-34. And why are faith and repentance prescribed as the means of pardon? Why does God everywhere in his word, call upon sinners to repent, and believe in this blood? encouraging them so to do, by so many precious promises of remission; and declaring the inevitable and eternal ruin, of all impenitent, and unbelieving ones, who despise and reject this blood? What, I say, does all this speak, but the possibility of a pardon for the greatest of sinners; and the certainty of a free, full, and final pardon for all believing sinners? O what a joyful sound is this! What ravishing voices of peace, pardon, grace, and acceptance, come to our ears from the blood of the cross? The greatest guilt that ever was contracted upon a trembling, shaking conscience, can stand before the efficacy of the blood of Christ no more, than the sinner himself can stand before the justice of the Lord, with all that guilt upon him.

Reader, the word assures you, whatever you have been, or are, that sins of as deep a dye as your, have been washed away in this blood. "I was a blasphemer, a persecutor, injurious; but I obtained mercy," says Paul, 1 Timothy 1:13. But it may be you will object; this was a rare and singular instance, as it is a great question whether any other sinner shall find the like grace that he did. No question of it at all, if you believe in Christ as he did; for he tells us, 1 Timothy 1:16. "For this cause I obtained mercy that in me first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." So that upon the same grounds he obtained mercy, you may obtain it also.

Those very men who had a hand in the shedding of Christ's blood, had the benefit of that blood afterwards pardoning them, Acts 2:36. There is nothing but unbelief and impenitence of heart can bar your soul from the blessings of this blood.

INFERENCE. 2. Did Christ die the cursed death of the cross for believers, then though there be much of pain, there is nothing of curse in the death of the saints. It still wears its dart, by which it strikes; but has lost its sting, by which it hurts and destroys. A serpent that has no sting, may hiss and affright, but we may take him in our hand, without danger. Death poured out all its poison, and

lost its sting in Christ's side, when he became a curse for us. But what speak I of the innocence and harmlessness of death to believers? It is certainly their friend and great benefactor. As there is no curse, so there are many blessings in it. "Death is yours," 1 Corinthians 3:22. Yours as a special privilege and favor. Christ has not only conquered it, but is more than a conqueror; for he has made it beneficial, and very serviceable to the saints. When Christ was nailed to the tree, then he said as it were to death, which came to grapple with him there, "Death, I will be your plague; O grave, I will be your destruction:" and so he was; for he swallowed up death in victory, spoiled it of its power. So that, though it may now affright some weak believers, yet cannot hurt them at all.

INFERENCE. 3. If Christ died the cursed death of the cross for us, how cheerfully should we submit to, and bear any cross for Jesus Christ? He had his cross, and we have ours; but what feathers are ours compared with his? His cross was a heavy cross indeed, yet how patiently and meekly did he support it! "he endured his cross," we cannot endure or bear ours, though they be not to be named with his. Three things would marvelously strengthen us to bear the cross of Christ, and bring up a good report upon it in the world.

First, That we shall carry it but a little way. Secondly, Christ bears the heaviest end of it. Thirdly, Innumerable blessings and mercies grow upon the cross of Christ.

First, We shall bear it but a little way. It should be enough to me (says a holy one) that Christ will have joy and sorrow halfers of the life of the saints. And that each of them should have a share of our days, as the night and day are kindly partners of time, and take it up between them. But if sorrow be the greediest halfer of our days here, I know joy's day shall dawn, and do more than recompense all our sad hours.

Let my Lord Jesus, (since he will do so) weave my bit-and-span length of time with white and black; well and woe. - Let the rose be neighbor with the thorn. - "When we are over the water, Christ shall cry, down crosses, and up heaven for evermore; down hell, and down death, and down sin, and down sorrow; and up glory, up life, up joy for evermore. It is true, Christ and his cross are not separable in this life; howbeit Christ and his cross part at heaven's door: for there is no house room for crosses in heaven. One tear, one sigh, one sad heart, one fear, one loss, one thought of trouble cannot find lodging there." - Sorrow and the saints are not married together! or suppose it was so, heaven shall make a divorce. Life is but short, and therefore crosses cannot be long. Our sufferings are but for a while, 1 Peter 5:10. They are but the sufferings of the present time, Romans 8:18.

Secondly, As we shall carry the cross of Christ but a little way, so Christ himself bears the heaviest end of it. And as one happily expresses, he says of their crosses, half mine. He divideth sufferings with them, and takes the largest share to himself. "O how sweet a sight (says one sweetly) is it to see a cross between Christ and us. To hear our Redeemer say, at every sigh, at every blow, and eatery loss of a believer, half mine. For they are called the sufferings of Christ, and the reproach of Christ, Col. 2:24. Hebrews 11:26. As when two are partners or owners of a ship, half of the gain, and half of the loss, belongs to either of the two. So Christ in our sufferings, is half gainer, and half loser, with us: yes, the heaviest end of the black tree lies on your Lord. It falls first upon him, and but rebounds from him upon you:" "The reproaches of them that reproached you, are fallen upon me," Psalms 69:9. Nay, so speak as the thing is, Christ does not only bear half, or the better part, but the whole of our cross and burden. Yes, he bears all, and more than all; for he bears us and

our burden too, or else we would quickly sink, and faint under it.

Thirdly, As we have not far to carry it, and Christ carries the heaviest part; yes, all the burden for us; yes, us and our burden too; so, in the last place, it is reviving to think what an innumerable multitude of blessings and mercies are the fruit and offspring of a sanctified cross. Since that tree was so richly watered with the blood of Christ; what store of choice, and rich fruits does it bear to believers? Our sufferings (says one) are washed in the blood of Christ, as well as our souls. "For Christ's merits bought a blessing to the crosses of the sons of God. Our troubles owe us a free passage through him. Devils, and men, and crosses, are our debtors; and death, and all storms are our debtors, to blow our poor tossed bark over the water freight free: and to set the travelers in their own known ground. Therefore we shall die, and yet live. - I know no man has a velvet cross, but the cross is made of what God will have it; but verily, howbeit, it be no warrentable market to buy a cross, yet I dare not say, O that I had liberty to sell Christ's cross, lest therewith also I should sell joy, comfort, sense of love, patience, and the kind visits of a bridegroom. I have but small experience of sufferings for Christ, but let my Judge and witness in heaven, lay my soul in the balance of justice; if I find not a young heaven, and a little paradise of glorious comforts, and soul-delighting love-kisses of Christ in suffering for him and his truth. - My prison is my palace, my sorrow is with child of joy; my losses are rich losses, my pain easy pain, my heavy days are holy days and happy days. I may tell a new tale of Christ to my friends. O what owe I to the file, and to the hammer, and to the furnace of my Lord Jesus! who has now let me see how good the wheat of Christ is, that goes through his mill, and his oven, to be made bread for his own table. Grace tried is better than grace, and more than grace. It is glory in its infancy."

"Who knows the truth of grace without a trial. - O how little gets Christ of us, but what he wins (to speak so) with much toil and pains? And how soon would faith freeze without a cross? Bear your cross therefore with joy."

INFERENCE. 4. Did Christ die the death, yes, the worst of deaths for us? Then it follows, that our mercies are brought forth with great difficulty; and that which is sweet to us in the fruition, was costly, and hard to Christ in the acquisition. Surely, upon every mercy we have this motto written, The price of Blood, Colossians 1:14. "In whom we have redemption through his blood:" Upon which a late neat writer delivers himself thus. "The way of grace is here considerable; life comes through death; God comes in Christ; and Christ comes in blood: the choicest mercies come through the greatest miseries; prime favors come swimming in blood to us. Through a red sea Israel came to Canaan. Many a man lost his life, and much blood shed; the very land flowing with milk and honey was first made to flow with blood, before Israel could inherit the promise. Seven nations were destroyed, before the land of Canaan was divided to the Israelites, Acts 13:19. - "Sin makes mercy so deadly hard to bring forth. To christen every precious child, every Benjamin Benoni, every son of God's right-hand, a son of sorrow and death to her that brings him forth. Adam's sweets had no bitter until he transgressed God's will: one mercy did not die to bring forth another, until he died. But oh! how should this raise the value of our mercies? What, the price of blood, the price of precious blood, the blood of the cross! O what an esteem should this raise!"

"Things (as the same ingenious author adds) are prized rather as they come, than as they are. Far fetched and dear bought makes all the price, and gives all the worth with us weak creatures. Upon this ground the scripture, when it speaks of our great fortune, tells the great price it cost, as eyeing

our weakness, who look more at what things cost, than at what they are. And as knowing if anything will take with us, this will, To him that loved us and washed us from sins in his own blood," Revelation 1:5.

"Man is a legal creature, and looks much at what is given for a thing. What did this cost? Why, it cost Christ’s own blood. Color is more than the cloth with us, and scarlet color is a general taking color with us: and therefore is Christ’s garment dipped in blood, and he admired in this habit. Who is this that comes from Edom, with garments dyed red from Bozra?"

Beware then you abuse not any of the mercies that Christ brought forth with so many bitter pangs and throes. And let all this endear Christ more than ever to you, and make you in a deep sense of his grace and love, to say, Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ!

S. The Nature and necessity of the Pries

The Nature and necessity of the Priesthood of Christ

"It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these." Hebrews 9:23

Salvation (as to the actual dispensation of it) is revealed by Christ as a Prophet, procured by him as a Priest, applied by him as a King. In vain it is revealed, if not purchased; in vain revealed and purchased, if not applied. How is it revealed, both to us, and in us, by our great Prophet, has been declared. And now, from the Prophetic office, we pass on to the priestly office of Jesus Christ, who as our Priest, purchased our salvation. In this office is contained the grand relief for a soul distressed by the guilt of sin. When all other reliefs have been essayed, it is the blood of this great sacrifice, sprinkled by faith upon the trembling conscience, that must cool, refresh, and sweetly compose and settle it. Now, seeing so great a weight hangs upon this office, the apostle industriously confirms and commends it in this epistle, and more especially in this ninth chapter; showing how it was figured to the world by the typical blood of the sacrifices, but infinitely excels them all: and as in many other most weighty respects, so principally in this, that the blood of these sacrifices did but purify the types or patterns of the heavenly things; but the blood of this sacrifice purified or consecrated the heavenly things themselves, signified by those types. The words read, contains an argument to prove the necessity of the offering up of Christ, the great sacrifice, drawn from the proportion between the types, and the things typified. If the sanctuary, mercy-seat, and all things pertaining to the service of the tabernacle, were to be consecrated by blood; those earthly, but sacred types, by the blood of bulls and lambs, etc. Much more the heavenly things shadowed by them, ought to be purified or consecrated by better blood than the blood of beasts. The blood consecrating these, should as much excel the blood that consecrated those, as the heavenly things themselves do, in their own nature, excel those earthly shadows of them. Look, what proportion there is between the type and anti-type, the like proportion also is between the blood that consecrates them; earthly things with common, heavenly things with the most excellent blood. So then, there are two things to be especially observed here: First, The nature of Christ's death and sufferings: It had the nature, use and end of a sacrifice, and of all the sacrifices the most excellent. Secondly, The necessity of his offering it up: it was necessary to correspond with all the types and prefiguration of it under the law: but especially it was necessary for the expiating of sin, the propitiating of a justly incensed God, and the opening, a way for reconciled ones to come to God in. The point I shall give you from it is, DOCTRINE. That the sacrifice of Christ, our High Priest, is most excellent in itself; and most necessary for us.

Sacrifices are of two sorts, eucharistical, or thank-offerings, in testification of homage, duty and service; and in token of gratitude for mercies freely received; and expiatory, for satisfaction to justice, and thereby the atoning and reconciling of God. Of this last kind was the sacrifice offered by Jesus Christ for us: to this office he was called by God, Hebrews 5:5. In it he was confirmed by the unchangeable oath of God, Psalms 110:4. for it, he was singularly qualified by his incarnation,

Hebrews 10:6-7. and all the ends of it he has fully answered, Hebrews 9:11-12. My present design is, from this scripture, to open the general nature and absolute necessity of the priesthood of Christ; showing what his priesthood implies in it, and how all this was indispensably necessary in order to our recovery from the deplorable state of sin and misery.

First then, we will consider what it supposes and implies; and then, wherein it consists. And there are six things which it either pre-supposes, or necessarily includes in it.

1. At first sights it supposes man's revolt and fall from God; and a dreadful breach made thereby between God and him, else no need of an atoning sacrifice. "If one died for all, then were at dead", 2 Corinthians 5:14. dead in law, under sentence to die, and that eternally. In all the sacrifices, from Adam to Christ, this was still preached to the world, that there was a fearful breach between God and man; and even so, that justice required our blood should be shed. And the fire flaming on the altar, which wholly burnt up the sacrifice, was a lively emblem of that fiery indignation that should devour the adversaries. But above all, when Christ, that true and great Sacrifice, was offered up to God, then was the fairest glass that ever was in the world, set before us, therein to see our sin and misery by the fall.

2. His priesthood, supposes the unalterable purpose of God to take vengeance for sin; he will not let it pass. I will not determine what God could do in this case, by his absolute power; but I think it is generally yielded, that, by his ordinate power, he could do no less than punish it in the person of the sinner, or of his surety.

Those that contend for such a forgiveness, as is an act of charity, like that whereby private persons forgive one another, must at once suppose God to part with his right, and also render the satisfaction of Christ altogether useless, as to the procurement of forgiveness; yes, rather an obstacle, than a means to it. Surely, the nature and truth of God oblige him to punish sin. "He is of purer eyes than to look upon iniquity," Hebrews 1:13. And beside, the word is gone out of his mouths that the sinner shall die.

3. The priesthood of Christ pre-supposes the utter impotency of men to appease God, and, recover his favor by anything he could do or suffer. Surely God would not come down to assume a body to die, and be offered up for us, if at any cheaper rate it could have been accomplished; there was no other way to recover man and satisfy God. Those that deny the satisfaction of Christ, and talk of his dying to confirm the truth, and give us an example of meekness, patience, and self-denial, affirming these to be the sole ends of his death, do not only therein root up the foundations of their own comfort, peace and pardon, but most boldly impeach and tax the infinite wisdom. God could have done all this at a cheaper rate: the sufferings of a mere creature are able to attain these ends: the deaths of the martyrs did it. But who by dying can satisfy and reconcile God? what creature can bring him an adequate and proportionable value for sin? yes, for all the sin that ever was, or shall be transmitted to the natures, or committed by the persons, of all God's elect, from Adam, to the last that shall be found alive at the Lord's coming? surely, none but Christ can do this.

4. Christ's priesthood implies the necessity of his being God- man. It was necessary he should be a man, in order to his passion, compassion, and derivation of his righteousness and holiness to men. Had he not been a man, he had had no sacrifice to offer, no soul or body to suffer in. The

Godhead is immortal, and above all those sufferings and miseries Christ felt for us. Besides, his being man, fills him with compassion, and tender sense of our miseries: this makes him a merciful and faithful High priest, Hebrews 4:15. and not only fits him to pity, but to sanctify us also; for "he that sanctifies, and they that are sanctified, are both of one," Hebrews 2:11; Hebrews 2:14; Hebrews 2:17. And as necessary it was our High-priest should be God, since the value and efficacy of our sacrifice results from thence.

5. The priesthood of Christ implies the extremity of his sufferings. In sacrifices, you know, there was a destruction, a kind of annihilation of the creature to the glory of God. The shedding of the creature's blood, and burning its flesh with fire, was but an umbrage, or faint resemblance of what Christ endured, when he made his soul an offering for sin. And lastly, It implies the gracious design of God to reconcile us at a dear rate to himself in that he called and confirmed Christ in his priesthood by an oath, and thereby laid out a sacrifice, of infinite value, for the world. Sins, for which no sacrifice is allowed, are desperate sins, and the case of such sinners is helpless: But if God allow, yes, and provide a sacrifice himself, how plainly does it speak his intentions of peace and mercy? These things are manifestly presupposed, or implied in Christ's priesthood.

"This priesthood of Christ is that function, wherein he comes before God, in our name and place, to fulfill the law, and offer up himself to him a sacrifice of reconciliation for our sins; and by his intercession to continue and apply the purchase of his blood to them for whom he shed it:" All this is contained in that famous scripture, Hebrews 10:7-13. Or, more briefly, the priesthood of Christ is that whereby he expiated the sins of men, and obtained the favor of God for them, Colossians 1:20; Colossians 1:22. Romans 5:10. But because I shall insist more largely upon the several parts and fruits of this office, it shall here suffice to speak this much as to its general nature; which was the first thing proposed for explication.

Secondly, The necessity of Christ's priesthood comes next to be opened. Touching which, I affirm, according to the scriptures, it was necessary, in order to our salvation, that such a Priest should, by such a sacrifice, appear before God for us. The truth of this assertion will be cleared by these two principles, which are evident in the scripture, namely, That God stood upon full satisfaction, and would not remit one sin without it: and that fallen man is totally incapable of tendering him any such satisfaction; therefore Christ, who only can, must do it, or we perish.

1. God stood upon full satisfaction, and could not remit one sin without it. This will be cleared from the nature of sin; and from the veracity and wisdom of God.

(1.) From the nature of sin, which deserves that the sinner should suffer for it. Penal evil; in a course of justice, follows moral evil. Sin and sorrow ought to go together; between these is a necessary connection, Romans 6:13. "The wages of sin is death."

(2.) The veracity of God requires it. The word is gone out of his mouth; Genesis 2:17. "in the day that you eat thereof, you shall surely die." From that time he was instantly and certainly obnoxious and liable to the death of soul and body. The law pronounces him cursed, "that continues not in all things that are written therein to do them," Galatians 3:9. Now, though man's threatening are often vain and insignificant things, yet God's shall surely take place; "not one little of the law shall fail, until all be fulfilled," Matthew 5:18. God will be true in his threatening, though thousands and millions perish.

(3.) The wisdom of God, by which he governs the rational world, admits not of a dispensation or relaxation of the threatenings without satisfaction: for, as good no king, as no laws for government; as good no law, as no penalty; and as good no penalty, as no execution. To this purpose one well observes; "It is altogether indecent, especially to the wisdom and righteousness of God, that that which provokes the execution, should procure the abrogation of his law; that that should supplant and undermine the law, for the alone preventing whereof the law was before established." How could it be expected, that men should fear and tremble before God, when they should find themselves more scared than hurt by his threats against sin! So then God stood upon satisfaction, and would admit no treaty of peace, on any other ground.

Object. Let none here object, that reconciliation upon this only score of satisfaction, is derogatory to the riches of grace; or that we allow not God what we do men, namely, to forgive an injury freely, without satisfaction.

Sol. Free forgiveness to us, and full satisfaction made to God by Jesus Christ for us, are not "asurata", things inconsistent with each other, as in its proper place shall be more fully cleared to you. And for denying that to God which we allow to men, you must know, that man and man stand on even ground: man is not capable of being wronged and injured by man, as God is by man, there is no comparison between the nature of the offences. To conclude, man only can freely forgive man; in a private capacity, so far as wrong concerns himself; but ought not to do so in a public capacity, as he is judge, and bound to execute justice impartially. God is our Law-giver and Judge: he will not dispense with violations of the law, but strictly stands upon complete satisfaction.

2. Man can render to God no satisfaction of his own, for the wrong done by his sin. He finds no way to compensate and make God amends, either by doing, or by suffering his will.

(1.) Not by doing: this way is shut up to all the world; none can satisfy God, or reconcile himself to him this way; for it is evident our best works are sinful; "All our righteousness is as filthy rags," Isaiah 64:6. And it is strange any should imagine, that one sin should make satisfaction for another. If it be said, not what is sinful in our duties, but what is spiritual, pure and good, may ingratiate us with God? it is at hand to reply, that what is good in any of our duties, is a debt we owe to God, yes, we owe him perfect obedience; and it is not imaginable how we should pay one debt by another; quit a former by contracting a new engagement. If we do anything that is good, we are be holden to grace for it, John 15:5. 2 Corinthians 3:5. 1 Corinthians 15:10. In a word, those that have had as much to plead on that score as any now living, have left, and utterly given up all hopes of appeasing and satisfying the justice of God, that way. It is like, holy Job feared God, and eschewed evil as much as any of you; yet he says, Job 9:20-21. "If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me; if I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse. Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul; I would despise my life." It may be David was a man as much after the heart of God as you; yet he said, Psalms 143:2. "Enter not into judgement with your servant; for in your sight shall no man be justified." It is like Paul lived as holy, heavenly, and fruitful a life as the best of you, and far, far beyond you; yet he says, 1 Corinthians 4:4. "I know (or am conscious to myself) of nothing, yet am I not hereby justified." His sincerity might comfort him, but could not justly him. And what need I say more? The Lord has shut up this way to all the world; and the scriptures speak it roundly and plainly: Romans 3:20. " Therefore, by the deeds of the law,

there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." Compare Galatians 3:21. Romans 8:3.

(2.) And as man can never reconcile himself to God by doing, so neither by suffering: that is equally impossible; for no sufferings can satisfy God, but such as are proportionable to the offence we suffer for. And if so, an infinite suffering must be borne: I say infinite, for sin is an infinite evil, objectively considered, as it wrongs an infinite God. Now sufferings may be said to be infinite, either in respect of their height, exceeding all bounds and limits; the letting out of the wrath and fury of an infinite God: or in respect of duration, being endless and everlasting. In the first sense, no creature can bear an infinite wrath, it would swallow us up. In the second, it may be borne as the damned do; but then, ever to be suffering, is never to have satisfied. So that no man can be his own priest, to reconcile himself to God by what he can do or suffer. And therefore, one that is able by doing and suffering, to reconcile him, must undertake it, or we perish. Thus you see plainly and briefly the general nature and necessity of Christ's priesthood. From both these, several useful corollaries, or practical deductions, offer themselves.

Corollary 1. This shows, in the first place, the incomparable excellency of the reformed Christian religion above all other religions, known to, or professed in the world. What other religions seek, the Christian religion only finds, even a solid foundation for true peace and settlement of conscience. While the Jews seek it in vain in the law, the Mohammedan in his external and ridiculous observances; the Papist in his own merits; the believer only finds it in the blood of this great Sacrifice; this, and nothing less than this, can pacify a distressed conscience, laboring under the weight of its own guilt. Conscience demands no less to satisfy it, than God demands to satisfy him. The grand inquest of conscience is, is God satisfied? If he be satisfied, I am satisfied. Woeful is the state of that man, that feels the worm of conscience nibbling on the most tender part of the soul, and has no relief against it; that feels the intolerable scalding wrath of God burning within, and has nothing to cool it. Hear me, you that slight the troubles of conscience, that call them fancies and melancholy whimsies; if you ever had had but one sick night for sin, if you had ever felt that shame, fears horror, and despair, which are the dismal effects of an accusing and condemning conscience, you would account it an unspeakable mercy to hear of a way for the discharge of a poor sinner from that guilt: you would kiss the feet of that messenger that could bring you tidings of peace; you would call him blessed, that should direct you to an effectual remedy. Now, whoever you are, that finest away in your iniquities, that droop from day to day under the present wounds, the dismal presages of conscience, know that your soul and peace can never meet, until you are persuaded to come to this blood of sprinkling. The blood of this sacrifice speaks better things than the blood of Abel. The blood of this sacrifice is the blood of God, Acts 20:2-7. Invaluably precious blood, 1 Peter 1:18. One drop of it infinitely excels the blood of all mere creatures, Hebrews 10:4-6. Such is the blood that must do you good. Lord, I must have such blood (says conscience) as is capable of giving you full satisfaction, or it can give me no peace. The blood of all the cattle upon a thousand hills cannot do this. What is the blood of beasts to God? the blood of all the men in the world can do nothing in this case. What is our polluted blood worth? No, no, it is the blood of God, that must satisfy both you and me.

Yes, Christ's blood is not only the blood of God, but it is blood shed in your stead, and in your place and room, Galatians 3:13. "He was made a curse for us." And so it becomes sin-pardoning blood, Hebrews 9:22. Ephesians 1:7. Colossians 1:14. Romans 3:26. And consequently, conscience-pacifying, and soul quieting blood, Colossians 1:20. Ephesians 2:13-14. Romans 3:26.

O bless God, that ever the news of this blood came to your ears. With hands and eyes lifted up to heaven, admire that grace that cast your lot in a place where this joyful sound rings in the ears of poor sinners. What had your case been, if your mother had brought you forth in the deserts of Arabia, or in the wastes of America! Or that if you have been nursed up by a popish father, who could have told you of no other remedy when in distress for sin, but to go such a pilgrimage, to whip and lash yourself, to satisfy an angry God! Surely the pure light of the gospel shining upon this generation, is a mercy never to be duly valued, never to be enough prized.

Corollary 2. Hence also be inferred of the necessity of faith, in order to a state and sense of peace with God: for to what purpose is the blood of Christ our sacrifice shed, unless it be actually and personally applied, and appropriated by faith? You know when the sacrifices under the law were brought to be slain, he that brought it was to put his hand upon the head of the sacrifice, and so it was accepted for him, to make an atonement, Leviticus 1:4. not only to signify, that how it was no more his, but God's, the property being transferred by a kind of manumission; nor yet that he voluntarily gave it to the Lord as his own free act; but principally it noted the putting off his sins, and the penalty due to him for them, upon the head of the sacrifice: and so it implied in it an execration, as if he had said, upon your head be the evil. So the learned observe; the ancient Egyptians were accustomed expressly to imprecate, when they sacrificed; if any evil be coming upon us or upon Egypt, let it turn and rest upon this head, laying their hand, at these words, on the sacrifice's head. And upon that ground, says the Historian, none of them would eat of the head of any living creature. You must also lay the hand of faith upon Christ your sacrifice, not to imprecate, but apply and appropriate his to your own souls, he having been made a curse for you. To this the whole gospel tends, even to persuade sinners to apply Christ, and his blood to their own souls. To this he invited us, Matthew 11:28. "Come unto me all you that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." For this end our sacrifice was lifted up upon the altar; John 3:14-15. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The effects of the law, not only upon the conscience, filling it with torments, but upon the whole person, bringing death upon it, are here shadowed out by the stingings of fiery serpents; and Christ by the brazen serpent which Moses exalted for the Israelites, that were stung, to look unto. And as by looking to it they were healed; so by believing, or looking to Christ in faith, our souls are healed. Those that looked not to the brazen serpent, died infallibly; so must all that look not to Jesus, our sacrifice, by faith. It is true, the death of Christ is the meritorious cause of remission, but faith is the instrumental applying cause; and as Christ's blood is necessary in its place, so is our faith in its place also. For to the actual remission of sin, and peace of conscience, there must be a cooperation of all the causes of remission and peace. As there is the grace and love of God for an efficient and impulsive cause, and the death of Christ our sacrifice, the meritorious cause; so of necessity there must be faith, the instrumental cause. And these con-causes do all sweetly meet in their influences, and activities, in our remission, and tranquility of conscience; and they are all (suo genare) in their kind and place absolutely necessary to the procuring and applying of it.

What is the need that the blood of Christ is shed, if I have no interest in it, no saving influences from it? O be convinced, this is the end, the business of life. Faith is the Phoenix-grace, as Christ is the Phoenix-mercy. He is the gift, John 4:10. And this is "the work of God," John 6:29. The death of Christ, the offers and tenders of Christ, never saved one soul in themselves, without believing

application. But, woe is me! how do I see sinners, either not at all touched with the sense of sin, and so being whole, need not the physician; or if any be stung and wounded with guilt, how do they lick themselves whole with their own duties and reformations! As physicians say of wounds, let them be kept clean, and nature will find balsam of its own to heal them: If it be so in spiritual wounds, what need Christ to have left the Father's bosom, and come down to die in the quality and nature of a sacrifice for us? O if men can but have health, pleasure, riches, honors, and any way make a shift to still a brawling conscience, that it may not check or interrupt them in these enjoyments, Christ may go where he will for them. And I am assured, until God show you the face of sin, in the glass of the law, make the scorpions and fiery serpents, that lurk in the law, and in your own consciences, to come hissing about you, and smiting you with their deadly stings, until you have had some sick nights, and sorrowful days for sin, you will never go up and down seeking an interest in the blood of his sacrifice with tears.

But, reader, if ever this be your condition, then will you know the worth of a Christ; then will you have a value for the blood of sprinkling. As I remember it is storied of our crook-backed Richard, when he was put to a rout in a field-battle, and flying on foot from his pursuing enemies; he cried out, O now says he, a kingdom for a horse. So will you cry, A kingdom for a Christ; ten thousand worlds now, if I had them, for the blood of sprinkling.

Corollary 3. Is Christ your High-priest, and is his priesthood so indispensably necessary to our salvation? Then, freely acknowledge your utter impotency to reconcile yourselves to God by anything you can do, or suffer; and let Christ have the whole glory of your recovery ascribed to him. It is highly reasonable that he that laid down the whole price, should have the whole praise. If any man think, or say, he could have made an atonement for himself, he does therein cast no light reproach upon that profound wisdom which laid the design of our redemption in the death of Christ. But of this I have spoken elsewhere. And therefore,

Corollary 4. In the last place, I rather choose to persuade you to see your necessity of this priest, and his most excellent sacrifice; and accordingly to make use of it. The best of you have polluted natures, poisoned in the womb with sin; those natures have need of this sacrifice, they must have the benefit of this blood to pardon and cleanse them, or be eternally damned. Hear me, you that never spent a tear for the sin of nature, if the blood of Christ be not sprinkled upon your natures, it had been better for you, that you had been the generation of beasts, the offspring of dragons or toads. They have a contemptible, but not a vitiated sinful nature, as you have. Your actual sins have need of the priest, and his sacrifice, to procure remission for them. If he take them not away by the blood of his cross, they can never be taken away, they will lie down with you in the dust; they will rise with you and follow you to the judgement seat, crying, We are your works, and we will follow you. All your repentance and tears, could you weep as many as there be drops in the ocean, can never take away sin. Your duties, even the best of them, need this sacrifice. It is in the virtue thereof that they are accepted of God. And were it not that God had respect to Christ's offering, he would not regard, or look towards you, or any of your duties. You could no more come near to God, than you could approach a devouring fire, or dwell with everlasting burnings.

Well then, say, I need such a price every way. Love him in all his offices. See the goodness of God in providing such a sacrifice for you. Meat, drink, and air, are not more necessary to maintain your natural life, than the death of Christ is to give and maintain your spiritual life.

O then, let your soul grow big while meditating of the usefulness and excellency of Christ, which is thus displayed and unfolded in every branch of the gospel. And, with a deep sense upon your heart, let your lips say, Blessed be God, for Jesus Christ!

S. The Nature of Christ's Mediation.

The Nature of Christ’s Mediation "There is one Mediator between God and Man, the man Christ Jesus." 1 Timothy 2:5

Great and long preparations bespeak the solemnity and greatness of the work for which they are designed; A man that had but seen the heaps of gold, silver and brass, which David amassed in his time, for the building of the temple, might easily conclude before one stone of it was laid, that it would be a magnificent structure. But lo, here is a design of God as far transcending that, as the substance does the shadow. For, in deed, that glorious temple was but the type and figure of Jesus Christ, John 2:19; John 2:21, and a weak adumbration of that living, spiritual temple which he was to build, cementing the lively stones thereof together with his own blood, 1 Peter 2:5-6. that the great God might dwell and walk in it, 2 Corinthians 6:16. The preparations for that temple were but of few years, but the consultations and preparations for this were from eternity, Proverbs 8:31. And as there were preparations for this work (which Christ dispatched in a few years) before the world began; so it will be matter of eternal admiration and praise, when this world shall be dissolved. What this astonishing glorious work is, this text will inform your as to the general nature of it: it is the work of mediation between God and man, managed by the sole hand of the man Christ Jesus. In this scripture (for I shall not spend time to examine the words in their context) you have a description of Jesus the Mediator: and he is here described four ways, namely, by his work or office, a Mediator; by the singularity of his mediation, one Mediator; and by the nature and quality of his person, employed in this singular way of mediation, the man; and lastly, his name Jesus Christ.

1. He is described by the work, or office he is employed as a Mediator, a middle person. So the word imports a fit, indifferent, and equal person, that comes between two persons that are at variance, to compose the difference and make peace. Such a middle, equal, indifferent person is Christ; a day’s man, to lay his hand upon both; to arbitrate and award justly and give God his due, and that without ruin to poor man.

2. He is described by the singularity of his mediation, one Mediator, and but one. Though there be many mediators of reconciliation among men, and many intercessors in a petitionary way, between God and man; yet but one only mediator of reconciliation between God and man: and it is as needless and impious to make more mediators than one, as to make more Gods than one. There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men.

He is described by the nature and quality of his person—the man Christ Jesus. This description of him by one nature, and that the human nature also (wherein, as you shall see anon, the Lord especially consulted our encouragement and comfort); I say, his being so described to us, has, through the corruption of men, been improved to the great dishonor of Jesus Christ, both by the Arians and Papists. The former took occasion from hence to affirm, that he was but—a mere man. The latter allow him to be the true God, but on this weak ground affirm, that he performed not the work of mediation as God, but only as man. Thus what the Spirit ordered for our comfort, is

wickedly retorted to Christ's dishonor; for I doubt not but he is described by his human nature in this place; not only because in this nature he paid that ransom (which he speaks of in the words immediately following) but especially for the drawing of sinners to him; seeing he is the man Christ Jesus, one that clothed himself in their own flesh; and to encourage the faith of believers, that he tenderly rewards all their wants and miseries, and that they may safely trust him with all their concerns, as one that will carefully mind them as his own, and will be for them a merciful and faithful High Priest, in things pertaining to God.

4. He is described by his names; by his appellative name Christ, and his proper name Jesus. The name Jesus, notes his work about which he came; and Christ, the offices to which he was anointed; and in the execution of which he is our Jesus. "In the name Jesus, the whole gospel is contained, it is the light, the food, the medicine of the soul," as one speaks. The note from hence is, DOCTRINE. That Jesus Christ is the true and only Mediator between God and men.

"You are come to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant," Hebrews 12:24. "And for this cause he is the Mediator of the New Testament," etc. Hebrews 9:14. I might show you a whole vein of scriptures running this way; but to keep a profitable and clear method, I shall show, First, What is the sense of this word "Mediator".

Secondly, What it implies, as it is applied to Christ.

Thirdly, How it appears that he is the true and only Mediator between God and men.

Fourthly, In what capacity he performed his mediatory work.

First, What is the sense and import of this word—Mediator? The true sense and importance of it, is a middle Person, or one that interposes between two parties at variance, to make peace between them. So that as Satan is a medium of discord; so Christ is a medium of concord and peace. And he is such a Mediator, both in respect of his person and office; in respect of his person, he is a Mediator, That is, one that has the same nature both with God and us, true God, and true man; and in respect of his Office or work, which is to interpose, to transact the business of reconciliation between us and God. The former some call his substantial, the latter his energetical, or operative mediation: Though I rather conceive that which is called his substantial mediation, is but the aptitude of his person to execute the mediatorial function; and that it does not constitute two kinds of mediation. His being a middle person, fits and capacitates him to stand in the midst between God and us. This, I say, is the proper sense of the word; though "Mesites", a Mediator, is rendered variously; sometimes an umpire or arbitrator; sometimes a messenger that goes between two persons; sometimes an interpreter, imparting the mind of one to another; sometimes a reconciler or peace-maker. And in all these senses Christ is the "Mesites", the middle person in his mediation of reconciliation or intercession; That is, either in his mediating, by suffering to make peace, as he did on earth; or to continue, and maintain peace, as he does in heaven, by meritorious intercession. Both these ways he is the only Mediator. And he manages this his mediation,

1. As an umpire or arbitrator; one that layeth his hands upon both parties, as Job speaks, Job 9:33 so does Christ, he layeth his hands (speaking after the manner of men) upon God, and says, Father, will you be at peace with them, and re admit them into your favor? If you will, you shall be fully satisfied for all that they have done against you. And then he layeth his hand upon man, and says, poor sinner, be not discouraged, you shall be justified and saved.

2. As a messenger or ambassador, so he came to impart the mind of God to us, and so he presents our desires to God; and in this sense only Socinus would allow Christ to be Mediator. But therein he endeavors to undermine the foundation, and to exclude him from being, Mediator by a suretyship; which is,

3. The third way of his mediation. So the apostle speaks, Hebrews 7:1-28 : he is the surety, or pledge. Which, as the learned David Pareus well expresses it, is one that engages to satisfy another, or gives caution or security by a pledge in the hand for it. And indeed, both these ways, Christ is our mediator by suretyship, namely, in a way of satisfaction, coming under our obligation to answer the law; this he did on the cross and in a way of caution, a surety for the peace, or good behavior. But to be more explicit and clear, I shall,

Secondly, In the next place enquire, what it implies and carries in it, for Christ to be a Mediator between God and us. And there are, mainly, these five things in it.

1. At the first sight, it carries in it a most dreadful breach and jar between God and men; else no need of a Mediator of reconciliation. There was indeed a sweet league of amity once between them, but it was quickly dissolved by sin; the wrath of the Lord was kindled against man, pursuing him to destruction, Psalms 5:5. " You hate all the workers of iniquity." And man was filled with unnatural enmity against his God, Romans 1:30.—haters of God; this put an end to all friendly commerce and fellowship between him and God. Reader, say not in your heart, that it is much, that one sin, and that seemingly so small, should make such a breach as this, and cause the God of mercy and goodness so to abhor the works of his hands, and that as soon as he had made man: for it was a heinous and aggravated evil. It was upright, perfect man, created in the image of God, that thus sinned: he sinned when his mind was most bright, clear and apprehensive; his conscience pure and active; his will free, and able to withstand any temptation: his conscience pure and undefiled; he was a public as well as a perfect man, and well knew that the happiness or misery of his numberless offspring was involved in him. The condition he was placed in, was exceeding happy: no necessity or want could arm and edge temptation: he lived amidst all natural and spiritual pleasures and delights, the Lord most delightfully conversing with him; yes, he sinned while as yet his creation-mercy was fresh upon him; and in this sin was most horrible ingratitude: yes, a casting off the yoke of obedience almost as soon as God had put it on. God now saw the work of his hands spoiled, a race of rebels now to be propagated, who, in their successive generations would be fighting against God: he saw it, and his just indignation sparkled against man, and resolves to pursue him to the bottom of hell.

2. It implies, a necessity of satisfaction and reparation to the justice of God. For the very design and end of this mediation was to make peace, by giving full satisfaction to the party that was wronged. The Photinians, and some others, have dreamed of a reconciliation with God, founded not upon satisfaction, but upon the absolute mercy, goodness, and free-will of God. "But concerning that absolute goodness and mercy of God, reconciling sinners to himself, there is a deep silence throughout the scriptures:" and whatever is spoken of it, upon that account, is as it works to us through Christ, Ephesians 1:3-5. Acts 4:12. John 6:40. And we cannot imagine, either how God could exercise mercy to the prejudice of his justice, which must be, if we must be reconciled without full satisfaction; or how such a full satisfaction should be made by any other than Christ. Mercy, indeed moved in the heart of God to poor man; but from his heart it found no

way to vent itself for us, but through the heart blood of Jesus Christ: and in him the justice of God was fully satisfied, and the misery of the creature fully cured. And so, as Augustine speaks, "God neither lost the severity of his justice in the goodness of mercy, nor the goodness of his mercy in the exactness of his severity." But if it had been possible God could have found out a way to reconcile us without satisfaction, yet it is past doubt now, that he has pitched and fixed on this way. And for any now to imagine to reconcile themselves to God by anything but faith in the blood of this mediator, is not only most vain in itself, and destructive to the soul, but most insolently derogatory to the wisdom and grace of God. And to such I would say, as Tertullian to Marcion, whom he calls the murderer of truth, "spare the only hope of the whole world, O you who destroy the most necessary glory of our faith!" All that we hope for is but a fantasy without this. Peace of conscience can be rationally settled on no other foundation but this; for God having made a law to govern man, and this law violated by man; either the penalty must be levied on the delinquent, or satisfaction made by his surety. As good no law, as no penalty for disobedience; and as good no penalty, as no execution. He therefore that will be made a mediator of reconciliation between God and man, must bring God a price in His hand, and that adequate to the offence and wrongs done him, else he will not treat about peace; and so did our Mediator.

3. Christ being a Mediator of reconciliation and intercession, implies the infinite value of his blood and sufferings, as that which in itself was sufficient to stop the course of God's justice, and render him not only placable, but abundantly satisfied and well pleased, even with those that before were enemies. And so much is said of it. Colossians 1:21-22. "And you that were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your minds by wicked works, yet now has he reconciled, in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy, and unblamable, and unreproveable in his sight." Surely, that which can cause the holy God, justly incensed against sinners, to lay aside all his wrath, and take an enemy into his bosom, and establish such an amity as can never more be broken, but to rest in his love, and to joy over him with singing, as it is, Zephaniah 3:17, this must be a most excellent and efficacious thing.

4. Christ's being a Mediator of reconciliation, implies the ardent love and large pity that filled his heart towards poor sinners. For he does not only mediate by way of entreaty, going between both, and persuading and begging peace; but he mediates, (as you have heard) in the capacity of a surety, by putting himself under an obligation to satisfy our debts. O how compassionately did his heart work towards us, that when he saw the arm of justice lifted up to destroy us, would interpose himself, and receive the stroke, though he knew it would smite him dead! Our Mediator, like Jonah his type, seeing the stormy sea of God's wrath working tempestuously, and ready to swallow us up, cast in himself to appease the storm. I remember how much that noble act of Marcus Curtius is celebrated in the Roman history, who being informed by the oracle, that the great breach made by the earthquake could not be closed, except something of worth were cast into it, heated with love to the commonwealth, he went and cast in himself. This was looked upon as a bold and brave adventure. But what was this to Christ?

5. Christ being a mediator between God and man, implies as the witness of his person, so his authoritative call to undertake it. And indeed the Father, who was the wronged person, called him to be the umpire and arbitrator, trusting his honor in his hands. Now Christ was invested with this office and power virtually, soon after the breach was made by Adam's fall; for we have the early promise of it, Genesis 3:15. Ever since, until his incarnation, he was a virtual and effectual

Mediator; and, on that account, he is called, "the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world," Revelation 13:8. And actually, from the time of his incarnation. But having discussed this more largely in a former discourse, I shall dismiss it here, and apply myself to the third thing proposed, which is,

Thirdly, How it appears that Jesus Christ is the true and only Mediator between God and men. I reply, it is manifest he is so,

1. Because he, and no other, is revealed to us by God. And if God reveal him, and no other, we must receive him, and no other as such. Take but two scriptures at present, that in 1 Corinthians 8:5. "The heathen have many gods, and many lords," That is, many great gods, supreme powers and ultimate objects of their worship; and lest these great gods should be defiled by their immediate and unhallowed approaches to them, they therefore invented heroes, demigods, intermediate powers, that they were as agents, or Lord mediators between the gods and them, to convey their prayers to the gods, and the blessings of the gods back again to them. "But unto us (says he) there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we by him," That is, one supreme essence, the first spring and fountain of blessings, and one Lord, That is, one Mediator, "by whom are all things, and we by him." By whom are all things which come from the Father to us, and by whom are all our addresses to the Father: So Acts 4:12. "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." No other name, That is, no other authority, or rather, no other person authorised under heaven, That is, the whole world: for heaven is not here opposed to earth, as though there were other intercessors in heaven besides Christ: no, no, in heaven and earth God has given him, and none but him, to be our Mediator. One sun is sufficient for the whole world; and one Mediator for all men in the world. So that the scriptures affirm this is he, and exclude all others.

2. Because he, and no other, is fit for, and capable of this office. Who but he that has the divine and human nature united in his single person, can be a fit day's-man to lay his hand upon both? Who but he that was God, could support under such sufferings, as were, by divine justice, exacted for satisfaction! Take person of the greatest spirit, and put him an hour in the case Christ was in, when he sweat blood in the garden, or uttered that heart-rending cry upon the cross, and he had melted under it as a moth.

3. Because he is alone sufficient to reconcile the world to God by his blood, without accessions from any other. The virtue of his blood reached back as far as Adam, and reaches forward to the end of the world; and will be as fresh, vigorous, and efficacious then, as the first moment it was shed. The sun makes day before it actually rises, and continues day sometimes after it is set: so do does Christ, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; so that he is the true and only Mediator between God and men: no other is revealed in scripture; no other is sufficient for it; no other needed beside him.

Fourthly, The last thing to be explained is, in what capacity he executed his mediatory work.

About which we affirm, according to scripture, that he performs that work as God-man, in both natures. Papists, in denying Christ to act as mediator, according to his divine nature, do at once spoil the whole mediation of Christ of all its efficacy, dignity and value, which arise from that nature, which they deny to co-operate, and exert its virtue in his active and passive obedience.

They say, the apostle, in my text, distinguishes the Mediator from God, in saying, "there is one God and one Mediator." We aptly reply, that the same Apostle distinguishes Christ from man, Galatians 1:1. "Not by man, but by Jesus Christ." Does it thence follow that Christ is not true man? Or that according to his divine nature only, he called Paul? But what need I stay my reader here; Had not Christ, as Mediator, power to lay down his life, and power to take it up again? John 10:17-18. Had he not, as Mediator, all power in heaven and earth to institute ordinances, and appoint officers? Matthew 28:18. To baptize men with the Holy Spirit and fire? Matthew 3:11. To keep those his Father gave him in this world? John 17:12. To raise up the saints again in the last day? John 6:54. Are these, with many more I might name, the effects of the mere human nature? Or, were they not performed by him as God-man? And besides, how could he, as Mediator, be the object of our faith, and religious adoration, if we are not to respect him as God-man? But I long now to be at the application of this: and the first inference from it, is this,

INFERENCE 1. That it is a dangerous thing to reject Jesus Christ the only Mediator between God and man. Alas! there is no other to interpose and screen you from the devouring fire, the everlasting burnings! O it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God! And into his hands you must needs fall, without an interest in the only Mediator. Which of us can dwell with devouring fire? Who can endure the everlasting burnings? Isaiah 33:14. You know how they singed and scorched the green tree, but what would they do to the dry tree? Luke 23:31. Indeed, if there were another plank to save after the shipwreck; any other way to be reconciled to God, besides Jesus the Mediator, somewhat might be said to excuse this folly; but you are shut up to the faith of Christ, as to your last remedy, Galatians 3:23. You are like starving beggars, that are come to the last door. O take heed of despising, or neglecting Christ! If so, there's none to intercede with God for you; the breach between him and you can never be composed. I remember, here, the words of Eli, to his profane sons, who caused men to abhor the offerings of the Lord, 1 Samuel 2:25. "If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him; but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?" The meaning is, common trespasses between men, the civil magistrate takes cognisance of it, and decides the controversy by his authority, so that there is an end of that strife; but if man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat or arbitrate in that case? Eli's sons had despised the Lord's sacrifices, which were sacred types of Christ, and the stated way that men had then to act faith on the Mediator in. Now, (says he) if a man thus sin against the Lord, by despising Christ shadowed out in that way, who shall entreat for him? What hope, what remedy remains?

I remember, it was the saying of Luther, and he spoke it with deep resentment—"I will have nothing to do with an absolute God," that is, with God without a Mediator. thus the devils have to do with God: but will you, in whose nature Christ is come, put yourselves into their state and case? God forbid!

INFERENCE 2. Hence also be informed, how great an evil it is to join any other Mediators, either of reconciliation, or meritorious intercession with Jesus Christ. O this is a horrid sin, and that which both pours the greatest contempt upon Christ, and brings the surest and sorest destruction upon the sinner! I am ashamed my pen should English what mine eyes have seen in the writings of Papists, ascribing as much, yes, more to the mediation of Mary than to Christ, with no less than blasphemous impudence, thus commenting upon scripture: "What is that which the Lord says, I have trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there was no man with me? true Lord, there was

no man with you, but there was a woman with you, who received all these wounds in her heart which you received in your body." I will not blot my paper with more of this, but refer the learned reader as under, where he may (if he have a mind to see more) be informed not only what blasphemy has dropped from single pens, but even from councils, to the reproach of Jesus Christ, and his blood.

How do they stamp their own sordid works with the peculiar dignity and value of Christ's blood; and therein seek to enter at the gate which God has shut to all the worlds because Jesus Christ the prince entered in thereby, Ezekiel 44:2-3. He entered into heaven in a direct immediate way, even in his own name, and for his own sake; this gate, says the Lord, shall be shut to all others; and I wish men would consider it, and fear, lest while they seek entrance into heaven at the wrong door, they do not forever shut against themselves, the true and only door of happiness.

INFERENCE. 3. If Jesus Christ be the only Mediator of reconciliation between God and men; then reconciled souls should thankfully ascribe all the peace, favors, and comforts they have from God, to their Lord Jesus Christ. Whenever you have had free admission, and sweet entertainment with God in the more public ordinances, or private duties of his worship; when you have had his smiles, his seals, and with hearts warmed with comfort, are returning from those duties, say, O my soul, you may thank your good Lord Jesus Christ for all this! had not he interposed as a Mediator of reconciliation, I could never have had access to, or friendly communion with God to all eternity.

Immediately upon Adam's sin, the door of communion with God was locked, yes, chained up, and no more coming near the Lord: not a soul could have any access to him, either in a way of communion in this world, or of enjoyment in that to come. It was Jesus the Mediator that opened that door again, and in him it is that we have boldness, and access with confidence, Ephesians 3:12. "We can now come to God by a new and living way, consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh," Hebrews 10:20. The veil had a double use, as Christ's flesh answerable has: it hid the glory of the Sanctum Sanctorum, and also gave entrance into it. Christ's incarnation rebates the edge of the divine glory and brightness, that we may be able to bear it and converse with it; and it gives admission into it also. O thank your dear Lord Jesus for your present and future heaven! these are mercies which daily emerge out of the ocean of Christ's blood, and come swimming in it to our doors. Blessed be God for Jesus Christ!

INFERENCE. 4. If Jesus Christ is the true and only Mediator, both of reconciliation and meritorious intercession between God and men, how safe and secure then is the condition and state of believers? Surely, as his mediation, by sufferings, has fully reconciled, so his mediation, by intercession, will everlastingly maintain that state of peace between them and God, and prevent all future breaches. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ," Romans 5:1. It is a firm and lasting peace, and the Mediator that made it, is now in heaven to maintain it forever, and prevent new jars, Hebrews 9:24. "There to appear in the presence of God for us;" according to the custom of princes and states, who, being confederated, have their agents residing in each others courts, who upon all occasions appear in the presence of the prince, in the name and behalf of those whom they represent, and negotiate for. And here it is proper to reflect upon the profound and incomprehensible wisdom of God, who has made an advantage to us, even out of our sin and misery. Come, see and adore the wisdom of our God, that has so improved, reduced, and disposed the fall of Adam, as to make a singular advantage thereby to

advance his offspring to a better state! It was truly said by one of the ancients upon this account, "That Job was a happier man on the ash-heap, than Adam was in paradise". His holiness indeed was perfect, his happiness was great: but neither of them permanent and indefeasible, as our happiness by the Mediator is. So that, in the same sense some divines call Judas's treasons—a happy wickedness: we may call Adam's fall—a happy fall, because ordered and over-ruled by the wisdom of God, to such an advantage for us. And to that purpose Austin somewhere sweetly speaks, "O how happily did I fall in Adam, who rose again more happy in Christ!" Thus did the Lord turn a poison into an antidote, thus did that dreadful fall make way for a more blessed and fixed state. Now are we so confirmed, fixed, and established in Christ, by the favor of God, that there can be no more such fatal breaches, and dreadful jars between God and his reconciled ones forever. The bone that is well set, is stronger where it is knit, than it was before. blessed be God for Jesus Christ!

INFERENCE. 5. Did Jesus Christ interpose between us and the wrath of God, as a Mediator of reconciliation? did he rather chose to receive the stroke upon himself, than to see us ruined by it? How well then does it become the people of God, in a thankful sense of this grace, to interpose themselves between Jesus Christ and the evils they see like to fall upon his name and interest in the world? O that there were but SUCH a heart in the people of God! I remember it is a saving of Jerome, when he heard the revilings and blaspheming of many against Christ, and his precious truths, "O (said he) that they would turn their weapons from Christ to me, and be satisfied with my blood!" And much to the same sense is that sweet one of Bernard, "Happy were I, if God would vouchsafe to use me as a shield." And David could say, "The reproaches of them that reproached you, fell on me, Psalms 69:9. Ten thousand of our names are nothing to Christ's name: his name is "kalon onoma", a worthy name; and no man that gives up his name as a shield to Christ, but shall thereby secure and increase the true honor of it. And though wicked men, for the present may bespatter them, yet Jesus Christ will take it out of the dirt, (as one speaks), wipe it clean, and give it us again. Oh, it is the least one can do, to interpose ourselves and all that is dear to us, between Christ and the wrath of men, when he (as you hear) interposed himself between you and the eternal wrath of God!

Chapter 149

S. The Necessity of Christ's Humiliation

The Necessity of Christ’s Humiliation, in order to the Execution of all these his blessed Offices for us; and particularly of his Humiliation by Incarnation

"And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross." Php 2:8

You have heard how Christ was invested with the offices of prophet, priest, and king, for the carrying on the blesses design of our redemption; the execution of these offices necessarily required that he should be both deeply abased, and highly exalted. He cannot as our Priest, offer up himself a sacrifice to God for us, except he be humbled, and humbled to death. He cannot, as a King, powerfully apply the virtue of that his sacrifice, except he be exalted, yes, highly exalted. Had he not stooped to the low estate of a man, he had not, as a Priest, had a sacrifice of his own to offer; as a Prophet, he had not been fit to teach us the will of God, so as that we should be able to bear it; as a King, he had not been a suitable head to the church: and, had he not been highly exalted, that sacrifice had not been carried within the veil before the Lord. Those discoveries of God could not have been universal, effectual and abiding. The government of Christ could not have secured, protected, and defended the subjects of his kingdom. The infinite wisdom prospecting all this, ordered that Christ should first be deeply humbled, then highly exalted: both which states of Christ are presented to us by the apostle in this context.

He that intends to build high, lays the foundation deep and low. Christ must have a distinct glory in heaven, transcending that of angels and men, (for the saints will know him from all others by his glory, as the sun is known from the lesser stars.) And, as he must be exalted infinitely above them, so he must first, in order thereunto, be humbled and abased as much below them: "His form was marred more than any man’s; and his visage more than the sons of men." The ground colors are a deep sable, which afterwards are laid on with all the splendor and glory of heaven.

Method requires that we first speak to this state of Humiliation.

And, to that purpose, I have read this scripture to you, which presents you the Son under an (almost) total eclipse. He that was beautiful and glorious, Isaiah 4:2. yes, glorious as the only begotten of the Father, John 1:14. yes, the glory, James 2:1. yes, the splendor and "brightness of the Fathers glory," Hebrews 1:3. was so veiled, clouded, and debased, that he looked not like himself; a God, no, nor scarce as a man; for, with reference to this humbled state, it is said, Psalms 22:6. "I am a worm, and no man:" q. d. rather write me worm, than man: I am become an abject among men, as that word, Isaiah 53:8. signifies. This humiliation of Christ we have here expressed in the nature, degrees, and duration or continuance of it.

1. The nature of it, "etapeinosen heauton", he humbled himself. The word imports both a real and voluntary abasement. Real; he did not personate a humbled man, nor act the part of one, in a debased state, but was really, and indeed humbled; and that not only before men, but God. As man, he was humbled really, as God in respect of his manifestative glory: and, as it was real, so

also voluntary: It is not said he was humbled, but he humbled himself: he was willing to stoop to this low and abject state for us. And, indeed, the voluntariness of his humiliation made it most acceptable to God, and singularly commends the love of Christ to us, that he would chose to stoop to all this ignominy, suffering, and abasement for us.

2. The degrees of his humiliation; it was not only so low as to become a man, a man under law; but he humbled himself to become "obedient to death, even the death of the cross." Here you see the depth of Christ's humiliations both specified, it was unto death, and aggravated, even the death of the cross: not only to become a man but a dead corpse, and that too hanging on a tree, dying the death of a malefactor.

3. The duration, or continuance of this his humiliation: it continued from the first moment of his incarnation, to the very moment of his vivification and quickening in the grave. So the terms of it are fixed here by the apostle; from the time he was found in fashion as a man, that is, from his incarnation, unto his death on the cross, which also comprehends the time of his abode in the grave; so long his humiliation lasted. Hence the observation is,

DOCTRINE. That the estate of Christ, from his conception to his resurrection, was a state of deep abasement and humiliation.

We are now entering upon Christ's humbled state, which I shall cast under three general heads, namely, his humiliation, in his incarnation, in his life, and in his death. My present work is to open Christ's humiliation, in his incarnation, imported in these words, He was found in fashion as a man. By which you are not to conceive that he only assumed a body, as an assisting form, to appear transiently to us in it, and so lay it down again. It is not such an apparition of Christ in the shape of a man, that is here intended; but his true and real assumption of our nature, which vas a special part of his humiliation; as will appear by the following particulars.

1. The incarnation of Christ was a most wonderful humiliation of him, inasmuch as thereby he is brought into the rank and order of creatures, who is over all, "God blessed forever," Romans 9:5. This is the astonishing mystery, 1 Timothy 3:16. that God should be manifest in the flesh; that the eternal God should truly and properly be called the Man Christ Jesus, 1 Timothy 2:5. It was a wonder to Solomon, that God would dwell in that stately and magnificent temple at Jerusalem, 2 Chronicles 6:18. "But will God in very deed dwell with men on earth! Behold the heaven, and heaven of heavens cannot contain you; how much less this house which I have built?" But it is a far greater wonder that God should dwell in a body of flesh, and pitch his tabernacle with us, John 1:14. It would have seemed a crude blasphemy, had not the scriptures plainly revealed it, to have thought, or spoken of the eternal God, as born in time; the world's Creator a creature; the Ancient of Days, as an infant of days. The Heathen Chaldeans told the king of Babel, that the "dwelling of the gods is not with flesh," Daniel 2:11. But now God not only dwells with fleshy but dwells in flesh; yes, was made flesh, and dwelt among us. For the sun to fall from its sphere, and be degraded into a wandering atom; for an angel to be turned out of heaven, and be converted into a silly fly or worm, had been no such great abasement; for they were but creatures before, and so they would abide still, though in an inferior order or species of creatures. The distance between the highest and lowest species of creatures, is but a finite distance. The angel and the worm dwell not so far asunder. But for the infinite glorious Creator of all things, to become a creature, is a mystery exceeding all human understanding. The distance between God and the highest order at

creatures, is an infinite distance. He is said to humble himself; to behold the things that are done in heaven. What a humiliation then is it, to behold the things in the lower world! but to be born into it, and become a man! Great indeed is the mystery of godliness. "Behold, (says the prophet, Isaiah 40:15; Isaiah 40:18) the nations are as the drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance; he takes up she isles as a very little thing. All nations before him are as nothing, and they are accounted to him less than nothing, and vanity." If, indeed, this great and incomprehensible Majesty will himself stoop to the state and condition of a creature, we may easily believe, that being once a creature, he would expose him to hunger, thirst, shame, spitting, death, or anything but sin. For that once being a man, he should endure any of these things, is not so wonderful, as that he should become a man. This was the low step, a deep abasement indeed!

2. It was a marvelous humiliation to the Son of God, not only to become a creature, but an inferior creature, a man, and not an angel. Had he taken the angelical nature, though it had been a wonderful abasement to him, yet he had staid (if I may so speak) nearer his own home, and been somewhat liker to a God, than now he appeared, when he dwelt with us: for angels are the highest and most excellent of all created beings: For their nature, they are pure spirits; for their wisdom, intelligences; for their dignity, they are called principalities and powers; for their habitation, they are stiled the heavenly army, and for their employment, it is to behold the face of God in heaven. The highest pitch, both of our holiness and happiness in the coming world, is expressed by this, we shall be "isangeloi", "equal to the angels," Luke 20:36. As man is nothing to God, so he is much inferior to the angels; so much below them, that he is not able to bear the sight of an angel, though in a human shape, rendering himself as familiarly as may be to him, Judges 42:22. When the Psalmist had contemplated the heavens, and viewed the celestial bodies, the glorious luminaries, the moon and stars which God had made, he cries out, Psalms 8:5. "What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man that you visitest him!" Take man at his best when he came a perfect and pure piece out of his Maker's hand, in the state of innocence: yet he was inferior to angels. They always bare the image of God, in a more eminent degree than man, as being wholly spiritual substances and so more lively representing God, than man could do, whose noble soul is immersed in matter, and closed up in flesh and blood: yet Christ chooses this inferior order and species of creatures, and passes by the angelical nature; Hebrews 2:16. "He took not on him the nature of angels but the seed of Abraham."

3. Moreover, Jesus Christ did not only neglect the angelical, and assume the human nature; but he also assumed the human nature, after sin had blotted the original glory of it, and withered up the beauty and excellency thereof. For he came not in our nature before the fall, while as yet its glory was fresh in it; but he came, as the apostle speaks, Romans 8:3 "In the likeness of sinful flesh," that is in flesh that had the marks, and miserable effects, and consequent of sin upon it. I say not that Christ assumed sinful flesh, or flesh really defiled by sin, That which was born of the Virgin was a holy thing. For by the power of the Highest (whether by the energetical command and ordination of the Holy Ghosts as some; or by his benediction and blessing, I here dispute not) that whereof the body of Christ was to be formed, was so sanctified, that no taint or spot of original pollution remained in it. But yet though it had not intrinsical native uncleanness in it, it had the effects of sin upon it; yes, it was attended with the whole troop of human infirmities, that sin at first let into our common nature, such as hunger, thirst, weariness, pain, mortality, and all these natural weaknesses and evils that clog our miserable natures, and make them groan from day to day

under them. By reason whereof, though he was not a sinner, yet he looked like one: and they that saw and conversed with him, took him for a sinner; seeing all these effects of sin upon him. In these things he came as near to sin as his holiness could admit. O what a stoop was this! to be made in the likeness of flesh, though the innocent flesh of Adam, had been much; but to be made in the likeness of sinful flesh, the flesh of sinners, rebels; flesh, though not defiled, yet miserably defaced by sin! O what is this! and who can declare it! And indeed, if he will be a Mediator of reconciliation, it was necessary it should be so. It behaved him to assume the same nature that sinned, to make satisfaction in it. Yes, these sinless infirmities were necessary to be assumed with the nature, forasmuch as his bearing them was a part of his humiliation, and went to make up satisfaction for us. Moreover, by them our High Priest was qualified from his own experience, and filled with tender compassion to us. But O the admirable condescensions of a Savior, to take such a nature! to put on such a garment when so very mean and ragged! Did this become the Son of God to wear? O grace unsearchable!

4. And yet more, by this his incarnation he was greatly humbled, inasmuch as this so veiled, clouded, and disguised him, that during the time he lived here, he looked not like himself, as God; but as a poor, sorry, contemptible sinner, in the eyes of the world; they scorned him. This fellow said, Matthew 26:61. Hereby "he made himself of no reputation," Php 2:6. It blotted his honor and reputation. By reason hereof he lost all esteem and honor from those that saw him, Matthew 13:55. "Is not this the carpenter's son?" To see a poor man traveling up and down the country, in hunger, thirst, weariness, attended with a company of poor men; one of his company bearing the bag, and that which was put therein, John 13:29. Who that had seen him, would ever have thought this had been the Creator of the world, the Prince of the kings of the earth? "He was despised, and we esteemed him not." Now which of you is there that would not rather chose to endure much misery as a man, than to be degraded into a contemptible worm, that every body treads upon, and no man regards it? Christ looked so unlike a God in this habit, that he was scarce allowed the name of a man; a worm rather than a man. And think with yourselves now, was not this astonishing self- denial? That he, who from eternity had his Father's smiles and honors, he that from the creation was adored, and worshiped by angels, as their God, must now become a footstool for every miscreant to tread on; and not to have the respects due to a man; sure this was a deep abasement. It was a black cloud that for so many years darkened, and shut up his manifestative glory, that it could not shine out to the world; only some weak rays of the Godhead shone to some few eyes, through the chinks of his humanity, as the clouded sun sometimes opens a little, and casts some faint beams, and is muffled up again. "We saw his glory, as of the only begotten Son:" but the world knew him not, John 1:14. If a prince walk up and down in a disguise, he must expect no more honor than a mean subject. This was the case of our Lord Jesus Christ, this disguise made him contemptible, and an object of scorn.

5. Again, Christ was greatly humbled by his incarnation, inasmuch as thereby he was put at a distance from his Father, and that ineffable joy and pleasure he eternally had with him. Think not, reader, but the Lord Jesus lived at a high and inimitable rate of communion with God while he walked here in the flesh: but yet to live by faith, as Christ here did, is one thing; and to be in the bosom of God, as he was before, is another. To have the ineffable delights of God perpetuated and continued to him, without one moment's interruption from eternity, is one thing; and to have his soul sometimes filled with the joy of the Lord, and then all overcast with clouds of wrath again;

to cry, and God not hear, as he complains, Psalms 32:2. nay, to be reduced to such a low ebb of spiritual comforts, as to be forced to cry out so bitterly, as he did, Psalms 22:1. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" This was a thing Christ was very unacquainted with, until he was found in habit as a man.

6. And lastly, It was a great stoop and condescension of Christ if he would become a man, to take his nature from such obscure parents, and chose such a low and contemptible state in this world as he did. He will be born, but not of the blood of nobles, but of a poor woman in Israel, espoused to a carpenter: yes, and that too, under all the disadvantages imaginable; not in his mother's house, but an inn; yes, in the stable too. He suited all to that abased state he was designed for; and came among us under all the humbling circumstances imaginable: "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (says the apostle) how that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor," 2 Corinthians 8:9. And thus I have shown you some few particulars of Christ's humiliation in his incarnation. Next we shall infer some things from it that are practical.

INFERENCE 1. Hence we gather the fullness and completeness of Christ's satisfaction, as the sweet first-fruits of his incarnation. Did man offend and violate the law of God? Behold, God himself is become man to repair that breach, and satisfy for the wrong done. The highest honor that ever the law of God received, was to have such a person as the man Christ Jesus is, to stand before its bar, and make reparation to it. This is more than if it had poured out all our blood, and built up its honor upon the ruins of the whole creation.

It is not so much to see all the stars in heaven overcast, as to see one sun eclipsed. The greater Christ was, the greater was his humiliation; and the greater his humiliation was, the more full and complete was his satisfaction; and the mote completeness there is in Christ's satisfaction, the more perfect and steady is the believers consolation. If he had not stooped so low, our joy and comfort could not be exalted so high. The depth of the foundation is the strength of the superstructure.

INFERENCE. 2. Did Christ for our sakes stoop from the majesty, glory and dignity he was possessed of in heaven, to the mean and contemptible state of a man? What a pattern of self-denial is here presented to Christians? What objection against, or excuses to shift off this duty, can remain, after such an example as is here propounded? Brethren, let me tell you, the pagan world was never acquainted with such an argument as this, to press them to self-denial. Did Christ stoop, and cannot you stoop? did Christ stoop so much, and cannot you stoop at the least? Was he content to become anything, a worm, a reproach, a curse; and cannot you digest any abasement? Do the least slights and neglects rankle your hearts, and poison them with discontent, malice and revenge; O how unlike Christ are you! Hear; and blush in hearing, what your Lord says in John 13:14. "If I then your Lord and Master, wash your feet; you ought also to wash one another's feet." "The example obliges not, (as a learned man well observes) to the same individual act, but it obliges us to follow the reason of the example;" that is after Christ's example, we must be ready to perform the lowest and meanest offices of love and service to one another. And indeed to this it obliges most forcibly; for it is as if a master, seeing a proud, sturdy servant, that grudges at the work he is employed about, as if it were too mean and base, should come and take it out of his hand; and when he has done it, should say, does your Lord and Master think it not beneath him to do it; and is it beneath you? I remember it is an excellent saying that Bernard has

upon the nativity of Christ: says he, "What more detestable, what more unworthy, or what deserves severer punishment, than for a poor man to magnify himself, after he has seen the great and high God, so humbled, as to become a little child? It is intolerable impudence for a worm to swell with pride, after it has seen majesty emptying itself; to see one so infinitely above us, to stoop so far beneath us." O how convincing and shaming should it be! Ah how opposite should pride and stoutness be to the Spirit of a Christian! I am sure nothing is more so to the spirit of Christ. Your Savior was lowly, meek, self-denying, and of a most condescending spirit; he looked not at his own things, but yours, Php 2:4. And does it become you to be proud, selfish, and stout? I remember Jerome, in his epistle to Pamachius, a godly young nobleman, advised him to be eyes to the blind, feet to the lame; yes, says he, if need be, I would not have you refuse to cut wood, and draw water for the saints: And what, says he, is this to buffeting and spitting upon, to crowning with thorns, scourging and dying! Christ did undergo all this, and that for the ungodly.

INFERENCE. 3. Did Christ stoop so low as to become a man to save us? Then those that perish under the gospel must needs perish without apology. What would you have Christ do more to save you? Lo, he has laid aside the robes of majesty and glory, put on your own garments of flesh, come down from his throne, and brought salvation home to your own doors. Surely, the lower Christ stooped to save us, the lower we shall sink under wrath that neglect so great salvation. The Lord Jesus is brought low, but the unbeliever will lay him yet lower, even under his feet: he will tread the Son of God under foot, Hebrews 10:28. For such (as the apostle there speaks) is reserved something worse than dying without mercy. What pleas and excuses others will make at the judgement seat, I know not; but once, it is evident, you will be speechless. And, as one well observes, the vilest sinners among the Gentiles, nay, the devils themselves, will have more to say for themselves than you.

I must be plain with you; I beseech you consider, how Jews, Pagans, and Devils will rise up in judgement against you. The Jew may say, I had a legal yoke upon me, which neither I nor my fathers were able to bear; Christ invited me only into the garden of nuts, where I might sooner break my teeth with the hard shells of ceremonies, than get the kernel of gospel promises. - In the best of our sacrifices, the smoke filled our temple; smoke only to provoke us to weep for a clearer manifestation. We had but the old edition of the covenant of grace, in a character very darkly intelligible: You have the last edition, with a commentary of our rejection, and the world's reception, and the Spirit's effusion. You had all that heart could wish. - I perish eternally, may the poor Pagan say, without all possibility of reconciliation, and have only sinned against the covenant of works; having never heard of a gospel covenant, nor of reconciliation by a Mediator. O had I but heard one sermon! had Christ but once broke in upon my soul, to convince me of my undone condition, and to have shown a righteousness to me! But woe is me! I never had so much as one offer of Christ. - But so have I, must you say that refuse the gospel: I have, or might have beard thousands of sermons; I could scarce escape hearing one or other showing me the danger of my sin, and my necessity of Christ. But notwithstanding all I heard, I wilfully resolved I would have nothing to do with him. I could not endure to hear strictness pressed upon me: It was all the hell I had upon earth, that I could not sin in quiet. - Nay, may the devil himself say, it is true, I was ever since my fall maliciously set against God. But alas! as soon as I had sinned, God threw me out of heaven, and told me he would never have mercy upon me: and though I lived in the time of all manner of gracious dispensations, I saw sacrifices offered, and Christ in the flesh, and the gospel

preached; yet how could all this chose but enrage me the more, to have God, as it were, say, Look here, Satan, I have provided a remedy for sin, but none for your! This set me upon revenge against God, as far as I could reach him. But alas! alas! had God entered into any covenant with me at all; had God put me on any terms, though never so hard for the obtaining of mercy; had Christ been but once offered to me, What do you think would I not have done? etc.

O poor sinners! Your damnation is just, if you refuse grace brought home by Jesus Christ himself to your very doors. The Lord grant this may not be your case who readest these lines.

INFERENCE. 4. Moreover; hence it follows, that none does, or can love like Christ: His love to man is matchless. The freeness, strength, antiquity, and immutability of it, puts a luster on it beyond all examples. Surely it was a strong love indeed, that made him lay aside hit glory, to be found in fashion as a man, to become anything, though never so much below himself, for our salvation. We read of Jonathan's love to David, which passed the love of women; of Jacob's love to Rachel, who for her sake endured the heat of summer, and cold of winter; of David's love to Absalom; of the primitive Christians love to one another, who could die one for another but neither had they that to deny which Christ had, nor had he those inducements from the object of his love that they had. His love, like himself, is wonderful.

INFERENCE. 5. Did the Lord Jesus so deeply abase and humble himself for us? What an engagement has he thereby put on us, to exalt and honor him, who for our sakes was so abused? It was a good saying of Bernard, "By how much the viler he was made for me, by so much the dearer he shall be to me." And O that all, to whom Christ is dear, would study to exalt and honor him, these four ways.

1. By frequent and delightful speaking of Him, and for Him. When Paul had once mentions(I his name, he knows not how to part with it, but repeats it no less than ten times in the compass of ten verses, in 1 Corinthians 1:1-31. It was Lambert's motto, "None but Christ, none but Christ." It is said of Johannes Milius, that after his conversion, he was seldom or never observed to mention the name of Jesus, but his eyes would drop; so dear was Christ to him. or. Fox never denied any beggar that asked an alms in Christ's name, or for Jesus' sake. Julius Palmer, when all concluded he was dead, being turned as black as a coal on the fire, at last moved his scorched lips, and was heard to say, Sweet Jesus, and fell asleep. Plutarch tells us, that when Titus Flaminius had freed the poor Grecians from the bondage with which they had been long ground by their oppressors, and the herald was to proclaim in their audience the articles of peace he had concluded for then, they so pressed upon him, (not being half of them able to hear), that he was in great danger to have lost his life in the press; at last, reading them a second time, when they came to understand distinctly how their case stood, they shouted for joy, "Soter, Soter", "a Savior, a Savior," that they made the cry heavens ring gain with their acclamations, and the very birds fell down astonished. And all that night the poor Grecians, with instruments of music, and songs of praise, danced and sung about his tent, extolling him as a God that had delivered them. But surely you have more reason to be exalting the Author of your salvation, who, at a dearer rate, has freed you from a more dreadful bondage. O you that have escaped the eternal wrath of God, by the humiliation of the Son of God, extol your great Redeemer, and forever celebrate his praises!

2. By acting your faith on him, for whatever lies in the promises yet unaccomplished. In this you see the great and most difficult promise fulfilled, Genesis 3:15. "The seed of the woman shall

break the serpent’s head;" which contained this mercy of Christ’s incarnation for us in it: I say, you see this fulfilled; and seeing that which was most improbable and difficult is come to pass, even Christ come in the flesh, methinks our unbelief should be removed for ever, and all other promises the more easily believed. It seemed much more improbable and impossible to reason, that God should become a man, and stoop to the condition of a creature, than being a man, to perform all that good which his incarnation and death procured. Unbelief usually argues from one of these two grounds, Can God do this? or, Will God do that? It is questioning either his power or his will; but after this, let it cease forever to cavil against either. His power to save should never be questioned by any that know what sufferings and infinite burdens he supported in our nature: and surely his willingness to save should never be put to a question, by any that consider how low he was content to stoop for our sakes.

3. By drawing near to God with delight, "through the veil of Christ’s flesh," Hebrews 10:19. God has made this flesh of Christ a veil between the brightness of his glory and us: it serves to rebate the unsupportable glory, and also to give admission to it, as the veil did in the temple. Through this body of flesh, which Christ assumed, are all decursus et recurs us gratiarum, "outlets of grace from God to us; and through it, also, must be all our returns to God again." It is made the great medium of our communion with God.

4. By applying yourselves to him, under all temptations and troubles, of what kind soever, as to one that is tenderly sensible of your case, and most willing and ready to relieve you. O remember, this was one of the inducements that persuaded and invited him to take your nature, that he might be furnished abundantly with tender compassion for you, from the sense he should have of your infirmities in his own body. Hebrews 2:17. "Therefore in all things it behaved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High-priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." You know by this argument the Lord pressed the Israelites to be kind to strangers; for, (says he) "you know the heart of a stranger," Exodus 22:9. Christ, by being in our nature, knows experimentally what our wants, fears, temptations, and distresses are, and so is able to have compassion. O let your hearts work upon this admirable condescension of Christ, until they be filled with it, and your lips say, Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ!

S. The Solemn Consecration of the Medi

The Solemn Consecration of the Mediator "And for their sakes I sanctify myself." John 17:19

Jesus Christ being fitted with a body, and authorized by a commission, now actually devotes, and sets himself apart to his work. In the former sermon you heard what the Father did; in this you shall hear what the Son has done towards the farther advancement of that glorious design of our salvation: He sanctified himself for our sakes. Wherein observe, (1.) Christ's sanctifying of himself. (2.) The end or design of his so doing.

1. You have Christ's sanctifying of himself. The word "hagiadzo" is not here to be understood for the cleansing, purifying, or making holy that which was before unclean and unholy, either in a moral sense, as we are cleansed from sin by sanctification; or in a ceremonial sense, as persons and things were sanctified under the law; though here is a plain allusion to those legal rites; But Christ's sanctifying himself, imports, (1.) His separation, or setting apart to be an oblation or sacrifice--as the priest and sacrifice. I sanctify myself, imports, (2.) His consecration, or dedication of himself to this holy use and service. So the Dutch Annotations, I sanctify myself, (That is,) I give up myself for a holy sacrifice. And so our English Annotations, I sanctify, (That is,) I consecrate and voluntarily offer myself a holy and unblemished sacrifice to you for their redemption. And thus under the Law, when any day, person, or vessel, was consecrated and dedicated to the Lord, it was so entirely for his use and service, that to use it afterward in any common service, was to profane and pollute it, as you see Daniel 5:3.

2. The end of his so sanctifying himself [for their sakes, and that they might be sanctified, where you have the Finis cujus, the end for whom, for their (that is,) for the elect's sake, for them whom you gave me; and the Finis cui, the end for which, that they might be sanctified. Where you also see that the death of Christ wholly respects us; he offered not for himself as other priests did, but for us, that we may be sanctified. Christ is so in love with holiness, that at the price of his blood he will buy it for us. Hence the observation is;

DOCTRINE. That Jesus Christ did dedicate, and wholly set himself apart to the work of a Mediator, for the elect's sake. This point is a glass, wherein the eye of your faith may see Jesus Christ preparing himself to be offered up to God for us, fitting himself to die. And to keep a clear method, I shall open these two things, in the doctrinal part; First, what his sanctifying himself implies: Secondly, How it respects us.

First, What is implied in this phrase, "I sanctify myself". And there are seven things carried in it.

1. This phrase "I sanctify myself" implies the personal union of the two natures in Christ; for what is that which he here calls himself, but the same that was consecrated to be a sacrifice, even his human nature? This was the sacrifice. And this also was himself: So the apostle speaks, Hebrews 9:14. "He through the eternal Spirit, offered up himself to God, without spot." So that our nature, by that assumption, is become himself. Greater honor cannot be done it, or greater ground of comfort proposed to us. But having spoken of that union in the former sermon, shall remit the reader there.

2. This sanctifying, or consecrating himself to be a sacrifice for us, implies, the greatness and dreadfulness of that breach which sin made between God and us. You see no less a sacrifice than Christ himself must be sanctified to make atonement. Judge of the greatness of the wound by the breadth of the plaister. "Sacrifice and offering, and burnt-offering for sin, you would not; but a body have you prepared me," Hebrews 10:5. All our repentance, could we shed as many tears for sin, as there have fallen drops of rain since the creation, could not have been our atonement: "But God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself." And had he not sanctified Christ to this end, he would have sanctified himself upon us, in judgement and fury forever.

3. This his sanctifying Himself, implies his free and voluntary undertaking of the work. It is not, I am sanctified, as if he had been merely passive in it, as the lambs that typed him out were, when plucked from the fold, but it is an active verb he uses here, I sanctify myself; he would have none think that he died out of a necessity of compulsion, but out of choice: therefore he is solid to "offer up himself to God", Hebrews 10:14. And John 9:18, "I lay down my life of myself; no man takes it from me." And although it is often said "his Father sent him, and gave him"; yet his heart was as much set on that work, as if there had been nothing but story, ease, and comfort in it; he was under no constraint, but that of his own love. Therefore, as when the scripture would set forth the willingness of the Father to this work, it says, God sent his Son, and God gave his Son; so when it would set forth Christ's willingness to it, it says, he offered himself, gave himself; and, here in the text, sanctified himself: The sacrifice that struggled, and came not without force to the altar, was reckoned ominous and unlucky by the Heathen: our Sacrifice dedicated himself; he died out of choice, and was a free-will offering

4. His sanctifying himself implies his pure and perfect holiness, that he had no spot or blemish in him. Those beasts that prefigured him, were to be without blemish, and none else were consecrated to that service. So, and more than so, it behaved Christ to be, Hebrews 7:26. "Such an High-Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners:" And what it became him to be, he was. Therefore in allusion to the lambs offered under the law, the apostle calls him a Lamb without blemish, or spot, 1 Peter 1:19. Every other man has a double spot on him, the heart spot, and the life-spot; the spot of original, and the spots of actual sin. But Christ was without either, he had net the spot of original sin, for he was not by man; he came in a peculiar way into the world, and so escaped that: nor yet of actual sins; for, as his nature, so his life was spotless and pure, Isaiah 53:9. "He did no iniquity." And though tempted to sin externally, yet he was never defiled in heart or practice; he came as near as he could for our sakes, yet still without sin, Hebrews 4:15. If he sanctifies himself for a sacrifice, he must be as the law required, pure and spotless.

5. His sanctifying himself for our sakes, speaks the strength of his love, and largeness of his heart to poor sinners, thus to set himself wholly and entirely apart for us: so that what he did and suffered, must all of it have a respect and relation to us. He did not (when consecrated for us) live a moment, do an act, or speak a word, but it had some tendency to promote the great design of our salvation. He was only and wholly, and always doing your work, when consecrated for your sakes. His incarnation respects you; Isaiah 9:6. "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given." And he would never have been the son of man, but to make you the sons and daughters of God. God would not have come down in the likeness of sinful flesh, in the habit of a man, but to raise up sinful man unto the likeness of God. All the miracles he wrought Were for you, to confirm your

faith. When he raised up Lazarus, John 11:42. "Because of the people which stand by, I said it, that they might believe that you had sent me." While he lived on earth, he lived as one wholly set apart for us: and when he died, he died for us, Galatians 3:13. "he was made a curse for us." When he hanged on that cursed tree, he hanged there in our room, and did but fill our place. When he was buried, he was buried for us: for the end of it was, to perfume our graves, against we come to lie down in them. And when he rose again, it was, as the apostle says, "for our justification," Romans 4:25. When he ascended into glory, he protested it was about our business, that he went to prepare places for us: and if it had not been so, he would have told us, John 14:2. And now he is there, it is for us that he there lives; for he "ever lives to make intercession for us," Hebrews 7:25. And when he shall return again to judge the world, he will come for us too. "He comes (whenever it be) to be glorified in his saints, and admired in them that believe," 2 Thessalonians 1:10. He comes to gather his saints home to himself, that where he is, there they all may be in soul and body with him forever. Thus you see how, as his consecration for us does speak him set apart for our use; so he did wholly bestow himself, time, life, death, and all upon us; living and dying for no other end, but to accomplish this great work of salvation for us.

6. His sanctifying himself for us plainly speaks the vicegerency of his death, that it was in our room or stead. When the priest consecrated the sacrifice, it was set apart for the people. So it is said of the scapegoat; "And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness," Leviticus 16:21. Thus Isaiah 53:6-7. He stood in our room, to bear our burden. And as Aaron laid the iniquities of the people upon the goat, so were ours laid on Christ; it was said to him in that day, On you be their pride, their unbelief, their hardness of heart, their vain thoughts, their earthly-mindedness, etc. You are consecrated for them, to be the sacrifice in their room. His death was in our stead, as well as for our good. And so much his sanctifying himself [for us] imports.

7. His sanctifying himself, imparts the extraordinariness of his person: for it speaks him to be both Priest, Sacrifice, and altar, all in one: a thing unheard of in the world before. So that this name might well be called Wonderful. I sanctify myself: I sanctify, according to both natures; myself, That is, my human nature, which was the sacrifice upon the altar of my divine nature; for it is the altar that sanctifies the gift. As the three offices never met in one person before, so these three things never met in one priest before. The priests indeed consecrated the bodies of beasts for sacrifices, but never offered up their own souls and bodies as a whole burnt offering, as Christ did. And thus you have the import of this phrase, I sanctify myself for their sakes.

Secondly, I shall show you briefly the habitude and respect that all this has to us; for unto us the scriptures everywhere refer it. So in 1 Corinthians 5:7. "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." Ephesians 5:2. "He loved the church, and gave himself for it." See Titus 2:14. This will be made out, by a threefold consideration of Christ’s death. And,

1. Let it be considered, that he was not offered up to God for his own sins for he was most holy. Isaiah 53:9. No iniquity was found in him. Indeed, the priests under the law offered for themselves, as well as the people; but Christ did not so, Hebrews 7:27. "He needed not daily, as those High-priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s." And indeed had he been a sinner, what value or efficacy could have been in his sacrifice? He could not have been

the sacrifice, but would have needed one. Now, if Christ were most holy, and yet put to death, and cruel sufferings, either his death or sufferings must be an act of injustice and cruelty, or it must respect others, whose persons and cause he sustained in that suffering capacity. He could never have suffered or died by the Father's hand, had he not been a sinner by imputation. And in that respect, as Luther speaks, he was the greatest of sinners; or, as the prophet Isaiah speaks, all our sins were made to meet upon Him; not that he was intrinsically, but was made so, so, by imputation, as is clear from 2 Corinthians 5:21. "He was made sin for us, who knew no sin." So that hence it is evident, that Christ's death, or sacrifice, is wholly a respective or relative thing.

2. It is not to be forgotten here, that the scriptures frequently call the death of Christ a price, 1 Corinthians 6:20, and a ransom, Matthew 20:28, or counterprice. To whom then does it relate, but to them that were, and are in bondage and captivity? If it was to redeem any, it must be captives: but Christ himself was never in captivity; he was always in his Father's bosom, as you have heard; but we were in cruel bondage and thraldom, under the tyranny of sin and Satan: and it is we only that have the benefit of this ransom.

3. Either the death of Christ must relate to believers, or else he must die in vain. As for the angels, those that stood in their integrity needed no sacrifice, and those that fell, are totally excluded from any benefit by it: he is not a Mediator for them. And among men that have need of it, unbelievers have no share in it, they reject it; such have no part in it. If then he neither died for himself, as I proved before, nor for angels, nor unbelievers; either his blood must be shed with respect to believers, or, which is most absurd, and never to be imagined, shed as water upon the ground, and totally cast away, so that you see by all this, it was for our sakes, as the text speaks, that he sanctified himself. And now we may say, Lord, the condemnation was your, that the justification might be mine; the agony your, that the victory might be mine; the pain was your, and the ease mine; the stripes your, and the healing balm issuing from them mine; the vinegar and gall were your, that the honey and sweet might be mine; the curse was your, that the blessing might be mine; the crown of thorns was your, that the crown of glory might be mine; the death was your, the life purchased by it mine; you paid the price that I might enjoy the inheritance.

We come next to the inferences of truth deducible from this point, which follow.

INFERENCE 1. If Jesus Christ did wholly set himself apart for believers, how reasonable is it that believers should consecrate and set themselves apart wholly for Christ? Is he all for us, and shall we be nothing for him? What he was, he was for you? Whatever he did, was done for you; and all that he suffered, was suffered for you. O then, "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, present your bodies,", That is, your whole selves, (for so body is there synecdochically put to signify the whole person) I say, "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service," Romans 12:1. As your good was Christ's end, so let his glory be your end. Let Christ be the "end of your conversation," Hebrews 13:7. As Christ could say, To me to live is you; so do you say, "For us to live is Christ," Php 1:21. O that all who profess faith in Christ, could subscribe cordially to that profession, Romans 14:8. "None of us lives to himself, and no man dies to himself; but whether we live, we live to the Lord; and whether we die, we die to the Lord; so then whether we live or die, we are the Lord's." This is to be a Christian indeed. What is a Christian, but an holy dedicated thing to the Lord? And what greater evidence can there be, that Christ set himself apart for you, than your setting yourselves apart for him? This is the marriage

covenant, Hosea 3:3 "You shall be for me, and not for another; so will I be for you." Ah, what a life is the life of a Christian; Christ all for you, and you all for him. Blessed exchange! Soul, (says Christ) all I have is your, Lord, (says the soul) and all I have is your. Soul, (says Christ) my person is wonderful, but what I am, I am for you: my life was spent in labor and travail, but lived for you. And Lord, (says the believers, my person is vile, and not worth your accepting; but such as it is, it is your; my soul, with all and every faculty; my body, and every member of it, my gifts, time, and all my talents are your. And see that as Christ bequeathed and made over himself to you, so you, in like manner, bestow and make over yourselves to him. He lived not, neither died (as you hear) for himself, but you. O that you, in like manner, would down with self, and exalt Christ in the room of it. 'Woe, woe is me, (says one) that the holy profession of Christ is made a showy garment by many to bring home a vain fame; and Christ is made to serve men's ends. This is to stop an oven with a king's robes. Except men martyr and slay the body of sin, in sanctified self-denial, they shall never be Christ's martyrs and faithful witnesses. O if I could be master of that house-idol, myself, mine own, mine own wit, will, credit, and ease, how blessed were I! O but we have need to be redeemed from ourselves, rather than from the devil and the world. Learn to put out yourselves, and to put in Christ for yourselves. I should make a sweet bargain, and give old for new, if I could shuffle out self, and substitute Christ my Lord in place of myself; to say, not I, but Christ; not my will, but Christ's; not my ease, not my lusts, not my credit, but Christ, Christ. - O wretched idol, myself, when shall I see you wholly decourted, and Christ wholly put in your room? O if Christ had the full place and room of myself, that all aims, purposes, thoughts and desires would coast and land upon Christ, and not upon myself.'

He set himself apart for you believers, and no others: no, not for angels but for you: Will you also set yourselves apart peculiarly for Christ? be his, and no others? Let not Christ and the world share anal divide your hearts in two halves between them; let not the world step in and say, half mine. You will never do Christ right, nor answer this grace, until you can say, as it is, Psalms 73:25, "Whom have I in heaven but you? and on earth there is none that I desire in comparison of you." None but Christ, none but Christ, is a proper motto for a Christian.

He left the highest and best enjoyments, even those in his Father's bosom, to set himself apart for death and suffering for you: Are you ready to leave the bosom of the best and sweetest enjoyments, you have in this world, to serve him? If you stand not habitually ready to leave father, mother, wife, children, lands, yes, and life too, to serve him, you are not worthy of him, Matthew 10:37.

He was so wholly given up to your service, that he refused not the worst and hardest part of it, even bleeding, groaning, dying work; his love to you sweetened all this to him; Can you say so too; do you "account the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, as Moses did?" Hebrews 11:26.

He had so entirely devoted himself to your work, that He could not be at rest until it was finished: he was so intent upon it, that he "forgot to eat bread," John 4:31-32. So it should be with you; his service should be meat and drink to you. To conclude:

He was so wholly given up to your work and service, that he would not suffer himself to be in the least diverted, or taken off from it: and if Peter himself counsel him to favor himself, he shall hear, "Get you behind me, Satan." O happy were it if our hearts were but so engaged for Christ! In

Galen’s time it was proverbial, when they would express the impossibility of a thing, You may as soon take off a Christian from Christ. Thus you see what use you should make of Christ’s sanctifying himself for you.

INFERENCE. 2. If Christ has sanctified or consecrated himself for us; learn hence, what a horrid evil it is, to use Christ or his blood, as a common and unsanctified thing. Yet so some do, as the apostle speaks, Hebrews 10:29. The apostate is said to tread upon the Son of God, as if he were no better than the dirt under his feet, and to count his blood an unholy (or common) thing. But woe to them that do so, they shall be counted worthy of something worse than dying without mercy, as the apostle there speaks. And as this is the sin of the apostate, so it is also the sin of all those that without faith approach, and so profane the table of the Lord, unbelievingly and unworthily handling those awful things. Such "eat and drink judgement to themselves, not discerning the Lord’s body," 1 Corinthians 11:29. Whereas the body of Christ was a thing of the deepest sanctification that ever God created; sanctified (as the text tells us) to a far more excellent and glorious purpose than ever any creature in heaven or earth was sanctified. It was therefore the great sin of those Corinthians, not to discern it, and not to behave themselves towards it, when they saw and handled the signs of it, as became so holy a thing. And as it was their great sin, so God declared his just indignation against it, in those sore strokes inflicted for it. As they discerned not the Lord’s body, so neither did the Lord discern their bodies from others in the judgements that were inflicted. And, as one well observes, God drew the model and platform of their punishment, from the structure and proportion of their sin. And truly, if the moral and spiritual seeds and originals of many of our outward afflictions and sicknesses were but duly sifted out, possibly we might find a great part of them in the affections of this sin. The just and righteous God will build up the breaches we make upon the honor of his Son, with the ruins of that beauty, strength and honor which he has given our bodies. O then, when you draw near to God in that ordinance, take heed to sanctify his name, by a spiritual discerning of this most holy, and most deeply sanctified body of the Lord; sanctified beyond all creatures, angels or men, not only in respect of the Spirit which filled him, without measure with inherent holiness, but also in respect of its dedication to such a service as this, it being set apart by him to such holy, solemn ends and uses, as you have heard. And let it, forever, be a warning to such as have lifted up their hands to Christ in a holy profession, that they never lift up their heel against him afterwards by apostasy. The apostate treads on God’s dear Son, and God will tread upon him for it. "You have trodden down all that err from your statutes," Psalms 119:118.

INFERENCE. 3. What a choice pattern of love to saints have we here before us! Calling all that are in Christ to an imitation of him, even to give up ourselves to their service, as Christ did; not in the same kind, so none can give himself for them, but as we are capable. You see here how his heart was affected to them, that he would sanctify himself as a sacrifice for them. See to what a height of duty the apostle improves this example of Christ, 1 John 3:16. "hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us, and we ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren." Some Christians came up fairly to this pattern in primitive times; Priscilla and Aquila laid down their necks for Paul, Romans 16:4. That is, eminently hazarded their lives for him; and he himself could "rejoice, if he were offered up upon the sacrifice and service of their faith," Php 2:17. And in the next times, what more known, even to the enemies of Christianity, than their fervent love one to another? See how they love one another, and are willing to die one for another! But

alas! the primitive spirit is almost lost in this degenerate age: instead of laving down life, how few will lay down twelve pence for them? I remember, it is the observation of a late Worthy, upon Matthew 5:44. That he is persuaded there is hardly that man to be found this day alive, that fully understands and fully believes that scripture. O, did men think what they do for them, is done for Christ himself, it would produce other effects than are yet visible.

INFERENCE 4. Lastly, If Christ sanctified himself, that we might be sanctified by [or in] the truth; then it will follow, by sound consequence, That true sanctification is a good evidence that Christ set apart himself to die for us. In vain did he sanctify himself (as to you) unless you be sanctified. Holy souls only can claim the benefit of the great Sacrifice. O try then, whether true holiness (and that is only to be judged by its conformity to its pattern, 1 Peter 1:15. "As he that called you is holy, so be you holy"); whether such a holiness as is, and acts (according to its measure) like God's holiness, in the following particulars, be found in you.

1. God is universally holy in all his ways; so Psalms 145:17. "His works are all holy:" whatever he does, it is still done as becomes a holy God: he is not only holy in all things, but at all times unchangeably holy. Be you therefore holy in all things and at all times too, if ever you expect the benefit of Christ's sanctifying himself to die for you.

O brethren, let not the feet of your conversation be as the feet of a lame man, which are unequal, Proverbs 20:7. Be not sometimes hot, and sometimes cold; at one time careful, at another time careless; one day in a spiritual rapture, and the next in a fleshly frolic: but be you holy "en pase anastrofe", 1 Peter 1:15. "in all manner of conversation," in every creek and turning of your lives: and let your holiness hold out to the end. "Let him that is holy, be holy still," Revelation 21:11. Not like the hypocrite's paint, but as a true natural completion.

2. God is exemplarily holy, Jesus Christ is the great pattern of holiness. Be you examples of holiness too, unto all that are about you. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works," Matthew 5:16. As wicked men infect one another by their examples, and diffuse their poison and malignity, wherever they come; so do you disseminate godliness in all places and companies; and let those that frequently converse with you, especially those of your own families, receive a deeper dye and tincture of heavenliness every time they come near you, as the cloth does by every new dipping into the vat.

3. God delights in nothing but holiness, and holy ones; he has set all his pleasure in the saints. Be you holy herein, as God is holy. Indeed, there is this difference between God's choice and yours; he chooses not men, because they are holy, but that they may be so; so you are to chose them for your delightful companions, that God has chosen and made holy. "Let all your delights be in the saints, even them that excel in virtue," Psalms 16:3.

4. God abhors and hates all unholiness; do you so likewise that you may be like your Father which is in heaven. And when the Spirit of holiness runs down this upon you, a sweeter evidence the world cannot give, that Christ was sanctified for you. Holy ones may confidently lay the hand of their faith on the head of this great sacrifice, and say, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."

Chapter 151

S. The Work of Providence for the Saints

The Work of Providence

for the Saints by John Flavel

First, I shall undertake the proof and defence of the great truth that the affairs of the saints in this world are certainly conducted by the wisdom and care of special Providence. And in doing so I address myself with cheerfulness to perform, as I am able, a service for that Providence which has throughout my life 'performed all things for me,' as the text speaks. There is a twofold consideration of Providence, according to its twofold object and manner of dispensation; the one in general, exercised about all creatures, rational and irrational, animate and inanimate; the other special and peculiar. Christ has a universal empire over all things (Ephesians 1:22); He is the head of the whole world by way of dominion, but a head to the Church by way of union and special influence (John 17:2). He is 'the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe' (1 Timothy 4:10). The Church is His special care and charge. He rules the world for its good, as a head consulting the welfare of the body.

Heathens generally denied Providence, and no wonder, since they denied a God; for the same arguments that prove one will prove the other. Aristotle, the prince of heathen philosophers, could not by the utmost search of reason find out how the world originated, and therefore concludes it was from eternity. The Epicureans did, in a way, acknowledge a God, but yet denied a Providence, and wholly excluded Him from any interest or concern in the affairs of the world, as being inconsistent with the felicity and tranquility of the divine Being, to be diverted and cumbered with the care and labour of government. This assertion is so repugnant to reason that it is a wonder they did not blush at its absurdity; but I guess the reason, and one of them (according to Cicero) speaks it out in broad language: Itaque imposuistis cervicibus nostris sempiternum dominum, quem dies & noctes timeremus. Quis enim non timeat omnia providentem, & cogitantem, & awmadvertentem, & omnia ad se pertinere putantem, curiosum & plenum negotii Deum? (If this is so you have yoked us to an eternal master, such as we would fear day and night. For who would not be frightened of a prying busybody of a God who provides, plans and observes everything and who considers that everything is his concern?) They foresaw that the concession of a Providence would impose an eternal yoke upon their necks, by making them accountable for all they did to a higher tribunal, so that they must necessarily 'pass the time of their sojourning here in fear,' while all their thoughts, words and ways were strictly noted and recorded, for the purpose of an account by an all-seeing and righteous God. They therefore laboured to persuade themselves that what they had no mind for did not exist. But these atheistical and foolish conceits fall flat before the undeniable evidence of this so great and clear a truth.

Now my business here is not so much to deal with professed atheists who deny the existence of God and consequently deride all evidences brought from Scripture of the extraordinary events that fall out in favour of that people that are called His, but rather to convince those that professedly own all this, yet, never having tasted religion by experience, suspect, at least, that all these things

which we call special providences to the saints, are but natural events or mere contingencies. Thus, while they profess to own a God and a Providence (which profession is but the effect of their education) they do in the meantime live like atheists, and both think and act as if there were no such things; and really, I fear this is the case with the greater part of the men of this generation. But if it were indeed so, that the affairs of the world in general, and more especially those of the saints, were not conducted by divine Providence, but, as they would persuade us, by the steady course of natural causes, beside which, if at any time we observe any event to fall out, ft is merely casual and contingent, or proceeds from some hidden and secret cause in nature—if this indeed were so, let them that are tempted to believe it, give a rational answer to the following questions:

How comes it to pass that so many signal mercies and deliverances have befallen the people of God, above the power and against the course of natural causes, to make way for which there has been an obvious suspension and stop put to the course of nature?

It is most evident that no natural effect can exceed the power of its natural cause. Nothing can give to another more than it has in itself, and it is as clear that whatsoever acts naturally, acts necessarily. Fire bums to the uttermost of its power, while waters overflow and drown all that they can. Lions and other rapacious and cruel beasts, especially when hungry, tear and devour their prey; and arbitrary and rational agents also act according to the principles and laws of their natures. A wicked man when his heart is fully set in him, and his will stands in a full bent of resolution, will certainly, if he has power in his hand and opportunity to execute his conceived mischief, give it vent, and perpetrate the wicked devices of his heart. Having once conceived mischief, and 'travailing in pain with it,' according to the course of nature, he must 'bring it forth' (Psalms 7:14). But if any of these inanimate, brute, or rational agents, when there is no natural obstacle or hindrance, have their power suspended, and that when the effect is near the birth and the design at the very point of execution, so that though they would, yet cannot hurt; to what, do you think, is this to be assigned and referred? Yet so it has often been seen, where God's interest has been immediately concerned in the danger and evil of the event. The sea divided itself in its own channel, and made a wall of water on each side, to give Goes distressed Israel a safe passage, and that not in a calm, but when Its waves roared (Isaiah 51:15). The fire, when blown up to the most intense and vehement flame, had no power to singe one hair of God's faithful witnesses, when at the same instant it had power to destroy their intended executioners at a greater distance (Daniel 3:22). Yea, we find It has sometimes been sufficient to consume, but not to torment the body, as in that known instance of blessed Bainham, who told his enemies: 'The flames were to him as a bed of roses.' The hungry lions put off their natural fierceness and became gentle and harmless when Daniel was cast among them for a prey. The like account we are given of Polycarp, and Dionysius the Areopagite, whom the fire would not touch, but stood after the manner of a shipman's sail filled with the wind about them. Are these things according to the course and law of nature? To what secret natural cause can they be ascribed? In like manner we find the vilest and fiercest of wicked men have been withheld by an invisible hand of restraint from injuring the Lord's people. By what secret cause in nature was Jeroboam's hand dried up and made inflexible at the same instant it was stretched out against the man of God (1 Kings 13:4)? No wild beasts rend and devour their prey more greedily than wicked men would destroy the people of God that dwell among them, were it not for this providential restraint upon them. So the Psalmist expresses his case in the words following my text: 'My soul is among lions, and I lie among them

that are set on fire.' The disciples were sent forth 'as sheep into the midst of wolves' (Matthew 10:16). It will not avail in this case to object that those miraculous events depend only upon Scripture testimony, which the atheist is not convinced by, for beside all that may be alleged for the authority of that testimony (which is needless to produce to men that own it), what is it less that every eye sees or may see at this day? Do we not behold a weak, defenceless handful of men wonderfully and otherwise unaccountably preserved from ruin in the midst of potent, enraged and turbulent enemies that fain would, but cannot, destroy them; when as yet no natural impediment can be assigned why they cannot? And if this puzzle us, what shall we say when we see events produced in the world for the good of God's chosen, by those very hands and means which were Intentionally employed for their ruin? These things are as much beside the intentions of their enemies as they are above their own expectations, Yet such things are no rarities in the world. Was not the envy of Joseph's brethren, the cursed plot of Haman, and the decree procured by the envy of the princes against Daniel, with many more of the same kind, all turned by a secret and strange hand of Providence to their greater advancement and benefit? Their enemies lifted them up to all that honour and preferment they had.

How is it if the saints' affairs are not ordered by a special divine Providence that natural causes unite and associate themselves for their relief and benefit in so strange a manner as they are found to do?

It is undeniably evident that there are marvellous coincidences of Providence, confederating and agreeing, as it were, to meet and unite themselves to bring about the good of God's chosen. There is a similar face of things showing itself in several places at the same time, whenever any work for the good of the Church is come upon the stage of the world. As when the Messiah, the capital mercy, came to the temple, then Simeon and Anna were brought there by Providence as witnesses to it. So in Reformation work, when the images were pulled down in Holland, one and the same spirit of zeal possessed them in every city and town, that the work was done in a night. He that carefully reads the history of joseph's advancement to be the lord of Egypt may number in that story twelve remarkable acts or steps of Providence by which he ascended to that honour and authority. If but one of them had failed, in all likelihood the event had done so too, but every one occurred in its order, exactly keeping its own time and place. So in the Church's deliverance from the plot of Haman, we find no less than seven acts of Providence concurring strangely to produce it, as if they had all met by appointment and consent to break that snare for them, one thing so aptly suiting with and making way for another that every careful observer must needs conclude that this cannot be the result of accident but wise counsel. Even as in viewing the accurate structure of the body of a man, the figure, position, and mutual relationships of the several members and vessels has convinced some, and is sufficient to convince all, that it is the work of divine wisdom and power; in like manner, if the admirable adaptation of the means and instruments employed for mercy to the people of God are carefully considered, who can but confess that as there are tools of all sorts and sizes in the shop of Providence, so there is a most skilful hand that uses them, and that they could no more produce such effects of themselves than the axe, saw, or chisel can cut or carve a rough log into a beautiful figure without the hand of a skilful artificer?

We find, by manifold instances, that there certainly are strong combinations and predispositions of persons and things to bring about some issue and design for the benefit of the Church, which they

themselves never thought of. They hold no conference, they do not communicate their counsels to each other, yet meet together and work together as if they did, which is as if ten men should all meet together at one place, and in one hour, about one and the same business, and that without any previous appointment between themselves. Can any question that such a meeting of means and instruments is certainly, though secretly, overruled by some wise invisible agent?

If the concerns of God's people are not governed by a special Providence, how is it that the most apt and powerful means employed to destroy them are rendered ineffectual, while weak, contemptible means employed for their defence and comfort are crowned with success? This could never be if things were wholly swayed by the course of nature. If we judge by that rule, we must conclude that the more apt and powerful the means are, the more successful and prosperous they must needs be, and where they are inept, weak, and contemptible, nothing can be expected of them. Thus reason lays it, according to the rules of nature, but Providence crosses its hands, as Jacob did in blessing the sons of Joseph, and orders quite contrary issues and events. Such was the mighty power and deep policy used by Pharaoh to destroy God's Israel, that to the eye of reason it was as impossible to survive it as for crackling thorns to abide unconsumed amidst devouring flames. By this emblem their miraculous preservation is expressed; the bush was all in a flame, but not consumed (Exodus 3:2). The heathen Roman emperors, who made the world tremble and subdued the nations under them, employed all their power and policy against the poor, naked, defenceless Church, to ruin it, yet could not accomplish it (Revelation 3:1-4). O the seas of blood that heathen Rome shed in the ten persecutions! yet the Church lives. And when 'the dragon gave his power to the beast, (Revelation 13:2) that is, the state of Rome became antichristian, O what slaughters were made by the beast in all his dominions, so that the Holy Ghost represents him as drunken with the blood of the saints (Revelation 17:6). And yet all will not do; the gates, that is, the powers and policies of hell, cannot prevail against it. How manifest is the care and power of Providence herein! Had half that power been employed against any other people, it had certainly swallowed them up immediately, or, in the hundredth part of the time, worn them out. How soon was the Persian monarchy swallowed up by the Grecian, and that again by the Roman! Diocletian and Maximinus, in the height of their persecutions, found themselves so baffled by Providence that they both resigned the government and lived as private men. But in this wonderful preservation God makes good that promise: 'Though I make a full end of all nations, yet will I not make a full end of thee' (Jeremiah 30:11), and 'No weapon formed against thee shall prosper' (Isaiah 54:17). On the contrary, how successful have weak and contemptible means been made for the good of the Church! Thus in the first planting of Christianity in the world, by what weak and improbable instruments was it done! Christ did not choose the eloquent orators, or men of authority in the courts of lungs and emperors, but twelve poor artisans and fishermen; and these not sent together in a troop, but some to take one country to conquer it, and some another. The most ridiculous course, in appearance, for such a design as could be imagined, and yet in how short a time was the Gospel spread and the Churches planted by them in the several kingdoms of the world! This the Psalmist foresaw by the Spirit of prophecy when he said: 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength, to still the enemy and the avenger' (Psalms 8:2). At the sound of rams' homs Jericho is delivered into the hands of Israel (Joshua 6:20). By three hundred men, with their pitchers and lamps, the huge host of Midian is discomfited (Judges 6:19). The Protestants besieged in Beziers in France are delivered by a drunken drummer who, going to his quarters at midnight, rang the alarm-bell of the town, not knowing what he did, and just then

their enemies were making their assault. And as weak and improbable means have been blessed with success to the Church in general, so to the preservation of its particular members also. A spider, by weaving her web over the mouth of an oven, shall hide a servant of Christ, Du Moulin, from his enemies, who took refuge there in that bloody Parisian massacre. A hen shall sustain another many days at the same time by lodging her egg every day in the place where he had hid himself from the cut-throats. Examples might be easily multiplied, but the truth is too plain and obvious to the observation of all ages to need them. And can we but acknowledge a divine and special Providence overruling these matters, when we see the most apt and potent means for the Church's ruin frustrated, and the most silly and contemptible means granted success and prospered for its good?

If all things are governed by the course of nature and force of natural causes, how then comes it to pass that, Like a bowl when it strikes another, men are turned out of the way of evil, along which they were driving at full speed?

Good men have been going along the way to their own ruin, and did not know it, but Providence has met them in the way and preserved them by strange diversions, the meaning of which they did not understand till the event revealed it. When Paul lay bound at Caesarea, the high priest and chief of the Jews request Festus that he might be brought bound to Jerusalem, having laid wait in the way to kill him; but Festus, though ignorant of the plot, utterly refuses it, and chooses rather to go with them to Caesarea and judge him there. By this diversion their bloody design is frustrated (Acts 25:3-4).

Possidonius, in the life of Augustine, tells us that the good father, going to teach the people of a certain town, took a guide with him to show him the way. The guide mistook the usual road and unwittingly took a by-path, by which means Augustine escaped ruin by the hands of the bloody Donatists who, knowing his intention, waylaid him to kill him on the road. And as memorable and wonderful are those rubs and diversions wicked men have met with in the way of perpetrating the evils conceived and intended in their own hearts. Laban and Esau came against Jacob with mischievous purposes, but no sooner are they come near him but the shackles of restraint are immediately clapped upon them both, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprises. Balaam runs greedily, for reward, to curse Israel, but meets with an unexpected check at his very outset; and though that did not stop him, he tried every way to do them mischief, yet he still finds himself fettered by an effectual bond of restraint that he can in no way shake off (Numbers 22:25, Numbers 22:38). Saul, the high priest's bloodhound, breathes out threatenings against the Church, and goes with a bloody commission towards Damascus, to hale the poor flock of Christ to the slaughter; but when he comes near the place he meets an unexpected stop on the way, by which the mischief is not only diverted, but he is converted to Chrlst (Acts 9:1-4). Who can fail to see the finger of God in these things!

If there is not an over-ruling Providence ordering all things for the good of God's people, how comes it to pass that the good and evil which is done to them in this world is accordingly repaid into the bosoms of them that are instrumental therein?

How clear is it to every man's observation, that the kindnesses and benefits any have done to the Lord's people have been rewarded with full measure into their bosoms The Egyptian midwives refused to obey Pharaoh's inhuman command, and saved the male children of Israel; for this 'the

Lord dealt well with them and built them houses! (Exodus 1:21). The Shunammite was hospitable and careful for Elisha, and God recompensed it with the desirable enjoyment of a son (2 Kings 4:9, 2 Kings 4:17). Rahab hid the spies, and was exempted from the destruction of Jericho (Hebrews 11:31). Publius, the chief man of the island of Melita, courteously received and lodged Paul after his shipwreck, the Lord speedily repaid him for that kindness, and healed his father, who lay sick at that time of a bloody flux and fever (Acts 28:7-8). In like manner, we find the evils done to God's people have been repaid by a just retribution to their enemies. Pharaoh and the Egyptians were cruel enemies to God's Israel, and designed the ruin of their poor innocent babes, and God repaid it in smiting all the first-born of Egypt in one night (Exodus 12:29). Haman erected a gallows fifty cubits high for good Mordecai, and God so ordered it that he himself and his ten sons were hanged on it. And indeed it was but meet that he should eat the fruit of that tree which he himself had planted (Esther 7:10). Ahithophel plots against David, and gives counsel like an oracle how to procure his fall; and that very counsel, like an overcharged gun, recoils upon himself, and procures his ruin. Seeing his good counsel rejected (good politically, not morally), it was now easy for him to guess the outcome, and so his own fate (2 Samuel 17:23).

Charles IX most inhumanly made the very canals of Paris flow with Protestant blood, and soon after he died miserably, his blood flowing from all parts of his body. Stephen Gardiner, who burnt so many of God's dear servants to ashes, was himself so scorched up by a terrible inflammation that his very tongue was black and hung out of his mouth, and in dreadful torments he ended his wretched days. Maximinus, that cruel emperor, who set forth his proclamation engraven in brass for the utter abolishing of the Christian religion, was speedily smitten like Herod with a dreadful judgment, swarms of lice preying upon his entrails, and causing such a stench that his physicians could not endure to come near him, and for refusing to do so were slain. Hundreds of like instances might easily be produced to confirm this observation. And who can but see by these things that 'verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth!'

Yea, so exact have been the retributions of Providence to the enemies of the Church, that not only the same persons, but the same members, that have been the instruments of mischief, have been made the subjects of wrath. The same arm which Jeroboam stretched out to smite the prophet, God smites. The emperor Aurelian, when he was ready to subscribe the edict for the persecution of the Christians, was suddenly cramped in his knuckles that he could not write. Greenhill, in his exposition upon Ezekiel 11:13, tells his hearers that there was one then present in the congregation who was an eye-witness of a woman scoffing at another for purity and holy walking, who had her tongue stricken immediately with the palsy, and died of it within two days. Henry II of France, in a great rage against a Protestant counsellor, committed him to the hands of one of his nobles to be imprisoned, and that with these words, that 'he would see him burned with his own eyes.' But, mark the righteous providence of God, within a few days after, the same nobleman, with a lance put into his hands by the king, did at a tilting match run the said king into one of his eyes, from which he died.

Yea, Providence has made the very place of sinning the place of punishment: "In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy blood (1 Kings 21:19); and it was exactly fulfilled (2 Kings 9:26). Thus Tophet is made a burying- place for the Jews, till there was no room to bury, and that was the place where they had offered up their sons to Moloch (Jeremiah 7:31-32). The story of Nightingale is generally known, which Foxe relates, how he fell out of the

pulpit and broke his neck, while he was abusing that Scripture (1 John 1:10). And thus the Scriptures are made good by Providence. 'Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein; and he that rolleth a stone, it shall return upon him' (Proverbs 26:27), and 'with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again' (Matthew 7:2).

If any shall still say that these things may fall out accidentally, and that many thousands of the Church's enemies have died in peace, and their end been like other men, we answer with Augustine: 'If no sin were punished here, no Providence would be believed; and if every sin should be punished here, no judgment would be expected.' But, that none may think these events to be merely casual and accidental, we shall enquire yet further.

If these things are merely accidental, how is it that they square and agree so exactly with the Scriptures in all particulars?

We read: 'Can two walk together except they be agreed?' (Amos 3:3). If two men travel along one road, it is likely they are agreed to go to the same place. Providences and Scriptures go all one way, and if they seem at any time to go different or opposite ways, be sum they will meet at the journey's end. There is an agreement between them so to do. Does God miraculously suspend the power of natural causes? Why, this is no accidental thing, but what harmonizes with the Word 'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee' (Isaiah 43:2). Do natural causes unite and associate themselves for the good of God's people? Why, this is no more than what is contained in the promises, and b but the fulfilling of that Scripture: 'All is yours, for ye are Christ's (1 Corinthians 3:22); that is, the use, benefit and service of all the creatures is for you, as your need shall require. Are the most apt and powerful means employed for their ruin frustrated? Who can but see the Scriptures fulfilled in, and expounded by such providences (see Isaiah 8:8-10, Isaiah 54:15-17; expounded by 2 Kings 18:17, etc.)! Do you see at any time a rub of Providence diverting the course of good men from falling into evil, or wicked men from committing evil? How loudly do such Providences proclaim the truth and certainty of the Scriptures, which tell us that 'the way of man is not in himself, neither is it in him that walketh to direct his steps! (Jeremiah 10:23), and that 'a man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps' (Proverbs 16:9)! Do you see adequate retributions made to those that injure or befriend the people of God? Why, when you see all the kindness and love they have shown the saints returned with interest into their bosoms, how is it possible but you must see the accomplishment of these Scriptures in such providences! 'But the liberal soul deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things he shall stand' (Isaiah 32:8; 2 Corinthians 9:6). And when you see the evils men have done, or intended to do to the Lord's people, recoiling upon themselves, he is perfectly blind that does not see the harmony such providences bear with such Scriptures as Psalms 7:14-16; Psalms 9:16; and Psalms 140:11-12.

O what exact proportions do providences and Scriptures hold! Little do men take notice of it. Why did Cyrus, contrary to all rules of state policy, freely dismiss the captives, except to fulfil the Scripture (Isaiah 45:13)? So that it was well observed by one that, 'as God hath stretched out the expansum or firmament over the natural; so he hath stretched out his Word over the rational world.' And as the creatures on earth are influenced by those heavenly bodies, so are all creatures in the world influenced by the Word, and do infallibly fulfill it, when they design to thwart it.

If these things are contingent, how is it that they fall out so remarkably in the nick of time, which makes them so greatly observable to all that consider them?

We find a multitude of providences so timed to a minute, that had they occurred just a little sooner or later, they had mattered little in comparison with what now they do. Certainly, it cannot be chance, but counsel, that so exactly works in time. Contingencies keep to no rules.

How remarkable to this purpose were the tidings brought to Saul, that 'the Philistines have invaded the land (1 Samuel 23:27), just as he was ready to grasp the prey! The angel calls to Abraham, and shows him another sacrifice just when his hand was giving the fatal stroke to Isaac (Genesis 22:10-11). A well of water is shown to Hagar just when she had left the child, as not able to see its death (Genesis 21:16-17). Rabshakeh meets with a blasting providence, hears a rumour that frustrated his design, just when ready to make an assault upon Jerusalem (Isaiah 37:7-8). So when Haman's plot against the Jews was ripe, and all things ready for execution, 'on that night could not the king sleep' (Esther 6:1). When the horns are ready to gore Judah, immediately carpenters are prepared to fray them away (Zechariah 1:18-21).

How remarkable was the relief of La Rochelle by a shoal of fish that came into the harbour when they were ready to perish with famine, such as they never observed before, nor after that time! Mr Dod could not go to bed one night, but has a strong impulse to visit, though unseasonably, a neighbour gentleman, and just as he came there, he meets him at his door, with a halter in his pocket, just going to hang himself. Dr Tate and his wife, in the Irish rebellion, were flying through the woods with a sucking-child, which was just ready to expire. The mother going to rest it upon a rock, puts her hand upon a bottle of warm milk, by which it was preserved. A good woman, from whose mouth I received it, being driven to a great extremity, all supplies falling, was exeedingly plunged into unbelieving doubts and fear, not seeing where supplies should come from, when, lo! in the nick of time, turning over some things in a chest, unexpectedly she lights upon a piece of gold, which supplied her present needs till God opened another door of supply. If these things fall out by accident, how is it they come in the very nick of time so exactly, as that it is become proverbial in Scripture, 'In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen' (Genesis 22:14)?

Lastly, were these things accidental and contingent, how can it be that they should fall out so immediately upon and consonantly to the prayers of the saints? So that in many providences they are able to discern a very clear answer to their prayers, and are sure they have the petitions they asked (1 John 5:15). Thus the sea divided itself just at the time of Israel's cry to heaven (Exodus 14:10). So signal a victory is given to Asa immediately at the time of that passionate cry to heaven: 'Help us, O Lord our God' (2 Chronicles 14:11-12). Ahithophel goes and hangs himself, just at the time of that prayer of distressed David (2 Samuel 1:1). Haman falls and his plot is broken, just at the time of the fast kept by Mordecai and Esther (Esther 4:16). Our own Speed, in his History of Britain, tells us that Richard I besieged a castle with his army, they offered to surrender if he would save their lives; he refuses, and threatens to hang them all. Upon this an arbalester [Crossbow-man] charged his bow with a square arrow, making first his prayer to God that he would direct the shot and deliver the innocent from oppression; it struck the king himself, from which he died, and they were delivered. Abraham's servant prayed for success, and see how it was answered (Genesis 24:45). Peter was cast into prison, and prayer was made for him by the Church, and see the event (Acts 12:5-7, Acts 12:12). I could easily add to these the wonderful

examples of the return of prayers which was observed in Luther, and Dr Winter in Ireland, and many more; but I judge it needless because most Christians have a stock of experience of their own, and are well assured that many of the providences that befall them are, and can be no other than the return of their prayers. And now who can be dissatisfied in this point that wisely considers these things? Must we not conclude that 'he withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous' (Job 36:7) and that 'The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him' (2 Chronicles 16:9). His providences proclaim Him to be a God who hears prayer.

S. The blessed Inheritance purchased

The blessed Inheritance purchased by the Oblation of

Christ, being the second Effect or Fruit of his Priesthood

"But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Galatians 4:4-5 This scripture gives us an account of a double fruit of Christ's death, namely, the payment of our debt, and the purchase of our inheritance.

1. The payment of our debt, expressed by our redemption, or buying us out from the obligation and curse of the law, which has been discoursed in the last exercise.

2. The purchase of an inheritance for those redeemed ones, expressed here by their receiving the adoption of sons, which is to be our present subject. Adoption is either civil, or divine. Of the first, the civil law gives this definition: that it is,

"A lawful act, an imitation of nature, invented for the comfort of them that have no children of their own. Divine adoption is that special benefit whereby God, for Christ's sake, accepts us as sons, and makes us heirs of eternal life with him."

Between this civil and sacred adoption, there is a twofold agreement, and disagreement. They agree in this, that both flow from the pleasure and good-will of the adoptant; and in this, that both confer a right to privileges, which we have not by nature: but in this they differ, one is an act imitating nature, the other transcends nature; the one was found out for the comfort of them that had no children; the other for the comfort of them that had no father. This divine adoption is, in scripture, either taken properly for that act or sentence of God, by which we are made sons, or for the privileges with which the adopted are invested: and so it is taken Romans 8:23, and in this scripture now before us. We lost our inheritance by the fall of Adam; we receive it, as the text speaks, by the death of Christ, which restores it again to us by a new and better title. The doctrine hence, is this,

DOCTRINE. That the death of Jesus Christ has not only satisfied for our debts, but over and above purchased a rich inheritance for the children of God.

"For this end, or cause, he is the Mediator of the New Testament; that, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first Testament, they which are called, might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance," Hebrews 9:15.

We will here, First, See what Christ paid. Secondly, What he purchased. Thirdly, For whom.

First, that Christ paid. Our divines comprise the virtue and fruits of the priesthood of Christ in these two things, namely, Solutio debiti, et acquisitio haereditatis, payment and purchase. Answerable, the obedience of Christ has a double relation, relatio legalis justitiae, the relation of a legal righteousness; and adequate and exactly proportioned price. And it has also in it ratio superlegalis

meriti, the relation of a merit over and beyond the law. To object (as some do) "the satisfaction of Christ was more than sufficient", according to our doctrine, "and therefore could not be intended, for the payment of our debt," is a senseless cavil. For surely, if Christ paid more than was owing, he must needs pay all that was owing to Divine Justice. And truly it is but a bad requital of the love of Jesus Christ, who, beside the payment of what he owed, would manifest his bounty by the redundancy of his merit, which he paid to God to purchase a blessed inheritance for us. This over plus of satisfaction (which was the price of that inheritance I am now to open) is not obscurely hinted, but plainly expressed twice in Romans 5:15. "But not as the offence, so also is the free gift: for if through the offence of one many be dead, 'pollo mallon', much more the grace of God, and the gift of grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, 'eperisseuse'" has abounded or flowed abundantly unto many." So Romans 5:17. "For if by one man's offence, death reigned by one, 'pollo mallon', much more they which receive 'ten perisseian', the overflowing, or abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." In both which places Christ and Adam are compared as the two roots or common heads of mankind, both agreeing in this property of communicating their conditions to those that are theirs; yet there is a great deal of difference between them! for in Christ the power is all divine, and therefore infinitely more active and effectual: He communicates abundantly more to his, than they lost in Adam; so that his blood is not only sufficient to redeem all those that are actually redeemed by it, but even the whole world also. And were there so many worlds of men as there are men in the world, it would be sufficient for them also; and yet still there would be an over plus of value: for all those worlds of men would rise but to a finite bulk; but this blood is infinite in its worth and dignity. Since then there is not a whole world, no not half, but the far less part redeemed by the blood of Christ, which was sufficient for so many; great must be the surplusage and redundancy of merit? Here our divines rightly distinguish between the substance and accidents of Christ's death and obedience. Consider Christ's suffering, as to the substance of it, it was no more than what the law required; for, neither the justice, nor love of the Father would permit that Christ should suffer more than what was necessary for him to bear, as our Surety; but, as to the circumstances, the person of the sufferer, the cause and efficacy of his sufferings, etc. it was much more than sufficient: a superlegale meritum, a merit above and beyond what the law required; for, though the law required the death of the sinner, who is but a poor contemptible creature, it did not require that one, perfectly innocent, should die, it did not require that God should shed his blood: it did not require blood of such value and worth as this was. I say, none of this the law required, though God was pleased, for the advancement and manifestation of his justice and mercy in the highest, to admit, and order this, by way of commutation, admitting him to be our 'antipsuchos', or ransomer, by dying for us.

And, indeed, it was a most gracious relaxation of the law, that admitted of such a commutation as this; for hereby it comes to pass, that justice is fully satisfied, and yet we live and are saved; which, before, was a thing that could not be imagined. Yes, now we are not only redeemed from wrath, by the adequate compensation made for our sins by Christ's blood and sufferings, substantially considered; but entitled to a most glorious inheritance, purchased by his blood, considered as the blood or an innocent, as the blood of God, and therefore as most excellent and efficacious blood, above what the law demanded. And this is the meaning of Athanasius, when he says, "That Christ recompensed, or made amends for small things with great:" he means not, that sin, considered absolutely, and in itself, is small, O no, but compared with Christ's blood, and the infinite

excellency and worth of it, it is so. And Chrysostom, to the same purpose, "Christ paid much more (says he) than he owed and so much more, as the immense ocean is more than a small drop." So that it was rightly determined by holy Anselm: "No man (says he) can pay to God what he owes him; Christ only paid more than he owed him." By this you see, how rich a treasure lies in Christ, to bestow in a purchase for us, above what he paid to redeem us; even as much as his soul and body were more worth than ours, for whom it was sacrificed; which is so great a sum, that all the angels in heaven, and men on earth, can never compute and sum up, so as to show us the total of it. And this was that inexhaustible treasure that Christ expended, to procure and purchase the fairest inheritance for believers. Having seen the treasure that purchased, let us next enquire into the inheritance purchased by it.

Secondly, This inheritance is so large, that it cannot be surveyed by creatures: nor can the boundaries and limits thereof be described, for it comprehends all things; 1 Corinthians 3:22. "All is yours, you are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Revelation 21:7. "He that overcomes shall inherit all things". And yet I do not think, or say, that Dominium fundatur in gratia, that temporal dominion is founded in grace: no, that is at the cast and disposal of Providence. But Christ, by his death, has restored a right to all things to his people.

But, to be more particular, I shall distribute the saints inheritance, purchased by Christ, into three heads; all temporal good things, all spiritual good things, and all eternal good things are theirs.

1. All temporal good things. 1 Timothy 6:7. "He has given us all things richly to enjoy". Not that they have the possession, but the comfort and benefit of all things: others have the sting, gall, wormwood, baits and snares of the creature; saints only have the blessing and comfort of it. So that this little that a righteous man has, is (in this among other respects) better than the treasures of many wicked: which is the true key to open that dark saying of the apostle, 2 Corinthians 6:10. "As having nothing, and yet possessing all things." They only possess, others are possessed by the world. The saints utuntur mundi, et fruuntur Deo, "use the world, and enjoy God" in the use of it. Others are deceived, defiled, and destroyed by the world; but these are refreshed and furthered by it.

2. All spiritual good things are purchased by the blood of Christ for them; as Justification, which comprises remission of sins and acceptance of our persons by God: Romans 3:24. "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ." Sanctification is also purchased for them; yes, both initial and progressive sanctification: for of "God, he is made unto us, not only wisdom and righteousness, but sanctification also," 1 Corinthians 1:30. These two, namely, our justification and sanctification, are two of the most rich and shining robes in the wardrobe of free grace. How glorious and lovely do they render the soul that wears them! These are like the bracelets, and jewels Isaac sent to Rebecca. Adoption into the family of God is purchased for us by his blood; "For you are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ," Galatians 3:26. Christ, as he is the Son, is haeres natus,, "the heir by nature;" as he is Mediator, he is haeres constitutus, "the heir by appointment," appointed heir of all things, as it is, Hebrews 1:2. By the Sonship of Christ, we being united to him by faith, become sons; and if sons, then heirs. "O what manner of love is this, that we should be called the sons of God", 1 John 3:1. That a poor beggar should be made an heir, yes, an heir of God, and joint heir with Christ! Yes, that very faith, which is the bond of union, and consequently, the ground of all our communion with Christ, is the purchase of his

blood also:2 Peter 1:1. "To them that have "obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ." This most precious grace is the dear purchase of our Lord Jesus Christ; yes, all that peace, joy, and spiritual comfort, which are sweet fruits of faith, are with it purchased for us by this blood. So speaks the apostle in Romans 5:1-3. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ," etc. Moreover the Spirit himself, who is the author, fountain, and spring of all graces and comforts, is procured for us by his death and resurrection: Galatians 3:13-14. "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree: that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." That Spirit that first sanctified, and since has so often sealed, comforted, directed, resolved, guided, and quickened your souls, had not come to perform any of these blessed offices upon your hearts, if Christ had not died.

3. All eternal good things are the purchase of his blood. Heaven, and all the glory thereof is purchased for you that are believers, with this price. Hence that glory, whatever it be, is called "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you": To the lively hope whereof you are begotten again, "by the resurrection of Christ from the dead," 1 Peter 1:3-4. Not only present mercies are purchased for us, but things to come also, as it is, 1 Corinthians 3:22. Man is a prudent and prospecting creature, and is not satisfied that it is well with him for the present, unless he have some assurance it shall be well with him for time to come. His mind is taken up about what shall be hereafter; and from the good or evil things to come, he raises up to himself vast hopes or fears.

Therefore to complete our happiness, and fill up the uttermost capacity of our souls, all the good of eternity is put into the account and inventory of the saints estate and inheritance. This happiness is ineffably; it is usually distinguished into what is essential, and what is accessory to it. The essentials of it, as far as we in our embodied state can conceive, is either the objective, subjective, or formal happiness to be enjoyed in heaven. The objective happiness is God himself, Psalms 73:25. "Whom have I in heaven but you?" If it could be supposed (says one) that God should withdraw from the saints in heaven, and say, Take heaven, and divide it among you; but as for me, I will withdraw from you; the saints would fall a weeping in heaven, and say, Lord, take heaven, and give it to whom you will; it is no heaven to us, except you be there: Heaven would be very Bochim to the saints without God. In this, our glory in heaven consists, to be ever with the Lord, 1 Thessalonians 4:17. God himself is the chief part of a saint’s inheritance; in which sense, as some will understand, Romans 8:1. they are called heirs of God. The subjective glory and happiness is the attemperation and suiting of the soul and body to God. This is begun in sanctification, and perfected in glorification. It consists in removing from both all that is indecent, and inconsistent with a state of such complete glory and happiness, and in superinducting and clothing it with all heavenly qualities. The immunities of the body are its freedom from all nature infirmities; which as they come in, so they go out with sin. Thenceforth there shall be no diseases, deformities, pains, flaws, monstrosities; their good physician death has cured all this, and their vile bodies shall be made like unto Christ’s glorious body, Php 3:21. and be made a spiritual body, 1 Corinthians 15:44. For agility, like the chariots of Aminadab; for beauty, as the top of Lebanon; for incorruptibility, as if they were pure spirits. The soul also is discharged and freed from all darkness and ignorance of mind, being now able to discern all truths in God, that crystal ocean of truth. The

leaks of the memory stopped forever; the roving of the fancy perfectly cured; the stubbornness and reluctance of the will forever subdued, and retained in due and full subjection to God. So that the saints in glory shall be free from all that now troubles them; they shall never sin more nor be once tempted so to do, for no serpent hisses in that paradise; they shall never grieve nor groan more, for God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. They shall never be troubled more, for God will then recompense tribulation to their troublers, and to them that are troubled, rest; they shall never doubt more, for fruition excludes doubting. The formal happiness is the fullness of satisfaction resulting from the blessed sight and enjoyment of God, by a soul so attempered to him, Psalms 17:15. "When I awake I shall be satisfied with your likeness." This sight of God, in glory, called the beatifical vision, must needs yield ineffable satisfaction to the beholding soul, inasmuch as it will be an intuitive vision. The intellectual or mental eye shall see God, 1 John 3:2. The corporeal glorified eye shall see Christ, Job 19:26-27. What a ravishing vision will this be! and how much will it exceed all reports and apprehensions we had here of it! Surely one half was not told us. It will be a transformative vision, it will change the beholder into its own image and likeness. "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is," 1 John 3:2. As iron put into the fire, becomes all fiery; so the soul, by conversing with God, is changed into his very similitude. It will be an appropriative vision; "Whom I shall see for myself," Job 19:26-27. In heaven interest is clear and undoubted, fear is cast out: no need of marks and signs there; for what a man sees and enjoys, how can he doubt of? It will be a ravishing vision; these we have by faith are so, how much more those in glory? How was Paul transported, when he was in a visional way enrapt up into the third heaven, and heard the unutterable things, though he was not admitted into the blessed society, but was with them, as the angels are in our assemblies, a stander by, a looker-on. If a spark do so inflame, what is it to lie down like a Phoenix in her bed of spices! Like a Salamander to live and move in the fire of love! It will also be an eternal vision; vacabimus et videbimus, (as Augustinus said) we shall then be at leisure for this employment, and have no diversions from it forever. No evening is mentioned to the seventh day’s sabbath; no night in the new Jerusalem. And therefore,

Lastly, It will be a fully satisfying vision: God will then be all in all. "Curiosity itself will be satisfied." The blessed soul will feel itself blessed, filled, satisfied in every part. Ah, what a happiness is here! to look and love, is drink and sing, and drink again at the fountain head of the highest glory! And if at any time its eye be turned from a direct to a reflex sight upon what it once was, how it was wrought on, how fitted for his glory, how wonderfully distinguished by special grace from them that are howling in flames, while himself is shouting aloud upon his bed of everlasting rest; and this will enhance the glory. And so also will the accessories of this blessedness be; The place where God is enjoyed, the empyrean heaven, the city of God, where Christ ascended, where the great assembly are met. Paradise and Canaan were but the types of it; more excelling and transcending the royal palaces or earthly princes, than they do a pigeon-hole. The company also with whom he is enjoyed, adds to the glory. A blissful society indeed! store of good neighbors in that city. There we shall have familiar converse with angels, whose appearances now are insupportable by poor mortals. There will be sweet and full closings also between the saints; Luther and Zwinglius are there agreed. Here they could not fully close with one another, and no wonder, for they could not fully close with themselves. But there is perfect harmony and unity; all meeting and closing in God, as lines in the center. This is a blessed glimpse of your inheritance.

Thirdly, All this is purchased for believers: hence it is called, "the inheritance of the saints in light," Colossians 1:12. "All is yours, for you are Christ's," that is the tenure, 1 Corinthians 3:23. So Romans 8:30. "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Only those that are sons, are heirs, Romans 8:17. The unrighteous shall not inherit, 1 Corinthians 6:9. "It is the Father's good pleasure, to give the kingdom to the little flock," Luke 12:32.

INFERENCE. 1. Has Christ not only redeemed you from wrath, but purchased such an eternal inheritance also by the overplus of his merit for you? O how well content should believers then be with their lot of providence in this life, be it what it will! Content did I say? I speak too low; overcome, ravished, filled with praises and thanksgivings; how low, how poor, how afflicted soever for the present they are. O let not such things as grumbling, repining, fretting at providence, be found, or once named among the expectants of this inheritance! Suppose you had taken a beggar from your door, and adopted him to be your son, and made him heir of a large inheritance, and after this he should contest and quarrel with you for a trifle; could you bear it? How to work the spirit of a saint into contentment with a low condition here, I have laid down several rules in another discourse, to which, for the present I refer the reader.

INFERENCE 2. With what weaned affections should the people of God walk up and down this world, content to live, and willing to die? For things present are theirs if they live, and things to come are theirs if they die. Paul expresses himself in a frame of holy indifference, Php 1:23 "Which to chose I know not." Many of them that are now in fruition of their inheritance above, had vitam in patientia, mortem in desiderio, "Life in patience, and death in desire," while they tabernacled with us. "O (cried one) what would I give to have a bed made to my wearied soul in Christ's bosom? " - I cannot tell you what sweet pain and delightful torments are in his love; I often challenge time for holding us asunder; I profess to you, I have no rest until I be over head and ears in love's ocean. If Christ's love (that fountain of delights) were laid open to me as I would wish, O how overcome would this my soul be! I half call his absence cruel; and the mask and veil on his face a cruel covering, that hideth such a fair, fair face from a sick soul. I dare not challenge himself, but his absence is a mountain of iron upon my heavy heart. O when shall we meet! How long is the dawning of the marriage-day! O sweet Lord Jesus, take wide steps! O my Lord, come over mountains at one stride! O my beloved, flee like a roe, or young hart upon the mountains of separation! O if he would fold the heavens together like an old cloak, and shovel time and days out of the way, and make really in haste the Lamb's wife for her husband! Since he looked upon me, my heart is not mine own." Who can be blamed for desiring to see that fair inheritance which is purchased for him! But, truly, should God hold up the soul by the power of faith, from day to day, to such sights as these, who would be content to live a day more on earth! How should we be ready to pull down the prison walls, and not have patience to wait until God open the door! As the Heathen said, "Victurosque dii celant, ut vivere durent." And truly the wisdom of God is in this specially remarkable, in giving the new creature such an admirable crisis, and even temper, as that scripture, 2 Thessalonians 3:5. expresses, "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and patient waiting for Christ." Love inflames with desire, patience allays that fervor. So that fervent desires (as one happily expresses it) are allayed with meek submission; mighty love with strong patience. And had not God twisted together these two principles in the Christian's constitution, he had framed a creature to be a torment to itself, to live upon a very rack.

INFERENCE. 3. Hence we infer the impossibility of their salvation that know not Christ, nor have interest in his blood. Neither Athens, nor merely nominal Christians, can inherit heaven. I know some are very indulgent to the Heathen, and many formal Christians are too much so to themselves: but union by faith with Jesus Christ, is the only way revealed in scripture, by which we hope to come to the heavenly inheritance. I know it seems hard, that such brave men, as some of the Heathens were, should be damned: but the scripture knows no other way to glory, but Christ put on, and applied by faith. And it is the common suffrage of modern sound divines, that no man, by the sole conduct of nature, without the knowledge of Christ, can be saved. There is but one way to glory for all the world, John 14:6. "No man comes to the Father but by me." Galatians 3:14. "The blessing of Abraham comes upon the Gentiles through faith." Scripture asserts the impossibility of being or doing, anything that is truly evangelically good, out of Christ, John 15:5. "Without me you can do nothing." And Hebrews 11:6. "Without faith it is impossible to please God."

Scripture everywhere connects and chains salvation with vocation, Romans 8:30. and vocation with the gospel, Romans 10:14. To those that plead for the salvation of Heathens, and profane Christians. we may apply that tart rebuke of Bernard, that while some labor to make Plato a Christian, he feared they therein did prove themselves to be Heathens.

INFERENCE. 4. How greatly are we all concerned to clear up our title to the heavenly inheritance! It is horrible to see how industrious many are for an inheritance on earth, and how careless for heaven. By which we may plainly see how vilely the noble soul is depressed by sin, and sunk down into flesh, minding only the concernments of the flesh. Hear me, you that labor for the world, as if heaven were in it; what will you do when at death you shall look back over your shoulder, and see what you have spent your time and strength for, shrinking and vanishing away from you? When you shall look forward, and see vast eternity opening its mouth to swallow you up; O then what would you give for a well-grounded assurance of an eternal inheritance!

O, therefore if you have any concernment for your poor souls; if it be not indifferent to you what becomes of them, whether they be saved, or whether they be damned, "give all diligence to make your calling and election sure," 2 Peter 1:10. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that works in you both to will and to do of his own good pleasure," Php 2:12. Remember it is salvation you work for, and that is no trifle. Remember, it is your own salvation, and not another's. It is for your own poor soul that you are striving; and what have you more?

Remember, now God offers you his helping hand; now the Spirit waits upon you in the means, but of the continuance thereof you have no assurance; for it is of his own good pleasure, and not at yours. To your work, souls, to your work. Ah, strive as men that know what an inheritance in heaven is worth.

And, as for you that have solid evidence that it is yours; O, that with hands and eyes lifted up to heaven, you would adore that free grace, that has entitled a child of wrath to a heavenly inheritance! Walk as becomes heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. Be often looking heavenward when wants pinch here. O look to that fair estate you have reserved in heaven for you, and say, I am hastening home; and when I come there, all my grants shall be supplied. Consider what it cost Christ to purchase it for you; and with a deep sense of what he has laid out for you, let your soul say, Blessed be God for Jesus Christ!

S. The fifth excellent Saying of Christ

The fifth excellent Saying of Christ upon the Cross

"After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, said--I thirst!" John 19:28

It is as truly, as commonly said, death is dry: Christ found it so, when he died. When his spirit labored in the agonies of death, then he said, I thirst. This is the fifth word of Christ upon the cross, spoken a little before he bowed the head and yielded up the Spirit. It is only recorded by this evangelist; and, there are four things remarkable in this complaint of Christ, namely, The person complaining: the complaint he made: the time when, and the reason why he so complained.

First, The person complaining. Jesus said, I thirst. This is a clear evidence, that it was no common suffering: great and resolute spirits will not complain for small matters. The spirit of a common man will endure much, before it utters any complaint. Let us therefore see,

Secondly, The affliction, or suffering, he complains of; and that is thirst. There are two sorts of thirst, one natural and proper, another spiritual and figurative: Christ felt both at this time. His soul thirsted, in vehement desires and longings, to accomplish and finish that great and difficult work he was now about; and his body thirsted, by reason of those unparalleled agonies it labored under, for the accomplishing thereof: but it was the proper natural thirst he here intends, when he said, I thirst. Now, "this natural thirst," of which he complains, "is the raging of the appetite for moist nourishment, arising from scorching up of the parts of the body for want of moisture." And, among all the pains and afflictions of the body, there can scarcely be named a greater, and more intolerable one, than extreme thirst. The most mighty and valiant have stooped under it. Mighty Samson, after all his conquests and victories, complains thus, Judges 15:18. "And he was sore athirst, and called on the Lord, and said, You have given this great deliverance into the hand of your servant, and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?" Great Darius drank filthy water, defiled with the bodies of the slain, to relieve his thirst, "and protested, never any drink was more pleasant to him." Hence, Isaiah 41:17, thirst is put to express the most afflicted state, "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst, I the Lord will hear them;" that is when my people are in extreme necessities, under any extraordinary pressures and distresses, I will be with them, to supply and relieve them. Thirst causes a most painful compression of the heart, when the body, like a sponge, sucks and draws for moisture, and there is none. And this may be occasioned, either by long abstinence from drink, or by the laboring and expense of the spirits under grievous agonies and extreme tortures; which, like a fire within, soon scorch up the very radical moisture.

Now, though we find not that Christ tasted a drop since he sat with his disciples at the table; after that no more refreshments for him in this world: yet that was not the cause of this raging thirst; but it is to be ascribed to the extreme sufferings which he so long had conflicted with, both in his soul and body. These preyed upon him, and drank up his very Spirits. Hence came this sad complaint, I

thirst.

Thirdly, Let us consider the time when he thus complained. "When all things were now accomplished," says the text, that is when all things were even ready to be accomplished in his death. A little, a very little while before his expiration, when the pangs of death began to be strong upon him: and so it was both a sign of death at hand, and of his love to us, which was stronger than death, that would not complain sooner, because he would admit of no relief, nor take the least refreshment, until he had done his work.

Fourthly, and lastly, Take notice of the design and end of his complaint: "that the scripture might be fulfilled, he says, I thirst;" that is that it might appear, for the satisfaction of our faith, that whatever had been predicted by the prophets, was exactly accomplished, even to a circumstance in him. Now it was foretold of him, Psalms 69:32. "They gave me gall for my meat, and, in my thirst, they gave me vinegar to drink;" and herein it was verified. Hence the note is,

DOCTRINE. That such were the agonies and extreme sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, as drank up his very spirits, and made him cry, I thirst.

"If I, (said one) should live a thousand years, and every day die a thousand times the same death for Christ that he once died for me, yet all this would be nothing to the sorrows Christ endured in his death." At this time the bridegroom Christ might have borrowed the words of his spouse, the church, Lamentations 1:12. "It is nothing to you, all you that pass by? See and behold, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord has afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger."

Here we are to enquire into, and consider the extremities and agonies Christ labored under upon the cross, which occasioned this sad complaint of thirst; and then make application, in the several inferences of truth deducible from it.

Now the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross were two fold, namely, His corporeal, and spiritual sufferings: we shall open them distinctly, and then show how both these meeting together upon him in their fullness and extremity, must needs consume his very radical moisture, and make him cry, I thirst. To begin with the first.

First, His corporeal and more external sufferings were exceeding great, acute, and extreme sufferings; for they were sharp, universal, continual, and unrelieved by any inward comfort.

First, They were sharp sufferings; for his body was racked or digged in those parts where sense more eminently dwells: in the hands and feet the veins and sinews meet, and their pain and anguish meet with them; Psalms 22:16. "They digged my hands and my feet." Now Christ by reason of his exact and excellent temper of body, had doubtless more quick, tender and delicate senses than other men: his body was so formed, that it might be a capacious vessel, to take in more sufferings than any other body could. Sense is, in some, more delicate and tender, and in others dull and blunt, according to the temperament and vivacity of the body and spirits; but in none as it was in Christ, whose body was miraculously formed on purpose to suffer unparalleled miseries. and sorrows in: "A body have you fitted me," Hebrews 10:5. Neither sin nor sickness had any way enfeebled or dulled it.

Secondly, As his pains were sharp, so they were universal, not affecting one, but every part; they seized every member; from head to foot, no member was free from torture: for, as his head was wounded with thorns, his back with bloody lashes, his hands and feet with nails, so every other part was stretched and distended beyond its natural length, by hanging upon that cruel engine of torment, the cross. And as every member, so every particular sense, was afflicted; his sight with vile wretches, cruel murderers that stood about him; his hearing with horrid blasphemies, belched out against him; his taste with vinegar and gall, which they gave to aggravate his misery; his smell with that filthy Golgotha where he was crucified, and his feeling with exquisite pains in every part; so that he was not only sharply, but universally tormented.

Thirdly, These universal pains were continual, not by fits, but without any intermission. He had not a moment's ease by the cessation of pains; wave came upon wave, one grief driving on another, until all God's waves and billows had gone over him. To be in extremity of pain, and that without a moment's intermission, will quickly pull down the stoutest nature in the world.

Fourthly, and lastly, As his pains were sharp, universal and continual, so they were altogether unrelieved by his understanding part. If a man have sweet comforts flowing into his soul from God, they will sweetly demulce and allay the pains of the body: this made the martyrs shout amidst the flames. Yes, even inferior comforts and delights of the mind, will greatly relieve the oppressed body.

It is said of Possidonius, that, in a great fit of the stone, he solaced himself with discourses of moral virtue, and when the pain twinged him, he would say, "O pain you does nothing, though you are a little troublesome, I will never confess you to be evil." And Epicures, in the fits of the colic, refreshed himself, ob memoriam inventorum, that is by his inventions in philosophy. But now Christ had no relief this way in the least; not a drop of comfort came from heaven into his soul to relieve it, and the body by it: but, on the contrary, his soul was filled up with grief, and had an heavier burden of its own to bear than that of the body; so that instead of relieving, it increased unspeakably the burden of its outward man. For,

Secondly, Let us consider these inward sufferings of his soul how great they were, and how quickly they spent his natural strength, and turned his moisture into the drought of summer. And,

First, His soul felt the wrath of an angry God, which was terribly impressed upon it. The wrath of a king is as the roaring of a lion; but what is that to the wrath of a Deity? See what a description is given of it in Nahum 1:6. "Who can stand before his indignation: and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him." Had not the strength that supported Christ been greater than that of rocks, this wrath had certainly overwhelmed and ground him to powder.

Secondly, As it was the wrath of God that lay upon his soul, so it was the pure wrath of God, without any allay or mixture: not one drop of comfort came from heaven or earth; all the ingredients in his cup were bitter ones: There was wrath without mercy; yes, wrath without the least degree of sparing mercy; "for God spared not his own Son," Romans 8:32. Had Christ been abated or spared, we had not. If our mercies must be pure mercies, and our glory in heaven pure and unmixed glory, then the wrath which lie suffered must be pure and unmixed wrath. Yes,

Thirdly, As the wrath, the pure unmixed wrath of God, lay upon his soul, so all the wrath of God was poured out upon him, even to the last drop; so that there is not one drop reserved for the elect to feel. Christ's cup was deep and large, it contained all the fury and wrath of an infinite God in it! and yet he drank it up: he bare it all, so that to believing souls, who come to make peace with God through Christ, he says, Isaiah 27:4. "Fury is not in me." In all the chastisements God inflicts upon his people, there is no vindictive wrath; Christ bore it all in his own soul and body on the tree.

Fourthly, As it was all the wrath of God that lay upon Christ, so it was wrath aggravated, in divers respects beyond that which the damned themselves do suffer. That is strange you will say; can there be any sufferings worse than those the damned suffer, upon whom the wrath of an infinite God is immediately transacted, who holds them up with the arm of his power, while the arm of his justice lies on eternally? Can any sorrows be greater than these? Yes; Christ's sufferings were beyond theirs in divers particulars.

First, None of the damned were ever so near and dear to God as Christ was: they were estranged from the womb, but Christ lay in his bosom. When he smote Christ, he smote "the man that was his fellow," Zechariah 13:7. But in smiting them, he smites his enemies. When he had to do, in a way of satisfaction, with Christ, he is said not to spare his own son, Romans 8:32. Never was the fury of God poured out upon such a person before.

Secondly, None of the damned had ever so large a capacity to take in a full sense of the wrath of God as Christ had. The larger any one's capacity is to understand and weigh his troubles fully, the more grievous and heavy is his burden. If a man cast vessels of greater and lesser quantity into the sea, though all will be full, yet the greater the vessel is, the more water it contains. Now Christ had a capacity beyond all mere creatures to take in the wrath of his Father; and what deep and large apprehensions he had of it may be judged by his bloody sweat in the garden, which was the effect of his mere apprehensions of the wrath of God. Christ was a large vessel indeed; as he is capable of more glory, so of more sense and misery than any other person in the world.

Thirdly, The damned suffer not so innocently as Christ suffered; they suffer the just demerit and recompense of their sin: They have deserved all that wrath of God which they feel, and must feel forever: It is but that recompense which was meet; but Christ was altogether innocent: He had done no iniquity, neither was guile found in his mouth; yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him. When Christ suffered, he suffered not for what he had done; but his sufferings were the sufferings of a surety, paying the debts of others. "The Messiah was cut off, but not for himself," Daniel 9:26. Thus you see what his external sufferings in his body, and his internal sufferings in his soul were.

Thirdly, In the last place, it is evident that such extreme sufferings as these, meeting together upon him, must needs exhaust his very spirits, and make him cry, I thirst. For let us consider,

First, What mere external pains, and outward afflictions can do. These prey upon, and consume our spirits. So David complains, Psalms 39:11. "When you with rebukes correctest man for iniquity; you makes his beauty to consume away as a moth," that is look, as a moth frets and consumes the most strong and well wrought garment, and makes it scary and rotten without any noise; so afflictions waste and wear out the strongest bodies. They make bodies of the firmest constitution like an old rotten garment: They shrivel and dry up the most vigorous and flourishing body, and make it like a bottle in the smoke, Psalms 119:83.

Secondly, Consider what mere internal troubles of the soul can do upon the strongest body: They spend its strength, and devour the spirits. So Solomon speaks, Proverbs 17:22. "A broken spirit drieth the bones," that is it consumes the very marrow with which they are moistened. So Psalms 32:3-4. "My bones waxed old, and through my roaring all the day long: for day and night your hand was heavy on me: my moisture (or chief sap) is turned into the drought of summer." What a spectacle of pity was Francis Spira become, merely through the anguish of his spirit? a spirit sharpened with such troubles, like a keen knife, cuts through the sheath. Certainly, whoever has had any acquaintance with troubles of soul, knows, by sad experience, how, like an internal flame, it feeds and preys upon the very spirits, so that the strongest stoop and sink under it. But,

Thirdly, When outward bodily pains shall meet with inward spiritual troubles, and both in extremity shall come in one day; how soon must the firmest body fail and waste away like a candle lighted at both ends? Now strength fails a-pace, and nature must fall flat under this load. When the ship in which Paul sailed, fell into a place where two seas met, it was quickly wrecked; and so will the best constituted body in the world, if it fall under both these troubles together the soul and body sympathize with each other under trouble, and mutually relieve each other.

If the body be sick and full of pain, the spirit supports, cheers, and relieves it by reason and resolution all that it can; and if the spirit be afflicted the body sympathizes and helps to bear up the spirit; but now, if the one be over laden with strong pains, more than it can bear, and calls for aid from the other, and the other be oppressed with intolerable anguish, and cries out under a burden greater than it can bear, so that it can contribute no help, but instead thereof adds to its burden, which before was above its strength to bear, then nature must needs fail, and the friendly union between soul and body suffer a dissolution by such an extraordinary pressure as this. So it was with Christ, when outward and inward sorrows met in one day in their extremity upon him. Hence the bitter cry, I thirst.

INFERENCE 1. How horrid a thing is sin! How great is to that evil of evils, which deserves that all this should be inflicted and suffered for the expiation of it! The sufferings of Christ for sin give us the true account, and fullest representation of its evil. "The law (says one) is a bright glass, wherein we may see the evil of sin; but there is the red glass of the sufferings of Christ, and in that we may see more of the evil of sin, than if God should let us down to hell, and there we should see all the tortures and torments of the damned. If we should see them how they lie sweltering under God’s wrath there, it were not so much as the beholding of sin through the red glass of the sufferings of Christ."

Suppose the bars of the bottomless pit were broken up; and damned spirits should ascend from thence, and come up among us, with the chains of darkness rattling at their heels, and we should hear the groans, and see the ghastly paleness and trembling of those poor creatures upon whom the righteous God has impressed his fury and indignation, if we could hear how their consciences are lashed by the fearful scourge of guilt, and how they shriek at every lash the arm of justice gives them.

If we should see and hear all this, it is not so much as what we may see in this text, where the Son of God, under his sufferings for it, cries out, I thirst. For, as I showed you before, Christ’s sufferings, in divers respects, were beyond theirs. O then, let not your vain heart slight sin, as if it were but a small thing! If ever God show you the face of sin in this glass, you will say, there is not

such another horrid representation to be made to a man in all the world. Fools make a mock at sin, but wise men tremble at it.

INFERENCE. 2. How afflictive and intolerable are inward troubles. Did Christ complain so sadly under them, and cry, I thirst? Surely then they are not such light matters as many are apt to make of them. If they so scorched the very heart of Christ, dried up the green tree, preyed upon his very spirits, and turned his moisture into the drought of summer, they deserve not to be slighted, as they are by some. The Lord Jesus was fitted to bear and suffer as strong troubles as ever befell the nature of man, and he did bear all other troubles with admirable patience; but when it came to this, when the flames of God's wrath scorched his soul, then he cries, I thirst.

David's heart was, for courage, as the heart of a lion; but when God exercised him with inward troubles for sin, then he roars out under the anguish of it, "I am feeble, and sore broken; I have roared, by reason of the disquietness of my heart. My heart panteth, my strength fails me: As for the light of mine eyes, it is also gone from me," Psalms 38:8; Psalms 38:10. "A wounded spirit who can bear!" Many have professed that all the torments in the world are but toys to it; the racking fits of the gout, the grinding tortures of the stone, are nothing to the wrath of God upon the conscience. What is the worm that never dies but the efficacy of a guilty conscience? This worm feeds upon, and gnaws the very inwards, the tender and most sensible part of man and is the principal part of hell's horror. In bodily pains, a man may be relieved by proper medicines; here nothing but the blood of sprinkling relieves. In outward pains, the body may be supported by the resolution and courage of the mind; here the mind itself is wounded. O let none despise these troubles, they are dreadful things!

INFERENCE. 3. How dreadful a place is hell, where this cry is heard forever, I thirst! There the wrath of the great and terrible God flames upon the damned forever, in which they thirst, and none relieves then. If Christ complained, I thirst, when he had conflicted but a few hours with the wrath of God; what is their state then, that are to grapple with it forever? When millions of years are past and gone, ten thousand millions more are coming on. There is an everlasting thirst in hell, and it admits of no relief. There are no full cups in hell, but all eternal, unrelieved thirst. Think on this you that now add drunkenness to thirst, who wallow in all sensual pleasures, and drown nature in an excess of luxury. Remember what Dives said in Luke 16:24. "And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame." No cups of water, no bowls of wine in hell. There, that throat will be parched with thirst, which is now drowned with excess. The songs of the drunkard turned into cowlings. If thirst in the extremity of it be now so insufferable, what is that thirst which is infinitely beyond this in measure, and never shall be relieved? Say not it is hard that God should deal thus with his poor creatures. You will not think it so, if you consider what he exposed his own dear Son to, when sin was but imputed to him. And what that man deserves to feel, that has not only merited hell, but, by refusing Christ the remedy, the hottest place in hell. In this thirst of Christ we have the liveliest emblem of the state of the damned, that ever was presented to men in this world. Here you see a person laboring in extremity, under the infinite wraths of the great and terrible God lying upon his soul and body at once, and causing him to utter this doleful cry, I thirst. Only Christ endured this but a little while, the damned must endure it forever: in that they differ, as also in the innocence and ability of the persons suffering, and in the end for which they suffer. But, surely, such as this will the cry of those souls be that are cast away

forever. O terrible thirst!

INFERENCE. 4. How much do nice and wanton appetites deserve to be reproved? The Son of God wanted a draught of cold water to relieve him, and could not have it. God has given us variety of refreshing creatures to relieve us, and we despise them. We have better things than a cup of water to refresh and delight us when we are thirsty, and yet are not pleased. O that this complaint of Christ on the cross, I thirst, were but believingly considered, it would make you bless God for what you now despise, and beget contentment in you for the meanest mercies, and most common favors in this world. Did the Lord of all things cry, I thirst, and had nothing in his extremity to comfort him; and do you, who have a thousand times over forfeited all temporal as well as spiritual mercies, condemn and slight the good creatures of God! What, despise a cup of water, who deserves nothing but a cup of wrath from the hand of the Lord! O lay it to heart, and hence learn contentment with anything.

INFERENCE. 5. Did Jesus Christ upon the cross cry, I thirst? Then believers shall never thirst eternally. Their thirst shall be certain satisfied.

There is a threefold thirst, gracious, natural, and penal. The gracious thirst is the vehement desire of a spiritual heart after God. Of this David speaks, Psalms 42:1-2. "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God, when shall I come and appear before God?" And this is indeed a vehement thirst; it makes the soul break with the longings it has after God, Psalms 119:1-176. It is a thirst proper to believers, who have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

Natural thirst is (as before was noted) a desire of refreshment by humid nourishment, and it is common both to believers and unbelievers in this world. God’s dear saints have been driven to such extremities in this life, that their tongues have even failed for thirst. "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst," Isaiah 41:17. And of the people of God in their captivity, it is said, Lamentations 4:4. "The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst. The young children ask bread, and no man breaketh it unto them. They that feed delicately are desolate in the streets; they that were brought up in scarlet embrace dung hills." To this many that fear the Lord have been reduced. A penal thirst, is God’s just denying of all refreshments or relief to sinners in their extremities, and that as a due punishment for their sin. This believers shall never feel, because when Christ thirsted upon the cross, he made full satisfaction to God in their room. These sufferings of Christ, as they were ordained for them, so the benefits of them are truly imputed to them. And for the natural thirst, that shall be satisfied: for in heaven we shall live without these necessities and dependencies upon the creature; we shall be equal with the angels in the way and manner of living and subsisting, "isangeloi eisin", Luke 20:6. And for the gracious thirsting of their souls for God, it shall be fully satisfied. So it is promised, Matthew 5:6. "Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled:" They shall then depend no more upon the stream, but drink from the overflowing fountain itself, Psalms 36:8 "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of your house, and you shall make them drink of the river of your pleasures: for with you is the fountain of life, and in Your light shall we see light:" There they shall drink and praise, and praise and drink for evermore; all their thirsty desires shall be filled with complete satisfaction. O how desirable a state is heaven upon this account! and how should we be restless until we come

there; as the thirsty traveler is until he meet that cool, refreshing spring he wants and seeks for. This present state is a state of thirsting, that to come of refreshment and satisfaction. Some drops indeed come from the fountain by faith, hut they quench not the believer's thirst; rather like water sprinkled on the fire, they make it burn the more: but there the thirsty soul has enough.

O bless God, that Jesus Christ thirsted under the heat of his wrath once, that you might not be scorched with it forever. If he had not cried, I thirst, you must have cried out of thirst eternally, and never be satisfied.

INFERENCE. 6. Lastly; Did Christ in the extremity of his sufferings cry, I thirst? Then how great, beyond all compare, is the love of God to sinners, who for their sakes exposed the Son of his love to such extreme sufferings?

Three considerations marvelously heighten that love of the Father.

First, His putting the Lord Jesus into such a condition. There is none of us would endure to see a child of our own lie panting, and thirsting in the extremity of torments, for the fairest inheritance on earth; much less to have the soul of a child conflicting with the wrath of God, and making such heart-rending complaints as Christ made upon the cross, if we might have the largest empire in the world for it: yet, such was the strength of the love of God to us, that he willingly gave Jesus Christ to all this misery and torture for us. What shall we call this love? O the height, length, depth, and breadth of that love which passes knowledge! The love of God to Jesus Christ was infinitely beyond all the love we have for our children, as the sea is more then a spoonful of water: and yet, as dearly as he loved him, he was content to expose him to all this, rather than we should perish eternally.

Secondly, As God the Father was content to expose Christ to this extremity, so in that extremity to hear his bitter cries, and dolorous complaints, and yet not relieve him with the least refreshment until he fainted and died under it. He heard the cries of his Son; that voice, I thirst, pierced heaven, and reached the Father's ear; but yet he will not refresh him in his agonies, nor abate him anything of the debt he was now paying, and all this for the love he had to poor sinners. Had Christ been relieved in his sufferings, and spared, then God could not have pitied or spared us. The extremity of Christ's suffering was an act of justice to him; and the greatest mercy to us that ever could be manifested. Nor indeed (though Christ so bitterly complains of his thirst) was he willing to be relieved, until he had finished his work. O love unspeakable! He does not complain, that he might be relieved, but to manifest how great that sorrow was which his soul now felt upon our account.

Thirdly, And it should never be forgotten, that Jesus Christ was exposed to these extremities of sorrow for sinners, the greatest of sinners, who deserved not one drop of mercy from God. This commends the love of God singularly to us, in that "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," Romans 5:1. Thus the love of God in Jesus Christ still rises higher and higher in every discovery of it. Admire, adore, and be ravished with the thoughts of this love!

Chapter 154

S. The first Branch of CHRIST'S Prophetical Office, consisting in the Revelation of the Will of God.

SERMON IX. The first Branch of CHRIST'S Prophetical Office, consisting in the Revelation of the Will of God. Acts 3:22. A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your Brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things, whatsoever he shall say unto you.

HAVING, in the former discourses, shewn you the solemn preparations, both on the Father's part, and on the Son's, for the blessed design of reconciling us by the meritorious mediation of Christ; and given you a general prospect of that his mediation, in the former sermon; method now requires, that I proceed to shew how he executes this his mediation, in the discharge of his blessed offices of Prophet, Priest and King. His prophetical office consists of two parts; one eternal, consisting in a true and full revelation of the will of God to men, according to John 17:6. "I have manifested thy name to the men thou gavest me." The other in illuminating the mind, and opening the heart to receive and embrace that doctrine. The first part is contained in the words before us; "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up," &.c., Which words are those of Moses, recorded in Deuteronomy 18:15. and here, by Peter, pertinently applied to Christ, to convince the incredulous Jews, that he is the true and only Messiah, and the great Prophet of the church; whose doctrine it was highly dangerous to contemn, though out of the months of such (otherwise contemptible) persons as he and John were. And it is well observed by Calvin, he singles out this testimony of Moses, rather than any other, because of the great esteem they had for Moses, and his writings, beyond any others. Now in the words themselves are two general parts.

First, Christ, according to the prophetical office, described.

Secondly, Obedience to him, as such a prophet, strictly enjoined.

First, You have here a description of Christ in his prophetical office; "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me." Where Christ is described,

1. By his title, Prophet, and that, princeps prophetarum, the prince of the prophets, or the great and chief shepherd, as he is stiled, Hebrews 13:10:1 Peter 5:4. It belongs to a prophet to expound the law, declare the will of God, and foretel things to come: all these meet, and that, in a singular and eminent manner, in Christ our prophet, Matthew 5:21, &c. John 1:18:1 Peter 1:11.

2. He is described by his type; a prophet like unto Moses, who therein typified and prefigured him. But is it not said of Moses, in Deuteronomy 34:10. "that there arose not a prophet since in Israel, like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face?" True, of mere men there never arose so great a prophet in Israel as Moses was; either in respect of his familiarity with God, or of his miracles which he wrought in the power of God: but Moses himself was but a star to this sun. However, in these following particulars, Christ was like him. He was a prophet that went between God and the people, carried God's mind to them, and returned theirs to God, they not being able to hear the

voice of God immediately, Deuteronomy 18:16-17. "According to all that thou desirest of the Lord thy God in Horeb, in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not again hear the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die "not." And upon this their request, God makes the promise which is cited in the text; Deuteronomy 18:17-18. "They have well spoken that which they have spoken: I will raise them up a prophet like unto thee," &c. Moses was a very faithful prophet, precisely faithful, and exact in all things that God gave him in charge, even to a pin of the tabernacle. "Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after: but Christ as a Son over his own house," Hebrews 3:5-6. Again, Moses confirmed his doctrine by miracles, which he wrought in the presence, and to the conviction of gainsayers. Herein, Christ our Prophet is also like unto Moses, who wrought many, mighty, and uncontrolled miracles, which could not be denied, and by them confirmed the gospel which he preached. Lastly, Moses was that prophet which brought God's Israel out of literal Egypt, and Christ his out of spiritual Egypt, whereof that bondage was a figure. Thus he is described by his likeness to Moses, his type.

3. He is described by his stock and original, from which, according to his flesh, he sprang; "I will raise him up from among thy brethren. Of Israel, as concerning the flesh, Christ came," Romans 9:5, And "it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah," Hebrews 7:14. He honoured that nation by his nativity. Thus the prophet is described.

Secondly, Here is a strict injunction of obedience to this Prophet, Him shall ye hear in all things, &.c. By hearing, understand obedience. So words of sense are frequently put in scripture, to signify those affections that are moved by, and use to follow those senses. And this obedience is required to he yielded to this prophet only, and universally, and under great penalties. It is required to be given to him only, for so [him] in the text must be understood, as exclusive of all others. It is true, we are commanded to obey the voice of his ministers, Hebrews 13:17. But still it is Christ speaking them, by whom we pay our obedience: He that heareth you., heareth me: We obey them in the Lord, 1. e. commanding or forbidding in Christ's name and authority. So when God said, Deuteronomy 6:13. ["Thou shalt serve him,"] Christ expounds it exclusively, Matthew 4:10. "Him only shalt thou serve." He is the only Lord, Jude 1:4. and therefore to him only our obedience is required. And as it is due to him only, so to him universally; "Him shall ye hear in all things:" his commands are to be obeyed, not disputed. A judgment of discretion indeed is allowed to Christians, to judge whether it be the will of Christ or no. We must "prove what is that holy, good, and acceptable will,". Romans 12:2. "His sheep hear his voice, and a stranger they will not follow: they know his voice, but know not the voice of strangers," John 10:4-5. But when his will is understood and known, we have no liberty of choice, hut are concluded by it, be the duty commanded never so difficult, or the sin forbidden never so tempting: and this is also required severely, under penalty of being destroyed from among the people, and of God's requiring it at our hands, as it is in Deuteronomy 18:1. e. of revenging himself in the destruction of the disobedient. Hence the observation.

Doct. That Jesus Christ is called and appointed by God to be the great Prophet and teacher of the Church.

He is anointed to preach good tidings to the meek, and sent to bind up the broken hearted, Isaiah 41:1. When he came to preach the gospel among the people, then was this scripture fulfilled,

Matthew 11:27. "Yea, all things are delivered him of his Father; so as no man knoweth whom the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." All light is now collected into one body of light, the Sun of righteousness; and he "enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world," John 1:9. And though he dispensed knowledge variously, in times past, speaking in many ways and divers manners, to the fathers; yet now the method and way of revealing the will of God to us is fixed and settled in Christ: In these last times he hath spoken to us by his Son.

Twice hath the Lord solemnly sealed him to this office, or approved and owned him in it, by a miraculous voice from the most excellent glory, Matthew 3:17. and Matthew 17:5. In this point there are two things doctrinally to be discussed and opened, viz. What Christ's being a Prophet to the church implies: and how he executes and discharges this his office.

First, What is implied in Christ's being a Prophet to the church; And it necessarily imports these three things.

1. The natural ignorance and blindness of men in the things of God. This shews us that "vain man is born as the wild ass's colt."—The world is involved in darkness: The people sit as in the region and shadow of death till Christ arise upon their souls, Matthew 4:15-17. It is true, in the state of innocency man had a clear apprehension of the will of God, without a Mediator: but now that light is quenched in the corruption of nature, and the "natural man receiveth not the things of God," 1 Corinthians 2:14. These things of God are not only contrary to corrupt and carnal reason, but they are also above right reason. Grace indeed useth nature, but nature can do nothing without grace, The mind of a natural man hath not only a native blindness, by reason whereof it cannot discern the things of the Spirit, but also a natural enmity, Romans 8:7. and hates the light, 1 John 3:19-20. So that until the mind he healed, and enlightened by Jesus Christ, the natural faculty can no more discern the things of the Spirit, than the sensitive faculty can discern the things of reason. The mysteries of nature may be discovered by the light of nature; but when it comes to supernatural mysteries, there, omnis Platonicorum caligavit subtilitus, as Cyprian somewhere speaks, the most subtle, searching, penetrating wit and reason, is at a loss.

2. It implies the divinity of Christ, and proves him to be true God; forasmuch as no other can reveal to the world, in all ages, the secrets that lay hid in the heart of God, and that with such convincing evidence and authority. He brought his doctrine from the bosom of his Father; John 1:18. "The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath revealed him." The same words which his Father gave him he hath given us, John 17:8. He spake to us that which he had seen with his Father, John 8:38. What man can tell the bosom-counsels and secrets of God? Who but he that eternally lay in that bosom can expound them?

Besides, other prophets had their times assigned them to rise, shine, and set again by death, Zechariah 1:5. "Your fathers, where are they? And do the prophets live for ever?" But Christ is a fixed and perpetual sun, that gives light in all ages of the world for he is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," Hebrews 13:8. Yea, and the very beams of his divinity shone with awfulness upon the hearts of them that heard him; so that his very enemies were forced to acknowledge, that, "never any man spake like him," John 7:46.

3. It implies Christ to be the original and fountain of all that light which is ministerially diffused up and down the world by men. Ministers are but stars, which shine with a borrowed light from the

sun: so speaks the apostle, 2 Corinthians 3:6-7. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." Those that teach men, must be first taught by Christ. All the prophets of the Old, and all the prophets, pastors, and teachers of the New-Testament, have lighted their candles at his torch: it was Christ that "gave them a mouth and wisdom," Luke 21:15. What Paul received from the Lord, he delivered to the church, 1 Corinthians 11:23. Jesus Christ is the chief Shepherd, 1 Peter 5:4. and all the under-shepherds receive their gifts and commissions from him. These things are manifestly implied in Christ's prophetical office,

Secondly, We shall next enquire how he executes and discharges this his office, or how he enlightens and teacheth men the will of God. And this be hath done variously, gradually, plainly, powerfully, sweetly, purely, and fully.

1. Our great Prophet hath revealed unto men the will of God variously; not holding one even and constant tenor in the manifestations of the Father's will, but as the apostle speaks, Polumerw'" kai; polutrovpw", at sundry times, and in divers manners, Hebrews 1:1. Sometimes he taught the church immediately, and in his own person, John 18:20. He declared God's righteousness in the great congregation, Psalms 22:22. And sometimes mediately, by his ministers and officers, deputed to that service by him. So h5 dispensed the knowledge of God to the church before his incarnation; it was Christ that in the time, and by the ministry of Noah, went and preached to the spirits in prison, as it is 1 Peter 3:19, that is, to men and women then alive, but now separated from the body, and imprisoned in hell for their disobedience. And it was Christ that was with the church in the wilderness, instructing and guiding them by the ministry of Moses and Aaron, Acts 7:37-38; and so he hath taught the church since his ascension. He cannot now be personally with us, having other business to do for us in heaven ; but, however, he will not be wanting to teach us by his officers, whom, for that end, he hath set and appointed in the church, Ephesians 4:11-12.

2. He hath dispensed his blessed light to the church gradually. The discoveries of light have been polumevpw" that is, in many parts or parcels; sometimes more obscure and cloudy as to the Old Testament believers, by visions, dreams, Urim, Thummim, vocal oracles, types, sacrifices, &c. which, though comparatively, were but a weak glimmering light, and had no glory compared to that which now shines, 2 Corinthians 3:7-11. yet it was sufficient for the instruction and salvation of the elect in those times; but flow is light sprung up gloriously in the gospel-dispensation; "And we all with open face, behold as in a glass, the glory of the Lord." It is to us not a twilight, but the light of a perfect day; and still is advancing in the several ages of the world. I know more (saith Luther) than blessed Austin knew; and they that come after me, will know more than I know.

3. Jesus Christ, our great Prophet, hath manifested to us the will of God plainly and perspicuously. When he was on earth himself, be taught the people by parables, and "without a parable he spake nothing," Matthew 13:3-4. He clothed sublime and spiritual mysteries in earthly metaphors, bringing them thereby to the low and dull capacities of men, speaking so familiarly to the people about them, as if he had been speaking earthly things to them, John 3:12. And so (according to his own example) would he have his ministers preach, "using great plainness of speech," 2 Corinthians 3:12. and by manifestation of the truth, "commending themselves to every man's conscience," 1 Corinthians 4:2. Yet not allowing them to be rude and careless in expression, pouring out indigested, crude, immethodical words; no, a holy serious, strict, and grave expression

befits the lips of his ambassadors: and who ever spake more weightily, more logically, persuasively than that apostle, by whose pen Christ hath admonished us to beware of vain affections and swelling words of vanity? But he would have us stoop to the understandings of the meanest, and not give the people a comment darker than the text; he would have us rather pierce their ears, than tickle their fancies; and break their hearts than please their ears. Christ was a very plain preacher.

4. Jesus Christ discovered truth powerfully; speaking "as one having authority, and not as the Pharisees," Matthew 7:29. They were cold and dull preachers, their words did even freeze betwixt their lips; but Christ spake with power; there was heat as well as light in his doctrine: and so there is still, though it be in the mouth of poor contemptible men, 2 Corinthians 10:4. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the casting down of strong holds: it is still quick and powerful, sharper than a two edged-sword; and piercing, to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow," Hebrews 4:12. The blessed apostle imitated Christ; and being filled with his Spirit, spake home and freely to the hearts of men. So many words, so many claps of thunder, (as one said of him) which made the hearts of sinners shake and tremble in their breasts. All faithful and able ministers are not alike gifted in this particular; but, surely, there is a holy seriousness and spiritual grace and majesty in their doctrine, commanding reverence from their hearers.

5. This Prophet, Jesus Christ, taught the people the mind of God in a sweet, affectionate, and taking manner: his words made their hearts burn within them, Luke 24:32. It was prophesied of him, Isaiah 42:2. "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard on high. A bruised reed he shall not break, and smoking flax he shall not quench. He knew how to speak a "word in season to the weary soul," Isaiah 41:1. "He gathered the Lambs with his arms, and gently led those that were with young," Isa. 4:11. How sweetly did his words slide to the melting hearts about him! he drew with cords of love, with the bands of a man: he discouraged none, upbraided none that were willing to come to him: his familiarity and free condescensions to the most vile and despicable sinners, were often made the matter of his reproach. Such is his gentle and sweet carriage to his people, that the church is called the Lamb’s wife, Revelation 19:7.

6. He revealed the mind of God purely to men; his doctrine had not the least dash of error to debase it; his most enviously observant hearers could find nothing to charge him with: he is "the faithful and true witness," Revelation 1:5. and he hath commanded his ministers to preserve the simplicity and purity of the gospel, and not to blend and sophisticate it, 2 Corinthians 4:2.

7. And lastly, He revealed the will of God perfectly and fully, keeping back nothing needful to salvation. So he tells his disciples, John 15:15. "All things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you." He was "faithful as a Son over his own house," Hebrews 3:6. Thus you have a brief account of what is implied in this part of Christ’s prophetical office, and how he performed it.

Inference 1. If Jesus Christ, who is now passed into the heavens, be the great Prophet and Teacher of the church; hence we may justly infer the continual necessity of a standing ministry of the church: for by his ministers he now teacheth us, and to that intent hath fixed them in the church, by a firm constitution, there to remain to the end of the world, Matthew 28:20. He teacheth men more personally, but ministerially. His ministers supply the want of his personal presence, 2

Corinthians 5:10. "We pray you in Christ's stead." These officers he gave the church at his ascension, 1. e. when he ceased to teach them any longer with his own lips; and so set them in the church, that their succession shall never totally fail: for so the word e[qeto, he hath set, 1 Corinthians 12:28. plainly implies. They are set by a sure establishment, a firm and unalterable constitution, even as the times and seasons, which the Father hath put [e[qeto] in his own power: it is the same word, and it is well they are so firmly set and fixed there; for how many adversaries in all ages have endeavoured to shake the very office itself? pretending that it is needless to be taught by men, and wresting such scriptures as these to countenance their error, Joel 2:28-29. "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and "daughters shall prophesy," &c. And Jeremiah 31:34. "These shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest of them." As to that of Joel, it is answered, That if an Old-Testament prophecy may be understood according to a New-Testament interpretation, then that prophecy doth no way oppose, but confirm the gospel ministry. How the apostle understood the prophet in that his prophecy, may be seen in Acts 2:17. when the Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost upon the apostles. And surely he must be a confident person indeed, that thinks not an apostle to be as good an expositor of the prophet, as himself. And for that in Jer. xxxi. we say, 1. That if it conclude against ministerial teachings, it must equally conclude against Christian conferences.

2. We say that cannot be the sense of one scripture which contradicts the plain sense of other scriptures: but so this would, Ephesians 4:11-12; 1 Corinthians 12:28.

3. And we say, the sense of that text is not negative, but comparative. Not that they shall have no need to be taught any truth, but no such need to be taught the first truths: That there is a God, and who is this true God: They shall no more teach every "man his brother, saying, Know the Lord! for they shall all know me?" To conclude, God hath given ministers to the church for the work of conversion and edification, "till we all come into the unity of the faith, to a perfect man," Ephesians 4:11, Ephesians 4:12. So that when all the elect are converted, and all those converts become perfect men; when there is no error in judgment or practice, and no seducer to cause it, then, and not till then, will a gospel ministry be useless. But (as it is well observed) there is not a man that opposes a gospel ministry, but the very being of that man is a sufficient argument for the continuance of it.

Inference 2. If Christ be the great Prophet of the church, and such a Prophet; then it follows, That the weakest Christians need not be discouraged at the dulness and incapacity they find in themselves: for Christ is not only a patient and condescending teacher, but he can also, as he hath often done, reveal that to babes, which is hid from the wise and learned, Matthew 11:25. "The testimonies of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple," Psalms 19:7. Yea, and such as you are, the Lord delights to choose, that his grace may be the more conspicuous in your weakness, 1 Corinthians 1:26, 1 Corinthians 1:27. You will have nothing of your own to glory in; you will not say, as a proud wretch once said, Ego et Deus meus; "I and my God did this." Jesus Christ affects not social glory, be will not divide the praise with any. Well then, be not discouraged; others may know more, in other things than you, but you are not incapable of knowing so much as shall save your souls, if Christ will be your teacher, in other knowledge they excel you: but if ye know Jesus Christ, and the truth as it is in him, one drop of your knowledge is worth a whole sea of their gifts: one truth sucked by faith and prayer from the breast of Christ is better than ten thousand dry notions

beaten out by racking the understanding. It is better in kind, the one being but natural, the other supernatural, from the saving illuminations and inward teachings of the Spirit: and so is one of those better things that accompany salvation. It is better in respect of effects; other knowledge leaves the heart as dry, barren, and unaffected, as if it had its seat in another man's head; but that little you have been taught of Christ, sheds down its gracious influences upon your affections, and slides sweetly to your melting hearts. So that as one "preferred the most despicable work of a plain rustic Christian, before all the triumphs of Alexander and Caesar;" much more ought you to prefer one saving manifestation of the Spirit, to all the powerless illuminations of natural men.

Inference 3. If Christ be the great Prophet and teacher of the church; it follows, That prayer is a proper mean for the increase of knowledge: Prayer is the golden key that unlocks that treasure. When Daniel was to expound that secret which was contained in the king's dream, about which the Chaldean magicians had racked their brains to no purpose; what course doth Daniel take? Why, "he went to his house, (saith the text, Daniel 2:17-18.) and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah his companions; that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning his secret." And then was the secret revealed to Daniel. Luther was wont to say, "Three things made a divine; meditation, temptation, and prayer." Holy Mr. Bradford was wont to study upon his knees. Those truths that are got by prayer, leave an unusual sweetness upon the heart. If Christ be our teacher, it becomes all his saints to be at his feet.

Inference 4. If Christ be the great Prophet and teacher of the church, We may thence discern and judge of doctrines, and it may serve us as a test to try them by. For such as Christ is, such are the doctrines that flow from him: every error pretends to derive itself from him; but as Christ was holy, humble, heavenly, meek, peaceful, plain and simple, and in all things alien, yea, contrary to the wisdom of the world, the gratifications of the flesh; such are the truths which he teacheth. They have his character and image engraven on them. Would you know then whether this or that doctrine be from the Spirit of Christ or no? Examine the doctrine itself by this rule. And whatsoever doctrine you find to encourage and countenance sin, to exalt self to be accommodated to earthly designs and interests, to wrap and bend to the humours and lusts of men; in a word, what doctrine soever directly, and as a proper cause makes them that profess it carnal, turbulent, proud, sensual, &.c. you may safely reject it, and conclude this never came from Jesus Christ. The doctrine of Christ is after godliness; his truth sanctifies. There is a Gustus spiritualis judicii, a spiritual taste, by which those that have their senses exercised, can distinguish things that differ. "The spiritual man judgeth all things," 1 Corinthians 2:15. "His ear tries words, as his mouth tasteth meats," Job 34:3. Swallow nothing (let it come never so speciously) that hath not some relish of Christ and holiness in it. Be sure, Christ never revealed any thing to men, that derogates from his own glory, or prejudices and obstructs the ends of his own death.

Inference 5. And as it will serve us for a test of doctrines, so it serves for a test of ministers; and hence you may judge who are authorized and sent by Christ the great Prophet, to declare his will to men. Surely those whom he sends have his Spirit in their hearts, as well as his words in their mouths. And according to the measures of grace received, they faithfully endeavour to fulfil their ministry for Christ, as Christ did for his Father: "As my Father hath sent me (saith Christ) so send I you," John 20:21. They take Christ for their pattern in the whole course of their ministration, and are such as sincerely endeavour to imitate the great Shepherd, in these six particulars following:

1. Jesus Christ was a faithful Minister, the "faithful and true witness," Revelation 1:5. He declared the whole mind of God to men. Of him it was prophetically said, Psalms 40:10. "I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness, and thy salvation; I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation." To the same sense, and almost in the same words, the apostle Paul professed, in Acts 20:20. "I have kept back nothing that was profitable unto you; and ver. 35. "I have shewed you all things." Not that every faithful minister doth in course of his ministry, anatomize the whole body of truth, and fully expound and apply each particular to the people: No, that is not the meaning, but of those doctrines which they have opportunity of opening, they do not out of fear, or to accommodate and secure base low ends, withhold the mind of God, or so corrupt and abuse his words, as to subject truth to their own, or other men's lusts: "They preach not as pleasing men, but God," 1 Thessalonians 2:4. "For if we yet please men, we cannot be the servants of Christ," Galatians 1:10. Truth must be spoken, though the greatest on earth be offended.

2. Jesus Christ was a tender-hearted Minister, full of compassion to souls. He was sent to bind up the broken in heart, Isaiah 41:1. He was full of bowels to poor sinners. "He grieved at the hardness of men's hearts," Mark 3:5. He mourned over Jerusalem, "and said, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! how oft would I have gathered thy children, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings!" Matthew 23:27. His bowels yearned when he saw the multitude, as sheep having no shepherd, Matthew 9:37. These bowels of Christ must be in all the under shepherds. "God is my witness," (saith one of them) how greatly I long after you all, in [or after the pattern of] the bowels of Christ Jesus," Php 1:8. He that shews a hard heart, unaffected with the dangers and miseries of souls, can never shew a commission from Christ to authorize him for ministerial work.

3. Jesus Christ was a laborious painful Minister, he put a necessity on himself to finish his work in his day; a work infinitely great, in a very little time; John 9:4. "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." O how much work did Christ do in a little time on earth! "He went about doing good," Acts 10:38. He was never idle. When he sits down at Jacob's well, to rest himself being weary, presently he falls into his work, preaching the gospel, to the Samaritaness. In this must his ministers resemble him; "striving according to his working, that worketh in them mightily," Colossians 1:28-29. An idle minister seems to be a contradiction in adjecto; as who should say, a dark light.

4. Jesus Christ delighted in nothing more than the success of his ministry; to see the work of the Lord prosper in his hand, this was meat and drink to him. When the seventy returned, and reported the success of their first embassy, "Lord, even the devils are subject to us through thy name!" "Why, (saith Christ) I beheld Satan fall as lightning from heaven." As if he had said, You tell me no news, I saw it when I sent you out at first: I knew the gospel would make work Where it came. "And in that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirits" Luke 10:17-18, Luke 10:21. And is it not so with those sent by him? do not they value the success of their ministry at a high rate? It is not (saith one) the expence, but the recoiling of our labours back again upon us, that kills us. Ministers would not die so fast, nor be grey-headed so soon, could they but see the travail of their souls. "My little children, (saith Paul) of whom I travail again in birth, pavlin wvdivnw, till Christ be "formed in you," Galatians 4:19. As for those that have the name of shepherds only, who visit the flock only once a year, about shearing time; who have "the instruments of a foolish shepherd," (forcipes et mulctra) the shears and pail, Zechariah 11:15. woeful will be their condition at appearing of this great

Shepherd.

5. Jesus Christ was a minister that lived up to his doctrine: his life and doctrine harmonised in all things. He pressed to holiness in his doctrine, and was the great pattern of holiness in his life, Matthew 11:28. "Learn of me, I am meek and lowly." And such his ministers desire to approve themselves, Php 4:9. "What ye have heard, and seen in me, that do." He preached to their eyes, as well as ears, His life was a comment on his doctrine. They might see holiness acted in his life, as well as sounded by his lips. He preached the doctrine, and lived the application.

6. And lastly, Jesus Christ was a minister that minded and maintained sweet, secret communism with God, far all his constant public labours. If he had been preaching and healing all the day, yet he would redeem time from his very sleep to spend in secret prayer; Matthew 14:23. "When he had sent the multitude away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray, and was there alone." O blessed pattern! Let the keepers of the vineyards remember they have a vineyard of their own to keep, a soul of their own that must be looked after as well as other men's. Those that, in these things, imitate Christ, are surely sent to us from him, and are worthy of double honour: They are a choice blessing to the people.

Chapter 155

S. The first Branch of Christ's Prophetic

The first Branch of Christ’s Prophetic Office,

consisting in the Revelation of the Will of God

"A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall you hear in all things whatever he shall say unto you." Acts 3:22

Having, in the former discourses, shown you the solemn preparations, both on the Father’s part, and on the Son’s, for the blessed design of reconciling us by the meritorious mediation of Christ: and given you a general prospect of that his mediation, in the firmer sermon; method now requires, that I proceed to show how he executes this his mediation, in the discharge of his blessed offices of Prophet, Priest and King. His Prophetic office consists of two parts; one external, consisting in a true and full revelation of the will of God to men, according to John 17:6. "I have manifested your name to the men you gave me." The other in illuminating the mind, and opening the heart to receive and embrace that doctrine. The first part is contained in the words before us; "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up," etc. Which words are those of Moses, recorded in Deuteronomy 18:15. And here, by Peter, pertinently applied to Christ, to convince the incredulous Jews, that he is the true and only Messiah, and the great Prophet of the church; whose doctrine it was highly dangerous to condemn, though out of the mouths of such (otherwise contemptible) persons as he and John were. And it is well observed by Calvin, he singles out this testimony of Moses, rather than any other, because of the great esteem they had for Moses, and his writings, beyond any others. Now in the words themselves are two general parts.

First, Christ, according to the Prophetic office, described.

Secondly, Obedience to him, as such a prophet, strictly enjoined.

First, You have here a description of Christ in his Prophetic office; "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me." Where Christ is described,

1. By his title, Prophet, and that—the prince of the prophets, or the great and chief shepherd, as he is stiled, Hebrews 13:10. 1 Peter 5:4. It belongs to a prophet to expound the law, declare the will of God, and foretell things to come: all these meet, and that, in a singular and eminent manner, in Christ our prophet, Matthew 5:21, etc. John 1:18. 1 Peter 1:11.

2. He is described by his type; a prophet like unto Moses, who therein typified and prefigured him. But is it not said of Moses, in Deuteronomy 34:10. "that there arose not a prophet since in Israel, like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face?" True, of mere men there never arose so great a prophet in Israel, as Moses was, either in respect of his familiarity with God, or of his miracles which he wrought in the power of God: but Moses himself was but a star to this sun. However, in these following particulars, Christ was like him. He was a prophet that went between God and the people, carried God’s mind to them, and returned theirs to God, they not being able to hear the voice of God immediately, Deuteronomy 18:16-17. "According to all that you desires of the Lord

your God in Horeb, in the day of the assembly, sayings Let me not again hear the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not." And upon this their request, God makes the promise which is cited in the text; Deuteronomy 18:17-18. "They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a prophet like unto you," etc. Moses was a very faithful prophet, precisely faithful, and exact in all things that God gave him in charge, even to a pin of the tabernacle. "Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after: but Christ as a Son over his own house," Hebrews 3:5-6. Again, Moses confirmed his doctrine by miracles, which he wrought in the presence, and to the conviction of gainsayers. Herein, Christ our Prophet is also like unto Moses, who wrought many, mighty, and uncontrolled miracles, which could not be denied, and by them confirmed the gospel which he preached. Lastly, Moses was that prophet which brought God's Israel out of literal Egypt, and Christ his out of spiritual Egypt, whereof that bondage was a figure. Thus he is described by his likeness to Moses, his type.

3. He is described by his stock and original, from which, according to his flesh, he sprang; "I will raise him up from among your brethren. Of Israel, as concerning the flesh, Christ came," Romans 9:5. And "it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah," Hebrews 7:14. He honored that nation by his nativity. Thus the prophet is described.

Secondly, Here is a strict injunction of obedience to this Prophet, Him shall you hear in all things, etc. By hearing, understand obedience. So words of sense are frequently put in scripture, to signify those affections that are moved by, and use to follow those senses. And this obedience is required to be yielded to this prophet only, and universally, and under great penalties. It is required to be given to him only, for so [him] in the text must be understood, as exclusive of all others. It is true, we are commanded to obey the voice of his ministers, Hebrews 13:17. But still it is Christ speaking them, by whom we pay our obedience: He that hears you, hears me: We obey them in the Lord, that is commanding or forbidding in Christ's name and authority. So when God said, Deuteronomy 6:13, ["You shall serve him,"] Christ expounds it exclusively, Matthew 4:10. "Him only shall you serve." He is the only Lord, Jude 1:4. and therefore to him only our obedience is required. And as it is due to him only, so to him universally; "Him shall you hear in all things:" his commands are to be obeyed, not disputed. A judgement of discretion indeed is allowed to Christians, to judge whether it be the will of Christ or no. We must "prove what is that holy, good, and acceptable will," Romans 12:2. "His sheep hear his voice, and a stranger they will not follow: they know his voice, but know not the voice of strangers," John 10:4-5. But when his will is understood and known, we have no liberty of choice, but are concluded by it, be the duty commanded never so difficult, or the sin forbidden never so tempting: and this is also required severely, under penalty of being destroyed from among the people, and of God's requiring it at our hands, as it is in Deuteronomy 18:1-22, that is of revenging himself in the destruction of the disobedient. Hence the observation.

DOCTRINE. That Jesus Christ is called and appointed by God to be the great Prophet and teacher of the Church.

He is anointed to preach good tidings to the meek, and sent to bind up the broken hearted, Isaiah 61:1. When he came to preach the gospel among the people, then was this scripture fulfilled, Matthew 11:27. "Yes, all things are delivered him of his Father; so as no man knows whom the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." All light is now collected into one

body of light, the Sun of righteousness; and he "enlightens every man that comets into the world," John 1:9. And though he dispensed knowledge variously, in times past, speaking in many ways and divers manners, to the fathers; yet now the method and way of revealing the will of God to us is fixed and settled in Christ: In these last times he has spoken to us by his Son

Twice has the Lord solemnly sealed him to this office, or approved and owned him in it, by a miraculous voice from the most excellent glory, Matthew 3:17 and Matthew 17:5. In this point there are two things doctrinally to be discussed and opened, namely, What Christ's being a Prophet to the church implies: and how he executes and discharges this his office.

First, What is implied in Christ's being a Prophet to the church: And it necessarily imports these three things.

1. The natural ignorance and blindness of men in the things of God. This shows us that "vain man is born as the wild ass's colt." the world is involved in darkness: The people sit as in the region and shadow of death until Christ arise upon their souls, Matthew 4:15-17. It is true, in the state of innocence man had a clear apprehension of the will of God, without a Mediator: but now that light is quenched in the corruption of nature, "and the natural man receives not the things of God," 1 Corinthians 2:14. These things of God are not only contrary to corrupt and carnal reason, but they are also above right reason. Grace indeed uses nature, but nature can do nothing without grace. The mind of a natural man has not only a native blindness, by reason whereof it cannot discern the things of the Spirit, but also a natural enmity, Romans 8:7, and hates the light, John 3:19-20. So that until the mind be healed, and enlightened by Jesus Christ, the natural faculty can no more discern the things of the Spirit, than the sensitive faculty can discern the things of reason. The mysteries of nature may be discovered by the light of nature; but when it comes to supernatural mysteries—the most subtle, searching, penetrating wit and reason, is at a loss.

2. It implies the divinity of Christ, and proves him to be true God, forasmuch as no other can reveal to the world, in all ages, the secrets that lay hid in the heart of God, and that with such convincing evidence and authority. He brought his doctrine from the bosom of His Father; John 1:18. "The only begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, he has revealed him." The same words which his Father gave him he has given us, John 17:8. He spoke to us that which he had seen with his Father, John 8:38. What man can tell the bosom-counsels and secrets of God? Who but he that eternally lay in that bosom can expound them?

Besides, other prophets had their times assigned them to rise, shine, and set again by death, Zechariah 1:5. "Your fathers, where are they? And do the prophets live forever?" But Christ is fixed and perpetual sun, that gives light in all ages of the world: for he is "the same yesterday, today, and forever," Hebrews 13:8. Yes, and the very beams of his divinity shone with awfulness upon the hearts of them that heard him; so that his very enemies were forced to acknowledge, that, "never any man spoke like him," John 7:46.

3. It implies Christ to be the original and fountain of all that light which is ministerially diffused up and down the world by men. Ministers are but stars, which shine with a borrowed light from the sun: so speaks the apostle, 2 Corinthians 3:6-7. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." Those that teach men, must be first taught by Christ. All the prophets of

the Old, and all the prophets, pastors, and teachers of the New-Testament, have lighted their candles at his torch: it was Christ that "gave them a mouth and wisdom," Luke 21:15. What Paul received from the Lord, he delivered to the church, 1 Corinthians 11:23 Jesus Christ is the chief Shepherd, 1 Peter 5:4. and all the under-shepherds receive their gifts and commissions from him. These things are manifestly implied in Christ's Prophetic office.

Secondly, We shall next enquire how he executes and discharges this his office, or how he enlightens and teaches men the will of God. And this he has done variously, gradually, plainly, powerfully, sweetly, purely, and fully.

1. Our great Prophet has revealed unto men the will of God variously; not holding one even and constant tenor in the manifestations of the Father's will, but as the apostle speaks, "polumeros kai polutropos", at sundry times, and in divers manners, Hebrews 1:1. Sometimes he taught the church immediately, and in his own person, John 18:20. He declared God's righteousness in the great congregation, Psalms 22:22. And sometimes mediately, by his ministers and officers, deputed to that service by him. So he dispensed the knowledge of God to the church before his incarnation; it was Christ that in the time, and by the ministry of Noah, went and preached to the spirits in prison, as it is 1 Peter 3:19, that is, to men and women then alive, but now separated from the body, and imprisoned in hell for their disobedience. And it was Christ that was with the church in the wilderness, instructing and guiding them by the ministry of Moses and Aaron, Acts 7:37-38; and so he has taught the church since his ascension. He cannot now be personally with us, having other business to do for us in heaven; but, however, he will not be wanting to teach us by his officers, whom, for that end, he has set and appointed in the church, Ephesians 4:11-12.

2. He has dispensed his blessed light to the church gradually. The discoveries of light have been "polumeros", that is, in many parts or parcels; sometimes more obscure and cloudy; as to the Old-Testament believers, by visions dreams, Urim, Thummim, vocal oracles, types, sacrifices, etc. which, though comparatively, were but a weak glimmering light, and had no glory compared to that which now shines, 2 Corinthians 3:7-11. yet it was sufficient for the instruction and salvation of the elect in those times, but now is light sprung up gloriously in the gospel-dispensation: "And we all with open face, behold as in a glass, the glory of the Lord." It is to us not a twilight, but the light of a perfect day; and still is advancing in the several ages of the world. I know more (says Luther) than blessed Austin knew; and they that come after me, will know more than I know.

3. Jesus Christ, our great Prophet, has manifested to us the will of God plainly and perspicuously. When he was on earth himself, he taught the people by parables, and "without a parable he spoke nothing," Matthew 13:3-4. He clothed sublime and spiritual mysteries in earthly metaphors, bringing them thereby to the low and dull capacities of men, speaking so familiarly to the people about them, as if he had been speaking earthly things to them, John 3:12. And so (according to his own example) would he have his ministers preach, "using great plainness of speech," 2 Corinthians 3:12. and by manifestation of the truth, "commending themselves to every man's conscience," 1 Corinthians 4:2. Yet not allowing them to be crude and careless in expression, pouring out undigested, crude words; no, a holy serious, strict, and grave expression befits the lips of his ambassadors: and who ever spoke more weightily, more logically, persuasively than that apostle, by whose pen Christ has admonished us to beware of vain affections and swelling words of vanity? But he would have us stoop to the understandings of the meanest, and not give the

people a comment darker than the text; he would have us rather pierce their ears, than tickle their fancies; and break their hearts than please their ears. Christ was a very plain preacher.

4. Jesus Christ discovered truth powerfully, speaking "as one having authority, and not as the Pharisees," Matthew 7:29. They were cold and dull preachers, their words did even freeze between their lips; but Christ spoke with power; there was heat as well as light in his doctrine: and so there is still, though it be in the mouth of poor contemptible men, 2 Corinthians 10:4. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the casting down of strongholds: it is still quick and powerful, sharper than a two edged sword; and piercing, to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow," Hebrews 4:12. The blessed apostle imitated Christ; and being filled with his spirit, spoke home and freely to the hearts of men. So many words, so many claps of thunder, (as ones said of him) which made the hearts of sinners shake and tremble in their breasts. All faithful and able ministers are not alike gifted in this particular; but, surely, there is a holy seriousness and spiritual grace and majesty in their doctrine, commanding reverence from their hearers.

5. This Prophet, Jesus Christ, taught the people the mind of God in a sweet, affectionate, and taking manner; his words made their hearts burn within them, Luke 24:32. It was prophesied of him, Isaiah 42:2. "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard on high. A bruised reed he shall not break, and smoking flax he shall not quench. He knew how to speak word in season to the weary soul," Isaiah 61:1. "He gathered the Lambs with his arms, and gently led those that were with young," Isa. 4:11. How sweetly did his words slide to the melting hearts about him! he drew with cords of love, with the bands of a man: he discouraged none, upbraided none that were willing to come to him: his familiarity and free condescensions to the most vile and despicable sinners, were often made the matter of his reproach. Such is his gentle and sweet carriage to his people, that the church is called the Lamb’s wife, Revelation 19:7.

6. He revealed the mind of God purely to men; his doctrine had not the least dash of error to debase it; his most enviously observant hearers could find nothing to charge him with: he is "the faithful and true witness," Revelation 1:5, and he has commanded his ministers to preserve the simplicity and purity of the gospel, and not to blend and sophisticate it, 2 Corinthians 4:2.

7. And lastly, He revealed the will of God perfectly and fully, keeping back nothing needful to salvation. So he tells his disciples, John 15:15. "All things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you." He was "faithful as a Son over his own house," Hebrews 3:6. Thus you have a brief account of what is implied in this part of Christ’s Prophetic office, and how he performed it.

INFERENCE 1. If Jesus Christ, who is now passed into the heavens, be the great Prophet and Teacher of the church; hence we may justly infer the continual necessity of a standing ministry of the church: for by his ministers he now teaches us, and to that intent has fixed them in the church, by a firm constitution, there to remain to the end of the world, Matthew 28:20. He teaches men more personally, but ministerially. His ministers supply the want of his personal presence, 2 Corinthians 5:10. "We pray you in Christ stead." These officers he gave the church at his ascension, that is when he ceased to teach them any longer with his own lips; and so set them in the church that their succession shall never totally fail: for so the word "etheto", he has set, 1 Corinthians 12:28. plainly implies. They are set by a sure establishment, a firm and unalterable

constitution, even as the times and seasons, which the Father has put ["etheto"] in his own power: it is the same word, and it is well they are so firmly set and fixed there; for how many adversaries in all ages have endeavored to shake the very office itself? pretending that it is needless to be taught by men, and wresting such scriptures as these to countenance their error, Joel 2:28-29, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and daughters shall prophesy," etc. And Jeremiah 31:34. "These shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest of them." As to that of Joel, it is answered, That if an Old-Testament prophecy may be understood according to a New-Testament interpretation, then that prophecy does no way oppose, but confirm the gospel ministry. How the apostle understood the prophet in that his prophecy, may be seen in Acts 2:17, when the Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost upon the apostles. And surely he must be a confident person indeed, that thinks not an apostle to be as good an expositor of the prophet, as himself. And for that in Jeremiah 31:1-40 we say, 1. That if it conclude against ministerial teachings, it must equally conclude against Christian conferences.

2. We say that cannot be the sense of one scripture which contradicts the plain sense of other scriptures: but so this would, Ephesians 4:11-12. 1 Corinthians 12:28.

3. And we say, the sense of that text is not negative, but comparative. Not that they shall have no need to be taught any truth, but no such need to he taught the first truths: That there is a God, and who is this true God: They shall no more teach every "man his brother, saying, allow the Lord! for they shall all "know me." To conclude, God has given ministers to the church for the work of conversion and edification, "until we all come into the unity of the faith, to a perfect man," Ephesians 4:11-12. So that when all the elect are converted, and all those converts become perfect men; when there is no error in judgement or practice, and no seducer to cause it, then, and not until then, will a gospel ministry be useless. But (as it is well observed) there is not a man that opposes a gospel ministry, but the very being of that man is a sufficient argument for the continuance of it.

INFERENCE. 2. If Christ be the great Prophet of the church, and such a Prophet; then it follows, that the weakest Christians need not be discouraged at the dullness and incapacity they find in themselves: for Christ is not only a patient and condescending teacher, but he can also, as he has often done, reveal that to babes, which is hid from the wise and learned, Matthew 11:25. "The testimonies of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple," Psalms 19:7. Yes, and such as you are, the Lord delights to choose, that his grace may be the more conspicuous in your weakness, 1 Corinthians 1:26-27. You will have nothing of your own to glory in; you will not say, as a proud wretch once said, Ego et Deus meus; "I and my God did this." Jesus Christ affects not social glory, he will not divide the praise with any. Well then, be not discouraged; others may know more, in other things than you, but you are not incapable of knowing so much as shall save your souls, if Christ will be your teacher, in other knowledge they excel you: but if you know Jesus Christ, and the truth as it is in him, one drop of your knowledge is worth a whole sea of their gifts: one truth sucked in faith and prayer from the bosom of Christ is better than ten thousand dry notions beaten out by racking the understanding. It is better in kind, the one being but natural, the other super natural, from the saving illuminations and inward teachings of the Spirit: and so is one of those better things that accompany salvation. It is better in respect of effects; other knowledge leaves the heart as dry, barren, and unaffected, as if it had its seat in another man’s head; but that little

you have been taught of Christ, sheds down its gracious influence upon your affections, and slides sweetly to your melting hearts. So that as one "preferred the most despicable work of a plain rustic Christian, before all the triumphs of Alexander and Caesar;" much more ought you so prefer one saving manifestation of the Spirit, to all the powerless illuminations of natural men.

INFERENCE. 3. If Christ be the great Prophet and teacher of the church; it follows, That prayer is a proper mean for the increase of knowledge: Prayer is the golden key that unlocks that treasure. When Daniel was to expound that secret which was contained in the king's dream, about which the Chaldean magicians had racked their brains to no purpose; what course does Daniel take? Why, "he went to his house, (says the text, Daniel 2:17-18) and made the thing known to Hananiah, Michael, and Azariah his companions; that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning his secret." And then was the secret revealed to Daniel. Luther was accustomed to say, "Three things made a divine; meditation, temptation, and prayer." Holy Mr. Bradford was accustomed to study upon his knees. Those truths that are got by prayer, leave an unusual sweetness upon the heart. If Christ be our teacher, it becomes all his saints to be at his feet.

INFERENCE. 4. If Christ be the great Prophet and teacher of the church, We may thence discern and judge of doctrines, and it may serve us as a test to try then by. For such as Christ is, such are the doctrines that flow from him; every error pretends to derive itself from him; but as Christ was holy, humble, heavenly, meek, peaceful, plain and simple, and in all things alien, yes, contrary to the wisdom of the world, the gratifications of the flesh, such are the truths which he teaches. They have his character and image engraved on them. Would you know then whether this or that doctrine be from the Spirit of Christ or no? Examine the doctrine itself by this rule. And whatever doctrine you find to encourage and countenance sin, to exalt self, to be accommodated to earthly designs and interests, to wrap and bend to the humors and lusts of men; in a word, what doctrine soever directly, and as a proper cause makes them that profess it carnal, turbulent, proud, sensual, etc. you may safely reject it, and conclude this never came from Jesus Christ. The doctrine of Christ is after godliness; his truth sanctifies. There is a spiritual taste, by which those that have their senses exercised, can distinguish things that differ. "The spiritual man judges all things," 1 Corinthians 2:15. "His ear tries words, as his mouth tastes meats," Job 34:3. Swallow nothing (let it come never so speciously) that has not some relish of Christ and holiness in it. Be sure, Christ never revealed anything to men, that derogates from his own glory, or prejudices and obstructs the ends of his own death.

INFERENCE. 5. And as it will reeve us for a test of doctrines, so it serves for a test of ministers; and hence you may judge who are authorised and sent by Christ the great Prophet, to declare his will to men. Surely those whom he sends have his Spirit in their hearts, as well as his words in their mouths. And according to the measures of grace received, they faithfully endeavor to fulfill their ministry for Christ, as Christ did for his Father: "As my Father has sent me (says Christ) so send I you," John 20:21. They take Christ for their pattern in the whole course of their ministration, and are such as sincerely endeavor to imitate the great Shepherd, in these six particulars following:

1. Jesus Christ was a faithful Minister, the "faithful and true witness," Revelation 1:5. He declared the whole mind of God to men. Of him it was Prophetically said, Psalms 40:10. "I have not hid your

righteousness within my heart; I have declared your faithfulness, and your salvation; I leave not concealed your loving-kindness and your truth from the great congregation." To the same sense, and almost in the same words, the apostle Paul professed, in Acts 20:20. "I have kept back nothing that was profitable unto you; and Acts 20:35. "I have showed you all things." Not that every faithful minister does in course of his ministry, anatomize the whole body of truth, and fully expound and apply each particular to the people: No, that is not the meaning, but of those doctrines which they have opportunity of opening, they do not out of fear, or to accommodate and secure base low ends, with hold the mind of God, or so corrupt and abuse his words, as to subject truth to their own, or other men's lusts: "They preach not as pleasing men, but God," 1 Thessalonians 2:4. "For if we yet please men, we cannot be the servants of Christ," Galatians 1:10. Truth must be spoken, though the greatest on earth be offended.

2. Jesus Christ was a tender-hearted Minister, full of compassion to souls. He was sent to bind up the broken in heart, Isaiah 61:1. He was full of affections to poor sinners. "He grieved at the hardness of men's hearts, Mark 3:5. He mourned over Jerusalem, "and said, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! how oft would I have gathered your children, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings!" Matthew 23:27. His affections yearned when he saw the multitude, as sheep having no shepherd, Matthew 9:37. These affections of Christ must be in all the under shepherds. "God is my witness, (says one of them) how greatly I long after you all, in [or after the pattern of] the affections of Christ Jesus," Php 1:8. He that shows a hard heart, unaffected with the dangers and miseries of souls, can never show a commission from Christ to authorize him for ministerial work.

3. Jesus Christ zeal a laborious painful Minister, he put a necessity on himself to finish his work in his day; a work infinitely great, in a very little time; John 9:4. "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night comets, when no man can work." O how much work did Christ do in a little time on earth! "He went about doing good," Acts 10:38. He was never idle. When he sits down at Jacob's well, to rest himself, being weary, presently he falls into his work, preaching the gospel to the Samaritan woman. In this must his ministers resemble him; "striving according to his working, that works in them mightily" Colossians 1:28-29. An idle minister seems to be a contradictions in adjecto; as who should say, a dark light.

4. Jesus Christ delighted in nothing more than the success of his ministry; to see the work of the Lord prosper in his hand, this was meat and drink to him. When the seventy returned, and reported the success of their first embassy, "Lord, even the devils are subject to us through your name!" "Why, (says Christ) I beheld Satan fall as lightning from heaven." As if he had said, You tell me no news, I saw it when I sent you out at first: I knew the gospel would make work where it came. "And in that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit," Luke 10:17-18; Luke 10:21. And is it not so with those sent by him? do not they value the success of their ministry at a high rate? It is not (says one) the expense, but the recoiling of our labors back again upon us, that kills us. Ministers would not die so fast, nor be grey-headed so soon, could they but see the travail of their souls. "My little children, (says Paul) of whom I travail again in birth, "palin odino", until Christ be formed in you", Galatians 4:19. As for those that have the name of shepherds only, who visit the flock only once a year, about shearing time; who have "the instruments of a foolish shepherd," (forcipes et mulctra) the shears and pail, Zechariah 11:15, woeful will be their condition at appearing of this great Shepherd.

5. Jesus Christ was a minister that lived up to his doctrine: his life and doctrine harmonized in all things. He pressed to holiness in his doctrine, and was the great pattern of holiness in his life, Matthew 11:28 "Learn of me, I am meek and lowly." And such his ministers desire to approve themselves, Php 4:9. "What you have heard, and seen in me, that do." He preached to their eyes, as well as ears, His life was a comment on his doctrine. They might see holiness acted in his life, as well as sounded by his lips. He preached the doctrine, and lived the application.

6. And lastly, Jesus Christ was a minister that minded and maintained sweet, secret communion with God, for all his constant public labors. If he had been preaching and healing all the day, yet he would redeem time from his very sleep to spend in secret prayer; Matthew 14:23. "When he had sent the multitude away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray, and was there alone." O blessed pattern! Let the keepers of the vineyards remember they have a vineyard of their own to keep, a soul of their own that must be looked after as well as other men's. Those that, in these things, imitate Christ, are surely sent to us from him, and are worthy of double honor. They are a choice blessing to the people.

S. The first Preparation for Christ's

The first Preparation for Christ’s Death, on

his Enemies Part, by the treason at Judas

"And while he yet spoke, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him." Matthew 26:47-49 The former sermons give you an account how Christ improved every moment of his time, with busy diligence, to make himself ready for his death. He has commended his charge to the Father, instituted the blessed memorial of his death, poured out his soul to God in the garden, with respect to the grievous sufferings he should undergo; and now he is ready, and waits for the coming of the enemies, being first in the field. And think you that they were idle on their parts? No, no, their malice made them restless. They had agreed with Judas to betray him. Under his conduct, a band of soldiers was sent to apprehend him. The hour, so long expected, is come. For "while he yet spoke," says the text, "lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude, with swords and staves."

These words contain the first preparative act, on their part, for the death of Christ, even to betray him, and that by one of his own disciples. Now they execute what they had plotted, Matthew 26:14-15. And in this paragraph you have an account, 1. Of the traitor, who he was. 2. Of the treason, what he did. 3. Of the manner of its execution, how it was contrived and effected. Lastly, Of the time, when they put this hellish plot in execution.

1. We have here a description of the traitor: and it is remarkable how carefully the several Evangelists have described him, both by his name, surname, and office, "Judas, Judas Iscariot, Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve;" that he might not be mistaken for Jude or Judas the apostle. God is tender of the names and reputations of his upright-hearted servants. His office, "one of the twelve," is added to aggravate the fact, and to show how that prophecy was accomplished in him, Psalms 41:9. "Yes, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, has lift up his heel against me." Lo, this was the traitor, and this was his name and office.

2. You have a description of the treason, or an account what this man did. He led an armed multitude to the place where Christ was, gave them a signal to discover him, and encouraged them to lay hands on him, and hold him fast. This was that hellish design which the devil put into his heart, working upon that principle, or lust of covetousness, which was predominant there. What will not a carnal heart attempt, if the devil suit a temptation to the predominant lust, and God withhold restraining grace!

3. You have here the way and manner in which the hellish plot was executed. It was managed both with force and with fraud. He comes with a multitude, armed with swords and staves, in case they should meet with any resistance. And he comes to him with a kiss, which was their signal, lest they should mistake the man. For they aimed neither at small nor great, save only at the King of

Israel, the King of glory. Here was much ado, you see, to take a harmless Lamb, that did not once start from them, but freely offered himself to them.

4. And lastly, When this treasonable design was executed upon Christ. And it was executed upon him while he stood among his disciples, exhorting them to prayer and watchfulness, dropping heavenly and most seasonable counsels upon them. "While he yet spoke, lo, Judas, and with him a multitude, came with swords and staves." Surely, it is no better than a Judas's trick, to disturb and afflict the servants of God in the discharge of their duties. This was the traitor and his treason; thus it was executed and at this time. Hence we observe,

DOCTRINE. That is was the lot of our Lard Jesus Christ, to be betrayed into the hands of his mortal enemies, by the assistance of a false and deceitful friend.

Look, as Joseph was betrayed and sold by his brethren; David by Achitophel, his old friend; Samson by Delilah, that lay in his bosom; so Christ by Judas, one of the twelve; a man, his friend, his familiar, that had been so long conversant with him: he that by profession had lifted up his hand to Christ, now by treason lifts up his heel against him; he bids the soldiers bind those blessed hands, that not long before had washed the traitor's feet. In the point before us, we will, First, Consider Judas, according to that eminent station and place he had under Christ.

Secondly, We will consider his treason, according to the several aggravations of it.

Thirdly, We will enquire into the cause or motives that put him upon such a dreadful, hellish design as this was.

Fourthly, and lastly, we will view the issue, and see the event of this treason, both as to Christ and as to himself. And then apply it.

First, As for the person that did this, he was very eminent by reason of that dignity Christ had raised him to. For,

1. He was one of the twelve; one retained not in a more general, and common, but in the nearest, and most intimate and honorable relation and service to Jesus Christ. There were in Christ's time several sorts and ranks of persons that had relation to him. There were secret disciples; men that believed, but kept their stations, and abode with their relations in their callings. There were seventy also whom Christ sent forth; but none of these were so much with Christ or so eminent in respect of their place, as the twelve, they were Christ's family, day and night conversant with him: it was the highest dignity that was conferred upon any: and of this number was Judas. The ancients have much extolled the apostolical dignity. Some stiled these twelve, pedes Christi, the feet of Christ: because they, as it were, carried Christ up and down the world. Others, oculi Dei, the very eyes of God; they were his watchmen, that took care for the concernments of his name and gospel in the world. Others, mammae ecclesiae, the breasts of the church; they fed and nourished the children of God by their doctrine. Now, to be one of this number, one of the twelve, what a dignity was this.

2. Yes, he being one of the twelve, was daily conversant with Christ: often joined with him in prayer, often sat at his feet, bearing the gracious words that came out of his mouth. It was one of Austin's three wishes, that he had seen Christ in the flesh: Judas not only saw him but dwelt with him, traveled with him, and eat and drank with him. And during the whole time of his abode with him, all Christ's carriage towards him was very obliging and winning; yes, such was the

condescension of Christ to this wretched man, that he washed his feet, and that but a little before betrayed him.

3. He was a man of unsuspected integrity among the apostles. When Christ told them, One of you shall betray me; none thought on him, but everyone rather suspected himself; Lord, is it I? says one, and so said they all; but none pointed at Judas, saying, You are he.

4. To conclude, in some respect, he was preferred to the rest. For he had not only a joint commission with them to preach the gospel to others, (though, poor unhappy wretch, himself became a cast-away) but he had a peculiar office, he bare the bag, that is he was Almoner, or the steward of the family, to take care to provide for the necessary accommodations of Christ and them. Now who could ever have suspected, that such a man as this should have sold the blood of Christ for a little money? that ever he should have proved a perfidious traitor to his Lord, who had called him, honored him, and carried himself so tenderly towards him? And yet so it was; "Lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a multitude:" O where will not a busy devil and a bad heart carry a man!

Secondly, But what did this man do? and what are the just aggravations of his fact? Why, he most basely and unworthily sold and delivered Christ into his enemies hands, to be butchered and destroyed; and all this for thirty pieces of silver.

Blush, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth, at this! In this fact, most black and horrid aggravations appear.

1. Judas had seen the majesty of a God on him whom he betrayed. He had seen the miracles that Christ wrought, which none but Christ could do. He knew that by the finger of God he had raised the dead, cast out devils, healed the sick. He could not choose but observe and see the rays and awful beams of divine majesty shining in his very face, in his doctrine, and in his life; to betray a man, to sell the blood of the poorest innocent in the world, is horrid; but to sell the blood of God, O what is this! Here is a wickedness that no epithet can match! Yes,

2. This wickedness he committed after personal warnings and premonitions given him by Christ, he had often told them in general, that one of them should betray him, Mark 14:20. He also denounced a dreadful woe upon him that should do it, Mark 14:21. "the Son of man goes indeed, as it is written of him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed; good had it been for that man if he had never been born." This was spoken in Judas's presence. And one would have thought so dreadful a doom as Christ passed upon the man! that should attempt this, should have affrighted him far enough from the thoughts of such a wickedness. Nay, Christ comes nearer to him than this, and told him he was the man: for when Judas (who was the last that put the question to Christ) asked him, "Master, is it I?" Christ's answer imports as much as a plain affirmation, "You have said," Matthew 26:25. Moreover,

3. He does it not out of a blind zeal against Christ, as many of his other enemies did; of whom it is said, 1 Corinthians 2:8. "That had they known him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory:" but he did it for money to make his market of Christ. He sold Christ as a man would sell an ox, or a sheep to the butcher for profit. He was fully of the mind of the Pope, whose motto was "The smell or savor of gain is sweet? let it arise out of what it will." If he can get anything by Christ's blood, it shall be a vendible commodity with him. "what will you give me, (says he) and I will betray him?"

Matthew 26:15.

4. He sells him, and he sells him at a low rate too, which showed how vile an esteem he had of Christ. He is content to part with him for thirty pieces of silver. If these pieces, or shekels, were the shekels of the sanctuary, they amounted but to three pounds fifteen shillings. But it is supposed they were the common shekels, which were mostly used in buying and selling; and then his price, that he put upon the Savior of the world, was but one pound seventeen shillings and six pence. A goodly price (as the prophet calls it) that he was valued at! Zechariah 11:12-13. I confess, it is a wonder, he asked no more, knowing how much they longed for his blood; and that they offered no more for him: how then should the scriptures have been fulfilled? O what a sale was this! to sell that blood, which all the gold and silver in the world is not worth one drop of, for a trifle! still the wickedness of the fact rises higher and higher.

5. He left Christ in a most heavenly and excellent employment, when he went to make this soul-undoing bargain. For if he went away from the table, as some think, then he left Christ instituting and administering those heavenly signs of his body and blood: there he saw, or might have seen, the bloody work he was going about, acted as in a figure before him. If he sat out that ordinance, as others suppose he did, then he left Christ singing an heavenly hymn, and preparing to go where Judas was preparing to meet him. When the Lord Jesus was in the most serious and heavenly exercise, the wretch slinked away from him into the city, or else went under pretense to buy some necessaries. But his design was not to buy, but to sell, whatever his pretenses were. Nay,

What he did, was not done by the persuasions of any. The high- priest sent not for him, and without doubt, was surprised when he came to him on such on errand. For it could never enter into any of their hearts, that any of his own disciples could ever be drawn into a confederacy against Him. No, he went as a volunteer, offering himself to this work: which still heightens the sin, and makes it out of measure sinful.

7. The manner in which he executes his treasonable design adds further malignity to the fact, He comes to Christ with fawning words and carriage, "Hail, Master, and kissed him." Here is honey in the tongue, and poison in the heart. Here is hatred hid under lying lips. This was the man; and this was his fact. Let us enquire,

Thirdly, The cause and motives of this wickedness, how he came to attempt and perpetrate such a villany. Maldonate the Jesuit criminates the Protestant divines, for affirming that God had a hand in ordering and over-ruling this fact. But we say, that Satan and his own lust was the impulsive cause of it: that God, as it was a wicked treason, permitted it; and as it was a delivering Christ to death, was not only the permitter, but the wise and holy director and orderer of it, and in the wisdom of his providence over-ruled it, to the great good and advantage of the church; in respect of which happy issue, Judas's treason is called foelix scelus, "a happy wickedness." Satan inspired the motion, Luke 23:3-4. "Then entered Satan into Judas, surnamed Iscariot, and he went his way", etc. his own lusts, like dry tinder, kindled presently: his heart was covetous; there was predisposed matter enough for the devil to work on, so that it was but touch and take. Luke 23:25. They covenanted to give him money, and he promised, etc. The holy God disposed and ordered all this to the singular benefit and good of his people: Acts 4:28. they did whatever "his hand and counsel had before determined to be done." And by this determinate counsel of God, he was taken and slain, Acts

2:23. Yet this no ways excuses the wickedness of the instruments: for what they did, was done from the power of their own lusts, most wickedly; what he did was done in the unsearchable depth of his own wisdom, most holy. God knows how to serve his own ends by the very sins of men, and yet have no communion at all in the sin he so over-rules. If a man let a dog out of his hand in pursuit of a hare, the dog hunts merely for a prey; but he that lets him go, uses the sagacity and nimbleness of the dog to serve his own ends by it. Judas minded nothing but his own advantage to get money: God permitted that lust to work, but over ruled the issue to his own eternal glory, and the salvation of our souls.

Fourthly and lastly, But what was the end and issue of this fact? As to Christ, it was his death; for the hour being come, he does not meditate an escape, nor put forth the power of his Godhead to deliver himself out of their hands. Indeed he showed what he could do, when he made them go back and stagger with a word. He could have obtained more than twelve legions of angels to have been his life-guard; one of whom had been sufficient to have coped with all the Roman legions: but how then should the scriptures have been fulfilled, or our salvation accomplished? No, he resists not, but Judas, delivering him into their hands at that time, was his death. And what got he as a reward of his wickedness? It ended in the ruin both of his soul and body. For immediately a death-pang of despair seized his conscience; which was so intolerable, that he ran to the halter for a remedy; and so falling headlong, he burst asunder, and all his affections gushed out, Acts 1:18. And now he that had no affections for Christ, has none for himself. As for his soul, it went to its own place, Acts 1:25 even the place appointed for the son of perdition, as Christ calls him, John 17:12. His name retains an odious stench to this day, and shall to all generations: it is a bye- word, a proverb of reproach. This was his end; we will next improve it.

Corollary 1. Hence in the first place we learn, That the greatest professors had need to be jealous of their own hearts, and look well to the grounds and principles of their professions. One of the ancients would have had this epitaph engraved upon Judas's tomb-stone, "eis eme tis horaon eusebes ekso", "Let everyone that beholds me, learn to be godly indeed, to be sincere in his profession, and to love Christ more unfeignedly than I did." O professors, look to your foundation, and build not upon the sand, as this poor creature did. That is sound advice, indeed, which the apostle gives, 1 Corinthians 10:12. "Let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall." O beware of a loose foundation. If you begin your profession as Judas did, no wonder if it shall end as his did.

1. Beware therefore that you hold not the truth in unrighteousness: Judas did so: he knew much, but lived not up to what he knew, for he was still of a worldly spirit in the height of his profession. His knowledge never had any saving influence upon his heart, he preached to others, but he himself was a cast-away. He had much light, but still walked in darkness. He had no knowledge to do himself good.

2. Beware you live not in a course of secret sin. Judas did so, and that was his ruin. He made a profession indeed, and carried it smoothly but he was a thief, John 12:6. He made no conscience of committing the sin, so he could but cover and hide it from men. This helped on his ruin, and so it will your, reader, if you be guilty herein. A secret way of sinning, under the covert of profession, will either break out at last to the observation of men, or else slide you down insensibly to hell, and leave you there only this comfort, that no body shall know you are there.

3. Beware of hypocritical pretenses of religion to accommodate self-ends. Judas was a man that had notable skill this way. He had a mind to fill his own purse, by the sale of that costly ointment which Mary bestowed upon our Savior's feet. And what a neat cover had he fitted for it, to do his business clearly; Why, says he, "This might have been sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor." Here was charity to the poor, or rather poor charity; for this was only a blind to his base self ends. O Christian, be plain hearted, take heed of craft and cunning in matters of religion: This spoiled Judas.

4. Beware of self-confidence. Judas was a very confident man of himself. "Last of all, Judas said, Master, is it I?" Matthew 26:25. But he that was last in the suspicion was first in the transgression. "He that trusteth in his own heart, is a fool," says Solomon, Proverbs 28:26. Such a fool was this great professor. It will be your wisdom to keep a jealous eye upon your own hearts; and still suspect their fairest pretenses.

5. If you will not do as Judas did, nor come to such an end as he did, take heed you live not unprofitably under the means of grace. Judas had the best means of grace that ever man enjoyed. He heard Christ himself preach, he joined often with him in prayer, but he was never the better for it all; it was but as the watering of a dead stick, which will never make it grow, but rot it the sooner. Never was there a rotten branch so richly watered as he was. O it is a sad sign and a sad sin too, when men and women live under the gospel from year to year, and are never the better. I warn you to beware of these evils, all you that profess religion. Let these footsteps by which Judas went down to his own place, terrify you from following him in them.

Corollary 2. Learn hence also, That eminent knowledge and profession put a special and eminent aggravation upon sin. Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve. Poor wretch! better had it been for him, if he had never been numbered with them, nor enlightened with so much knowledge as he was endowed with: for this rent his conscience to pieces, when he reflected on what he had done, and presently run into the gulf of despair. To sin against clear light, is to sin with an high hand. It is that which makes a sad waste of the conscience. That, without doubt, which now torments this poor soul in hell, is that he should go against his light, against his profession, to gratify a base lust to his eternal ruin. Had he known no better, it had been more excusable. Those that had a hand in the death of Christ, through mistake and ignorance, were capable to receive the pardon of their sin by that blood they so shed, Acts 3:17; Acts 3:19 compared. Take heed therefore of abusing knowledge, and putting a force upon conscience.

Corollary 3. Learn hence in the third place, That unprincipal professors will sooner or later become shameful apostates. Judas was an unprincipled professor, and see what he came to; ambition invited Simon Magus to the profession of Christ, he would be "eis megas", "some great one," and how quickly did the rottenness of his principles discover itself in the ruin of his profession? That which wants a root, must needs wither, as Christ speaks, Matthew 13:20-21. That which is the predominant interest, will prevail, and sway with us in the day of our trial. Hear me, all you that profess religion, and have given your names to Christ; if that profession be not built upon a solid and real work of grace upon your hearts, you shall never honor religion, nor save your souls by it. O it is your union with Christ, that, like a spring, maintains your profession. "So much as you are united to Christ, so much constancy, steadiness, and evenness, you will manifest in the duties of religion, and no more."

O brethren, when he that professes Christ for company, shall be left alone as Paul was; when he that makes religion a stirrup to help himself into the saddle of preferment and honor, shall see that he is so advanced to be drawn forth into Christ's camp and endure the heat of the day, and not to take his pleasure; in a word, when he shall see all things about him discouraging and threatening, his dearest interest on earth exposed for religion's sake, and he has no faith to balance his present losses with his future hopes; I say, when it comes to this, you shall then see the rottenness of many hearts discovered; and Judas may have many fellows, who will part with Christ for the world, as he did. O therefore look well to your foundation.

Corollary 4. Moreover, in this example of Judas you may read this truth; That men and women are never in more imminent danger, than when they meet with temptations exactly suited to their master- lusts, to their own iniquity. O pray, pray, that you may be kept from a violent suitable temptation. Satan knows that when a man is tried here, he falls by the root. The love of this world was all along Judas' master sin, and some conjecture he was a married man, and had a great charge; but that is conjectural: this was his predominant lust. The devil found out this, and suited it with a temptation which fully hit his humor, and it carries him immediately. This is the dangerous crisis of the soul. Now you shall see what it is, and what it will do. Put money before Judas, and presently you shall see what the man is.

Corollary 5. Hence, in like manner, we are instructed, That no man knows where he shall stop, when he first engages himself in a way of sin.

Wickedness, as well as holiness, is not born in its full strength, but grows up to it by insensible degrees. So did the wickedness of Judas. I believe, he himself never thought he should have done what he did; and if any should have told him, in the first beginning of his profession, You shall sell the blood of Christ for money, you shall deliver him most perfidiously into their hands that seek his life; he would have answered as Hazael did to Elisha, "But what, is your servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" 2 Kings 8:13. His wickedness first discovered itself in murmuring and discontent, taking a pique at some small matters against Christ, as we may find, by comparing John 6:1-71 from John 6:60-70, with John 12:1-50 from John 12:3-9 but see to what it grows at last. That lust or temptation that at first is but a little cloud as big as a man's hand, may quickly overspread the whole heaven. It is our engaging in sin, as in the motion of a stone down the hill, vires acquirit eundo, "it strengthens itself by going;" and the longer it runs, the more violent. Beware of the smallest beginnings of temptations. No wise man will neglect or slight the smallest spark of fire, especially if he see it among many barrels of gun-powder. You carry gun-powder about you, O take heed of sparks.

Corollary 6. Did Judas sell Christ for money? What a potent conqueror is this love of this world! How many has it cast down wounded! What great professors have been dragged at its chariot wheels as its captives? Hymenaeus and Philetus, Ananias and Sapphire, Demas and Judas, with thousands and ten thousands, since their days, led away in triumph. It "drowns men in perdition," 1 Timothy 6:9. In that pit of perdition, this son of perdition fell, and never rose more. O you that so court and prosecute it; that so love and admire it; make a stand here; pause a little upon this example; consider to what it brought this poor wretch, whom I have presented to you dead, eternally dead, by the mortal wound that the love of this world gave him: it destroyed both soul and body. Pliny tells us, that the Mermaids delight to be in green meadows, into which they draw men

by their enchanting voices; but, says he, there always lie heaps of dead men's bones by them. A lively emblem of a bewitching world! Good had it been for many professors of religion, if they had never known what the riches, and honors, and pleasures of this world meant.

Corollary 7. Did Judas fancy so much happiness in a little money, that he would sell Christ to get it? Learn then, That which men promise themselves much pleasure and contentment in the day of sin, may prove the greatest curse and misery to them that ever befell them in the world. Judas thought it was a brave thing to get money! he fancied much happiness in it: but how sick was his conscience as soon as he had swallowed it! O take it again, says he! It griped him to the heart. He knows not what to do, to rid himself of that money. Give me children, says Rachel, or I die: she has children, and they prove her death. O mortify your fancies to the world; put no necessity upon riches. "They that will be rich, fall into temptations, and many hurtful lusts, which drown men in perdition," 1 Timothy 6:9. You may have your desires with a curse. He that brings home a pack of fine clothes infected with the plague, has no such great bargain of it, how cheap soever he bought them.

Corollary 8. Was there one, and but one of the twelve, that proved a Judas, a traitor to Christ? Learn thence, that it is a most unreasonable thing to be prejudiced at religion, and the sincere professors of it, because some that profess it prove naught and vile. Should the eleven suffer for one Judas? Alas, they abhorred both the traitor and his treason. As well might the High-priest and his servants have condemned Peter, John, and all the rest, whose souls abhorred the wickedness. If Judas proved a vile wretch, yet there were eleven to one that remained upright: if Judas proved naught, it was not his profession made him so, but his hypocrisy; he never learned it from Christ. If religion must be charged with all the miscarriages of its professors, then there is no pure religion in the world. Name that religion among the professors whereof there is not one Judas. Take heed, reader, of prejudices against godliness on this account. The design of the devil, without doubt, is to undo you eternally by them. "Woe to the world because of offences," Matthew 18:7. And what if God do permit these things to fall out, that you may be hardened in iniquity, confirmed in sin by such occasions, and so the destruction brought about this way: Blessed is he that is not offended at Christ.

Corollary 9. Did Judas, one of the twelve, do so? Learn thence, That a drop of grace, is better than a sea of gifts. Gifts have some excellency in them, but the way of grace is the more excellent way, 1 Corinthians 12:31. Gifts as one says, are dead graces, but graces are living gifts. There is many a learned head in hell. These are not the things that accompany salvation. Gifts are the gold that beautifies the temple; but grace is as the temple which sanctifies the gold. One tear, one groan, one breathing at an upright heart, is more than the tongues of angels.

Poor Christian, you are troubled that you canned not speak and pray so neatly, so handsomely, as some others can? but canned you go into a corner, and there pour out your soul affectionately, though not rhetorically, to your Father? trouble not yourself. It is better for you to feel one divine impression from God upon the heart, than to have ten thousand fine notions floating in your head; Judas was a man of parts; but what good did they do him?

Corollary 10. Did the devil win the consent of Judas to such a design as this? Could he get no other but the hand of an apostle to assist him? Learn hence, That the policy of Satan lies much in the choice of his instruments he works by. No bird, (says one) like a living bird to tempt others into

the net. Pelagius Socinus, etc. were fit for that work the devil put them upon. Austin told an ingenious young scholar, "The devil coveted him for an ornament." He knows he has a foul cause to manage, and therefore will get the fairest hand he can to manage it with the less suspicion.

Corollary 11. Did Judas one of the twelve, do this? Then certainly, Christians may approve and join with such men on earth, whose faces they shall never see in heaven. The apostles held communion a long time with this man, and did not suspect him. O please not yourselves therefore, that you have communion with the saints here, and that they think and speak charitably of you. "All the churches shall know, (says the Lord) that I am he that searches the heart and reins, and will give to every man as his work shall be," Revelation 2:23. In heaven we shall meet many that we never thought to meet there, and miss many we were confident we should see there.

Corollary 12. Lastly, Did Judas, one of the twelve, a man so obliged, raised and honored by Christ, do this? Cease then from man, be not too confident, but beware of men. "Trust you not in a friend, put no confidence in a guide, keep the door of your lips from her that lies in your bosom," Micah 7:5. Not that there is no sincerity in any man, but because there is so much hypocrisy in many men, and so much corruption in the best of men, that we may not be too confident, nor lay too great a stress upon any man. Peter's modest expression of Sylvanus is a pattern for us; "Sylvanus, a faithful brother unto you (as I suppose") 1 Peter 5:12. The time shall come, says Christ, that "brother shall betray brother to death," Matthew 10:11. Your charity for others may be your duty, but your too great confidence may be your snare. Fear what others may do, but fear yourself more!

S. The fourth excellent Saying of Christ

The fourth excellent Saying of Christ upon the Cross

"And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Matthew 27:46 This verse contains the fourth memorable saying of Christ upon the cross; words able to rend the hardest heart in the world: it is the voice of the Son of God in an agony: his sufferings were great, very great before, but never in that extremity as now; when this heaven rending and heart melting out-cry brake from him upon the cross, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? In which are considerable, the time, matter, and manner of this his sad complaint.

First, The time when it was uttered, "about the ninth hour," that is about three of the clock afternoon. For as the Jews divided the night into four quarters, or watches; so they divided the day, in like manner, into four quarters, or greater flours; which had their names from that hour of the day that closed the quarter. so that beginning their account of their lesser hours from six in the morning, which with them was the first, their ninth hour answered to our third afternoon. And this is heedfully marked by the evangelists, on purpose to show us how long Christ hanged in distress upon the cross both in soul and body, which at least was full three hours: towards the end whereof his soul was so filled, distressed, and overwhelmed, that this doleful cry brake from his soul, in bitter anguish, "My God, my God," etc.

Secondly. The matter of the complaint. It is not of the cruel tortures he felt in his body, nor of the scoffs and reproaches of his name; he mentions not a word of these, they were all swallowed up in the sufferings within, as the river is swallowed up in the sea, or the lesser flame in the greater. He seems to neglect all these, and only complains of what was more burdensome than ten thousand crosses; even his Father’s deserting him, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" It is a more inward trouble that burdens him, darkness upon his spirit, the hidings of God’s face from him, an affliction he was totally a stranger to until now; here he lays his hand in this complaint. This was the pained place, to which he points in this dolorous outcry.

Thirdly. The manner in which he utters his sad complaint, and that was with a remarkable vehemency, "he cried with a loud voice," not like a dying man, in whom nature was spent, but as one full of vigor, life, and sense. He gathered all his spirits together, stirred up the whole power of nature, when he made this grievous outcry. There is in it also an emphatical reduplication which shows with what vehemency it was uttered; not singly, my God, but he doubles it, "My God, my God," as distressed persons use to do. So Elisha, when Elijah was separated from him by the chariots and horses of fire, cries out, "My father, my father."

Nay, moreover, to increase the force and vehemency of this complaint, here is an affectionate interrogation, "Why have you forsaken me?" Questions, especially such as this, are full of spirits. It is as if he were surprised by the strangeness of this affliction: and rousing up himself with an unusual vehemency, turns himself to the Father, and cries, Why so, my Father? O what do you

mean by this! What! hide that face from me that was never hid before! What! and hide it from me now, in the depth of my other torments and troubles! O what new, what strange things are these! Lastly, here is an observable variation of the language in which this astonishing complaint was uttered; for he speaks both Hebrew and Syrian in one breath, Eli, Eli lama, are all Hebrew, sabachthani is a Syrian word, used here for emphasis sake. Hence we observe,

DOCTRINE. That God in design to heighten the sufferings of Christ to the uttermost, forsook him in the time of his greatest distress; to the unspeakable affliction and anguish of his soul. This proposition shall be considered in three parts: The desertion itself; the design or end of it; the effect and influence it had on Christ.

First, The desertion itself. Divine desertion generally considered, is God's withdrawing himself from any, not as to his essence, that fills heaven and earth, and constantly remains the same; but it is the withdrawment of his favor, grace, and love: when these are gone, God is said to be gone. And this is done two ways, either absolutely, and wholly, or respectively, and only as to manifestation. In the first sense, devils are forsaken of God. They once were in his favor and love, but they have utterly and finally lost it. God is so withdrawn from them, as that he will never take them into favor any more. In the other sense he sometimes forsakes his dearest children, that is he removes all sweet manifestations of his favor and love for a time, and carries it to them as a stranger, though his love be still the same. And this kind of desertion, which is respective, temporary, and only in regard of manifestation, is justly distinguished from the various ends and designs of it, into probational, cautional, castigatory, and penal. Probational desertions are only for the proof and trial of grace. Cautional desertions are designed to prevent sin. Castigatory desertions are God's rods to chastise his people for sin. Penal desertions are such as are inflicted as the just reward of sin, for the reparation of that wrong sinners have done by their sins. Of this sort was Christ's desertion. A part of the curse, and a special part. And his bearing it was no small part of the reparation, or satisfaction he made for our sins.

More particularly, to open the nature of this desertion of Christ by his Father, there being much of intricacy and difficulty in it; I shall proceed in the explication of it negatively, and positively.

First, Negatively. When Christ cries out of God's forsaking him, he does not mean, that he had dissolved the personal union of the two natures. Not as if the marriage-knot which united our nature to the person of Christ was loosed, or a divorce made between them: No, for when he was forsaken of God, he was still true and real God-man, in one person.

Secondly, When Christ bewails the father's forsaking him, he does not mean, that he pulled away the prop of divine support from him, by which he had until then endured the tortures and sufferings that oppressed him: no, though the Father deserted, yet he still supported him. And so much is intimated in these words of Christ, Eli, Eli, which signifies, my strong One, my strong One. God was with him by way of support, when withdrawn as to manifestations of love and favor. In respect of God's supporting essence which was with Christ at this time, it is said, Isaiah 42:1. "Behold my servant, whom I uphold:" and John 16:32. "I am not alone, but my father is with me." So that this cannot be the meaning of it.

Thirdly, Much less is it his meaning? that God had left him, as to inherent grace and sanctification; recalling that spirit of holiness which had anointed him above his fellows: no, when he was

forsaken, he remained as holy as ever: he had indeed less comfort, but not less holiness than before. Such a desertion had irritated and made void the very end of his death. And his sacrifice could never have yielded such a fragrant odor to God as it did, Ephesians 5:2.

Fourthly, The love of God was not so withdrawn from Christ, as that the Father had now no love for him, nor delight in him. That is impossible, he can no more cease to love Christ, than to love himself. his love was not turned into wrath; though his wrath only was now manifested to him as our surety; and hid his love from him as his beloved Son.

Fifthly, Nor was Christ forsaken by his Father finally, upon what account soever it was that he was forsaken: no, it was but for a few hours that the dark cloud dwelt upon his soul; it soon passed away, and the bright and glorious face of God shone forth again as bright as ever, Psalms 22:1; Psalms 22:24. compared.

Sixthly, and lastly, It was not a mutual desertion, or a desertion on both parts; the Father forsook him, but he forsook not his Father. When God withdrew, he followed him, crying, "My God, my God."

Yet to speak positively of it; though he did not dissolve the personal union, nor cut off divine supports, nor remove his inherent grace, nor turn his Father's love into hatred, nor continue forever, nor yet was it on both parts, Christ's forsaking God, as well as God's forsaking Christ: yet I say it was,

First, A very sad desertion, the like unto which in all respects never was experienced by any, nor can be to the end of the world. All his other sufferings were but small to this; they bore upon his body, this upon his soul; they came from the hands of vile men, this from the hands of a dear Father. He suffered both in body and soul; but the sufferings of his soul were the very soul of his sufferings. Under all his other sufferings he opened not his mouth; but this touched the quick, that he could not but cry out, "My God, my God, why best you forsaken me?"

Secondly, As it was sad, so it was a penal desertion, inflicted on him for satisfaction for those sins of ours, which deserved that God should forsake us forever, as the damned are forsaken by him. So that this cry (as one observes) was like the perpetual shriek of them that are cast away forever: this was that hell, and the torments of it which Christ, our surety, suffered for us. For look, as there lies a twofold misery upon the damned in hell, namely, pain of sense, and pain of sense; so upon Christ answerable, there was not only an impression of wrath, but also a subtraction or withdrawment of all sensible favor and love. Hence it is said by himself, John 12:27. And now my soul, "tetaraktai" is troubled. The word signifies, troubled as they that are in hell are troubled. Though God did not leave his soul in hell, as others are, he having enough to pay the debt which they have not, yet in the torments thereof, at this time, he was; yes, his sufferings at this time in his soul were equivalent to all that which our souls should have suffered there to all eternity.

Thirdly, It was a desertion that was real, and not fictitious. He does not personate a deserted soul, and speak as if God had withdrawn the comfortable sense and influence of his love from him; but the thing was so indeed. The Godhead restrained and kept back, for this time, all its joys, comforts and sense of love from the manhood, yielding it nothing but support. This bitter doleful outcry of Christ gives evidence enough of the reality of it: he did not feign, but feel the burdensomeness of it.

Fourthly, This desertion fell out in the time of Christ's greatest need of comfort that ever he had in all the time of his life on earth. His Father forsook him at that time, when all earthly comforts had forsaken him, and all outward evils had broken in together upon him; when men, yes, the best of men stood afar off, and none but barbarous enemies were about him. When pains and shame, and all miseries even weighed him down; then, even then, to complete and fill up his suffering, God stands afar off too.

Fifthly, and lastly, It was such a desertion as left him only to the supports of his faith. He had nothing else now but his Father's covenant and promise to hang upon. And indeed, as a judicious author pertinently observes, the faith of Christ did several ways act and manifest itself, in these very words of complaint in the text. For though all comfortable sights of God and sense of love were obstructed, yet you see his soul cleaves fiducially to God for all that: My God, etc. Though sense and feeling speak as well as faith, yet faith speaks first, My God, before sense speaks a word of his forsaking. His faith presented the complaint of sense; and though sense comes in afterwards with a word of complaint, yet here are two words of faith to one of sense: it is, "My God, my God," and but one word of forsaking. As his faith spoke first, so it spoke twice, when sense and feeling spoke but once: yes, and as faith spoke first, and twice as much as sense, so it spoke more confidently than sense did. He lays a confident claim to God as his God; "My God, my God," and only queries about his forsaking of him, "Why have you forsaken me?" This is spoken more dubiously, the former more confidently. To be short, his faith laid hold on God, under a most suitable title, or attribute, Eli, Eli, "my strong One, my strong One," q. d. O you, with whom is infinite and everlasting strength; you that have hitherto supported my manhood, and according to your promise upheld your servant; what! will you now forsake me? My strong One, I lean upon you. To these supports and refuges of faith this desertion shut up Christ: by these things he stood, when all other visible and sensible comforts shrunk away, both from his soul and body. This is the true, though brief account of the nature and quality of Christ's desertion.

Secondly, In the next place, let us consider the designs and ends of it; which were principally satisfaction and sanctification: Satisfaction for those sins of ours which deserved that we should be totally and everlastingly forsaken of God. This is the desert of every sin, and the damned do feel it, and shall to all eternity: God is gone from them forever, not essentially; the just God is with them still, the God of power is still with them, the avenging God is ever with them; but the merciful God is gone, and gone forever. And thus would he have withdrawn himself from every soul that sinned, had not Christ borne that punishment for us in his own soul: If he had not cried, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" we must have howled out this hideous complaint in the lowest hell forever, O righteous God! O dreadful! O terrible God! you have forever forsaken me! And as satisfaction was designed in this desertion of Christ, so also was the sanctification of all the desertion of the saints designed in it. For he having been forsaken before us, and for us, whenever God forsakes us, that very forsaking of his is sanctified, and thereby turned into a mercy to believers. Hence are all the precious fruits and effects of our desertions: such are the earnest excitations of the soul to prayer, Psalms 78:2. Psalms 88:1; Psalms 88:9. The antidoting the tempted soul against sin. The reviving of ancient experiences, Psalms 77:5. Enchanting the value of the divine presence with the soul, and teaching it to hold Christ faster than ever before, Song of Solomon 3:1-5. These, and many more, are the precious effects of sanctified desertion; but how many, or how good soever these effects are, they all owe themselves to Jesus Christ, as the

author of them; who, for our sakes would pass through this sad and dark state, that we might find those blessings in it. So then, the Godhead's suspending of all the effects of joy and comfort from the humanity of Christ at this time, which had not ceased to flow into it, in an ineffable measure and manner, until now, must needs be both a special part of Christ's satisfaction for us, and consequently, that which makes all our temporary desertions rather mercies and blessings, than curses to us.

Thirdly, Let us, in the next place, consider the effects and influence this desertion had upon the spirit of Christ. And though it did not drive him to despair, as the Papists falsely charge Mr. Calvin to have affirmed; yet it even amazed him, and almost swallowed up his soul in the deeps of trouble and consternation. This cry is a cry from the deeps, from a soul oppressed even to death. Never was the Lord Jesus so put to it before; it is a most astonishing outcry.

Let but five particulars be weighed, and you will say, never was there any darkness like this: no sorrow like Christ's sorrow in his deserted state: For,

First, Apprehend, reader, this was a new thing to Christ, and that which he never was acquainted with before. From all eternity until now there had been constant and wonderful outlets of love, delight, and joy, from the bosom of the Father, into his bosom. He never missed his Father before: never saw a frown, or a veil, upon that blessed face before. This made it an heavy burden indeed, the words are words of admiration and astonishment; "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" you that never midst so before, have forsaken me now.

Secondly, As it was a new thing to Christ, and therefore the more amazing, so it was a great thing to Christ; so great, that he scarce knew how to support it. Had it not been a great trial indeed, so great a spirit as Christ's was would never have so drooped under it, and made so sad a complaint of it. It was so sharp, so heavy an affliction to his soul, that it caused him, who was meek under all other sufferings as a lamb, to roar under this like a lion; for so much those words of Christ signify, Psalms 22:1. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from the voice of my roaring?" It comes from a root, that signifies "to howl, or roar as a lion; and rather signifies the noise made by a wild beast, than the voice of a man." And it is as much as if Christ had said, O my God, no words can express my anguish: I will not speak, but roar, howl out my complaint; pour it out in vollies of groans: I roar as a lion. It is no small matter will make that majestic creature to roar: and sure, so great a spirit as Christ's would not have roared under a slight burden.

Thirdly, As it was a great burden to Christ, so it was a burden laid on in the time of his greatest distress. When his body was in tortures, and all about him was black, dismal, and full of horror and darkness. He fell into this desertion at a time when he never had the like need of divine supports and comforts, and that aggravated it.

Fourthly, It was a burden that lay upon him long, even from the time his soul began to be sorrowful and sore amazed in the garden, until his very death. If you were but to hold your finger in the fire for two minutes, you would not be able to bear it. But what is the finger of a man to the soul of Christ? Or what is a material fire to the wrath of the great God!

Fifthly, So heavy was this pressure upon Christ's soul, that in probability it hastened his death; for it was not usual for crucified persons to expire so soon; and those that were crucified with him were both alive after Christ was gone. Some have hanged more than a day and a night, some two

full days and nights, in those torments alive; but never did any feel inwardly what Christ felt. He bare it until the ninth hour, and then makes a fearful outcry and dies. The uses follow.

INFERENCE 1. Did God forsake Christ upon the cross as a punishment to him for our sins? Then it follows, That as often as we have sinned, so oft have we deserved to be forsaken of God. This is the just recompense and demerit of sin. And, indeed, here lies the principal evil of sin, that it separates between God and the soul. This separation is both the moral evil that is in it, and the penal evil inflicted by the righteous God for it. By sin we depart from God, and, as a due punishment of it, God departs from us. This will be the dismal sentence in the last day, Matthew 25:1-46 : "Depart from me, you cursed." Thenceforth there will be a gulf fixed between God and them, Luke 19:20. No more friendly intercourses with the blessed God forever. The eternal shriek of the damned is, Woe and alas, God has forsaken us for evermore. Ten thousand worlds can nowise recompense the loss of one God. Beware, sinners, how you say to God now, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of your ways, lest he say, Depart from me, you shall never see my face.

INFERENCE. 2. Did Christ never make such a sad complaint and outcry, until God hid his face from him? Then the hiding of God's face is certainly the greatest misery that can possibly befall a gracious soul in this world. When they scourged, buffeted, and smote Christ, yes, when they nailed him to the tree, he opened not his mouth; but when his father hid his face from him, then he cried out; yes, his voice was the voice of roaring: this was more to him than a thousand crucifyings. And, surely, as it was to Christ, so is it to all gracious souls, the saddest stroke, the heaviest burden that ever they felt. When David forbade Absalom to come to Jerusalem, to see his father, he complains in 2 Samuel 14:32. "Therefore, (says he) am I come from Geshur, if I may not see the king's face?" So does the gracious soul bemoan itself; Therefore am I redeemed, called, and reconciled, if I may not see the face of my God?

It is said of Tully, when he was banished from Italy, and of Demosthenes, when he was banished from Athens, that they wept every time they looked towards their own country: and, is it strange that a poor deserted believer should mourn every time he looks heaven ward? Say, Christian, did the tears never trickle down your cheeks when you look towards heaven, and could not see the face of your God, as at other times? If two dear friends cannot part, though it be but for a season, but that parting must be in a shower; blame not the saints if they sigh and mourn bitterly when the Lord, who is the life of their life, depart, though but for a season, from them; for if God depart, their sweetest enjoyment on earth, the very crown of all their comforts is gone, and what will a king take in exchange for his crown? What can recompense a saint for the loss of his God! Indeed, if they had never seen the Lord, or tasted the incomparable sweetness of his presence, it were another matter; but the darkness which follows the sweetest light of his countenance, is double darkness. And that which does not a little increase the horror of this darkness is, that when their souls were thus benighted, and the sun of their comfort is set; then does Satan, like the wild beasts of the desert, creep out of his den, and roar upon them with hideous temptations. Surely this is a sad state, and deserves tender pity! Pity is a debt due to the distressed, and the world shows not a greater distress than this. If ever you have been in troubles of this kind yourselves, you will never slight others in the same case: nay, one end of God's exercising you with troubles of this nature, is to teach you compassion towards others in the same case. Do they not cry to you, as Job 19:21. "Have pity have pity upon me, O you my friends, for the hand of God has touched me." Draw forth

affections of mercy and tender compassion to them; for, either you have been, or are, or may be in the same case yourselves: however, if men do not, to be sure, Christ, that has felt it before them, and for them, will pity them.

INFERENCE. 3. Did God really forsake Jesus Christ upon the cross? Then from the desertion of Christ, singular consolation springs up to the people of God; yes, manifold consolation. Principally it is a support in these two respects, as it is preventive of your final desertion and a comfortable pattern to you in your present sad desertions.

First, Christ's desertion is preventive of your final desertion: because he was forsaken for a time, you shall not be forsaken forever: for he was forsaken for you: and God's forsaking him, though but for a few hours, is equivalent to his forsaking you forever. It is every way as much for the dear Son of God, the darling delight of his soul, to be forsaken of God for a time; as if such a poor inconsiderable thing as you are, should be cast off to eternity. Now this being equivalent, and borne in your room, must needs give you the highest security in the world, that God will never finally withdraw from you: had he intended to have done so, Christ had never made such a sad outcry as you hear this day, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Secondly, Moreover, this sad desertion of Christ becomes a comfortable patterns to poor deserted souls in divers respects: and the proper business of such souls, at such times, is to eye it believingly, in these six respects.

First, Though God deserted Christ, yet at the same time he powerfully supported him: his omnipotent arms were under him, though his pleased face was hid from him: he had not indeed his smiles, but he had his supports. So, Christian, just so shall it be with you: your God may turn away his face, but he will not pluck away his arm. When one asked holy Mr. Baines, how the case stood with his soul, he answered, supports I have, though suavities I want. Our father, in this, deals with us, as we ourselves sometimes do with a child that is stubborn and rebellious. We turn him out of doors, and bid him begone out of our sight: and there he sighs and weeps; but however, for the humbling of him, we will not presently take him into house and favor: yet we order, or at least, permit the servants to carry him meat and drink. Here is fatherly care and support: though no former smiles, or manifested delights.

Secondly, Though God deserted Christ, yet he deserted not God: his Father forsook him, but he could not forsake his Father, but followed him with this cry, "My God my God, why have you forsaken me?" And is it not even so with you? God goes off from your souls, but you cannot go off from him. No, your hearts are mourning after the Lord, seeking him carefully with tears: complaining of his absence, as the greatest evil in this world. This is Christ-like: so it was with the spouse, Song of Solomon 3:1-2. Her beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone; but was she content to part with him so? No such thing. "By night, on my bed, I sought him whom my soul loves; I sought him, but I found him not; I will arise now, and go about the city," etc.

Thirdly, Though God forsook Christ, yet he returned to him again. It was but for a time, not forever. In this also does his desertion parallel yours. God may, for several wise and holy reasons, hide his face from you, but not so as it is hid from the damned, who shall never see it again. This cloud shall pass away; this night shall have a bright morning: "For (says your God) I will not contend forever, neither will I be always wrath; for the spirit shall fail before me, and the souls which I have

made." As if he should say, I may contend with him for a time, to humble him, but not forever, lest, instead of a sad child, I should have a dead child. Oh the tenderness even of a displeased father!

Fourthly, Though God forsook Christ, yet at that time he could justify God. So you read, Psalms 22:2-3. "O my God (says he) I cry in the day time, but you hear not; and in the night season, and am not silent: but you are holy." Is not your spirit, according to the measure, framed like Christ's in this; canned you not say, even when he writes bitter things against you, he is a holy, faithful, and good God for all this? I am deserted but not wronged. There is not one drop of injustice in all the sea of my sorrows. Though he condemn me, I must, and will justify him; this also is Christ-like.

Fifthly, Though God took from Christ all visible and sensible comforts, inward as well as outward; yet Christ subsisted, by faith, in the absence of them all: his desertion put him upon the acting of his faith. "My God, my God", are words of faith, the words of one that wholly depends upon his God: and is it not so with you too? Sense of love is gone, sweet sights of God shut up in a dark cloud? well, what then? Must your hands presently hang down, and your soul give up all its hopes? What! Is there no faith to relieve in this case? Yes, yes, and blessed be God for faith. "Who is among you that fears the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of his servants, that walks in darkness, and has no light; let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God," Isaiah 50:10. To conclude,

Sixthly, Christ was deserted, a little before the glorious morning of light and joy dawned upon him. It was a little, a very little while, after this sad cry, before he triumphed gloriously; and so it may be with you: heaviness may endure for a night, but joy and gladness will come in the morning. You know how Mr. Glover was transported with joy, and cried out, as a man in a rapture, O Austin! he is come, he is come, he is come, meaning the Comforter, who for some time had been absent from his soul.

But, I fear I am absolutely and finally forsaken.

Why so? Do you find the characters of such a desertion upon your soul? Be righteous judges, and tell me, whether you find an heart willing to forsake God? Is it indifferent to you whether God ever return again or no? Are there no mournings, meltings, or thirsting after the Lord? Indeed, if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever; but can you do so? Oh, no, let him do what he will, I am resolved to wait for him, cleave to him, mourn after him, though I have no present comfort from him, no assurance of my interest in him; yet will I not exchange my poor weak hopes for all the good in this world.

Again, you say God has forsaken you, but has he let loose the bridle before you? To allude to Job 30:11. Has he taken away from your souls all conscientious tenderness of sin, so that now you can sin freely, and without any regret? If so, it is a sad token indeed: tell me, soul, if you, indeed, judge God will never return in loving kindness to you any more; why have you not then give yourself over to the pleasures of sin, and fetch your comforts that way, from the creature, since you can't have no comfort from your God? Oh, no, I cannot do so; if I die in darkness and sorrow, I will never do so: my soul is as full of fear and hatred of sin as ever, though empty of joy and comfort. Surely, these are no tokens of a soul finally abandoned by its God.

INFERENCE. 4. Did God forsake his own Son upon the cross; Then the dearest of God's people may, for a time, be forsaken of their God. Think it not strange, when you, that are the children of

light, meet with darkness, yes, and walk in it; neither charge God foolishly; nor say he deals hardly with you. You see what befall Jesus Christ, whom his soul delighted in: It is doubtless your concernment to expect and prepare for days of darkness. You have heard the doleful cry of Christ, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" You know how it was with Job, David, Heman, Asaph, and many others, the dear servants of God, what heart melting lamentations they had made upon this account; and are you better than they? Oh, prepare for spiritual troubles; I am sure you do enough every day to involve you in darkness. Now, if at any time this trial befall you, mind these two seasonable admonitions, and lay them up for such a time.

Admonition 1. First, Exercise the faith of adherence, when you have lost the faith of evidence. When God takes away that, he leaves this: that is necessary to the comfort, this to the life of his people. It is sweet to live in views of your interest, but if they be gone, believe and rely on God, for an interest. Stay yourselves on your God when you have no light, Isaiah 50:10. Drop this anchor in the dark, and do not reckon all gone when evidence is gone: never reckon yourselves undone while you can adhere to your God. Direct acts are noble acts of faith, as well as reflexive ones; yes, and in some respects to be preferred to them. For,

First, As your comfort depends on the evidencing acts of faith, so your salvation upon the adhering act of faith. Evidence comforts, affiance saves you; and, sure, salvation is more than comfort.

Secondly, Your faith of evidence has more sensible sweetness, but your faith of adherence is of more constancy and continuance: the former is as a flower in its month, the latter sticks by you all the year.

Thirdly, Faith of evidence brings more joy to you, but faith of adherence brings more glory to God: for thereby you trust him when you cannot see him; yes, you believe not only without, but against sense and feeling; and, doubtless, that which brings glory to God, is better than that which brings comfort to you. O then exercise this, when you have lost that.

Admonition 2. Secondly, Take the right method to recover the sweet light which you have sinned away from your souls. Do not go about from one to another complaining; nor yet sit down desponding under your burden. But,

First, Search diligently after the cause of God’s withdrawment: urge him hard, by prayer, to tell you therefore he contends with you, Job 10:2. Say, Lord, what have I done that so offends your Spirit? What evil is it which you so rebuke? I beseech you show me the cause of your anger: have I grieved your Spirit in this thing, or in that? Was it my neglect of duty, or my formality in duties? Was I not thankful for the sense of your love, when it was shed abroad in my heart? O Lord, why is it thus with me?

Secondly, Humble your souls before the Lord for every evil you shall be convinced of: tell him, it pierces your heart, that you have so displeased him, and that it shall be a caution to you, while you live, never to return again to folly: invite him again to your souls, and mourn after the Lord until you have found him: If you seek him, he will be found of you, 2 Chronicles 15:2. It may be you shall have a thousand comforters come about your sad souls, in such a time to comfort them: this will be to you instead of God, and that will repair your loss of Christ: despise them all, and say, I am resolved to sit as a widow until Christ return; he, or none, shall have my love.

Thirdly, Wait on in the use of means, until Christ returns. O be not discouraged; though he tarry, wait you for him; for, blessed are all they that wait for him!

S. The manner of Christ's Death

The manner of Christ’s Death, in respect

to the Solitariness thereof

"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man [that is] my fellow, says the Lord Almighty! Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones." Zechariah 13:7 In the former sermons, we have opened the nature and kind of death Christ died; even the cursed death of the cross. Wherein, nevertheless his innocence was vindicated, by that honorable title providentially affixed to his cross. Method now requires that we take into consideration the manner in which he endured the cross, and that was solitarily, meekly, and instructively. His solitude in suffering is plainly expressed in this scripture now before us, it cannot be doubted, but the prophet in this place speaks of Christ, if you consider Matthew 26:31. where you shall find these words applied to Christ by his own accommodation of them, "Then said Jesus unto them, all you shall be offended because of me this night, for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." Besides, the title here given [God’s fellow] is too big for any creature in heaven or earth besides Christ. In these words we have four things particularly to consider. First, The commission given to the sword by the Lord of hosts. Secondly, The person against whom it is commissioned. Thirdly, The dismal effect of that stroke. Fourthly and lastly, The gracious mitigation of it.

First, The commission given to the sword by the Lord of hosts. "Awake, O sword, and smite, says the Lord of hosts." The Lord of hosts, at whose beck and command all the creatures are. Who, with a word of his mouth, can open all the armouries in the world, and command what weapons and instruments of death he pleases, calls here for the sword; not the rod, gently to chasten; but the sword to destroy. The rod breaks no bones, but the sword opens the door to death and destruction. The strokes and thrusts of the sword are mortal; and he bids it awake. It signifies both "to rouse up," as one that awakes out of sleep, and "to rouse or awake with triumph and rejoicing." So the same word is rendered, Job 31:29. Yes, he commands it, "to awake and smite." And it is as if the Lord had said, Come forth of your scabbard, O sword of justice, you have been hid there a long time, and have, as it were, been asleep in your scabbard, now awake and glitter, you shall drink royal blood, such as you never sheddest before.

Secondly, The person against whom it is commissioned, "my shepherd, and the man that is my fellows." This shepherd can be no other than Christ, who is often in scripture stiled "a Shepherd, yes, the chief Shepherd, the Prince of pastors." Who redeemed, feeds, guides, and preserves the flock of God’s elect, 1 Peter 5:4. John 10:11. This is he whom he also stiles the man his fellow. Or his neighbor, as some render it. And so Christ is, with respect to his equality and unity with the Father, both in essence and will. His next neighbor. His other self. You have the sense of it in Php 2:6. He was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God.

Against Christ his fellow, his next neighbor, the delight of his soul, the sword here receives its commission.

Thirdly, you have here the dismal consequent of this deadly stroke upon the shepherd. And that is the scattering of the sheep. By the sheep understand here, that little flock, the disciples, which followed this shepherd until he was smitten that is apprehended by his enemies, and they were scattered, that is dispersed; they all forsook him and fled. And so Christ was left alone, amidst his enemies. Not one dared make a stand for him, or own him in that hour of his danger.

Fourthly, And lastly, Here is a gracious mitigation of this sad dispersion, "I will turn my hand upon the little ones." By little ones he means the same that before he called sheep; but the expression is designedly varied, to show their feebleness and weakness, which appeared in their relapse from Christ. And by turning his hand upon them, understand God's gracious reduction, and gathering of them again after their sad dispersion, so that they shall not be lost, though scattered for the present. For after the Lord was risen, he went before them into Galilee, as he promised, Matthew 26:31. And gathered them again by a gracious hand, so that not one of them was lost but the son of perdition. The words thus opened, I shall observe suitably to the method I have proposed.

DOCTRINE. That Christ's dearest friends forsook and left him alone, in the time of his greatest distress and danger. This doctrine containing only matter of fact, and that also so plainly delivered by the pens of the several faithful Evangelists, I need spend no longer time in the proof of it, than to refer you to the several testimonies they have given to it. But I shall rather choose to fit and prepare it for use, by explaining these four questions.

First, Who were the sheep that were scattered from their shepherd, and left him alone?

Secondly, What evil was there in this their scattering?

Thirdly, What were the grounds and causes of it?

Fourthly, and lastly, What was the outcome and event of it?

First, Who were these sheep that were dispersed and scattered from their shepherd when he was smitten. It is evident they were those precious elect souls that he had gathered to himself, who had long followed him, and dearly loved him, and were dearly beloved of him. They were persons that had left all and followed him, and, until that time, faithfully continued with him in his temptations, Luke 22:28. And were all resolved so to do, though they should die with him, Matthew 26:35. These were the persons.

Secondly, But were they as good as their word? Did they indeed stick faithfully to him? No, they all forsook him and fled. These sheep were scattered. This was not indeed a total and final apostasy, that is the fall proper to the hypocrite, the temporary believer, who, like a comet, expires when that earthly matter is spent that maintained the blaze for a time.

These were stars fixed in their orb, though clouded and overcast for a time. This was but a mist or fog, which overspreads the earth in the morning until the sun be risen, and then it clears up and proves a fair day. But though it was not a total and final apostasy; yet it was a very sinful and sad relapse from Jesus Christ, as will appear by considering the following aggravations and circumstances of it. For,

First, This relapse of theirs was against the very articles of agreement, which they had sealed to Christ at their first admission into his service; he had told them, in the beginning, what they must resolve upon, Luke 14:26-27. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." Accordingly they submitted to these terms, and told him they had left all and followed him, Mark 10:28. Against this engagement made to Christ, they now sin. Here was unfaithfulness.

Secondly, As it was against the very terms of their admission, so it was against the very principles of grace implanted by Christ in their hearts. They were holy sanctified persons, in whom dwelt the love and fear of God. By these they were strongly inclined to adhere to Christ, in the time of his sufferings, as appears by those honest resolves they had made in the case. Their grace strongly inclined them to their duty, their corruptions swayed them the contrary way. Grace bid them stand, corruption bid them fly. Grace told them it was their duty to share in the sufferings as well as in the glory of Christ. Corruption represented these sufferings as intolerable, and bid them shift for themselves while they might. So that here must needs be a force and violence offered to their light, and the loving constraints thereof; which is no small evil. For though I grant it was a sudden, surprising temptation, yet it cannot be imagined that this fact was wholly deliberate; nor that, for so long time, they were without any debate or seasonings about their duty.

Thirdly, As it was against their own principles, so it was much against the honor of their Lord and Master. By this their sinful flight they exposed the Lord Jesus to the contempt and scorn of his enemies. This some conceive is imported in that question which the High-priest asked him, John 18:19. "The High priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine." He asked him of his disciples, how many he had, and what was become of them now? And what was the reason they forsook their master, and left him to shift for himself when danger appeared? But to those questions Christ made no reply. He would not accuse them to their enemies, though they had deserted him. But, doubtless, it did not a little reflect upon Christ, that there was not one of all his friends that dared own their relation to him, in a time of danger.

Fourthly, As it was against Christ’s honor, so it was against their own solemn promise made to him before his apprehension, to live and die with him. They had passed their word, and given their promise that they would not flinch from him, Matthew 26:35. "Peter said to him, though I should die with you, yet will I not deny you. Likewise also said all the disciples." This made it a perfidious relapse. Here they break promise with Christ who never did so with them. He might have told then when he met them afterwards in Galilee, as the Roman soldier told his general, when he refused his petition after the war was ended, I did not serve you so at the battle of Actium.

Fifthly, As it was against their solemn promise to Christ, so it was against Christ’s heart-melting expostulations with them, which should have abode in their hearts while they lived. For when others that followed him went back, and walked no more with him, Jesus said to these very men, that now forsook him at last, Will you also go away? There is an emphasis in [you] q.d. What, you that from eternity were given to me! You whom I have called, loved, and honored above others, for whose sakes I am ready and resolved to die. "Will you also forsake me?" John 6:67. What ever others do, I expect other things from you.

Sixthly, As it was against Christ's heart-melting expostulations with them, so it was against a late direful example presented to them in the fall of Judas. In him, as in a glass, they might see how fearful a thing it is to apostatise from Christ. They had heard Christ's dreadful threats against him. They were present when he called him the son of perdition, John 18:11. They had heard Christ say of him, "Good had it been if he had never been born." An expression able to scare the deadest heart. They saw he had left Christ the evening before. And that very day, in which they fled, he hanged himself. And yet they fly. For all this they forsake Christ.

Seventhly, As it was against the dreadful warning given them in the fall of Judas, so it was against the law of love, which should have knit them closer to Christ, and to one another.

If to avoid the present shock of persecution, they had fled, yet surely they should have kept together, praying, watching, encouraging, and strengthening one another. This had made it a lesser evil: but as they all forsook Christ, so they forsook one another also; for it is said, John 16:32 "They shall go every man to his own, and leave Christ alone," (that is says Beza) every man to his own house, and to his own business. They forsook each other, as well as Christ. O what an hour of temptation was this!

Eighthly, and lastly, This their departure from Christ, was accompanied with some offence at Christ. For so he tells them, Matthew 26:31. "All you shall be offended because of me this night." The word is, "skandalisthesesthe", you shall be scandalised at me, or in me. Some think the scandal they took at Christ was this, that when they saw he was fallen into his enemies' hands, and could no longer defend himself; they then began to question whether he were the Christ or no, since he could not defend himself from his enemies. Others, more rightly, understand it of their shameful flight from Christ, seeing it was not now safe to abide longer with him. That seeing he gave himself into their hands, they thought it advisable to provide as well as they could for themselves, and somewhere or other, to take refuge from the present storm, which had overtaken him. This was the nature and quality of the fact. We enquire, Thirdly, Into the grounds and reasons of it. Which were three.

First, God's suspending wonted influences and aids of grace from them. They were not accustomed to do so. They never did so afterwards. They would not have done so now, had there been influences of power, zeal, and love from heaven upon them. But how then should Christ have borne the heat and burden of the day? How should he tread the wine-press alone? How should his sorrows have been extreme, unmixed, succourless (as it behaved them to be) if they had stuck faithfully to him in his troubles? No, no, it must not be; Christ must not have the least relief or comfort from any creature; and therefore, that he might be left alone, to grapple hand to hand with the wrath of God, and of men; the Lord for a time withholds his encouraging, strengthening influences from them; and then, like Samson when he had lost his locks, they were weak as other men.

"Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might," says the apostle, Ephesians 6:10. If that be withheld, our resolutions and purposes melt away before a temptation, as snow before the sun.

Secondly, As God permitted it, and with-held usual aid from them; so the efficacy of that temptation was great, yes, much greater than ordinary. As they were weaker than they were used to be, so the temptation was stronger than any they had yet met withal. It is called, Luke 22:53.

"Their hour and the power of darkness." A sifting, winnowing hour, Luke 22:46. O it was a black and cloudy day. Never had the disciples met with such a whirlwind, such a furious storm before. The devil desired but to have the winnowing of them in that day, and so would have sifted and winnowed them, that their faith had utterly failed, had not Christ secured it by his prayer for them. So that it was an extraordinary trial that was upon them.

Thirdly and lastly, That which concurred to their shameful relapse, as a special cause of it, was the remaining corruptions that were in their hearts yet unfortified. Their knowledge was but little, and their faith not much. Upon the account of their weakness in grace, they were called little ones in the text. And as their graces were weak, so their corruptions were strong. Their unbelief, and carnal fears grew powerfully upon them. Do not censure them, reader, in your thoughts, nor despise them for this their weakness. Neither say in your heart, Had I been there as they were, I would never have done as they did. They thought as little of doing what they did, as you, or any of the saints do; and as much did their souls detest and abhor it: but here you may see, where a soul that fears God may be carried, if his corruptions be irritated by strong temptation, and God withholds usual influences.

Fourthly and lastly, Let us view the issue of this sad apostasy of theirs. And you shall find it ended far better than it began. Though these sheep were scattered for a time, yet the Lord made good his promise, in turning his hand upon these little ones, to gather them. The morning was over cast, but the evening was clear.

Peter repents of his perfidious denial of Christ, and never denied him more. All the rest likewise returned to Christ, and never forsook him any more. He that was afraid at the voice of a damsel, afterwards feared not the frowns of the mighty. And they that dared not own Christ now, afterwards confessed him openly before councils, and rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for his sake, Acts 5:41. They that were now as timorous as hares, and started at every sound, afterward became as bold as lions, and feared not any danger, but sealed their confession of Christ with their blood. For though, at this time, they forsook him, it was not voluntarily, but by surprisal. Though they forsook him, they still loved him; though they fled from him, there still remained a gracious principle in them; the root of the matter was still in them, which recovered them again. To conclude: Though they forsook Christ, yet Christ never forsook them: he loved them still; "Go tell the disciples, and tell Peter, that he goes before you into Galilee," Mark 16:7. q.d. Let them not think that I so remember their unkindness, as to own them no more: No, I love them still. The use of this is contained in the following inferences.

INFERENCE. 1. Did the disciples forsake Christ, though they had such strong persuasions and resolutions never to do it? Then we see, That self-confidence is a sin too incident to the best of men. They little thought their hearts would have proved so base and deceitful, as they found them to be when they were tried. "Though all men forsake you (says Peter) yet will not!" Good man, he resolved honestly, but he knew not what a feather he should be in the wind of temptation, if God once left him to his own fears.

Little reason have the best of saints to depend upon their inherent grace, let their stock be as large as it will. The angels left to themselves, quickly left their own habitations, Jude 1:6. Upon which, one well observes, That the best of created perfections, are of themselves defectible. Every excellency without the prop of divine preservation, is but a weight which tends to a fall. The angels

in their innocence, were but frail, without God's sustentation; even grace itself is but a creature, and therefore purely dependant. It is not from its being and nature, but from the assistance of something without it, that it is kept from annihilation. What becomes of the stream, if the fountain supply it not? What continuance has the reflection in the glass, if the man that looks into it, turn away his face? The constant supplies of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, are the food and fuel of all our graces. The best men will show themselves but men if God leave them. He who has set them up, must also keep them. It is safer to be humble with one talent, than proud with ten; yes, better to be an humble worm, than a proud angel. Adam had more advantage to maintain his station than any of you. For though he were left to the liberty of his own mutable and self-determining will; and though he was created upright, and had no inherent corruption to endanger him, yet he fell. And shall we be self confident, after such instances of human frailty! Alas, Christian! What match are you for principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness! "Be not high-minded, but fear." When you have considered well the example of Noah, Lot, David, and Hezekiah, men famous and renowned in their generations, who all fell by temptations; yes, and that when one would think they had never been better provided to cope with them. Lot fell after, yes, presently after the Lord had thrust him out of Sodom, and his eyes had seen the direful punishment of sin. Hell, as it were, rained upon them out of heaven. Noah, in like manner, immediately after God's wonderful, and astonishing preservation of him in the ark; when he saw a world of men and women, perishing in the floods for their sins. David, after the Lord had settled the kingdom on him, which for sin he rent from Saul, and given him rest in his house. Hezekiah was but just up from a great sickness, wherein the Lord wrought a wonderful salvation for him. Did such men, and at such times, when one would think no temptations should have prevailed, fall; and that so foully? Then "let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall." O be not high minded, but fear.

INFERENCE. 2. Did Christ stand his ground, and go through with his suffering-work, when all that had followed him, forsook him? Then a resolved adherence to God, and duty, though left alone, without company or encouragement, is Christ-like, and truly excellent. You shall not want better company than that which has forsaken you in the way of God. Elijah complains, 1 Kings 19:10 "They have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and slain your prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away" And yet all this did not damp or discourage him in following the Lord; for still he was very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts.

Paul complains, 2 Timothy 4:16 "At my first answer no man stood by me, all men forsook me: nevertheless the Lord stood with me." And as the Lord stood by him, so he stood by his God alone, without any aids or support from men. How great an argument of integrity is this! He that professes Christ for company, will also leave him for company. But to be faithful to God, when forsaken of men; to be a Lot, in Sodomy a Noah, in a corrupted generation; oh, how excellent is it! It is sweet to travel over this earth to heaven, in the company of the saints, that are bound it there with us, if we can; but if we can meet no company, we must not be discouraged to go on. It is not unlike, but before you have gone many steps farther, you may have cause to say, as one did once, Never less alone, than when alone.

INFERENCE 3. Did the disciples thus forsake Christ, and yet were all recovered at last? Then, though believers are not privileged from backsliding, yet they are secured from final apostasy and ruin. The new creature may be sick, it cannot die. Saints may fall, but they shall rise again, Micah

7:8. The highest flood, of natural zeal and resolution, may ebb, and be wholly dried up; but saving grace is "a well of water, still springing up into everlasting life," John 4:14. God's unchangeable election, the frame and constitution of the New Covenant, the meritorious and prevalent intercession of Jesus Christ, do give the believer abundant security against the danger of a total and final apostasy. "My Father, which gave them me, says Christ, is greater than all: and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand," John 10:29. And again, "The foundation of God stands sure, having this seal; the Lord knows who are his," 2 Timothy 2:19. Every person committed to Christ by the Father, shall be brought by him to the Father, and not one wanting.

God has also so framed and ordered the new covenant, that none of those souls, who are within the blessed clasp and bond of it can possibly be lost. It is settled upon immutable things: and we know all things are as their foundations be, Hebrews 6:18-19. Among the many glorious promises contained in the bundle of promises, this is one, "I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." And as the fear of God in our hearts, pleads in us against sin, so our potent intercessor in the heavens pleads for us with the Father; and by reason thereof, we cannot finally miscarry, Romans 8:34-35. Upon these grounds, we may (as the apostle in the place last cited does) triumph in that full security which God has given us; and say, What "shall separate us from the love of God?" Understand it either of God's to us, as Calvin, Beza, and Martyr do; or of our love to God, as Ambrose and Augustine do: it is true in both senses, and a most comfortable truth.

INFERENCE 4. Did the sheep fly, when the shepherd was smitten; such men, and so many forsake Christ in the trial? Then learn how sad a thing it is for the best of men to be left to their own carnal fears in a day of temptation: This was it that made those good men shrink away so shamefully from Christ in that trial: "The fear of man brings a snare," Proverbs 29:25. In that snare these good souls were taken, and for a time held fast.

Oh what work will this unruly passion make, if the fear of God do not over-rule it! Is it not a shame to a Christian, a man of faith to see himself out done by an Heathen? Shall natural conscience and courage make them stand and keep their places in times of danger; when we shamefully turn our backs upon duty, because we see duty and danger together? When the emperor Vespasian had commanded Fluidius Priscus not to come to the senate; or, if he did, to speak nothing but what he would have him; the senator returned this brave and noble answer, "That as he was a senator, it was fit he should be at the senate; and if, being there, he were required to give his advice, he would speak freely, that which his conscience commanded him." The emperor threatening that then he should die; he returned thus, "Did I ever tell you that I was immortal? Do you what you will, and I will do what I ought. It is in your power to put me to death unjustly, and in me to die constantly." O think, what mischief you; fears may do yourselves, and the discovery of them to others. O learn to trust God with your lives, liberties, and comforts, in the way of your duty; and at that time you are afraid trust in him: and do not magnify poor dust and ashes, as to be scared, by their threat, from your God and your duty. The politic design of Satan herein, is to affright you out of your coverts, where you are safe, into the net. I will enlarge on this no farther; I have elsewhere laid down fourteen rules for the cure of this, in what of mine is public.

INFERENCE. 5. Learn hence, How much a man may differ from himself, according as the Lord is with him, or withdrawn from him. The Christian does not always differ from other men, but

sometimes from himself also: yes, so great is the difference between himself and himself, as if he were not the same man. And where is he that does not so experience it? Sometimes bold and courageous, despising dangers, bearing down all discouragements in the strength of zeal, and love to God: at another time faint, feeble, and discourage at every petty thing. Whence is this but from the different administrations of the Spirit, who sometimes gives forth more, and sometimes less, of his gracious influence. These very men that flinched now, when the Spirit was more abundantly shed forth upon them, could boldly own Christ before the council, and despised all dangers for his sake. A little dog, if his master be by, and encourage him, will venture upon a greater beast than himself. Peter stood at the door without, when the other disciple, (or one of the other disciples, as the Syrian turns it, and Grotius approves it as the best), that is one of the private disciples that lived at Jerusalem, went in so boldly, John 18:16-17. We are strong or weak, according to the degrees of assisting grace. So that as you cannot take the just measure of a Christian by one act, so neither must they judge of themselves, by what they sometimes feel in themselves. But when their spirits are low, and their hearts discouraged, they should rather say to their souls, "Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him:" It is low with me now, but it will be better.

INFERENCE. 6. Was the sword drawn against the Shepherd, and he left alone to receive the mortal strokes of it? How should all adore both the justice and mercy of God so illustriously displayed herein! Here is the triumph of divine justice, and the highest triumph that ever it had, to single forth the chief Shepherd, the man that is God's fellow, and sheathe its sword in his bosom for satisfaction. No wonder it is drawn and brandished with such a triumph; awake rejoicingly, O sword, against my Shepherd, etc. For in this blood shed by it, it has more glory than if the blood of all the men and women in the world had been shed. And no less is the mercy and goodness of God herein signalized, in giving the sword a commission against the Man, his fellow, rather than against us. Why had he not rather said, awake, O sword, against the men that are mine enemies; shed the blood of them that have sinned against me, than smite the Shepherd, and only scatter the sheep. Blessed be God, the dreadful sword was not drawn and brandished against our souls; that God did not set it to our breasts; that he had not made it fat with our flesh, and bathed it in our blood; that his fellow vas smitten, that his enemies might be spared. O what manner of love was this! Blessed be God therefore for Jesus Christ, who received the fatal stroke himself; and has now so sheathed that sword in its scabbard, that it shall never be drawn any more against any that believe in him.

INFERENCE. 7. Were the sheep scattered when the Shepherd was smitten? Learn hence, That the best of men know not their own strength until they come to the trial. Little did these holy men imagine such a cowardly spirit had been in them, until temptation put it to the proof. Let this therefore be a caution forever to the people of God. You resolve never to forsake Christ, you do well; but so did these, and yet were scattered from him. You can never take a just measure of your own strength, until temptation have tried it. It is said, Deuteronomy 8:2. that God led the people so many years in the wilderness to prove them; and to know them, (that is to make them know) what was in their hearts. Little did they think such unbelief, murmurings, discontents, and a spirit bent to backslidings, had been in them; until their straits in the wilderness gave them the sad experience of these things.

INFERENCE. 8. Did the dreadful sword of divine justice smite the Shepherd, God's own fellow; and at the same time the flock, from whom all its outward comforts arose, were scattered from

him? Then learn, That the holiest of men have no reason either to repine or despond, though God should at once strip them of all their outward and inward comforts together. He that did this by the man his fellow, may much rather do it by the man his friend. Smite my Shepherd: there is all comfort gone from the inward man; Scatter the sheep; there is all comfort gone from the outward man. What refreshments had Christ in this world, but such as came immediately from his Father, or those holy ones now scattered from him? In one day he loseth both heavenly and earthly comforts. Now, as God dealt by Christ, he may, at one time or other, deal with his people. You have your comforts from heaven; so had Christ, in a fuller measure than ever you had, or can have. He had comforts from his little flock; you have your comforts from the society of the saints, the ordinances of God, comfortable relations, etc. Yet none of these are so firmly settled upon you, but you may be left destitute of them all in one day. God did take all comfort from Christ, both outward and inward; and are we greater than he? God sometimes takes outward, and leaves inward comfort; sometimes he takes inward, and leaves outward comfort: but the time may come, when God may strip you of both. This was the case of Job, a favorite of God, who was blessed with outward and inward comforts; yet a time came when God stripped him of all, and made him poor to a proverb, as to all outward comfort; and the venom of his arrows drank up his spirit, and the inward comforts thereof. Should the Lord deal thus wish any of you, how seasonable and relieving will the following considerations be?

First. Though the Lord deal thus with you, yet this is no new thing; he has so dealt with others, yes with Jesus Christ that was his fellow. If these things were done in the green tree, in him that never deserved it for any sin of his own, how little reason have we to complain? Nay,

Secondly. Therefore did this befell Jesus Christ before you, that the like condition might be sanctified to you, when you shall be brought into it. For therefore did Jesus Christ pass through such varieties of conditions, on purpose that he might take away the curse, and leave a blessing in those conditions, against the time that you should come into them. Moreover,

Thirdly, Though inward comforts and outward comforts were both removed from Christ, in one day, yet he wanted not support in the absence of both. How relieving a consideration is this! John 16:32. "Behold, (says he) the hour comes, yes, is now come that you shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." With me by way of support, when not by way of comfort. Your God, Christian, can in like manner support you, when all sensible comforts shrink away together from your soul and body in one day.

Lastly, It deserves a remark, that this comfortless forsaken condition of Christ, immediately preceded the day of his greatest glory and comfort. Naturalists observe, the greatest darkness is a little before the dawning of the morning. It was so with Christ, it may be so with you. It was but a little while and he had better company than theirs that forsook him. Act therefore your faith upon this, that the most glorious light usually follows the thickest darkness. The louder your groans are now, the louder your triumphs hereafter will be. The horror of your present, will but add to the luster of your future state!

Chapter 159

S. The manner of Christ's Death

The manner of Christ’s Death, in

respect of the Patience thereof

"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." Isaiah 53:7

How our Lord Jesus Christ carried on the work of our redemption in his humble state, both in his incarnation, life, and death, has in part been discovered in the former sermons. I have showed you the kind or nature of that death he died; and am now engaged, by the method proposed, to open the manner of his death. The solitariness or loneliness of Christ in his sufferings, was the subject of the last sermon. The patience and meekness of Christ in his sufferings, come in order, to be opened in this. This chapter treats wholly of the sufferings of Christ, and the blessed fruits thereof. Hornbeck tells us of a learned Jew, "that ingenuously confessed this very chapter converted him to the Christian faith. And such delight he had in it, that he read it more than a thousand times over." Such is the clearness of this prophecy, that he who penned it, is deservedly stiled the evangelical prophet. I cannot allow time to annualise the chapter; but my work lying in the seventh verse, I shall speak to these two branches or parts of it, namely, The grievous sufferings of Christ, and the glorious ornament he put upon them.

First, Christ’s grievous sufferings; "he was afflicted, and he was oppressed, brought to the slaughter, and shorn as a sheep," that is he lost both fleece and blood, life, and comforts of life. "He was oppressed;" the word signifies both "to answer and oppress, humble or depress." The other word, rendered afflicted, signifies "to exact and afflict," and so implies Christ to stand before God, as a surety before the creditor; who exacts the utmost satisfaction from him, by causing him to suffer according to the utmost rigor and severity of the law. It did not suffice that he was shorn as a sheep, that is that he was stripped and deprived of his riches, ornaments and comforts; but his blood and life must go for it also. He is brought to the slaughter. These were his grievous sufferings.

Secondly, Here is the glorious ornament he put upon those grievous sufferings, even the ornament of a meek and patient spirit. He opened not his mouth: but went as a sheep to be shorn, or a lamb to the slaughter. The lamb goes as quiet to the slaughter-house, as to the fold. By this lively and lovely similitude, the patience of Christ is here expressed to us. Yet Christ’s dumbness and silence is not to be understood simply, but universally; as though he spoke nothing at all when he suffered; for he uttered many excellent and weighty words upon the cross, as you shall hear in the following discourses; but it must be understood respectively, that is he never opened his mouth repiningly, passionately, or revengefully, under his greatest tortures and highest provocations. Whence the note is, DOCTRINE. That Jesus Christ supported the burden of his sufferings, with admirable patience and meekness of spirit.

It is a true observation, that meekness inviteth injury, but always to its own cost. And it was evidently verified in the sufferings of Christ. Christ's meekness triumphed over the affronts and injuries of his enemies, much more than they triumphed over him. Patience never had a more glorious triumph, than it had upon the cross. The meekness and patience of his spirit, amidst injuries and provocations, is excellently set forth in 1 Peter 2:22, "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judges righteously." In this point we have these three things to open doctrinally.

1. The burden of sufferings, and provocations that Jesus Christ was oppressed with.

2. The meekness and admirable patience with which he supported that burden.

3. The causes and grounds of that perfect patience which he then exercised.

First, The burden of sufferings and provocations which Christ supported, was very great; for on him met all sorts and kinds of trouble at once, and those in their highest degrees and fullest strength. Troubles in his soul, and these were the soul of his troubles. His soul was laden with spiritual horrors and troubles, as deep as it could swim, Mark 14:33. "He began to be sore amazed and very heavy." The wrath of an infinite dreadful God beat him down to the dust. His body full of pain and exquisite tortures in every part. Not a member or sense but was the seat and subject of torment. His name and honor suffered the vilest indignities, blasphemies, and horrid reproaches that the malignity of Satan and wicked men could belch out against it. He was called a blasphemer, seditious, one that had a devil, a glutton, a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and harlots, the carpenter's son, this fellow. He that was God's fellow, as you heard lately, now this fellow. Contempt was poured upon all his offices. Upon his kingly office, when they crowned him with thorns, arrayed him with purple, bowed the knee in mockery to him and cried, "Hail king of the Jews." His Prophetic, office, when they blinded him, and then bid him "prophesy who smote him." His priestly office, when they reviled him on the cross, saying, "He saved others, himself he cannot save." They scourged him, spit in his face; and smote him on the head and face. Besides, the very kind of death they put him to, was reproachful and ignominious; as you heard before.

Now all this, and much more than this, meeting at once upon an innocent and dignified person; one that was greater than all; that lay in the bosom of God; and from eternity had his smiles and honors; upon one that could have crushed all his enemies as a moth; I say, for him to bear all this, without the least discomposure of spirit, or breach of patience, is the highest triumph of patience that ever was in the world. It was one of the greatest wonders of that wonderful day:

Secondly, And that is the next thing we have to consider, even this almighty patience and unpatterned meekness of Christ, supporting such a burden with such evenness and steadiness of spirit. Christian patience, or the grace of patience, is an ability or power to suffer hard and heavy things, according to the will of God.

It is a power, and a glorious power, that strengthens the suffering soul to bear. It is our passive fortitude, Colossians 1:11. "Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience, and long suffering, with joyfulness;" that is strengthened with the might or power of God himself: Or such as might appear to be the proper impress and image of that divine power, who is both its principle and pattern. For the patience which God exercises towards sinners, that daily

wrong and load him, is called power, and great power, Numbers 14:17. "Let the power of my Lord be great, as you have spoken, saying, The Lord is longsuffering, forgiving," etc. Hence it is observed, Proverbs 24:10. That the loss or breaking of our patience under adversity, argues a decay of strength in the soul. "If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small."

It is a power or ability in the soul, to bear hard, heavy, and difficult things. Such only are the objects of patience. God has several sorts of burdens to impose upon his people. Some heavier, others lighter; some to be carried but a few hours, others many days; others all our days: some more spiritual, bearing upon the soul, some more external, touching or punishing the flesh immediately; and the spirit by way of sympathy: and sometimes both sorts are laid on together. So they were at this time on Christ. His soul burdened as deep as it could swim; full of the sense, the bitter sense and apprehension of the wrath of God: his body filled with tortures: in every member and sense grief took up its lodging. Here was the highest exercise of patience.

It is a power to bear hard and heavy things, according to the will of God. Considering it in that respect, patience, the Christian grace, differs from patience the moral virtue. So the apostle describes it, 1 Peter 4:19. "Let them that suffer according to the will of God," etc. that is who exercise patience graciously, as God would have them. And then our patience is, as Christ's most exactly was, according to the will of God; when it is as extensive, as intensive, and as protensive as God requires it to be.

First, When it is as extensive, as God would have it. So was Christ's patience. It was a patience that stretched and extended itself to all, and every trouble and affliction, that came upon him. Troubles came upon him in troops, in multitudes. It is said, Psalms 40:12. "Innumerable evils have compassed me about." Yet he found patience enough to receive them all. It is not with us. Our patience is often worn out. And like sick people, we fancy, if we were in another chamber, or bed, it would be better. If it were any other trouble than this, we could bear it. Christ had no exceptions at any burden his Father would lay on. His patience was as large as his trouble, and that was large indeed.

Secondly, It is then according to the will of God, when it is as intensive as God requires it to be, that is in the apostle's phrase, James 1:4. When it has its perfect work, or exercise; when it is not only extended to all kinds of troubles; but when it works in the highest and most perfect degree. And then may patience be said to be perfect (as it was in Christ) when it is plenum sui, et prohibens alieni, full of itself, and exclusive of its opposite. Christ's patience was full of itself, (that is) it included all that belonged to it. It was full of submission, peace, and serenity; full of obedience and delight in his Father's will. He was in a perfect calm. As a lamb or sheep, (says the text) that howls not, opposes not, but is dumb and quiet. And as his external behavior, so his internal frame and temper of soul was most serene and calm. Not one repining thought against God. Not one revengeful thought against man once ruffled his spirit, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do," was all the hurt he wished his worst enemies. And as it included all that belonged to it, so his perfect patience excluded all its opposites. No discontents, murmurings, despondencies had place in his heart. So that his patience was a most intensive, perfect patience. And as it was as extensive, and as intensive, so it was,

Thirdly, As protensive as God required it to be, (that is) it held out to the end of his trial. He did not faint at last. His troubles did not out-live his patience. He indeed was strengthened with all might

unto all patience, and long suffering. This was the patience of Christ our perfect pattern. He had not only patience but longanimity.

Thirdly, In the last place, let us inquire into the grounds and reasons of this his most perfect patience. And if you do so, you shall find perfect holiness, wisdom, fore knowledge, faith, heavenly mindedness, and obedience, at the root of this perfect patience.

First, This admirable patience and meekness of Christ, was the fruit and offspring of his perfect holiness. His nature was free from those corruptions, that ours groan and labor under; otherwise he could never have carried it at this rate. Take the meek Moses who excelled all others in that grace, and let him be tried in that very grace, wherein he excels, and see how "unadvisedly he may speak with his lips," Psalms 106:33. Take a Job, whose famous patience is trumpeted and resounded over all the world; you have heard of the patience of Job; and let him be tried by outward and inward troubles, meeting upon him in one day; and even a Job may curse the day wherein he was born. Envy, revenge, discontent, despondencies, are weeds naturally springing up in the corrupt soil of our sinful natures, "I saw a little child grow pale with envy," said Austin. And the spirit that is in us, lusts unto envy, (says the apostle) James 4:5. The principles of all these evils being in our natures, they will show themselves in time of trial. The old man is fretful and passionate. But it was otherwise with Christ. His nature was like a pure crystal glass, full of pure fountain water, which though shaken and agitated never so much, cannot show, because it has no dregs. "The prince of this world comes, and has nothing in me," John 14:30. No principle of corruption, for a handle to temptation. Our high-priest was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, Hebrews 7:26.

Secondly, The meekness and patience of Christ proceeded from the infinite wisdom with which he was filled. The wiser any man is, the more patient he is. Hence meekness, the fruit, is denominated from patience, the root that bears it, James 3:13. "The meekness of wisdom." And anger is lodged in folly, its proper cause, Ecclesiastes 7:9. "Anger rests in the bosom of fools." Seneca would allow no place for passion in a wise man’s bosom. Wise men use to ponder, consider, and weigh things deliberately in their judgements, before they suffer their affections and passions to be stirred and enraged. Hence come the constancy and serenity of their spirits. As wise Solomon has observed, Proverbs 17:27. "A man of understanding is of an excellent (or as the Hebrew is) a cool, spirit."

Now wisdom filled the soul of Christ. He is wisdom in the abstract, Proverbs 8:1-36. In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom, Colossians 2:3. Hence it was that he was no otherwise moved with the revilings and abuses of his enemies, than a wise physician is with the impertinencies of his distempered, and crazy patient.

Thirdly, And as his patience flowed from his perfect wisdom and knowledge, so also from his foreknowledge. He had a perfect prospect of all those things from eternity, which befell him afterwards. They came not upon him by way of surprisal. And therefore he wondered not at them when they came, as if some strange thing had happened. He foresaw all these things long before, Mark 8:31. "And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed." Yes, he had compacted and agreed with his Father to endure all this for our sakes, before he assumed our flesh. Hence, Isaiah 1:6. "I gave my back to the smilers, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. I hid not my

face from shame and spitting."

Now look as Christ in John 16:4. obviates all future offences his disciples might take at suffering for his sake, by telling them beforehand what they must expect. "These things (says he) I told you, that when the time shall come, you may remember that I told you of them:" So he, foreknowing what himself must suffer, and having agreed so to do, bare those sufferings with singular patience. "Jesus therefore knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, whom seek you?" John 18:4.

Fourthly, As his patience sprang from his fore-knowledge of his sufferings; so from his faith which he exercised under all that he suffered in this world. His faith looked through all those black and dismal clouds, to the joy proposed, Hebrews 12:2. He knew that though Pilate condemned, God would justify him, Isaiah 50:4-8. And he set one over-against the other: he balanced the glory, into which he was to enter, with the sufferings, through which he was to enter into it. He acted faith upon God for divine support and assistance under suffering, as well as for glory, the fruit and reward of them, Psalms 16:7-11. I have set (or as the apostle varies it) "I foresaw the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices." There is faith acted by Christ, for strength to carry him through. And then it follows, "My flesh also shall rest in hope; for you will not leave my soul in hell, neither will you suffer your holy one to see corruption. You will show me the path of life. In your presence is fullness of joy; at your right-hand there are pleasures for evermore." There is his faith acting spoil the glory into which he was to enter, after he had suffered these things: this filled him with peace.

Fifthly, As his faith, eyeing the glory into which he was passing, made him endure all things; so the heavenliness of his Spirit also filled him with a heavenly tranquility and calmness of spirit under all his abuses and injuries. It is a certain truth, that the more heavenly any man’s spirit is, the more sedate, composed and peaceful. "As the higher heavens (says Seneca) are more ordinate and tranquil; there are neither clouds nor winds, storms nor tempests; they are the inferior heavens that lighten and thunder: the nearer the earth the more tempestuous and unquiet: even so the sublime and heavenly mind is placed in a calm and quiet station."

Certainly that heart which is sweetened frequently with heavenly, delightful communion with God, is not very apt to be embittered with wrath, or soured with revenge against men. The peace of God does "brabeuein", appease and end all strifes and differences, as an umpire: so much that word, Colossians 3:15. imports. The heavenly Spirit marvelously affects a sedate and quiet bosom.

Now, never was there such a heavenly soul on earth, since man inhabited it, as Christ was: he had most sweet and wonderful communion with God: he had meat to eat, which others, yes, and those his greatest intimates, knew not of. The Son of man was in heaven upon earth, John 3:13. Even in respect of that blessed heavenly communion he had with God, as well as in respect of his immense Deity: and that his heart was in heaven when he so patiently endured and digested the pain and shame of the cross is evident from Hebrews 12:2. "For the joy set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame." See where his eye and heart were, when he went as a lamb to the slaughter.

Sixthly, And lastly, As his meekness and patience sprang from the heavenliness and sublimity of his spirit; so likewise, from the complete and absolute obedience of it to his Father’s will and

pleasure: he could most quietly submit to all the will of God, and never regret at any part at the work assigned him by his Father. For you must know, that Christ's death in him was an act of obedience; he all along eyeing his Father's command and counsel in what he suffered, Php 2:7-8. John 18:11. Psalms 40:6-8. Now look, as the eyeing and considering the hand of God in an affliction, presently becalms and quiets a gracious soul; as you see in David, 2 Samuel 16:11. "Let him alone, it may be God that has bid him curse David;" So much more it quieted Jesus Christ, who was privy to the design and end of his Father, with whose will he all along complied; looking on Jews and Gentiles but as the instruments ignorantly fulfilling God's pleasure, and serving that great design of his Father; this was big patience, and these the grounds of it.

Use 1. I might variously improve this point; but the direct and main use of it is, to press us to a Christ-like patience in all our sufferings and troubles. And seeing in nothing we are more generally defective, and that defects of Christians herein, are so prejudicial to religion, and uncomfortable to themselves; I resolve to wave all other uses, and spend the remaining time wholly upon this branch; even a persuasive to Christians unto all patience, in tribulations; to imitate their lamb-like Savior. Unto this (Christians) you are expressly called, 1 Peter 2:21-22. "Because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps. Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judges righteously." Here is your pattern; a perfect pattern! a lovely and excellent pattern! Will you be persuaded to the imputation of Christ herein? Methinks I should persuade you to it: yes, everything about you persuades to patience in your sufferings, as well as I: look which way you will, upward or downward, inward or outward, backward or forward, to the right-hand, or to the left, you shall find all things persuading and urging the doctrine of patience upon you.

First, Look upwards, when tribulations come upon you: look to that sovereign Lord, that commissionates and sends them upon you. You know troubles do not rise out of the dust, nor spring out of the ground, but are framed in heaven, Jeremiah 18:11. "Behold I frame evil, and devise a device against you." Troubles and afflictions are of the Lord's framing and devising, to reduce his wandering people to himself: much like that device of Absalom, in setting Joab's field of corn on fire, to bring Joab to him, 2 Samuel 14:30. In the frame of your afflictions, you may observe much of divine wisdom in the choice, measure, and season of your troubles: sovereignty, in electing the instruments of your affliction; in making them as afflictive as he pleases; and in making them obedient both to his call, in coming and going, when he pleases. Now, could you in times of trouble look up to this sovereign hand, in which your souls, bodies, and all their comforts and mercies are; how quiet would your hearts be! Psalms 39:9. "I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, because it is your doing." 1 Samuel 3:18. "It is the Lord, let him do what seems him good." Oh, when we have to do with men, and look no higher, how do our spirits swell and rise with revenge and impatience! But if you once come to see, that man as a rod in your Father's hand, you will be quiet; Psalms 46:10. "Be still, and know that I am God;" q.d. consider with whom you have to do; not with your fellow, but with your God, who can puff you to destruction with one blast of his mouth; in whose hand you are, as the clay in the potter's hand. It is for want of looking up to God in our troubles, that we fret, murmur, and despond at the rate we do.

Secondly, Look downward, and see what is below you, as well as up to that which is above you. You are afflicted, and you cannot bear it. Oh! no trouble like your trouble! never man in such a

case as you are! Well, well, cast the eye of your mind downward, and see those who lie much lower than you. Can you see none on earth in a more miserable state than yourselves? Are you at the very bottom, and not a man below you? sure there are thousands in a sadder case than you on earth. What is your affliction? Have you lost a relation? others have lost all. Have you lost an estate, and are become poor? Well, but there are some you read of, Job 30:4-7. "Who cut up mallows by the bushes, and juniper-roots for their meat. They are driven forth from among men, they cried after them as after a thief. They dwell in the cliffs of the valleys, in caves of the earth, and in the rocks. Among the bushes they braved, under the nettles they were gathered together." What difference, as to manner of life, do you find between the persons here described, and the wild beasts, that herd together in a desolate p]ace? Are you persecuted and afflicted for Christ's sake? What think you of their sufferings, Hebrews 11:36-37. "Who had trial of cruel dockings; yes, moreover of bands and imprisonments: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword, they wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented." And are you better than they? I know not what you are; but I am sure, these were such "of whom the world was not worthy," Hebrews 11:38. Or are your afflictions more spiritual and inward? Say not the Lord never dealt more bitterly with the soul of any, than he has with yours. What think you of the case of David, Heman, Job, Asaph, whose doleful cries, by reason of the terrors of the Almighty, are able to melt the stoniest heart that reads their stories? the Almighty was a terror to them: the arrows at God were within them; they roared by reason of the disquietness of their hearts. Or are your afflictions outward and inward together; an afflicted soul in an afflicted body? Are you fallen, like the ship in which Paul sailed, into a place where two seas meet! Well, so it was with Paul, Job, and many other of those worthies gone before you. Sure you may see many on earth who have been, and are in far lower and sadder states than yourselves. Or if not on earth, doubtless, you will yield there are many in hell, who would be glad to change conditions with you, as bad as you think yours to be. And were not all these mounded out of the same lump with you? Surely, if you can see any creature below you, especially any reasonable being, you have no reason to return so ungratefully upon your God, and accuse your Maker of severity; or charge God foolishly. Look down, and you shall see grounds enough to be quiet.

Thirdly, Look inward, you discontented spirits, and see if you can find nothing there to quiet you. Cast year eye into your own hearts; consider either the corruptions or the graces that are there. Cannot you find weeds enough there, that need such winter breather as this to rot them? Has not that proud heart need enough of all this to humble it? That carnal heart need of such things as these to mortify it? That backsliding, wandering heart need of all this to reduce and recover it to its God? "If need be, you are in heaviness," 1 Peter 1:6. O Christian! Did you not see need of this before you came into trouble? Or has not God shown you the need of it since you were under the rod? It is much you should not see it; but be assured, if you do not, your God does: he knows you would be ruined forever, if he should not take this course with you. Your corruptions require all this to kill them. Your lusts will take all this, it may be more than this, and all little enough. And as your corruptions call for it, so do year graces too. Therefore think you the Lord planted the principles of faith, humility, patience, etc. in your souls? What, were they put there for nothing? Did the Lord intend they should lie sleeping in their drowsy habits? Or were they not planted there in order to exercise? And how shall they be exercised without tribulations? Can you tell? Does not "tribulation work patience, and patience experience, and experience hope?" Romans 5:3-4. Is not "the trial of

your faith much more precious, than of gold which perishes," 1 Peter 1:7. O look inward, and you will be quiet.

Fourthly, Look outward, and see who stands by and observes your carriage under trouble. Are there not many eyes upon you: yes, many envious observers round about you. It was David's request, Psalms 5:8. "Lead me, O Lord, in your righteousness, because of mine enemies;" or, as the Hebrew word there might be rendered, because of mine observers or watchers. There is many an envious eye upon you. To the wicked there can scarcely be an higher gratification and pleasure, than to see your carriage under trouble so like their own; for thereby they are confirmed in their prejudices against religion, and in their good opinion of themselves. These may talk and profess more than we; but when they are tried, and put to it, it appears plainly enough, their religion enables them to do no more than we do; they talk of heaven's glory, and their future expectancies; but it is but talk, for it is apparent enough their hopes cannot balance a small afflictions with all the happiness they talk of. Oh, how do you dishonor Christ before his enemies, when you make them think all your religion lies in talking of it! Consider who looks on.

Fifthly, Look backward, and see if there be nothing behind you that may hush and quiet your impatient spirits; consult the multitude of experiences past and gone; both your own and others. Is this the first strait that ever you were in? If so, you have reason to be quiet, yet to bless God that has spared you so long, when others have had their days filled up with sorrow. But if you have been in troubles formerly, and the Lord has helped you; if you have past through the fire, and not been burnt; through the waters, and not drowned; if God has stood by you, and hitherto helped you. O what cause have you to be quiet now, and patiently wait for the salvation of God! Did he help you then, and cannot he do so now? Did he give waters, and cannot he give bread also? Is he the God of the hills only, and not the God of the valleys also? O call to mind the days of old, the years of the right hand of the Most High. "These things I call to mind, therefore I have hope," Lamentations 3:21. Have you kept no records of past experiences? How ungrateful then have you been to your God, and how injurious to yourselves, if you have not read them over in such a day as this? for to that end were they given you.

O when you shall consider what a God he has been to you, at a pinch; how faithfully Jehovah-jireh has stood by you; that this is not the first time your hearts and hopes have been low; as well as your condition, and yet God has raised you again; surely you will find your present troubles made light, by a glance back upon your past experiences.

Sixthly, Look forward, to the end of your troubles; yes, look to a double end of them, the end of their duration, and the end of their operation. Look you to the end of their duration, and that is just by you: they shall not be everlasting troubles, if you be such as fear the Lord. "The God of all grace, who has called us unto his eternal glory by Jesus Christ, after that you have [suffered a while] make you perfect," 1 Peter 5:10. "These light afflictions are but for a moment," 2 Corinthians 4:18. They are no more comparatively, with that vast eternity that is before you. Alas! what are a few days and nights of sorrows, when they are past? Are they not swallowed up as a spoonful of water in the vast ocean? But more especially look to the end of their operation. What do all these afflictions tend to and effect? Do they not work out an exceeding weight of glory? Are you not by them made partakers of his holiness?" Hebrews 12:1-29: Is not this all the fruit to take away your sins? What, and be impatient at this; fret and repine, because God is, this way, perfecting your

happiness? O ungrateful soul! Is this a due requital of that love that disdains not to stoop to so low an employment, as to scour and cleanse your souls, that they might be shining vessels of honor to all eternity?

O look forward to the end of your troubles: the end of their duration and operation.

Seventhly, Look to the right-hand, and see how you are shamed, convinced and silenced by other Christians; and it may be such too, as never made that profession you have done; and yet can not only patiently bear the afflicting hand of God, but are blessing, praising, and admiring God under their troubles; while you are sinning against, and dishonoring him under smaller ones. It may be you will find some poor Christians that know not where to have their next bread, and yet are speaking of the bounty of their God; while you are repining in the midst of plenty. Ah! if there be any ingenuity in you, let this shame you. If this will not, then,

Eighthly, Look to your left-hand, and there you will see a sad sight, and what one would think should quiet you. There you may see a company of wicked, graceless wretches, carrying themselves under their troubles, but too much like yourselves. What do they more, than fret and murmur, despond and sink, mix sin with their afflictions, when the rod of God is upon them?

It is time for you to leave off, when you sees how near you are come to them, whom you hope you shall never be ranked and numbered with. Reader, such considerations as these, I am persuaded, would be of singular use to your soul at such a time, but above all, your eyeing the great pattern of patience, Jesus Christ; whose Lamb- like damage, under a trial, with which your is not to be named the same day, is here recommended to you. O how should this transform you into a lamb, for meekness also!

S. The second Branch of Christ's Prop

The second Branch of Christ’s Prophetic Office,

consisting in the Illumination of the Understanding "Then He opened their understanding." Luke 24:45

Knowledge of spiritual things is well distinguished into intellectual and practical: the first has its seat in the mind, the latter in the heart. This latter, divines call a knowledge peculiar to saints; and, in the apostle’s dialect, it is "The eminency, or excellency of the knowledge of Christ." And indeed, there is but little excellency in all those petty notions which furnish the lips with discourse, unless by a sweet and powerful influence they draw the conscience and will to the obedience of Christ. Light in the mind is necessarily antecedent to the sweet and heavenly motions and elevations of the affections: For the farther any man stands from the light of truth, the farther he must needs be from the heat of comfort. Heavenly quickening are begotten in the heart, while the sun of righteousness spreads the beams of truth into the understanding, and the soul sits under those its wings; yet all the light of the gospel spreading and diffusing itself into the mind, can never savingly open and change the heart, without another act of Christ upon it; and what that is, the text informs you; "Then opened he their understandings, that they might understand the scriptures". In which words we have both an act of Christ upon the disciples’ understandings, and the immediate end and scope of that act.

1. Christ’s act upon their understandings: He opened their understandings. By understanding is not here meant the mind only, in opposition to the heart, will, and affections, but these were opened by and with the mind. The mind is to the heart, as the door to the house: what comes in to the heart, comes in at the understanding, which is introductive to it; and although truths sometimes go no farther than the entry, never penetrate the hearts, yet, here, this effect is undoubtedly included.

Expositors make this expression parallel to that in Acts 16:14. "The Lord opened the heart of Lydia." And it is well observed, that it is one thing to open the scriptures, that is, to expound them, and give the meaning of them, as Paul is said to do in Acts 18:3, and another thing to open the mind or heart, as it is here. There are, as a learned man truly observes, two doors of the soul barred against Christ; the understanding by ignorance; and the heart by hardness: both these are opened by Christ. The former is opened by the preaching of the gospel, the other by the internal operation of the Spirit. The former belongs to the first part of Christ’s Prophetic office, opened in the foregoing sermon: the latter, to that special internal part of his Prophetic office, to be opened in this. And that it was not a naked act upon their minds only, but that their hearts and minds did work in fellowship, being both touched by this act of Christ, is evident enough by the effects mentioned, Luke 24:52-53. "They returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God." It is confessed, that before this time Christ had opened their hearts by conversion; and this opening is not to be understood simply, but secundum quid, in reference to those particular truths, in which, until now, they were not sufficiently informed, and so their hearts

could not be duly affected with them. They were very dark in their apprehensions of the death and resurrection of Christ; and consequently their hearts were sad and dejected about that which had befallen him, Luke 24:17. But when he opened the scriptures and their understandings and hearts together, then things appeared with another face, and they returned, blessing and praising God.

2. Here is farther to be considered, the design and end of this act upon their understandings: That they might understand the scriptures: Where let it be marked, reader, that the teachings of Christ, and his Spirit, were never designed to take men off from reading, and studying, and searching the scriptures, as some vain notionists, have pretended, opposing those things which are subordinated, but to make their studies and duties the more fruitful, beneficial, and effectual to their souls: or that they might this way receive the end or blessing of all their duties. God never intended to abolish his Word, by giving his Spirit; and they are true fanatics (as Calvin upon thus place calls them) that think, or pretend so. By this means he would at once impart more light, and make that they had before more operative and useful to them, especially in such a time of need as this was. Hence we observe,

DOCTRINE. That the opening of the mind and heart, effectually to receive the truths of God, is the peculiar prerogative and office of Jesus Christ.

One of the great miseries under which lapsed nature labors, is spiritual blindness. Jesus Christ brings that eye-salve which only can cure it. Revelation 3:18. "I counsel you to buy of me eye-salve, that you may see." Those to whom the Spirit has applied it, can say, as it is 1 John 5:20. "We know that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ: this is the true God, and eternal life.

"To the spiritual illumination of a soul, it suffices not that the object be revealed, nor yet that man, the subject of that knowledge have a due use of his own reason; but it is further necessary that the grace and special assistance of the holy Spirit be superadded, to open and mollify the heart, and so give it a due taste and relish of the sweetness of spiritual truth." By opening the gospel, he reveals truth to us, and, by opening the heart, in us. Now, though this cannot be without that, yet it is much more excellent to have truth revealed in us, than to us. This divines call praecipuum illud "apogelesma" muneris prophetici; "the principal perfective effect of the Prophetic office," the special blessing promised in the new covenant, Hebrews 8:10. "I will put my laws in their mind, and write them in their hearts." For explication of this part of Christ's Prophetic office, I shall as in the former, show what is included in the opening of their understanding, and by what acts Christ performs it. And, First, Give you a brief account of what is included in this act of Christ; take it in the following particulars.

1. It implies the transcendent nature of spiritual things, far exceeding the highest flight and reach of natural reason. Jesus Christ must by his Spirit open the understandings of men, or they can never comprehend such mysteries. Some men have strong natural parts, and by improvement of them are become eagle-eyed in the mysteries of nature. Who more acute than the heathen sages? Yet, to them the gospel seemed foolishness, 1 Corinthians 1:20. Austin confesses, that before his conversion, he often felt his spirit swell with offence and contempt of the gospel; and he despising it, said, "he scorned to become a child again." Bradwardine, that profound doctor, learned usque ad stuporem, even to a wonder, professes that when he read Paul's epistles, he condemned them,

because in them he found not a metaphysical wit. Surely, it is possible a man may, with Berengarius, be able to dispute every point of knowledge; to unravel nature from the cedar in Lebanon, to the hyssop on the wall; and yet be as blind as a bat in the knowledge of Christ. Yes, it is possible a man's understanding may be improved by the gospel, to a great ability in the literal knowledge of it, so as to be able to expound the scriptures orthodoxly, and enlighten others by them, as it is Matthew 7:22. The Scribes and Pharisees were well acquainted with the scriptures of the Old Testament; yes, such were their abilities, and esteem among the people for them, that the apostle stiles them the princes of this world, 1 Corinthians 2:8. And yet notwithstanding Christ truly calls them blind guides, Matthew 23:1-39. Until Christ open the heart, we can know nothing of him, or of his will, as we ought to know it. So experimentally true is that of the apostle, 1 Corinthians 2:14-15. "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual, judges all things; yet he himself is judged of no man." The spiritual man can judge and discern the carnal man, but the carnal man wants a faculty to judge of the spiritual man: as a man that carries a dark lantern, can see another by its light, but the other cannot discern him. Such is the difference between persons whose hearts Christ has, or has not opened.

2. Christ's opening the understanding, implies the insufficiency of all external means, how excellent soever they are in themselves, to operate savingly upon men, until Christ by his power opens the soul, and so makes them effectual. What excellent preachers were Isaiah and Jeremiah to the Jews? The former spoke of Christ more like an Evangelist at the New than a Prophet of the Old Testament; the latter was a most convictive and pathetical preacher: yet the one complains, Isaiah 53:1, "Who has believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" The other laments the successlessness of his ministry, Jeremiah 6:18. "The bellows are burnt, the lead is consumed of the fire, the founder melts in vain." Under the New Testament, what people ever enjoyed such choice helps and means, as those that lived under the ministry of Christ and the apostles? Yet how many remained still in darkness? Matthew 11:27. "We have piped to you, but you have not danced; we have mourned unto you, but you have not lamented". Neither the delightful airs of mercy, nor the doleful ditties of judgement, could effect or move their hearts. And indeed if you search into the reason of it, you will be satisfied, that the choicest of means can do nothing upon the heart, until Christ by his Spirit open it, because ordinances work not as natural causes do: for then the effect would always follow unless miraculously hindered; and it would be equally wonderful, that all that hear should not be converted, as that the three children should be in the fiery furnace so long, and yet not be burned: no, it works not as a natural, but as a moral cause, whose efficacy depends on the gracious and arbitrary concurrence of the Spirit. "The wind blows where it wills," John 3:8. The ordinances are like the pool of Bethesda, John 5:4. At a certain time an angel came down and troubled the waters, and then they had a healing virtue in them. So the Spirit comes down at certain times in the word, and opens the heart; and then it becomes the power of God to salvation. So that when you see souls daily sitting under excellent and choice means, and remain dead still, you may say as Martha did to Christ of her brother Lazarus, Lord, if you had been here they had not remained dead. If you had been in this sermon, it had not been so ineffectual to them.

3. It implies the utter impotency of man to open his own heart, and thereby make the word effectual to his own conversion and salvation. He that at first said, "let there be light," and it was

so, must shine into our hearts, or they will never be savingly enlightened, 2 Corinthians 4:4; 2 Corinthians 4:6. A double misery lies upon a great part of mankind, namely, Impotency and Pride. They have not only lost the liberty and freedom of their wills, but with it have so far lost their understanding and humility as not to own it. But, alas! Man is become a most impotent creature by the fall; so far from being able to open his own heart, that he cannot know the things of the Spirit, 1 Corinthians 2:14. cannot believe, John 6:44. cannot obey, Romans 8:7. cannot speak one good word, Matthew 12:34, cannot think one good thought, 2 Corinthians 3:5, cannot do one good act, John 15:5. O what a helpless, shiftless thing is a poor sinner! Suitably to this state of impotence, conversion is in scripture called regeneration, John 3:3, a resurrection from the dead, Ephesians 2:5. a creation, Ephesians 2:10. a victory, 2 Corinthians 10:5. Which does not only imply man to be purely passive in his conversion to God, but a renitency, and opposition made to that power which goes forth from God to recover him.

Lastly, Christ's opening the understanding imports his divine power, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself. Who but God knows the heart? Who but God can unlock and open it at pleasure? No mere creature, no not the angels themselves, who for their large understandings are called intelligences, can command or open the heart. We may stand and knock at men's hearts, until our own ache; but no opening until Christ come. He can fit a key to all the cross wards of the will, and with sweet efficacy open it, and that without any force or violence to it. These things are carried in this part of his office, consisting in opening the heart: which was the first thing propounded for explication.

Secondly, In the next place, let us see by what acts Jesus Christ performs this work of his, and what way and method he takes to open the hearts of sinners. And there are two principal ways, by which Christ opens the understandings and hearts of men, namely, by his Word and Spirit.

1. By his word; to this end was Paul commissioned and sent to preach the gospel, Acts 26:18. "To open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God." The Lord can, if he pleases, accomplish this immediately; but though he can do it, he will not do it ordinarily without means, because he will honor his own institutions. Therefore you may observe, that when Lydia's heart was to be opened, "there appeared unto Paul a man of Macedonia, who prayed him, saying, come over into Macedonia, and help us," Acts 19:9. God will keep up his ordinances among men: and though he has not tied himself, yet he has tied us, to them. Cornelius must send for Peter: God can make the earth produce corn, as it did at first, without cultivation and labor; but he that shall now expect it in the neglect of means, may perish for want of bread.

2. But the ordinances in themselves cannot do it, as I noted before; and therefore Jesus Christ has sent forth the Spirit, who is his Prorex, his viceregent, to carry on this work upon the hearts of his elect. And when the Spirit comes down upon the souls in the administration of the ordinances, he effectually opens the heart to receive the Lord Jesus, by the healing of faith. He breaks in upon the understanding and conscience by powerful convictions and compunctions? so much that word, John 16:8. imports, "He shall convince the world of sin;" convince by clear demonstration, such as enforces assent, so that the soul cannot but yield it to be so; and yet the door of the heart is not opened, until he has also put forth his power upon the will, and, by a sweet and secret efficacy, overcome all its reductions, and the soul be made willing in the day of his power. When this is done, the heart is opened: saving light now shines in it; and this light set up, the Spirit in the soul

is,

1. A new light in which all things appear far otherwise than they did before. The names Christ and sin, the words heaven and hell have another sound in that man's ears, than formerly they had. When he comes to read the same scriptures, which possibly he had read a hundred times before, he wonders he should be so blind as he was, to overlook such great, weighty, and concerning things as he now beholds in them; and says, Where were mine eyes, that I could never see these things before?

2. It is a very affecting light; a light that has heat and powerful influences with it, which makes deep impressions on the heart. Hence they whose eyes the great Prophet opens, are said to be "brought out of darkness into his marvelous light," 1 Peter 2:9. The soul is greatly affected with what it sees. The beams of light are contracted and twisted together in the mind; and being reflected on the heart and affections, soon cause them to smoke and burn. "Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us, and opened to us the scriptures?"

3. And it is a growing light, like the light of the morning which "shines more and more unto the perfect day," Proverbs 4:18. When the Spirit first opens the understanding, he does not give it at once a full sight of all truths, or a full sense of the power, sweetness and goodness of any truth; but the soul in the use of means grows up to a greater clearness day by day: its knowledge grows extensively in measure, and intensively in power and efficacy. And thus the Lord Jesus by his Spirit opens the understanding. Now the use of this follows in five practical deductions.

INFERENCE 1. If this be the work and office of Jesus Christ, to open the understandings of men; hence we infer the miseries that lie upon those men, whose understandings, to this day, Jesus Christ has not opened; of whom we may say, as it is, Deuteronomy 24:4. "To this day Christ has not given them eyes to see." Natural blindness, whereby we are deprived of the light of this world, is sad; but spiritual blindness is much more so. See how dolefully their case is represented, 2 Corinthians 4:3-4. "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: whose eyes the God of this world has blinded, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them:" he means a total and final concealment of the saving power of the word from them. Why, what if Jesus Christ withhold it, and will not be a prophet to them, what is their condition? Truly no better than lost men. It is hid "tois apollumenois", to them that are to perish, or be destroyed. This blindness, like the covering of the face, or tying the handkerchief over the eyes, is in order to their turning off into hell. More particularly, because the point is of deep concernment, let us consider,

1. The judgement inflicted, and that is spiritual blindness. A sore misery indeed! Not an universal ignorance of all truths, O no! in natural and moral truths they are oftentimes acute, and sharp sighted men; but in that part of knowledge which wraps up eternal life, John 17:2, there they are utterly blinded: as it is said of the Jews, upon whom this misery lies, that blindness in part is happened to Israel. They are learned and knowing persons in other matters, but they know not Jesus Christ; there is the grand and sad defect.

2. The subject of this judgement, the mind, which is the eye of the soul. If it were put upon the body, it would not be so considerable; this falls immediately upon the soul, the noblest part of man, and upon the mind, the highest and noblest faculty of the soul, whereby we understand, think, and

reason. This in scripture is called "pneuma", the spirit, the intellectual, rational faculty, which the philosophers call "to hegemonikon", the leading directive faculty; which is to the soul what the natural eye is to the body. Now the soul being the most active and restless thing in the world, always working, and its leading, directive power blind, judge what a sad and dangerous state such a soul is in; just like a fiery, high-mettled horse, whose eyes are out, furiously carrying his rider up on rocks, pits and dangerous precipices. I remember Chrysostom, speaking of the loss of a soul, says that the loss of a member of the body is nothing to it; for, says he, If a man lose an eye, ear, hand or foot, there is another to supply its lack, "God has given us those members double; but he has not given us two souls," that if one be lost, yet the other may be saved. Surely it were better for you, reader, to have every member of your body made the seat and subject of the most exquisite racking torments, than for spiritual blindness to befall your soul. Moreover,

3. Consider the indiscernableness of this judgement to the soul on whom it lies: they know it not, no more than a man knows that he is asleep. Indeed it is "the spirit of a deep sleep poured out upon them from the Lord," Isaiah 29:10. like that which befall Adam when God opened his side, and took out a rib. This renders their misery the more remediless: "Because you say you see, therefore your sin remains," John 9:41. Once more,

4. Consider the tendency and effects of it. What does this tend to but eternal ruin? for hereby we are cut off from the only remedy. The soul that is so blinded, can never see sin, nor a Savior; but, like the Egyptians, during the palpable darkness, sits still, and moves not after its own recovery. And as ruin is that to which it tends, so in order thereto, it renders all the ordinances and duties under which that soul comes, altogether useless and ineffectual to its salvation. He comes to the word, and sees others melted by it, but to him it signifies nothing. O what a heavy stroke of God is this! Most wretched is their case, to whom Jesus Christ will not apply this eye-salve, that they may see. Did you but understand the misery of such a state, if Christ should say to you, as he did to the blind man, Matthew 20:33. That will you that I should do for you?" You would return as he did, "Lord, that my eyes may be opened."

INFERENCE 2. If Jesus Christ be the great Prophet of the church, then surely he will take special care both of the church and the under shepherds appointed by him to feed them: else both the objects and instruments upon and by which he executes his office, must fail and consequently this glorious office be in vain. Hence he is said "to walk among the golden candlesticks," Revelation 1:13: and Revelation 2:1. "to hold the stars in his right hand." Jesus Christ instrumentally opens the understandings of men by preaching of the gospel; and while there is an elect soul to be converted, or a convert to be farther illuminated, means shall not fail to accomplish it by.

INFERENCE 3. Hence you that are yet in darkness, may be directed to whom to apply yourselves for saving knowledge. It is Christ that has the sovereign eye-salve, that can cure your blindness; he only has the key of the house of David; he opens, and no man shuts. O that I might persuade you to set yourselves in his way, under the ordinances, and cry to him, "Lord, that my eyes may be opened." Three things are marvelously encouraging to you so to do

1. God the Father has put him into this office, for the cure of such as you be, Isaiah 49:6. "I will give you for a light to the Gentiles, that you may be my salvation to the end of the earth". This may furnish you with an argument to plead for a cure. Why do you not go to God, and say, Lord, did you give Jesus Christ a commission to open the blind eyes? Behold me, Lord, such a one am I, a

poor, dark, ignorant soul. Did you give him to be your salvation to the ends of the earth? No place nor people excluded from the benefit of that right; and shall I still remain in the shadow of death? O that unto me he might be a saving light also? The best and most excellent work that ever you wrought, brings you no glory until it comes into the light! O let me see and admire it!

2. It is encouraging to think, that Jesus Christ has actually opened the eyes of them that are as dark and ignorant as you are. He has revealed those things to babes, that have been hid from the wise and prudent, Matthew 11:25. "The law of the Lord is perfect, making wise the simple," Psalms 19:7. And if you look among those whom Christ has enlightened, you will not find "many wise after the flesh, many mighty or noble; but the foolish, weak, base, and despised; these are they op whom he has glorified the riches of his grace," 1 Corinthians 1:26-27.

3. And is it not yet farther encouraging to you that hitherto he has mercifully continued you under the means of light? Why is not the light of the gospel put out? Why are times and seasons of grace continued to you, if God have no farther design of good to your souls? Be not therefore discouraged, but wait on the Lord in the use of means, that you may yet be healed.

Question. If you ask, What can we do to put ourselves into the way of the Spirit, in order to such a cure?

Sol. I say, though you cannot do anything, that can make the gospel effectual, yet the Spirit of God can make those means you are capable of using effectual, if he please to concur with them. And it is a certain truth, that your inability to do what is above your power, does no ways excuse you from doing what is within the compass of your power to do. I know no act that is saving, can be done without the concurrence of spiritual grace; yes, and no act that has a remote order and tendency thereto, without a more general concourse of God’s assistance: but herein he is not behind hand with you. Let me therefore advise,

1. That you diligently attend upon an able, faithful, and searching ministry. Neglect no opportunity God affords you; for how know you but that may be the time of mercy to your soul? If he that lay so many years at the pool of Bethesda, had been wanting but that hour when the angel came down and troubled the waters, he had not been healed.

2. Satisfy not yourselves with hearing, but consider what you hear. Avow time to reflect upon what God has spoken to you. What power is there in man more excellent, or more appropriate to the reasonable nature, than its reflective and self-considering power? There is little hope of any good to be done upon your souls, until you begin to go alone, and become thinking men and women: Here all conversion begins. I know, a severer task can hardly be imposed upon a carnal heart. It is a hard thing to bring a man and himself together upon this account: but this must be, if ever the Lord do your souls good. Psalms 4:4. "Commune with your own hearts."

3. Labor to see, and ingenuously confess the insufficiency of all your other knowledge to do you good. What if you had never so much skill and knowledge in other mysteries? What if you be never so well acquainted with the letter of the scripture? What if you had an angelical illumination? This can never save your soul. No, all your knowledge signifies nothing until the Lord show you by special light the deplorable sight of your own heart, and a saving sight of Jesus Christ, your only remedy.

INFERENCE. 4. Since then there is a common light, and special saving light, which none but Christ can give, it is therefore the concernment, of everyone of you to try what your light is. "We know, (says the apostle, 1 Corinthians 8:1.) that we all have knowledge." O but what, and whence is it? Is it the light of life springing from Jesus Christ, that bright and morning star, or only such as the devils and damned have? These lights differ,

1. In their very kind and natures. The one is heavenly, supernatural, and spiritual, the other earthly, and natural, the effect of a better constitution or education, James 3:15; James 3:17.

2. They differ most apparently in their effects and operations. The light that comes in a special way from Christ, is humbling, abasing, and soul-emptying light: by it a man sees the vileness of his own nature and practice, which begets self-loathing in him; but natural light, on the contrary, puffs up, exalts, and makes the heart swell with self-conceitedness, 1 Corinthians 8:1. The light of Christ is practical and operative, still urging the soul, yet lovingly constraining it to obedience. No sooner did it shine into Paul's heart, but presently he asks, "Lord, what will you have me to do?" Acts 9:13. It brought forth fruit on the Colossians, from the first day it came to them, Colossians 1:6; but the other spends itself in impractical notions, and is detained in unrighteousness, Romans 1:18. The light of Christ is powerfully transformative of its subjects, changing the man, in whom it is, into the same image, from glory to glory, 2 Corinthians 3:18. But common light leaves the heart as dead, as carnal and sensual, as if no light at all were in it. In a word, All saving light endears Jesus Christ to the soul; and as it could not value him before it saw him, so when once he appears to the soul in his own light, he is appreciated and endeared unspeakably: then none but Christ; all is but dung, that he may win Christ: none in heaven but him, nor in earth desirable in comparison of him. But no such effect flows from natural common knowledge.

3. They differ in their issues. Natural common knowledge vanishes, as the apostle speaks, 1 Corinthians 13:8. It is but a Mayflower, and dies in its month. "Does not their excellency that is in them go away?" Job 4:21. But this that springs from Christ is perfected, not destroyed by death: it springs up into everlasting life. The soul in which it is subjected, carries it away with it into glory. John 17:2. this light is life eternal. Now turn in, and compare yourselves with these rules: let not false light deceive you.

INFERENCE. 5. Lastly, How are they obliged to love, serve, and honor Jesus Christ, whom he has enlightened with the saving knowledge of himself? O that with hands and hearts lifted up to heaven, you would adore the free grace of Jesus Christ to your souls? How many round about you have their eyes closed, and their hearts shut up! How many are in darkness, and there are like to remain, until they come to the blackness of darkness, which is reserved for them? O what a pleasant thing is it for your eyes to see the light of this world! But what is it for the eye of your mind to see God in Christ? To see such ravishing sights as the objects of faith are? and to have such a pledge as this given you of the blessed visions of glory? for in this light you shall see light. Bless God, and boast not: rejoice in your light, but be proud of it; and beware you sin not against the best and highest light in this world. If God were so incensed against the Heathens for disobeying the light of nature, what is it in you to sin with eyes clearly illuminated with the purest light that shines in this world? You know, God charges it upon Solomon, 1 Kings 11:9. that he turned from the way of obedience after the Lord, had appeared, to him twice. Jesus Christ intended when he opened your eyes, that your eyes should direct your feet. Light is a special help to obedience, and

obedience is a singular help to increase your light.

S. The second and third Preparatives for

The second and third Preparatives for the Death

of Christ, by his illegal Trial and Condemnation

"And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required." Luke 23:23-24

Judas has made good his promise to the high-priest, and delivered Jesus a prisoner into their hands. These wolves of the evening, no sooner seize the Lamb of God, but they thirst and long to be sucking his precious innocent blood; their revenge and malice admit no delay, as fearing a rescue by the people. When Herod had taken Peter, he committed him to prison, "intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people," Acts 12:4. But these men cannot sleep until they have his blood, and therefore the preparation of the passover being come, they resolve in all haste to destroy him; yet lest it should look like a downright murder, it shall be formalised with a trial. This his trial and condemnation are the two last acts by which they prepared for his death, and are both contained in this context; in which we may observe, 1. The indictment. 2. The sentence to which the judge proceeded.

1. The indictment drawn up against Christ, wherein they accuse him of many things, but can prove nothing. They charge him with sedition and blasphemy, but falter shamefully in the proof. However, what is wanting in evidence, shall be supplied with glamour and importunity. For says the text, "They were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified; and their voices prevailed". When they can neither prove the sedition and blasphemy they charged him with, then, Crucify him, Crucify him, must serve the turn, instead of all witnesses and proofs. The sentence pronounced upon him; Pilate gave sentence, that it should be as they required: That is, he sentenced Christ to be nailed to the cross, and there to hang until he was dead. From both these we may observe these two doctrinal conclusions.

DOCTRINE. 1. That the trial of Christ for his life, was managed most maliciously, and illegally against him, by his unrighteous judges.

DOCTRINE. 2. Though nothing could be proved against our Lord Jesus Christ worthy of death, or of bonds; yet he was condemned to be nailed to the cross, and there to hang until he died.

I shall handle these two points distinctly in their order, beginning with the first, namely,

DOCTRINE. 1. That the trial of Christ for his life, was managed most maliciously and illegally against him, by his unrighteous judges.

Reader, here you may see the Judge of all the world standing himself to be judged; he that shall judge the world in righteousness, judged most unrighteously; he that shall one day come to the throne of judgement, attended with thousands, and ten thousands of angels and saints, standing

as a prisoner at man's bar, and there denied the common right which a thief or murderer might claim, and is commonly given them. To manifest the illegality of Christ's trial, let the following particulars be heedfully weighed.

1. That he was inhumanely abused, both in words and actions, before the court met, or any examination was taken of the fact: for as soon as they had taken him, they forthwith bound him, and led him away to the High-priest's house, Luke 22:54. And there they that held him, mocked him, smote him, blind-folded him, struck him on the face, and bid him prophesy who smote him; and many other things blasphemously spoke they against him, Luke 22:63-65. How illegal and barbarous a thing was this? When they were but binding Paul with thongs, he thought himself abused contrary to law, and asked the centurion that stood by, "Is it lawful fat for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?" q. d. Is this legal! What, punish a man first, and judge him afterwards! But Christ was not only bound, but horribly abused by them all that night, dealing with him as the lords of the Philistine did with Samson, to whom it was sport to abuse him. No rest had Jesus that night; no more sleep for him now in this world: O it was a sad night to him: and this under Caiaphas's own roof.

2. As he was inhumanely abused before he was tried, so he was examined and judged by a court that had no authority to try him. Luke 22:66. "As soon as it was day, the elders of the people, and the chief priests, and the scribes came together and led him into their council." This was the ecclesiastical court, the great Sanhedrin, which, according to its first constitution, should consist of seventy grave, honorable, and learned men; to whom were to be referred all doubtful matters, too hard for inferior courts to decide. And these were to judge impartially and uprightly for God, as men in whom was the Spirit of God, according to God's counsel to Moses, Numbers 11:16, etc. In this court the righteous and innocent might expect relief and protection. And that is conceived to be the meaning of Christ's words, Luke 13:33 "It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem;" that is, there righteousness and innocence may expect protection. But now, contrary to the first constitution, it consisted at a pack of malicious Scribes and Pharisees, men full of revenge, malice, and all unrighteousness: and over these Caiaphas (a head fit for such a body) at this time presided. And though there was still some face of a court among them, yet their power was so abridged by the Romans, that they could not hear and determine, judge and condemn in capital matters, as formerly. For as Josephus their own historian informs us, Herod in the beginning of his reign took away this power from them; and that scripture seems to confirm it, John 18:31. "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death;" and therefore they bring him to Pilate's bar. He also understood him to be a Galilean, and Herod being Tetrarch of Galilee, and at that time in Jerusalem, he is sent to him, and by him remitted to Pilate.

3. As he was at first heard and judged by a court that had no authority to judge him; so when he stood at Pilate's bar, he was accused of perverting the nation, and denying tribute to Caesar, than which nothing was more notoriously false. For as all his doctrine was pure and heavenly, and malice itself could not find a flaw is it; so he was always observant of the laws under which he lived, and scrupulous of giving the least just offence to the civil powers. Yes, he not only paid the tribute himself though he might have pleaded exemption, but charged it upon others as their duty so to do, Matthew 22:24. "Give unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's." And yet with such palpable untruths is Christ charged.

4. Yes, and what is more abominable and unparalleled; to compass their malicious designs, they industriously labor to suborn else witnesses to take away his life, not sticking at the grossest perjury, and manifest injustice, so they might destroy him. So you read, Matthew 26:59. "Now the chief priests and elders, and all the council, sought false witnesses against Jesus to put him to death." Abominable wickedness! for such men, and so many, to complot to shed the blood of the innocent, by known and studied perjury! What will not malice against Christ transport men to?

5. Moreover, the carriage of the court was most insolent and base towards him during the trial: for while he stood before them as a prisoner, yet uncondemned, sometimes they are angry at him for his silence! and when he speaks, and that pertinently to the point, they smite him on the mouth for speaking, and scoff at what he speaks. "To some of their light, frivolous and ensnaring questions, he is silent, not for want of an answer, but because he heard nothing worthy of one." And to fulfill what the prophet Isaiah had long before predicted of him; "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth," Isaiah 53:7. As also to leave us a precedent when to speak, and when to be silent, when we for his name sake shall be brought before governors: for such reasons as these he sometimes answers not a word, and then they are ready to condemn him for a mute. "Answerest you nothing? (says the high-priest) what is it that these witness against you?" Matthew 26:62. "Hear you not how many things they witness against you?" says Pilate, Matthew 27:13. And when he makes his defense in words of truth and soberness, they smite him for speaking, John 18:22. "And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by, struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, answerest you the high priest so?" And what had he spoken to exasperate them? Had he spoken impertinently? Not at all; what he said was but this, when they would have had him ensnare himself with his own lips: "Jesus answered, I spoke openly in the world, I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, where the Jews always resort, and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest you me? Ask them that heard me, behold they know what I said;" q. d. I am not obliged to accuse and ensnare myself, but you ought to proceed secundum allegata et probata, according to what is alleged and proved. Did he deserve a blow on his mouth for this? O who but himself could have so patiently digested such abuses! Under all this he stands in perfect innocence and patience, making no other return to that wretch that smote him, but this, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil but if well, why smites you me?"

6. Lastly, To instance in no more: he is condemned to die by that very mouth which had once and again professed he found no fault in him. He had heard all that could be alleged against him, and saw it was a perfect piece of malice and envy. When they urge Pilate to proceed to sentence him; "Why, says he, what evil has he done?" Matthew 27:23. Nay, in the preface to the very sentence itself, he acknowledges him to be a just person, Matthew 27:24. "When Pilate saw he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, and said, I am innocent of the blood of this just person, see you to it." Here the innocence of Christ brake out like the sun wading out of a cloud; convincing the conscience of his judge that he was just; and yet he must give sentence on him, for all that, to please the people.

INFERENCE 1. Was Christ thus used when he stood before the great council, the scribes and elders of Israel? Then surely "great men are not always wise, neither do the aged understand judgement," Job 32:9. Here were many great men, many aged men, many politic men in council;

but not one wise or good man among them. In this council were men of parts and learning, men of great abilities, and by so much the more pernicious, and able to do mischief. Wickedness in a great or learned man, is like poison given in wine, the more operative and deadly. Christ's greatest enemies were such as these. Heathen Pilate had more pity for him than superstitious Caiaphas. Luther tells us, that his greatest adversaries did not rise out of the ale-houses or brothel-houses, but out of monasteries, convents, and religious houses.

INFERENCE. 2. Hence also we learn, That though we are not obliged to answer every captious, idle, or ensnaring question, yet we are bound faithfully to own and confess the truth, when we are solemnly called thereto.

It is true, Christ was sometimes silent, and as a deaf man that heard not; but when the question was solemnly put, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the blessed? Jesus said, I am," Mat. 14:61, 62. He knew that answer would cost his life, and yet he dared not deny it. On this account the apostle says, "he witnessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate," 1 Timothy 6:13. Herein Christ has ruled out the way of our duty, and by his own example, as well as precept, obliged us to a sincere confession of him, and his truth, when we are required lawfully so to do, that is when we are before a lawful magistrate, and the questions are not curious or captious; when we cannot hold our peace, but our silence will be interpretatively a denying of the truth; finally, when the glory of God, honor of his truth, and edification of others, are more attainable by our open confession, than they can be by our silence; then must we with Christ, give direct, plain, sincere answers.

It was the old Priscillian error, to allow men to deny or dissemble their profession, when an open confession would infer danger. But you know what Christ has said, Matthew 10:33. "Whoever shall deny me before men, him will I deny before my Father which is in heaven." Christ will repay him in his own coin. It was a noble saying of courageous Zwinglius, "What deaths would I not choose? What punishment would I not undergo? Yes, into what vault of hell would I not rather choose to be thrown, than to witness against my conscience? Truth can never be bought too dear, nor sold cheap. The Lord Jesus, you see, owns truth with the imminent and instant hazard of his life. The whole Cloud of witnesses have followed him therein, Revelation 14:1. We ourselves once openly owned the ways of sin; and shall we not do as much for Christ, as we then did for the devil? Did we then glory in our shame, and shall we now be ashamed of our glory? Do not we hope Christ will own us at the great day? Why, if we confess him, he also will confess us. O think on the reasonableness of this duty.

INFERENCE. 3. Once more, hence it follows, That to bear the reviling contradictions, and abuses of men, with a meek, composed, and even spirit, is excellent and Christ-like. He stood before them as a lamb; he rendered not railing for railing? he endured the contradictions of sinners against himself. Imitate Christ in his meekness. He calls you so to do, Matthew 11:28. This will be convincing to your enemies, comfortable to yourselves, and honorable to religion: and as for your innocence, God will clear it up as Christ's was.

You have heard the illegal trial of Christ, how insolently it was managed against him; well, right or wrong, innocent or guilty, his blood is resolved upon; it is bought and sold before-hand; and if nothing else will do it, menaces and clamors shall constrain Pilate to condemn him. Whence our second note was,

DOCTRINE. 2. That though nothing could be proved against our Lord Jesus Christ worthy of death or of bonds, yet was he condemned to be nailed to the cross, and there to hang until he died. For the explication of this, I shall open the following particulars. First, Who gave the sentence. Secondly, Upon whom it was given. Thirdly, What sentence it was that was given. Fourthly, In what manner Christ received it.

First, Who, and what was he, that dared attempt such a thing as this? Why, this was Pilate, who succeeded Valerius Gratus in the presidentship of Judea, (as Josephus tells us) in which trust he continued about ten years. This cruel, cursed act of his against Christ was in the eighth year of his government. Two years after, he was removed from his place and office by Vitellius, president of Syria, for his inhuman murdering of the innocent Samaritans. This necessitated him to go to Rome to clear himself before Caesar; but before he came to Rome, Tiberius was dead, and Caius in his room. Under him, says Eusebius, Pilate killed himself. "He was a man not very friendly or benevolent to the Jewish nation, but still suspicious of their rebellions and insurrections; this jealous humor the priests and scribes observed, and wrought upon it to compass their design against Christ." Therefore they tell him so often of Christ's sedition, and stirring up the people; and that if he let him go, he is none of Caesar's friends, which very consideration prevailed with him to do what he did. But how dared he attempt such a wickedness as this, though he had stood ill in the opinion of Caesar? What! give judgement against the Son of God? for it is evident, by many circumstances in this trial, that he had many inward fears and convictions upon him, that he was the Son of God: By these he was scared, and sought to release him, John 19:8; John 19:12. the fear of a Deity fell upon him; his mind was greatly perplexed, and dubious about this prisoner whether he was a God or a man. And yet the fear of Caesar prevailed more than the fear of a Deity; he proceeds to give sentence.

O Pilate! you was not afraid to judge and sentence an innocent, a known innocent, and one whom you yourself suspectest at least to be more than man! But see in this predominance of self-interest, what man will attempt, and perpetrate, to secure and accommodate self.

Secondly, Against whom does Pilate give sentence? Against a malefactor? No, his own mouth once and again acknowledged him innocent. Against a common prisoner? No, but one whose fame no doubt had often reached Pilate's ears, even the wonderful things wrought by him, which none but God could do: one that stood before him as the picture, or rather as the body, of innocency and meekness. You have condemned and killed the just, and he resists you not, James 5:6. Now was that word made good, Psalms 94:21. "They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood."

Thirdly, But what was the sentence that Pilate gave? We have it not in the form in which it was delivered: but the sum of it was, that it should be as they required. Now what did they require? why, crucify him, crucify him. So that in what formalities soever it was delivered, this was the substance and effect of it, I adjudge Jesus of Nazareth to be nailed to the cross, and there to hang until he be dead. Which sentence against Christ was,

1. A most unjust and unrighteous sentence: the greatest perversion of judgement and equity that was ever known to the civilized world, since seats of judicature were first set up. What! to condemn him before one accusation was proved against him. And if what they accused him of (that he said he was the Son of God) had been proved, it had been no crime, for he really was so;

and therefore no blasphemy in him to say he was. Pilate should rather have come down from his seat of judgement, and adored him, than sat there to judge him. O it was the highest piece of injustice that ever our ears heard of! As it was an unrighteous, so it was a cruel sentence, delivering up Christ to their wills. This was that misery which David so earnestly deprecated, Psalms 27:12. "O deliver me not over to the will of mine enemies." But Pilate delivers Christ over to the will of his enemies, men full of enmity, rage, and malice, whose greatest pleasure it was to glut themselves with his blood, and to satiate their revengeful hearts with such a spectacle of misery. For lo, as soon as these wolves had gripped their prey, they were not satisfied with that cursed, cruel, and ignominious death of the cross, to which Pilate had adjudged him, but they are resolved he shall die over and over; they will contrive many deaths in one; now they saw as a tyrant did once, moriatur, at sentiat se mori; "let him die, so as he may feel himself to die." To this end they presently strip him naked; scourge him cruelly; array him in scarlet, and mock him; crown him with a bush of plaited thorns; fasten that crown upon his head by a blow with a cane, which set them deep into his sacred temples; sceptered him with a reed, spat in his face, stripped off his mock-robes again; put the cross upon his back, and compelled him to bear it. All this, and much more, they express their cruelty by, as soon as they had him delivered over to their will. So that this was a cruel sentence.

3. As it was a cruel, so it was a rash and hasty sentence. The Jews are all in haste; consulting all night, and early up by the break of day in the morning, to get him to his trial. They spur on Pilate, with all arguments they can to give sentence. His trial took up but one morning, and a great part of that was spent in sending him from Caiaphas to Pilate, and from Pilate to Herod, and then back; again to Pilate; so that it was a hasty and headlong sentence that Pilate gave. He did not sift and examine the matter, but handles it very slightly. The trial of many a mean man has taken up ten times more debates and time than was spent about Christ. "They that look but slightly into the cause, easily pronounce and give sentence." But that which was then done in haste, they have had time enough to repent for since.

4. As it was a rash and hasty, so it was an extorted, forced sentence. They squeeze it out of Pilate by mere glamour, importunity, and suggestions of danger. In courts of judicature, such arguments should signify but little; not importunity, but proof, should carry it: but timorous Pilate bends like a willow at this breath of the people: he had neither such a sense of justice, nor spirit of courage, as to withstand it.

5. As it was an extorted, so it was a hypocritical sentence, masking horrid murder under the pretense and formality of law. It must look like a legal procedure to palliate the business. Loth he was to condemn him lest innocent blood should glamour in his conscience; but since he must do it, he will transfer the guilt upon them, and they take it; "his blood be on us, and on our children forever," say they. Pilate calls for water, washes his hands before them, and tells them, "I am free from the blood of this just person." But stay; free from his blood, and yet condemn a known innocent person? Free from his blood, because he washed his hands in water? No, no, he could never be free, except his soul had been washed in that blood he shed. O the hypocrisy of Pilate! Such juggling as this will not serve his turn, when he shall stand as a prisoner before him who now stood arraigned at his bar.

6. And lastly, As it was hypocritical, so it was an unrevoked sentence: it admitted not of a reprieve, no, not for a day; nor does Christ appeal to any other judicature, or once desire the least delay; but away he is hurried in haste to the execution. Blush, O you heavens! and tremble, O earth! at such a sentence as this! Now is Christ dead in law, now he knows whether he must he carried, and that presently. His soul and body must feel that, the very sight of which put him into an agony but the night before.

Fourthly, and lastly, In what manner did Christ receive this cruel and unrighteous sentence? He received it like himself, with admirable meekness and patience. He does as it were wrap himself up in his own innocence, and obedience to his Father's will, and stands at the bar with invincible patience, and meek submission. He does not at once desire the judge to defer the sentence, much less fall down and beg for his life, as other prisoners use to do at such times. No, but as a sheep he goes to the slaughter, not opening his mouth. Some apply that expression to Christ, James 5:6. "You have condemned and killed the Just, and he resists you not." From the time that Pilate gave sentence, until he was nailed to the cross, we do not read that ever he said anything, save only to the women that followed him out of the city to Golgotha: and what he said there, rather manifesting his pity to them, than any discontent at what was now come upon him; "Daughters of Jerusalem, (says he) weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children," Luke 23:28, etc. O the perfect patience and meekness of Christ. The inferences from hence are.

INFERENCE 1. Do you see what was here done against Christ, under pretense of law? What cause have we to pray for good laws, and righteous executioners of them?

O! It is a singular mercy to live under good laws, which protect the innocent from injury. Laws are hedges about our lives, liberties, estates, and all the comforts we enjoy in this world. Times will be evil enough, when iniquity is not discountenanced and punished by law; but how evil are those times like to prove when iniquity is established by law! As the Psalmist complains, Psalms 94:20. "It was the complaint of Pliny to Trojan, that whereas crimes were accustomed to be the burden of the age, now laws were so; and that he feared the commonwealth which was established would be subverted by laws." It is not likely that virtue will much flourish, when "judgement springs up as hemlock in the furrows of the field," Hosea 10:4. How much therefore is it our concernment to pray, that "judgement may run down as a mighty stream?" Amos 5:24. "That our officers may be peace, and our exactors righteousness?" Isaiah 60:17. It was not therefore without great reason, that the apostle exhorted, that "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and honesty;" 1 Timothy 2:1-2. Great is the interest of the church of God in them; they are instruments of much good or much evil.

INFERENCE. 2. Was Christ condemned in a court of judicature? How evident then is it, that there is a judgement to come after this life? Surely things will not be always carried as they are in this world. When you see Jesus condemned, and Barabbas released, conclude, that a time will come when innocence shall be vindicated, and wickedness shamed. On this very ground, Solomon concludes, and very rationally, that God will call over things hereafter at a more righteous tribunal: "And moreover, I saw under the sun the place of judgement, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there. I said in my heart, God shall judge the righteous, and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work," Ecclesiastes

3:16-17. Some indeed, on this ground, have denied the divine providence; but Solomon draws a quite contrary conclusion, God shall judge: Surely, he will take the matter into his own hand, he will bring forth the righteousness of his people as the light, and their just dealing as the noon-day. It is a mercy, if we be wronged in one court, that we can appeal to another where we shall be sure to be relieved by a just impartial Judge. "Be patient therefore, my brethren (says the apostle) until the coming of the Lord," James 5:6-8.

INFERENCE. 3. Again here you see how conscience may be over-borne and run down by a fleshly interest. Pilate's conscience bid him beware, and forbear: His interest bid him act; his fear of Caesar was more than the fear of God. But O! what a dreadful thing is it for conscience to be ensnared by the fear of man? Proverbs 29:25. To guard your soul, reader, against this mischief, let such considerations as those be ever with you.

1. Consider how dear those profits, or pleasures cost, which are purchased with the loss of inward peace! There is nothing in this world good enough to recompense such a loss, or balance the misery of a tormenting conscience. If you violate it, and prostitute it for a fleshly lust, it will remember the injury you did it many years after; Genesis 42:21. Job 13:26. It will not only retain the memory of what you did, but it will accuse you for it: Matthew 27:4. It will not fear to tell you that plainly, which others dare not whisper. It will not only accuse, but it will also condemn you for what you have done. This condemning voice of conscience is a very terrible voice.

You may see the horror of it in Cain, the vigor of it in Judas, the doleful effects of it in Spira. It will, from all these its offices, produce shame, fear, and despair, if God give not repentance to life. The shame it works will so confound you, that you will not be able to look up; Job 31:14. Psalms 1:5. The fear it works will make you wish for a hole in the rock to hide you; Isaiah 2:9-10; Isaiah 2:15; Isaiah 2:19. And its despair is a death pang. The cutting off of hope, is the greatest cut in the world. O! who can stand under such a load as this? Proverbs 17:14.

2. Consider the nature of your present actions; they are seed sown for eternity, and will spring up again in suitable effects, rewards, and punishments, when you that did them are turned to dust. Galatians 6:7. "What a man sows, that shall he reap:" And as sure as the harvest follows the seed time, so sure shall shame, fear, and horror, follow sin, Daniel 12:2. What Zeuxis, the famous limner, said of his work, may much more truly be said of ours, aeternitati pingo, I paint for eternity, said he, when one asked him why he was so curious in his work. Ah! how bitter will those things be in the account and reckoning, which were pleasant in the acting, and committing? It is true, our actions, physically considered, are transient; how soon is a word or action spoken or done, and there is an end of it? But morally considered, they are permanent, being put upon God's book of account. O! therefore take heed what you do; so speaks speak, so act, as they that must give an account.

3. Consider, how by these things men do but prepare for their own torment in a dying hour. There is bitterness enough in death, you need not add more gall and wormwood to increase the bitterness of it. What is the violencing and wounding of conscience now, but the sticking so many pins or needles in your death bed, against you come to lie down on it? This makes death bitter indeed. How many have wished in a dying hour, they had rather lived poor and low all their days, than to have strained their consciences for the world? Ah! how is the face and aspect of things altered in such an hour. No such considerations as these had any place in Pilate's heart; for if so,

he would never have been courted, or scared in such an act as this.

INFERENCE. 4. Did Christ stand arraigned and condemned at Pilate's bar? Then the believer shall never be arraigned and condemned at God's bar. This sentence that Pilate pronounced on Christ gives evidence that God will never pronounce sentence against such: for had he intended to have arraigned them, he would never have suffered Christ, their surety, to be arraigned and condemned for them. Christ stood at this time before a higher judge than Pilate; he stood at God's bar as well as his. Pilate did but that which God's own hand and counsel had before determined to be done, and what God himself, at the same time, did; though God did it justly and holier, dealing with Christ as a creditor with a surety; Pilate most wickedly and basely, dealing with Christ as a corrupt judge, that shed the blood of a known innocent to pacify the people. But certain it is, that out of his condemnation flows our justification: and had not sentence been given against him, it must have been given against us.

O what a melting consideration is this! that out of his agony comes our victory; out of his condemnation, our justification; out of his pain, our ease; out of his stripes, our healing: out of his gall and vinegar, our honey; out of his curse, our blessing; out of his crown of thorns, our crown of glory; out of his death, our life: if he could not be released, it was that you might. If Pilate gave sentence against him, it was that the great God might never give sentence against you. If he yielded that it should be with Christ as they required, it was that it might be with our souls as well as we can desire. And therefore, Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!

Chapter 162

S. The second excellent Word of

The second excellent Word of Christ upon the Cross "Then he said to the disciple, Behold your mother!" John 19:27

We now pass to the consideration of the second memorable and instructive word of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, contained in this scripture. Wherein he has left us an excellent pattern for the discharge of our relative duties. It may be well said, the gospel makes the best husbands and wives, the best parents and children, the best masters and servants in the world; seeing it furnishes them with the most excellent precepts, and proposes the best patterns. Here we have the pattern of Jesus Christ presented to all gracious children for their imitation, teaching them how to acquit themselves towards their parents, according to the laws of nature and grace. Christ was not only subject and obedient to his parents while he lived, but manifested his tender care even while he hanged in the torments of death upon the cross. "Then says he to the disciple, Behold your mother." The words contain an affectionate recommendation of his distressed mother to the care of a dear disciple, a bosom friend; wherein let us consider the design, manner, and season of this recommendation.

First, The design and end of it, which, doubtless, was to manifest his tender respect and care for his mother, who was now in a most distressed comfortless state. For now was Simeon's prophecy Luke 2:35. fulfilled, in the trouble and anguish that filled her soul, yes, a sword also shall pierce through your own soul, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. Her soul was pierced for him, both as she was his mother, and as she was a mystical member of him, her head, her Lord: and therefore he commends her to the beloved disciple that lay in his bosom, saying, "Behold your mother," That is, let her be to you as your own mother. Let your love to me be now manifested in your tender care for her.

Secondly, The manner of his recommending her, is both affectionate and mutual. It was very affectionate and moving, Behold, your motherâ€"John, I am now dying, leaving all human society and relations, and entering into a new state, where neither the duties of natural relations are exercised, nor the pleasures and comforts of them enjoyed. It is a state of dominion over angels and men, not of subjection and obedience; this I now leave to you. Upon you do I devolve both the honor and duty of being in my stead and room to her, as to all dear and tender care over her.

John, "Behold your mother;" and as it is affectionate, so it is mutual, ver. 26. And to his mother he said, "Woman, behold your son;" not mother, but woman, intimating not only the change of state and conditions with him, but also the request he was making for her to the disciple with whom she was to live, as a mother with a son. And all this he designs as a pattern to others.

Thirdly, The season or time when his care for his mother so eminently manifested itself, was when his departure was at hand, and he could no longer be a comfort to her, by his bodily presence; yes, his love and care then manifested themselves, when he was full of anguish to the very brim, both in his soul and body; Yet all this makes him not in the least unmindful of so dear a relation.

Hence the doctrinal note is,

DOCTRINE. That Christ's tender care of his mother, even in the time of his greatest distress; is an excellent pattern for all gracious children to the end of the world.

"There are three great foundations, or bonds of relations, on which all family government depends." Husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants. The Lord has planted in the souls of men, affections suitable to these relations, and to his people he has given grace to regulate those affections, appointed duties to exercise those graces, and seasons to discharge those duties. So that, as in the motion of a wheel every spoke takes its turn, and bears its stress; in like manner, in the whole round of a Christian's conversation, every affection, grace, and duty, at one season or other, comes to be exercised. But yet grace has not so far prevailed in the sanctification of any man's affections, but that there will be excesses or defects in the exercise of them towards our relations; yes, and in this the most eminent saints have been eminently defective. But the pattern I set before you this day, is a perfect pattern. As the church finds him the best of husbands, so to his parents he was the best of sons; "and being the best, and most perfect, is therefore the rule and measure of all others." Christ knew how those corruptions we draw from our parents are returned in their bitter fruits upon them again, to the wounding of their very hearts; and therefore it pleased him to commend obedience and love to parents, in his own example to us.

It was anciently a proverb among the heathen, in sole Sparta, expedite senescere. It is good to be an old man, or women, only in Sparta. The ground of it was the strict laws that were among the Spartans, to punish the rebellions and disobedience of children to their aged parents. And shall it not be good to be an old father and mother in England, where the gospel of Christ is preached, and such an argument as this now set before you urge; an argument which the Heathen world was never acquainted with? Shall parents here be forced to complain with the eagle in the fable, that they are smitten to the heart, by an arrow winged with their own feathers? Or, as a tree cleft in pieces by the wedges that were made of its own body? God forbid. To prevent such sad occasions of complaints as these, I desire all that sustain the relation of children, into whose hands providence shall cast this discourse, seriously to ponder this example of Christ, proposed for their imitation in this point. Wherein we shall first consider what duties belong to the relation of children: secondly, how Christ's example enforces those duties, and then suitably apply it.

First, Let us examine what duties pertain to the relation of children, and they are as truly, as commonly branched out into the following particulars.

First, Fear and reverence are due from children to their parents, by the express command of God, Leviticus 19:3. You shall fear every man his mother and his father. The Holy Spirit purposely inverts the order, and puts the mother first, because she, by reason of her blandishments, and fond indulgence, is most subject to the irreverence and contempt of children. God has clothed parents with his authority. They are entrusted by God with them, and are accountable to him for the souls and bodies of their children; and he expects that you reverence them, although, in respect of outward estate, or honor, you be never so much above them. Joseph, though Lord of Egypt, bowed down before his aged father, with his face to the earth, Genesis 48:12. Solomon, the most magnificent and glorious king that ever swayed a scepter, when his mother came to speak with him for Adonijah, he rose up to meet her, and bowed himself to her, and caused a seat to be

set up for the king’s mother, and set her upon his right hand, 2 Kings 2:19.

Secondly, Dear and tender love is due from children to their parents: and to show how strong and dear that love ought to be, it is joined with the love you have for your own lives; as it appears in that injunction, to deny both for Christ’s sake, Matthew 10:37. The bonds of nature are strong and direct between parents and children. What is the child but a piece of the parent wrapped up in another skin? O the care, the cost, the pity, the tenderness, the pains, the fears they have expressed for you. It is worse than Heathenish ingratitude, not to return love for love. This filial love is not only in itself a duty, but should be the root or spring of all your duties to them.

Thirdly, Obedience to their commands is due to them, by the Lord’s strict and special command, Ephesians 6:1. "Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right; honor your father and your mother, which is the first commandment with promise." Filial obedience is not only founded upon the positive law of God, but also upon the law of nature; for though the subjection of children to parents is due to them by natural right; therefore, says the apostle, this is right, (that is) right both according to natural and positive law. However, this subjection and obedience is not absolute and universal. God has not divested himself of his own authority, to clothe a parent with it. Your obedience to them must be in the Lord," that is in such things as they require you to do in the Lord’s authority. In things consonant to that divine and holy will, to which they, as well as you must be subject; and therein you must obey them. Yes, even the wickedness of a parent exempts not from obedience, where his command is not so. Nor, on the other side, must the holiness of a parent sway you, where his commands and God’s are opposite. In the former case, the Canonists have determined, "that the command must be distinguished from the person." In the latter, it is a good rule, "My parents must be loved, but my God must be preferred."

Yield yourselves, therefore, cheerfully to obey all that which they lawfully enjoin, and take heed of that black character fixed on the Heathens who know not God, be not found upon you, "disobedience to parents," Romans 1:30. Remember, your disobedience to their just commands rises higher, much higher, than an affront to their personal authority; it is disobedience to God himself, whose commands second, and strengthen theirs upon you.

Fourthly, Submission to their discipline and rebukes, is also your duty, Hebrews 12:9. "We had fathers of our own flesh that corrected us, and we gave them reverence." Parents ought not to abuse their authority. "Cruelty in them is a great sin, wrath and rebellion in a child against his parents, is monstrous." It is storied of Elian, that having been abroad, at his return, his father asked him what he had learned since he went from him; he answered, you will know shortly; I have learned to bear your anger quietly, and submit to what you please to inflict. Two considerations should especially mold others into the like frame, especially to their godly parents. The end for which, and the manner in which they manifest their anger to their children. Their end is to save your souls from hell. They judge it better for you to hear the voice of their anger, than the terrible voice of the wrath of God: to feel their hand than his. They know, if you fall into the hands of the living God, you will be handled in another manner. And for the manner in which they rebuke and chasten, it is with grief in their hearts, and tears in their eyes. Alas! it is no delight to them to cross, vex, or afflict you. Were it not mere conscience of their duty to God, and tender love to your souls, they would neither chide nor smite: and when they do, how do they afflict themselves in afflicting you! When their faces are full of anger, their affections are full of compassion for you; and

you have no more reason to blame them for what they do, than if they cry out and violently snatch at you, when they see you ready to fall from the top of a rock.

Fifthly, faithfulness to all their interests is due so them, by the natural and positive law of God. What in you lies, you are bound to promote, not to waste and scatter their substance: to assist, not to defraud them. Whoever robbeth his father or mother, and says, it is no transgression, the same is a companion of a destroyer, Proverbs 28:24. This, says one, as far excels your wronging another, as parricide is a greater crime than man-slaughter, or as Reuben's incest was beyond common fornication. God never meant you should grow up about your parents, as suckers about a tree, to impoverish the root. But for a child, out of covetousness after what his parents have, secretly to wish their death, is a sin so monstrous, as should not be once named, much less found among persons professing Christianity. To desire their death, from whom you had your life, is unnatural wickedness: to dispose of their goods, much more of yourselves, without their consent, is (ordinarily) the greatest injustice to them. Children are obliged to defend the estate and persons of their parents, with the hazard of their own. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that has his quiver full of them. They shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemy in the gates. Psalms 127:5.

Sixthly, And more especially, requital of all that love, care, and pains they have been at for you, is your duty so far as God enables you, and those things are requitable, 1 Timothy 5:4. "Let them learn to show piety at home, and requite their parents." The word is "antipelargein", and signifies to play the stork, to imitate that creature of whom it is said, that the young do tenderly feed the old ones, when they are no longer able to fly abroad and provide for themselves. Hence those that want affections of natural affection to their relations, are said to be "asogmoi", Romans 1:30. worse than storks. Oh, it is a shame that birds and beasts should show more tenderness to their dams than children to their parents.

It is a saying frequent among the Jews, "A child should rather labor at the mill than suffer his parents to want." And to the same sense is that other saying, "Your parents must be supplied by you if you have it; if not, you ought to beg for them, rather than see them perish." It was both the comfort and honor of Joseph, that God made him an instrument of so much support and comfort to his aged father and distressed family, Genesis 47:13. And you are also to know, that what you do for them, is not in the way of an alms, or common charity. For the apostle says, it is but your requiting them, and that is justice, not charity. And it can never be a full requital. Indeed the apostle tells us, 2 Corinthians 12:14. That parents lay up for their children, and not children for their parents, and so they ought; but, sure, if providence blast them, and bless you, an honorable maintenance is their due. Even Christ himself took care for his mother.

Secondly, You have had a brief account of the duties of this relation; next, let us consider how Christ's example, who was so subject to them in his life, Luke 2:51. and so careful to provide at his death, enforces all those duties upon children, especially upon gracious children. And this it does two ways, both as it has the obliging power of a law; and as he himself will one day sit in judgement to take an account how we have imitated him in these things.

First, Christ's example in this has the force and power of a law, yes, a law of love, or a law lovingly constraining you to an imitation of him. If Christ himself will be your pattern, if God will be pleased to take relations like yours, and go before you in the discharge of relative duties; Oh, how much

are you obliged to imitate him, and tread in all his footsteps! This was by him intended as a precedent, or pattern, to facilitate and direct your duties.

Secondly, He will come to take an account how you have answered the pattern of obedience, and tender care he set before you in the days of his flesh. What will the disobedient plead in that day? He that heard the groans of an afflicted father or mother, will now come to reckon with the disobedient child for them; and, the glorious example of Christ's own obedience to, anti tenderness of his relations, will, in that day, condemn and aggravate, silence and shame such wretched children as shall stands guilty before his bar.

INFERENCE 1. Has Jesus Christ given such a famous pattern of obedience and tenderness to parents? Then there can be nothing of Christ in stubborn, rebellious, and careless children, that regard not the good or comfort of their parents. The children of disobedience cannot be the children of God. If providence directs this to the hands of any that are so, my heart's desire and prayer for them is, that the Lord would search their souls by it, and discover their evils to them, while they shall read the following queries.

First Query, Have you not been guilty of slighting your parents by irreverent words or carriages; the old man or woman? To such I commend the consideration of that scripture, Proverbs 30:17, which, methinks, should be to them as the hand-writing that appeared upon the plaister of the wall to Belshazzar. "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despises to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it." That is, they shall be brought to an untimely end, and the birds of the air shall eat that eye, that had never seen but for that parent that was despised by it.

It may be you are vigorous and young, they decayed and wrinkled with ages: but, says the Holy Spirit, "Despise not your mother when she is old," Proverbs 23:22. Or when she is wrinkled, as the Hebrew signifies. It may be you are rich, they poor; own, and honor them in their poverty, and despise them not. God will requite it with his hand if you do.

Second Query, Have you not been disobedient to the commands of parents? a son of Belial is a son of wrath, if God give not repentance to life. Is not this the black brand set upon the Heathens, Romans 1:30. Have not many repented this upon a ladder, with a halter about their necks? Woe to him that makes a father or mother complain, as the tree in the fable, that they are cleft asunder with the wedges that are cut out of their own bodies.

Third Query, Have you not risen up rebelliously against, and hated your parents for chastening your bodies, to save your souls from hell? Some children (says one) will not take that from a parent, which beasts, yes, and savage beasts too, bears and lions, will take from their keepers. What is this but to resist an ordinance of God for your good? and, in rebelling against them, to rebel against the Lord? Well, if they do not, God will take the rod into his own hand, and him you shall not resist.

Fourth Query, Have you not been unjust to your parents, ant defrauded them? first, help to make them poor, and then despise them because they are poor. O horrid wickedness! What a complicated evil is this! You are, in the language of the scripture, a companion with destroyers, Proverbs 28:24. This is the worst of theft, in God's account. You may think you make bold with them, but how bold do you make with conscience, and the command of God?

Fifth Query, Are you not, or have you not been ungrateful to parents? Leaving then to shift for themselves, in those straits you have helped to bring them into. O consider it, children, this is an evil which God will surely avenge, except you repent. that! to be hardened against your own flesh; to be cruel to your own parents, that with so much tenderness fed you, when else you had perished! I remember Luther gives us a story of one, (and oh that it might be a warning to all that hear it), who had made over all that he had to his son, reserving only a maintenance for himself; at last his son despised him, and grudged him the very meat he eat; and one day the father coming in, when the son and his wife were at dinner upon a goose, they shuffled the meat under the table; but see the remarkable vengeance of God upon this ungracious, unnatural son: the goose was turned into a monstrous toad, which seized upon this vile wretch, and killed him. If any one of you be guilty of these evils, to humble you for them, and reclaim you from them, I desire these six considerations may be laid to heart.

First, That the effects of your obedience, or disobedience will stick upon you and yours to many generations. If you be obedient children in the Lord, both you and yours may reap the fruits of that your obedience, in multitudes of sweet mercies, for many generations. So runs the promise, Ephesians 6:22. "Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with you, and you may live long on the earth." You know what an eye of favor God cast upon the Recabites for this, Jeremiah 35:8. from Jeremiah 35:14-20 : and as his blessings are, by promise, entailed on the obedient, so his curse upon the disobedient, Proverbs 20:20. "Whoever curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness;" that is the lamp of his life quenched by death, yes, say others, and his soul also by the blackness of darkness in hell.

Secondly, Though other sins do, this sin seldom escapes exemplary punishment, even in this world. Our English history tells us of a yeoman in Leicestershire, who had made over all he had to his son, to prefer him in marriage, reserving only a bare maintenance at his son's table: afterward, upon some discontent, the son bid his father get out of his house. The next day Mr. Goodman, the minister of the parish, meeting the young man walking about his ground, asked him, How he did? He answered, very well; but before the minister was gone far from him, his affections fell out, which he carried in his hands, got to his house, sent for Mr. Goodman, bitterly bewailed his sin against his father, and so died. And Dr. Taylor, in his great exemplar, tells us of another, that, upon discontent with his father, wished the house might be on fire, if ever he came any more into his father's house: afterwards, coming, in, it was fired indeed, and this wicked son only consumed. I could multiply instances of this nature, (for indeed that righteous judgement of God has multiplied them,) but this only for a taste.

Thirdly, Heathens will rise up in judgement against you, and condemn you. They never had such precepts nor precedents as you, and yet some of the better natured Heathens would rather chosen death, than to do as you do. You remember the story of Croesus' dumb son, whose dear affections could make him speak when he saw Croesus in danger; though he never spoke before, yet then he could cry out, "O do not kill my father!" But what speak I of Heathens! the stork in the heavens, yes, the beasts of the earth, will condemn the disobedience of children.

Fourthly, These are sins inconsistent with the true fear of God, in whoever they are found. That a man is indeed, which he is in his family, and among his relations. He that is a bad child can never

be a good Christian. Either bring testimonies of your godliness from your relations, or it may be well suspected to be no better than counterfeit. Never talk of your obedience to God, while your disobedience to the just commands of your parents gives you the lie.

Fifthly, A parting time is coming when death will break up the family, and when that time comes, oh! how bitter will the remembrance of these things be! when you shall see a father or a mother lying by the wall, what a cut will it be to remember your miscarriages and evils! They are gone out of your reach, you cannot now, if you would, give them any satisfaction for what you have done against them; but, oh, how bitter will the remembrance of these things be at such a time! Surely, this will be more unsupportable to you than their death, if the Lord open your eyes, and give you repentance; and if not, then,

Sixthly, What a terrible thing will it be, to have a father or mother come in as witnesses against you at Christ's bar? As well as they loved you, and as dear as you were to them in this world, they must give evidence against you then. Now, what a fearful thing is it for you but to imagine your parents to come before the Lord, and say, Lord, I have given this child many hundred reproofs for sin; I have counseled, persuaded, and used all means to reclaim him, but in vain; he was a child of disobedience, nothing could work upon him: what think you of this?

INFERENCE. 2. Have you such a pattern of obedience, and tender love to parents? Then, children, imitate your pattern, as it becomes Christians, and take Christ for your example. Whatever your parents be, see that you carry it towards them becoming such as profess Christ

First, If your parents be godly, O beware of grieving them by any unbecoming carriage. Are you a Christian indeed? you will then reckon yourself obliged in a double bond, both of grace and nature, to them: O what a mercy would some children esteem it, if they had parents fearing the Lord, as you have!

Secondly, If they be carnal, walk circumspectly, in the most precise and punctual discharge of your duties, for how know you, O child, but hereby you may win your parents? Would you but humbly, and seriously entreat, and persuade them to mind the ways of holiness, speaking to them at fit seasons, with all imaginable humility and reverence, insinuating your advice to duties, or trouble for their evils, rather by relating some pertinent history, or proposing some excellent example, leaving, their own conscience to draw the conclusion, and make application, than to do it yourselves; it is possible they may ponder your words in their hearts, as Mary did Christ's, Luke 2:49; Luke 2:51. And would you but back all this with your earnest cries to heaven for them, and your own daily example, that they may have nothing from yourselves to retort upon you; and thus wait with patience for the desired effect: O what blessed instruments might you be of their everlasting good!

INFERENCE. 3. To conclude, Let those that have such children as fear the Lord, and endeavor to imitate Christ in those duties, account them a singular treasure and heritage from the Lord, and give them all due encouragement to their duties.

How many have no children at all, but are as a dry tree! and how many have such as are worse than none? The very reproach and heart breaking of their parents, that bring down their hoary heads with sorrow to the grave.

If God have given you the blessing of godly children, you can never be sufficiently sensible of, or thankful for such a favor. O that ever God should honor you to bring forth children for heaven! what a comfort must this be to you, whatever other troubles you meet with abroad, when you come home among godly relations, that are careful to sweeten your own family to you by their obedience! especially, what a comfort is it, when you come to die, that you leave them within the covenant, entitled to Christ, and so need not be anxious how it shall be with them when you are gone? Take heed of discouraging or damping such children from whom so much glory is like to rise to God, and so much comfort to yourselves. Thus let Christ's pattern be improved, who went before you in such eminent holiness, in all his relations, and left you an example that you should follow his steps!

S. The second preparative Act of Christ

The second preparative Act of Christ for his own Death

"The Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do you, as oft as you drink [it], in remembrance of me." 1 Corinthians 11:23-25

Christ had no sooner recommended his dear charge to the Father, but (the time of his death hastening on) he institutes his last supper, to be the lasting memorial of his death, in all the churches, until his second coming; therein graciously providing for the comfort of his people, when he should be removed out of their sight. And this was the second preparative act of Christ, in order to his death: he will set his house in order, and then die. This his second act manifests no less love than the former. It is like the plucking off the ring from his finger, when ready to lay his neck upon the block, and delivering it to his dearest friends, to keep that as a memorial of him: "Take this, etc. in remembrance of me." In the words read, are four things noted by the apostle, about this last and lovely act of Christ, namely, the Author, Time, Institution, and End of this holy, solemn ordinance.

1. The author of it, The Lord Jesus: It is an effect of his lordly power, and royal authority; Matthew 28:18. "And Jesus came, and spoke unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and earth: Go you therefore." The government is upon his shoulders, Isaiah 9:6. He shall bear the glory, Zechariah 6:13. Who but he that came out of the bosom of the Father, and is acquainted with all the counsels that are there, knows what will be acceptable to God? And who but he can give creatures, by his blessing, their sacramental efficacy and virtue? Bread and wine are naturally fit to refresh and nourish our bodies; but what fitness have they to nourish souls? Surely none, but what they receive from the blessing of Christ that institutes them.

2. The Time when the Lord Jesus appointed this ordinance. "In the same night in which he was betrayed:" it could not be sooner, because the passover must first be celebrated; nor later, for that night he was apprehended. It is therefore emphatically expressed "en tei nukti", in that same night, that night forever to be remembered. He gives, that night, a cordial draught to his disciples before the conflict: he settles, that night, an ordinance in the church, for the confirmation and consolation of his people, in all generations, to the end of the world. By instituting it that night, he gives abundant evidence of his care for his people, in spending so much of that little, very little, time he had left, on their account.

3. The Institution itself; in which we have the memorative, significative, instructive signs, and they are bread and wine; and the glorious mysteries represented and shadowed forth by them, namely, Jesus Christ crucified; the proper New-Testament nourishment of believers. Bread and wine are choice creatures, and do excellently shadow forth the flesh and blood of crucified Jesus; and that both, in their natural usefulness, and manner of preparation. Their usefulness is very great; bread

is a creature necessary to uphold and maintain our natural life; therefore it is called the staff of bread, Isaiah 3:1. Because as a feeble man depends and leans upon his staff, so do our feeble spirits upon bread. Wine was made to cheer the heart of man, Judges 11:13. They are both useful and excellent creatures; their preparations, to become so useful to us, are also remarkable. The corn must be ground in the mill, the grapes torn and squeezed to pieces in the winepress, before we can either have bread or wine. And when all this is done, they must be received into the body, or they nourish not. So that these were very fit creatures to be set apart for this use and end.

If any object, It is true, they are good creatures, but not precious enough to be the signs of such profound and glorious mysteries: it was worth creating a new creature, to be the sign of the new covenant.

Let him that thus objects, ask himself, whether nothing be precious without pomp? The preciousness of these elements is not so much from their own natures, as their use and end; and that makes them precious indeed. A loadstone at sea is much more excellent than a diamond, because more useful. A penny-worth of wax applied to the label of a deed, and sealed, may in a minute have its value raised to thousands of pounds. These creatures receive their value and estimation on a like account. Nor should it at all remain a wonder to you, why Christ should represent himself by such mean and common things, when you have well considered that the excellency of the picture, is its similitude and conformity to the original; and that Christ was in a low, sad, and very abased state, when this picture of him was drawn; he was then a man of sorrows. These then, as lively sighs, shadow forth a crucified Jesus, represent him to us in his red garments. This precious ordinance may much more than Paul, say to us, "I always bear about in my body the dying of the Lord Jesus:" That is the thing it signifies.

4. Lastly take notice of the use, design, and end of this institution. "Eis ten emen anamnesin", in remembrance, or for a memorial of me. O there is much in this: Christ knew how apt our base hearts would be to lose him, amidst such a throng of sensible objects as we here converse with; and how much that forgetfulness of him and of his sufferings, would turn to our prejudice and loss; therefore does he appoint a sign to be remembered by: "As oft as you do this, you show forth the Lord’s death until he come." Hence we observe, suitable to the design of this discourse, DOCTRINE. That the sacramental memorial Christ left with his people, is a special mark of his care and love for them.

What! To order his picture (as it were) to be drawn when he was dying, to be left with his spouse! To rend his own flesh, and set abroach his own blood to be meat and drink for our souls! O what manner of love was this! It is true, his picture in the sacrament is full of scars and wounds: but these are honorable scars, and highly grace and commend it to his spouse, for whose dear sake he here received them.

"They are marks of love and honor." And he would be so drawn, or rather he so drew himself, that as oft as his people looked upon the portraiture of him, they might remember, and be deeply affected with those things he here endured for their sakes. These are the wounds my dear husband Jesus received for me. These are the marks of that love which passes the love of creatures. O see the love of a Savior! This is that heavenly Pelican that feeds his young with his own blood. We have read of pitiful and tender women that have eaten the flesh of their own children, Lamentations 4:10. But where is that woman recorded that gave her own flesh and blood

to be meat and drink to her children? Surely the spouse may say of the love of Christ, what David in his lamentations, said of the love of Jonathan, "Your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women." But to prepare the point to be meat indeed, and drink indeed to your soul, I shall discuss briefly these three things, and hasten to the application.

First, What it is to remember the Lord Jesus in the sacrament.

Secondly, What aptitude there is in that ordinance, so to bring him to our remembrance.

Thirdly, How the care and love of Christ is discovered, by leaving such a memorial of himself with us.

Remembrance, properly, is the return of the mind to an object, about which it has been formerly conversant; and it may so return to a thing, it has conversed with before, two ways; speculatively and transiently; or affectingly, and permanently. A speculative remembrance is only to call to mind the history of such a person and his sufferings: that Christ was once put to death in the flesh. An affectionate remembrance, is when we so call Christ and his death to our minds, as to feel the powerful impressions thereof upon our hearts. Thus, Matthew 26:75. "Peter remembered the word of the Lord, and went out, and wept bitterly." His very heart was melted with that remembrance; his affections were pained, he could not hold, but went out and wept abundantly. Thus Joseph, when he saw his brother Benjamin, whose sight refreshed the memory of former days and endearments, was greatly affected, Genesis 43:29-30. "And he lift up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son: and said, Is this your younger brother, of whom you spoke to me? and he said, God be gracious to you my son. And Joseph made haste, for his affections did yearn upon his brother, and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there." Such a remembrance of Christ is that which is here intended. This is indeed a gracious remembrance of Christ: the former has nothing of grace in it. The time shall come when Judas that betrayed him, and the Jews that pierced him, shall historically remember what was done; Revelation 1:7. "Behold he comets with clouds, and every eye shall see him; and they also which pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." Then I say, Judas shall remember; This is he whom I perfidiously betrayed. Pilate shall remember; This is he whom I sentenced to be hanged on the tree though I was convinced of his innocence. Then the soldiers shall remember; This is that face we spit upon, that head we crowned with thorns; Lo, this is he whose side we pierced, whose hands and feet we once nailed to the cross. But this remembrance will be their torment, not their benefit. It is not therefore a bare historical, speculative, but a gracious, affectionate, impressive remembrance of Christ, that is here intended: and such a remembrance of Christ supposes and includes,

1. The saving knowledge of him. We cannot be said to remember what we never knew; nor to remember, savingly, what we never knew savingly. There have been many previous, sweet end gracious transactions, dealings, and intimacies between Christ and his people, from the time of their first happy acquaintance with him: much of that sweetness they have had in former considerations of him, and hours of communion with him, is lost and gone; for nothing is more volatile, hazardous, and inconstant, than our spiritual comforts: but now at the Lord's table, there our old acquaintance is renewed, and the remembrance of his goodness and love refreshed and revived: "We will remember your love more than wine; the upright love you," Song of Solomon 1:4.

2. Such a remembrance of Christ includes faith in it. Without discerning Christ at a sacrament, there is no remembrance of him; and, without faith, no discerning Christ there. But when the precious eye of faith has spied Christ, under that veil, it presently calls up the affections, sayings "Come see the Lord." These are the wounds he received from me. This is he that loved me, and gave himself for me. This is his flesh, and that his blood; sic oculus, sic ille manus, etc. so his arms were stretched out upon the cross to embrace me; so his blessed head hung down to kiss me. Awake my love, rouse up my hope, flame out my desires; Come forth, 0 all you powers and affections of my soul; come, see the Lord. No sooner does Christ by his Spirit call to the believer but faith hears; and discerning the voice, turns about, like Mary, saying, Rabboni, my Lord, my Master.

3. This remembrance of Christ includes suitable impressions made upon the affections, by such a sight and remembrance of him: and therein lies the nature of that precious thing which we call communion with God. Various representations of Christ are made at his table. Sometimes the soul there calls to mind the infinite wisdom, that so contrived and laid the glorious and mysterious design and project of redemption: the effect of this is wonder and admiration. O the manifold wisdom of God! Ephesians 3:10. O the depths, the heights, the length, the breadth of this wisdom! I can as easily span the heavens as take the just dimensions of it. Sometimes a representation of the severity of God is made to the soul at that ordinance. O how inflexible and severe is the justice of God! What, no abatement! no sparing mercy; no, not to his own Son? This begets a double impression on the heart.

(1.) Just and deep indignation against sin; Oh cursed sin! It was you used my dear Lord so; for your sake he underwent all this. If your vileness had not been so great, his sufferings had not been so many. Cursed sin! you were the knife that stabbed him: you the sword that pierced him. Ah what revenge it works! I remembered that it is storied of one of the kings of France, that hearing the bishop (as I remember it was Remegius) read the history of Christ's trial and execution, and hearing how barbarously they had used him, he was moved, with so tragical and pathetical a history, to great indignation against Pilate, the Jews, and the crude and bloody soldiers, and could not contain himself, but cried out, as the bishop was reading, "O that I had been there with my Frenchmen, I would have cut all their throats who so barbarously abused my Savior." To allude to this: when the believer considers and remembers, that sin put Christ to all that shame and ignominy, and that he was wounded for our transgressions, he is filled with hatred of sin, and cries out, O sin, I will revenge the blood of Christ upon you! you shall never live a quiet hour in my heart. And,

(2.) It produces an humble adoration of the goodness and mercy of God, to exact satisfaction for our sins, by such bloody stripes, from our surety. Lord, if this wrath had seized on me, as it did on Christ, what had been my condition then! If these things were done to the green tree, what had been the case of the dry tree?

Sometimes representations, (and not common ones), are made of the love of Christ, who assumed a body and soul, on purpose to bear the wrath of God for our sins. And when that surpassing love breaks out in its glory upon the souls, how is the soul transported and ravished with it! crying out, what manner of love is this! here is a love large enough to go round the heavens, and the heaven of heavens! Who ever loved after this rate, to lay down his life for

enemies! O love unutterable and inconceivable! How glorious is my love in his red garments! Sometimes the fruits of his death are there gloriously displayed; even his satisfaction for sin, and the purchase his blood made of the eternal inheritance: And this begets thankfulness and confidence in the soul, Christ is dead, and his death has satisfied for my sin. Christ is dead, therefore my soul shall never die. Who shall separate me from the love of God? These are the fruits, and this is the nature of that remembrance of Christ here spoken of.

Secondly, What aptitude or condecency is there in this ordinance, to bring Christ so to remembrance?

Much every way; for it is a sign, by him appointed to that end, and has (as divines well observe) a threefold use and consideration, namely, as it is memorative, significative, and instructive.

1. As it is memorative, and so it has the nature and use of a pledge or token of love, left by a dying to a dear surviving friend. And so the sacrament, as was said before, is like a ring plucked off from Christ's finger, or a bracelet from his arm; or rather his picture from his bosom, delivered to us with such words as these; "As oft as you look on this, remember me; let this help to keep me alive in your remembrance when I am gone, and out of your sight." It induces to it also,

2. As it is a significative sign, most aptly signifying both his bitter sufferings for us, and our strict and intimate union with him; both which have an excellent usefulness to move the heart, and its deepest affections, at the remembrance of it. The breaking of the bread, and shedding forth the wine, signify the former; our eating, drinking, and incorporating them, is a lively signification of the other.

3. Moreover, this ordinance has an excellent use and advantage for this affectionate remembrance of Christ, as it is an instructive sign. And it many ways instructs us, and enlightens our mind, particularly in these truths, which are very affecting things.

1. That Christ is the bread on which our souls live, proper meat and drink for believers, the most excellent New-Testament food. It is said, Psalms 78:25. "Man did eat angels food:" he means the manna that fell from heaven, which was so excellent, that if angels, who are the noblest creatures, did live upon material food, they would choose this above all to feed on. And yet this was but a type and weak shadow of Christ, on whom believers feed. Christ makes a royal feast of his own flesh and blood, Isaiah 25:6. All our delicates are in him.

2. It instructs us that the New Testament is now in its full force, and no substantial alteration can be made in it, since the testator is dead, and by his death has ratified it. So that all the excellent promises and blessings of it are now fully confirmed to the believing soul, Hebrews 9:16-17. All these, and many more choice truths, are we instructed in by this sign: And all these ways it remembers us of Christ, and helps powerfully to raise, warm, and affect our hearts with that remembrance of him.

Thirdly, The last enquiry is, How Christ has, hereby, left such a special mark of his care for, and love to his people. And that will evidently appear, if you consider these five particulars.

1. This is a special mark of the care and love of Christ, inasmuch as hereby he has made abundant provision for the confirmation and establishment of the faith of his people to the end of the world. For this being an evident proof that the New Testament is in its full force, (Matthew

26:28. "This is the cup of the New testament in my blood,") it tends as much to our satisfaction, as the legal execution of a deed, by which we hold and enjoy our estate. So that when he says, Take, eat, it is as much as if God should stand before you at the table with Christ, and all the promises in his hand; and say, I deliver this to you as my deed. What think you, does this promote and confirm the faith of a believer? if it does not, what does?

2. This is a special mark of Christ's care and love, inasmuch as by this he has made like abundant provision for the enlargement of the joy and comfort of his people. Believers are at this ordinance, as Mary was at the sepulcher, with fear and great joy, Matthew 28:8. Come, reader, speak your heart, if you be one that heartily lowest Jesus Christ, and have gone many days, possibly years, mourning and lamenting because of the inevidence and cloudiness of your interest in him; who have sought him sorrowing, in this ordinance, and in that, in one duty, and another: if at last Christ should take off that mask, that cruel covering (as one calls it) from his face, and be known of you in breaking of bread: suppose he should, by his Spirit, whisper thus in your ear as you sit at his table, Do you indeed so prize, esteem, and value me? Will nothing but Christ and his love content and satisfy you? Then, as sweet, lovely, and desirable as I am, know that I am your: take your own Christ into the arms of your faith this day: Would not this create in your soul, a joy transcendent to all the joys and pleasures in this world? What thinkest you of it?

3. Here is a signal mark of Christ's care and love, inasmuch as this is one of the highest, and best helps for the mortification of the corruption of his people. Nothing tends more to the killing of sin, than this does. Christ's blood, as it is food to faith, so it is poison to our lusts. O what a pill is enrapt up in that bread! what an excellent potion is in that cup to purge the soul? One calls that table, an altar, on which our corruptions are sacrificed and slain before the Lord. For how can they that there see what Christ suffered for sin, live any longer therein?

4. Moreover his care and love appear in providing an ordinance so excellently adapted, to excite and blow up his people's love into lively flame. When Joseph made himself known to his brethren, "I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold, be not grieved:" O! what showers of tears and dear affections were there? How did they fall upon each others necks! so that the Egyptians wondered at the matter. How does the soul (if I may so speak) passionately love Jesus Christ at such a time? O what a Christ is my Christ! "The fairest among ten thousand." What has he done, what has he suffered for me! what great things has my Jesus given, and what great things has he forgiven me: A world, a thousand worlds cannot show such another. Here the soul is melted down by love at his feet; it is pained with love.

5. To conclude; Christ's care and love are further manifested to his people, in this ordinance, as it is one of the strongest bonds of union between them that can be:1 Corinthians 10:17. "We being many, are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." And though, through our corruptions, it falls out, that what was intended for a bond of union proves a bone of contention, yet, inasmuch as by this it appears how dearly Christ loved them; for as much also as here they are sealed up to the same inheritance, their dividing corruptions here slain, their love to Christ, and consequently to each other, here improved; it is certainly one of the strongest ties in the world, to wrap up gracious hearts in a bundle of love. And thus I have dispatched the doctrinal part of this point. The improvement of it is in the following inferences.

INFERENCE 1. Did Christ leave this ordinance with his church to preserve his remembrance among his people: Then surely Christ foresaw, that, notwithstanding what he is, has done, suffered, and promised yet to do for his people, they will for all this be still apt to forget him. A man would think that such a Christ should never be one whole hour together out of his people's thoughts and affections: that wherever they go, they should carry him up and down with them, in their thoughts, desires, and delights: that they should let their thoughts work towards Christ as the longing thoughts of her that is with child do work after that she longs for: that they should lie down with Christ in their thoughts at night, and when they awake be still with him that their very dreams in the night should be sweet visions of Christ, and all their words savor of Christ. But O the baseness of these hearts! Here we live and converse in a world of sensible objects, which, like a company of thieves, rob us of our Christ, and lay the dead child in his room. Woe is me, that it should be so with me, who am so obliged to love him! Though he be in the highest glory in heaven, he does not forget us; he has graven us upon the palms of his heads; we are continually before him. He thinks on us, when we forget him. The whole honor and glory paid him in heaven by the angels, cannot divert his thoughts one moment from us; but every trifle that meets us in the way, is enough to divert our thoughts from him. Why do we not abhor and loathe ourselves for this? What! Is it a pain, a burden, to carry Christ in our thoughts about the world? As much a burden, if your heart be spiritual, as a bird is burdened by carrying his own wings. Will such thoughts intrude unseasonably, and thrust greater things than Christ out of our minds? For shame, Christian, for shame, let not your heart play the wanton, and gad from Christ after every vanity. In heaven nothing else takes up the thoughts of saints to eternity; and yet there is no tiring, no satiety. O learn to live nearer that heavenly life. Never leave praying and striving, until you canned say as it is, Psalms 63:5. "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise you with joyful lips; while I remember you on my bed, and meditate on you in the night watches."

INFERENCE. 2. Hence also we infer, that sacrament-seasons are heart melting seasons; because therein the most affecting and heart-melting recognitions and representations of Christ are made. As the gospel offers him to the ear, in the most sweet, affecting sounds of grace; so the sacrament to the eye, in the most pleasing visions that are on this side heaven.

There, hearts that will not yield a tear under other ordinances, can pour out floods: Zechariah 12:10. "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and mourn." Yet I dare not affirm, that everyone whose heart is broken by the believing sight of Christ there, can evidence that it is so by a dropping eye. No, we may say of tears, as it is said of love, Song of Solomon 8:7. If some Christians would give all the treasures of their houses for them, they cannot be purchased: yet they are truly humbled for sin, and seriously affected with the grace of Christ. For the support of such, I would distinguish, and have them to do so also, between what is essential to spiritual sorrow, and what is contingent. Deep displeasure with yourself for sin, hearty resolutions and desires of the complete mortification of it, this is essential to all spiritual sorrow; but tears are accidental, and in some constitutions rarely found. If you have the former, trouble not yourself for want of the latter, though it is a mercy when they kindly and undissembledly flow from a heart truly broken. And surely, to see who it is that your sins have pierced, how great, how glorious, how wonderful a Person that was, that was so humbled, abased, and brought to the dust, for such a wretched thing as you are, cannot but tenderly affect the considering soul. If it was for a lamentation in the captivity, "that princes were hanged up by the hands, and the faces of the elders

not reverenced," Lamentations 5:12. And if at the death of Abner, David could lament, and say, "A prince, and a great man is fallen in Israel this day," 2 Samuel 3:38. If he could pathetically lament the death of Saul and Jonathan, saying, "Daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet; the beauty of Israel is slain upon the high places!" Ah! how much more should it affect us, to see the beauty of heaven fallen, the Prince of life hang dead upon a tree! O let the place where you assemble to see this sight of your crucified Jesus, be a Bochim, a place of lamentation.

INFERENCE. 3. Moreover hence it is evident, that the believing and affectionate remembrance of Christ, is of singular advantage at all times to the people of God. For it is the immediate end of one of the greatest ordinances that ever Christ appointed to the church. To have frequent recognitions of Christ, will appear to be singularly efficacious and useful to believers, if you consider,

1. If at any time the heart be dead and hard, this is the likeliest means in the world to dissolve, melt, and quicken it. Look hither hard heart; hard indeed if this hammer will not break it. Behold the blood of Jesus.

2. Are you easily overcome by temptations to sin? This is the most powerful restraint in the world from sin: Romans 6:2 "How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" We are crucified with Christ, what have we to do with sin? Have such a thought as this, when your heart is yielding to temptation. How can I do this, and crucify the Son of God afresh! Has he not suffered enough already on earth; shall I yet make him groan as it were for me in heaven! Look, as David poured the water brought from the well of Bethlehem, on the ground, though he was athirst, for he said, it is the blood of the men? that is they eminently hazarded their lives to fetch it; much more should a Christian pour out upon the ground, yes, despise and trample under foot, the greatest profit or pleasure of sin; saying, Nay, I will have nothing to do with it, I will on no terms touch it, for it is the blood of Christ: it cost blood, infinite, precious blood to expiate it. If there were a knife in your house that had been thrust to the heart of your father, you would not take pleasure to see that knife, much less to use it.

3. Are you afraid your sins are not pardoned, but still stand upon account before the Lord? What more relieving, what more satisfying, than to see the cup of the New Testament in the blood of Christ, which is "shed for many for the remission of sins?" Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is Christ that died."

4. Are you staggered at your sufferings, and hard things you must endure for Christ in this world? Does the flesh shrink back from these things, and cry, spare yourself? What is there in the world more likely to steel and fortify your spirit with resolution and courage, than such a sight as this? Did Christ face the wrath of men, and the wrath of God too? Did he stand as a pillar of brass, with unbroken patience, and steadfast resolution, under such troubles as never met in the like height upon any mere creature, until death beat the last breath out of his nostrils? And shall I shrink for a trifle? Ah, he did not serve me so! I will arm myself with the like mind, 1 Peter 2:2.

5. Is your faith staggered at the promises? Can’t you not rest upon a promise? Here is what will help you against hope to believe in hope, giving glory to God. For this is God’s seal added to his covenant, which ratifies and binds fast all that God has spoken.

6. Do you idle away precious time vainly, and live unusefully to Christ in your generation? What more apt both to convince and cure you, than such remembrance of Christ as this? O when you

considerest you are not your own, your time, your talents are not your own, but Christ's; when you shall see you are bought with a price (a great price indeed) and so are strictly obliged to glorify God, with your soul and body, which are his, 2 Corinthians 5:14. This will powerfully awaken a dull, sluggish, and lazy spirit. In a word, what grace is there that this remembrance of Christ cannot quicken? What sin cannot it mortify? What duty cannot it animate? O it is of singular use in all cases to the people of God.

INFERENCE. 4. Lastly we infer; Though all other things do, yet Christ neither does, nor can grow stale. Here is an ordinance to preserve his remembrance fresh to the end of the world. The blood of Christ does never dry up. The beauty of this rose of Sharon is never lost or withered. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. As his body in the grave saw no corruption, so neither can his love, or any of his excellencies. When the saints shall have fed their eyes upon him in heaven, thousands and millions of years, he shall be as fresh, beautiful, and orient as at the beginning. Others beauties have their prime, and their fading time; but Christ abides eternally. Our delight in creatures is often most at first acquaintance; when we come nearer to them, and see more of them, the edge of our delight is abated: but the longer you know Christ, and the nearer you come to him, still the more do you see of his glory. Every farther prospect of Christ entertains the mind with a fresh delight. He is as it were a new Christ every day, and yet the same Christ still. Blessed be God for Jesus Christ!

S. The seventh and last Word with which

The seventh and last Word with which Christ breathed out his Soul

"And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into your hands I commend my spirit; and having said thus, he gave up his spirit." Luke 23:46

These are the last of the last words of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, with which he breathed out his soul. They were David's words before him, Psalms 31:5. and for substance, Stephen's after him, Acts 7:27. They are words full, both of faith and comfort; fit to be the last breathing of every gracious soul in this world. They are resolved into these five particulars:

First, The person depositing, or committing: The Lord Jesus Christ, who in this, as well as in other things, acted as a common person, as the head of the church. This must be remarked carefully, for therein lies no small part of a believer's consolation: When Christ commends his soul to God, he does as it were bind up all the souls of the elect in one bundle with it, and solemnly presents them all with his, to his Father's acceptance: To this purpose one aptly renders it.

"This commendation made by Christ, turns to the singular profit and advantage of our souls; inasmuch as Christ, by this very prayer, has delivered them into his Father's hand, as a precious treasure, whenever the time comes that they are to be loosed from the bodies which they now inhabit." Jesus Christ neither lived nor died for himself, but for believers; what he did in this very act, refers to them as well as to his own soul: You must look therefore upon Christ, in it is last and solemn act of his life, as gathering all the souls of the elect together, and making a solemn tender of them all, with his own soul to God.

Secondly, The depository, or person to whom he commits this precious treasure, and that was to his own Father: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Father is a sweet encouraging, assuring title: Well may a son commit any concernment, how dear soever, into the hands of a father, especially such a son into the hands of such a father. "By the hands of the Father into which he commits his soul, we are not to understand the naked or mere power, but the fatherly acceptance and protection of God."

Thirdly, The depositum, or thing committed into this hand, [my spirit] that is my soul, now instantly departing, upon the very point of separation from my body. The soul is the most precious of all treasures, it is called the darling, Psalms 35:17. or, "the only ones," that is that which is most excellent, and therefore most dear and precious: A whole world is but a trifle, if weighed, for the price of one soul, Matthew 16:26. This inestimable treasure he now commits into his Father's hands.

Fourthly, The Act by which he puts it into that faithful hand of the Father, "parathesomai", I commend. We rightly render it in the present tense, though the word be future: For, with these words he breathed out his soul. This word is of the same import with "sunhiemi" I present, or tender it into your hands; It was in Christ an act of Faith, a most special and excellent act intended

as a precedent for all his people.

Fifthly, and Lastly, The last thing observable is, the manner in which he uttered these words, and that was with a loud voice; he spoke it that all might hear it, and that his enemies, who judged him now destitute and forsaken of God, might be convinced that he was not so, but that he was dear to his Father still, and could put his soul confidently into his hands: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Talking then these words, not only as spoken by Christ, the head of all believers, and so commending their souls to God with his own, but also as a pattern, teaching them what they ought to do themselves, when they come to die. We observe,

DOCTRINE. That dying believers are both warranted, and encouraged, by Christ's example, believingly to commend their precious souls into the hands of God.

Thus the apostle directs the faith of Christians, to commit their souls to God's tuition and fatherly protection, when they are either going into prisons, or to the stake for Christ, 1 Peter 4:9. "Let them (says he) that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator." This proposition we will consider in these two main branches of it, namely, what is implied and carried in the soul's commending itself to God by faith, when the time of separation is come. And what warrant or encouragement gracious souls have for so doing.

First, What is implied in this act of a believer, his commending or committing, his soul into the hands of God at death? And if it be thoroughly weighed, you will find these six things, at least, carried in it.

First, It implies this evidently in it, That the soul outlives the body, and fails not, as to its being, when its body fails; it feels the house in which it dwelt, dropping into ruins, and looks out for a new habitation with God. "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." The soul understands itself a more noble being than that corruptible body, to which it was united, and is now to leave in the dust: it understands its relation to the Father of spirits, and from him it expects protection and provision in its unbodied state; and therefore into his hands it puts itself. If it vanished, or breathed into air, and did not survive the body, if it were annihilated at death, it were but a mocking of God to say, when we die, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."

Secondly, It implies the soul's true rest to be in God. See which way its motions and tendencies are, not only in life, but in death also. It bends to its God: It reposes, it even puts itself upon its God and Father; "Father, into your hands." God is the center of all gracious spirits. While they tabernacle here, they have no rest but in the bosom of their God: when they go hence, their expectation and earnest desires are to be with him. It had been working after God by gracious desires before, it had cast many a longing look heaven-ward before; but when the gracious soul comes near its God (as it does in a dying hour) "then it even throws itself into his arms;" as a river, that after many turnings and windings, at last is arrived to the ocean; it pours itself with a central force into the bosom of the ocean, and there finishes its weary course. "Nothing but God can please it in this world, and nothing but God can give it content when it goes hence." It is not the amenity of the place, where the gracious soul is going, but the bosom of the blessed God, who dwells there, that it so vehemently pants after; not the Father's house, but the Father's arms and bosom: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit: Whom have I in heaven but you? And on earth there is none that I desire in comparison of you, Psalms 73:24-25.

Thirdly, It also implies the great value believers have for their souls. That is the precious treasure; and their main solicitude and chief care, is to see it secured in a safe hand: "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit:" They are words speaking the believer's care for his soul, that it may be safe, whatever becomes of the vile body. A believer when he comes near to death, spends but few thoughts about his body, where it shall be laid, or how it shall be disposed of: He trusts that in the hands of friends; but as his great care all along was for his soul, so he expresses it in these his very last breathing, in which he commends it into the hands of God: It is not, Lord Jesus receive my body, take care of my dust, but receive my Spirit: Lord, secure the jewel, when the casket is broken.

Fourthly, These words imply the deep sense that dying believers have of the great change that is coming upon them by death; when all visible and sensible things are shrinking away from them, and failing. They feel the world and the best comforts of it failing: Every creature and creature comfort failing: For, at death we are said to fail, Luke 16:9. Hereupon the soul clasps the closer about its God, cleaves more close than ever to him: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Not that a mere necessity puts the soul upon God; or that it cleaves to God, because it has then nothing else to take hold on: No, it chose God for its portion, when it was in the midst of all its outward enjoyments, and had as good security as other men have for the long enjoyment of them: but my meaning is, that although gracious souls have chosen God for their portion, and do truly prefer him to the best of their comforts; yet in this compounded state, it lives not wholly upon its God, but partly by faith, and partly by sense; partly upon things seen, and partly upon things not seen. The creatures had some interest in their hearts; alas, too much: but now all these are vanishing, and it sees they are so. I shall see man no more, with the inhabitants of the world, (said sick Hezekiah;) hereupon it turns itself from them all, and casts itself upon God for all its subsistence, expecting now to live upon its God entirely, as the blessed angels do; and so, in faith, they throw themselves into his arms: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."

Fifthly, It implies the atonement of God, and his full reconciliation to believers, by the blood of the great Sacrifice; else they dared never commit their souls into his hands: "For it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," Hebrews 12:29. that is of an absolute God, a God unatoned by the offering up of Christ. The soul dare no more cast itself into the hand of God, without such an atoning sacrifice, than it dares approach to a consuming fire; And, indeed, the reconciliation of God by Jesus Christ, as it is the ground of all our acceptance with God; for we are made accepted in the beloved: So it is plainly carried in the order or manner of the reconciled soul, committing itself to him: For, it first casts itself into the hands of Christ, then into the hands of God by him. So Stephen, when dying, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit:" And by that hand it would be put into his Father's hands.

Sixthly, and lastly, It implies both the efficacy and excellency of faith, in supporting and relieving the soul at a time when nothing else is able to do it; Faith is its conductor, when it is at the greatest loss and distress that ever it met with: it secures the soul when it is turned out of the body; when heart and flesh fail, this leads it to the rock that fails not: it sticks by that soul until it sees it safe through all the territories of Satan, and safe landed upon the shore of glory; and then is swallowed up in vision: many a favor it has shown the soul while it dwelt in its body. The great service it did for the soul was in the time of its espousals to Christ. This is the marriage knot, the blessed bond of union between the soul and Christ. Many a relieving sight, secret and sweet support it has

received from its faith since that; but, surely, its first and last works are its most glorious works. By faith it first ventured itself upon Christ; threw itself upon him in the deepest sense of its vileness and utter unworthiness, when sense, reason, and multitudes of temptations stood by, contradicting and discouraging the soul: by faith it now casts itself into his arms, when it is launching out into vast eternity.

They are both noble acts of faith; but the first no doubt, is the greatest and most difficult: for, when once the soul is interested in Christ, it is no such difficulty to commit itself into his hands, as when it has no interest at all in him. It is easier for a child to cast himself in the arms of his own father, in distress, than for one that has been both a stranger and an enemy to Christ, to cast itself upon him, that he may be a father and a friend to it. And this brings us upon the second enquiry I promised to satisfy, namely,

Secondly, What warrant or encouragement have gracious souls to commit themselves at death into the hands of God? I answer, Much every way; all things encourage and warrant its so doing: For,

First, This God, to whom the believer commits himself at death, is its Creator: the Father of its being; he created and inspired it, and so it has the relation of a creature to a Creator: yes, of a creature now in distress, to a faithful Creator, 1 Peter 4:19. "Let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing; as to a [faithful Creator]." It is very true, this single relation, in itself, gives little ground of encouragement, unless the creature had conserved that integrity in which it was originally created. And they that have no more to plead with God for acceptance, by their relation to him as creatures to a Creator, will doubtless find that word made good to their little comfort, Isaiah 27:11. "It is a people of no understanding, therefore he that made them, will not have mercy on them; and he that formed them, will show them no favor." But now, grace brings that relation into repute: holiness ingratiates us again, and revives the remembrance of this relation; so that believers only can plead this.

Secondly, As the gracious soul is his creature, so it is his redeemed creature; one that he has bought, and that with a great price, even with the precious blood of Jesus Christ, 1 Peter 1:18. This greatly encourages the departing soul, to commit itself into the hands of God; so you find, Psalms 31:5. "Into your hands do I commend my spirit, you have redeemed it, O Lord God of truth." Surely this is mighty encouragement, to put itself upon God in a dying hour. Lord, I am not only your creature, but your redeemed creature; one that you have bought with a great price: O, I have cost you dear! for my sake Christ came from your bosom, and is it imaginable, that after that you have in such a costly way, even by the expense of the precious blood of Christ, redeemed me, you should at last exclude me? Shall the ends both of creation and redemption of this soul be lost together? will God form such an excellent creature as my soul is, in which are so many wonders of the wisdom and power of its Creator? will he be content, when sin has marred the frame, and defaced the glory of it, to recover it to him self again, by the death of his own dear Son, and after all this, cast it away, as if there were nothing in all this? "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit:" I know you will have a respect to the work of your hands; especially to a redeemed creature, upon which you best expended so great sums of love, which you have bought at so dear a rate.

Thirdly, Nay, that is not all; the gracious soul may confidently and securely commit itself into the hands of God, when it parts with its body at death; not only because it is his creature, his redeemed creature, but because it is his renewed creature also: and this lays a firm ground for the believer's confidence and acceptance; not that it is the proper cause, or reason of its acceptance, but as it is the soul's best evidence, that it is accepted with God, and shall not be refused by him, when it comes to him at death: for, in such a soul, there is a double workmanship of God, both glorious pieces, though the last exceeds in glory. A natural workmanship, in the excellent frame of that noble creature, the soul; and a gracious workmanship upon that again; a new creation upon the old; glory upon glory. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus," Ephesians 2:10. The Holy Spirit came down from heaven on purpose to create this new workmanship; to frame this new creature; and indeed, it is the top and glory of all God's works of wonders in this world; and must needs give the believer encouragement to commit itself to God, whether at such a time, it shall reflect either upon the end of the work, or upon the end of the workman; both which meet in the salvation of the soul so wrought upon, the end of the neck is our glory. By this "we are made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," Colossians 1:12. It is also the design and end of him that wrought it, 2 Corinthians 5:5. "Now he that has wrought us for the self same thing, is God." Had he not designed your soul for glory, the Spirit should never have come upon such a sanctifying design as this: surely it shall not fail of a reception into glory, when it is cast out of this tabernacle: such a work was not wrought in vain, neither can it ever perish: when once sanctification comes upon a soul, it so roots itself in the soul, that where the soul goes, it goes; gifts indeed, they die: all natural excellency and beauty, that goes away at death, Job 4:1-21 ult. but grace ascends with the soul; it is a sanctified, when a separate sent. And can God shut the door of glory upon such a soul, that by trace is made meet for the inheritance? O, it cannot be!

Fourthly, As the gracious soul is a renewed soul, so it is also a sealed soul; God has sealed it in this world for that glory, into which it is now to enter at death. All gracious souls are sealed objectively, that is they have those works of grace wrought on their souls which do, (as but now was said,) ascertain and evidence their title to glory; and in many are sealed formally; that is, the Spirit helps them clearly to discern their interest in Christ, and all the promises. This both secures heaven to the soul in itself, and becomes also an earnest or pledge of that glory in the unspeakable joys and comforts that it produces in the soul: So you find, 2 Corinthians 1:22. "Who has sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." God's sealing, us gives his security; his objective seal makes it sure in itself, its formal seal makes it so to us. but, if over and above all this, he will please, as a fruit of that his sealing, to give us those heavenly inexpressible joys and comforts which are the fruit of his formal sealing-work, to be an earnest, a foretaste and hansel of that glory, how can the soul that has found all this, fear in the least at a rejection by its God, when at death it comes to him? Surely, if God have sealed, he will not refuse you; if he have given his earnest, he will not shut you out; God's earnest is not given in jest.

Fifthly, Moreover, every gracious soul may confidently cast itself into the arms of its God, when it goes hence, with "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." Forasmuch as every gracious soul; is a soul in covenant with God; and God stands obliged by his covenant and promise to such, not to cast them out, when they come unto him. As soon as ever you became his, by regeneration, that promise became your, Hebrews 13:5. "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." And will he leave the soul at a time when it never had more need of a God to stand by it, than it has then?

Every gracious soul is entitled to that promise, John 14:3. "I will come again, and receive you to myself." And will he fail to make it good when the time of the promise is come, as at death it is? It cannot be. multitudes of promises; the whole covenant of promises, give security to the soul against the fears of rejections, or neglect by God. And the soul's dependence upon God and his promise; its very casting itself upon him, from the encouragement the word gives it, add to the engagement upon God. When he sees a poor soul that he has made, redeemed, sanctified sealed, and by solemn promise engaged himself to receive, coming to him at death, firmly depending upon his faithfulness that has promised, saying, as David, 2 Samuel 23:5, Though Lord, there be many defects in me, yet you have made a covenant with me, well ordered in all things, and sure; and this is all my salvation, and all my hope." Lord, I am resolved to send out my soul in an act of faith; I will venture it upon the credit of your promise. How can God refuse such a soul? How can he put it off, when it so puts itself upon him?

Sixthly, But this is not all; the gracious soul sustains many intimate and dear relations to that God into whose hands it commends itself at death. It is his spouse, and the consideration of such a day of espousals, may well encourage it to cast itself into the bosom of Christ, its head and husband: it is a member of his body, flesh and bones, Ephesians 5:30. It is his child, and he its everlasting Father, Isaiah 9:6. It is his friend. "Henceforth (says Christ,) I call you not servants, but friends," John 15:15. What confidence may these, and all other the dear relations Christ owns to the renewed soul, beget, in such an hour as this is! that husband can throw off the dear wife of his bosom; Who in distresses casts herself into his arms! What father can shut the door upon a dear child that comes to him for refuge, saying, Father, into your hands I commit myself!

Seventhly, and lastly, The unchangeableness of God's love to his people, gives confidence they shall in no wise be cast out. They know Christ was the same to them at last as he was at first: the same in the pangs of death, as he was in the comforts of life: having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to the end, John 13:1. He does not love as the world loves, only in prosperity; but they are as dear to him when their beauty and strength are gone, as when they were in the greatest flourishing. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's, Romans 14:8. Take in all these things, and weigh them both apart, and together, and see whether they amount not to a full evidence of the truth of this point, that dying believers are both warranted and encouraged to commend their souls into the lands of God; whether they have not everyone of them cause to say as the apostle did, 2 Timothy 1:12 "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." The improvements of all this you have in the following practical deductions.

Deduction I. Are dying believers only warranted and encouraged thus to commend their souls into the hands of God? What a sad strait then must all dying unbelievers be in about their souls? Such souls will fall into the hands of God, but that is their misery, not their privilege: they are not put by faith into the hands of mercy, but fall by sin into the hands of justice: not God, but the devil is their father, John 8:4. Where should the child go but to its own father? They have not one of those aforementioned encouragements to cast themselves into the hands of God, except the naked relation they have to God as their Creator, and that is as good as none, without the new creation. If they have nothing but this to plead for their salvation, the devil has as much to plead as they. It is the new creature that brings the first creation into repute again with God.

O dismal! O deplorable case! A poor soul is turning out of house and home, and knows not where to go; it departs, and immediately falls into the hands of justice. The devil stands by, waiting for such a soul (as a dog for a crust) whom God will throw to him. Little! ah little, do the friends of such a one think, while they are honoring his dust by a splendid and honorable funeral, what a case that poor soul is in that lately dwelt there; and what fearful straits and extremities it is now exposed to! He may cry, indeed, Lord! Lord! open to me, as in Matthew 7:22. But to how little purpose are these vain cries! Will God hear him when he cries? Job 27:9. It is a lamentable case!

Deduction 2. Will God graciously accept, and faithfully keep what the saints commit to him at death? How careful then should they be to keep what God commits to them, to be kept for him while they live? You have a great trust to commit to God when you die, and God has a great trust to commit to you while you live: you expect that he should faithfully keep what then you shall commit to his keeping, and he expects you should faithfully keep what he now commits to your keeping. O keep what God commits to you, as you expect he should keep your souls when you commit them unto him. If you keep his truths, he will keep your souls. "Because you have kept the word of my patience, I also will keep you, etc." Revelation 3:10. Be faithful to your God, and you shall find him faithful to you. None can pluck you out of his hand; see that nothing wrest his truths out of your hands. "If we deny him, he also will deny us," 2 Timothy 2:12. Take heed lest those estates you have gotten as a blessing, attending the gospel, prove a temptation to you to betray the gospel. "Religion (says one) brings forth riches, but the daughter devours the mother." How can you expect acceptance with God, who have betrayed his truth, and dealt perfidiously with him.

Deduction 3. If believers may safely commit their souls into the hands of God, how confidently may they commit all lesser interests and lower concernments into the same hand? Shall we trust him with our souls, and not with our lives, liberties or comforts. Can we commit the treasure to him and not a trifle? Whatever you enjoy in this world, is but a trifle to your souls. Sure, if you can trust him for eternal life for your souls, you may much more trust him for the daily bread for your bodies. I know it is objected, that God has made over temporal things to his people upon conditional promises, and an absolute faith can never be grounded upon conditional promises. But what means this objection? Let your faith be but suitable to these conditional promises, that is believe they shall be made good to you so far as God sees them good for you: do you but labor to come up to those conditions required in you, and thereby God will have more glory, and you more comfort: If your prayers for these things proceed from pure ends, the glory of God, not the satisfaction and gratification of your lusts: If your desires after them be moderate as to the measure, content with that proportion the Infinite Wisdom sees fittest for you: If you take God’s way to obtain them, and dare not strain conscience, or commit a sin, though you should perish for want: If you can patiently wait God’s time for enlargements from your straits, and not make any sinful haste, you shall be surely supplied; and he that remembers your souls will not forget your bodies. But we live by sense, and not by faith; present things strike our affections more powerfully than the invisible things that are to come. The Lord humble his people for this.

Deduction. 4. Is this the privilege of believers, that they can commit their souls to God in a dying hour? Then how precious, how useful a grace is faith to the people of God, both living and dying?

All the graces have done excellently, but faith excels then all: faith is the Phoenix grace, the queen of graces: deservedly it is stiled precious faith, 2 Peter 1:1. The benefits and privileges of it in this

life are unspeakable: and as there is no comfortable living, so no comfortable dying without it.

First, While we live and converse here in the world, all our comfort and safety is from it; for all our union with Christ, the fountain of mercies and blessings, is by faith, Ephesians 3:17. "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." No faith, no Christ: all our communion with Christ is by it: he that comes to God must believe, Hebrews 11:6. The soul's life is enrapt up in this communion with God, and that communion in faith. All communications from Christ depend upon faith; for look, as all communion is founded in union, so from our union and communion are all our communications. All communications of quickening, comforts, joy, strength, and whatever serves to the well-being of the life of grace, are all through that faith which first knits us to Christ, and still maintains our communion with Christ; believing we rejoice, 1 Peter 1:8. The inner man is renewed, while we look to the things that are not seen, 2 Corinthians 4:18.

Secondly, And as our life, and all the supports and comforts of it here, are dependent on faith, so you see our death, as to the safety and comfort of our souls then, depends upon our faith: he that has no faiths cannot commit his soul to God, but rather shrinks from God. Faith can do many sweet offices for your souls upon a death-bed, when the light of this world is gone, and all joy ceases on earth: it can give us sights of things invisible in the other world, and those sights will breathe life into your souls, amidst the very pangs of death.

Reader, do but think what a comfortable foresight of God, and the joys of salvation, will be to you, when your eye-strings are breaking; faith can not only see that beyond the grave, which will comfort, but it can cleave to its God, and clasp Christ in a promise, when it feels the ground of all sensible comforts trembling, and sinking under your feet: "My heart and my flesh fails, but God is the strength (or rock) of my heart, and my portion forever." Reeds fail, but the rock is firm footing; yes, and when the soul can no longer tabernacle here, it can carry the soul to God, cast it upon him, with "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." O precious faith!

Deduction 5. Do the souls of dying believers commend themselves into the hands of God? Then let not the surviving relations of such sorrow as men that have no hope. A husband, a wife, a child, is rent by death out of your arms: well, but consider into what arms, into what bosom they are commended. Is it not better for them to be in the bosom of God, than in yours? Could they be spared so long from heaven, as to come back again to you but an hour, how would they he displeased to see your tears, and hear your cries and sighs for them: They would say to you as Christ said to the daughters of Jerusalem, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children." I am in a safe land, I am out of the reach of all storms and troubles. O did you but know what their state is, who are with God, you would be more than satisfied about them.

Deduction 6. Lastly, I will close all with a word of counsel. Is this the privilege of dying believers, to commend their souls into the hands of God.? Then as ever you hope for comfort, or peace in your last hour, see that your souls be such, as may be then fit to be commended into the hands of an holy and just God: See that they be holy souls; God will never accept them if they be not holy, "Without holiness no man shall see God," Hebrews 12:24. "He that has this hope, (namely, to see God) purifieth himself even as he is pure," 1 John 3:3. Endeavors after holiness are inseparably connected with all rational expectations of blessedness. Will you put an unclean, filthy, defiled thing into the pure hand of the most holy God? O see they be holy, and already accepted in the beloved, or use to them when they take their leave of those tabernacles they now dwell in. The

gracious soul may confidently say then, Lord Jesus! into your hand I commend my spirit. O let all that can say so then, now say, Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ!

S. The signal Providence, which directed

Of the signal Providence, which directed and

ordered the Title affixed to the cross of Christ

"And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS." Luke 23:38

Before I pass on to the Manner of Christ's death, I shall consider the title affixed to the cross; in which very much of the wisdom of Providence was discovered. It was the manner of the Romans, that the equity of their proceedings might the more clearly appear to the people, when they crucified any man, to publish the cause of his death, in a table written in capital letters, and placed over the head of the crucified. And that there might be at least, a show and face of justice in Christ's death, he also shall have his title or superscription. The worst and most unrighteous actions labor to cover and shroud themselves under pretension of equity. Sin is so shameful a thing, that it cares not to own its name. Christ shall have a table written for him also. This writing one evangelist calls the Accusation, "aitia", Matthew 27:37. Another calls it the Title, "titlos", John 19:19. Another the Inscription or Superscription, "epigrafe", so the text. And another the Superscription of his Accusations, "epigrafe tes aitias", Mark 15:26. In short, it was a fair legible writing, intended to express the fact or crime, for which the person died. This was their usual manner, though sometimes we find it was published by the voice of the common crier. As in the case of Attalus the martyr, who was led about the amphitheater, one proclaiming before him, this is Attalus the Christian. But it was customary and usual to express the crime in a written table, as the text expresses it. Wherein these three things offer themselves to your consideration.

First, The character or description of Christ, contained in that writing. And he is described by his kingly dignity: This is the king of the Jews. The very office, which but a little before, they had reproached and derided, bowing the knee to him in mockery, saying, Hail King of the Jews: the Providence of God so orders it, that therein he shall be vindicated and honored. This is the King of the Jews: Or, as the other evangelists complete it, This is Jesus of Nareth the King of the Jews.

Secondly, The person that drew his character or title. It was Pilate; he that but now condemned him: he that was his judge, shall be his herald, to proclaim his glory. For the title is honorable. Surely, this was not from himself, for he was Christ's enemy; but rather than Christ should want a tongue to clear him, the tongue of an enemy shall do it.

Thirdly, The time when this honor was done him: It was when he was at the lowest ebb of his glory; when shame and reproach were heaped on him by all hands. When all the disciples had forsaken him, and were fled. Not one left to proclaim his innocence, or speak a word in his vindication. Then does the providence of God as strangely, as powerfully, over-rule the heart and pen of Pilate, to draw this title for him, and affix it to his cross. Surely we must look higher than Pilate in this thing, and see how Providence serves itself by the hands of Christ's adversities. Pilate writes in honor of Christ, and stiffly defends it too. Hence our observation is,

DOCTRINE. 1. That the dignity of Christ was openly proclaimed, and defended by an enemy; and that, in the time of his greatest reproaches and sufferings. To open this mystery of providence to you, that you may not stand idly gazing upon Christ's title, as many then did; we must, First, Consider the nature and quality of this title. Secondly, What hand the Providence of God had in this matter. Thirdly, and then draw forth the proper uses and improvements of it.

First, To open the nature and quality of Christ's title or inscription; let it be thoroughly considered, and we shall find,

First, That it was an extraordinary title, varying from all examples of that kind; and directly crossing the main design and end of their own custom. For, as I hinted before, the end of it was to clear the equity of their proceedings, and show the people how justly they suffered those punishments inflicted on them for such crimes. But lo, here is a title expressing no crime at all, and so vindicating Christ's innocence t. This some of them perceived, and moved Pilate to change It, not, This is, but, This is he that said, I am the King of the Jews. In that, as they conceived, lay his crime. O how strange and wonderful a thing was this! But what shall we say! it was a day of wonders and extraordinary things. As there was never such a person crucified before, so there was never such a title affixed to the cross before.

Secondly, As it was an extraordinary, so it was a public title, both written and published with the greatest advantage of spreading itself far and near, among all people, that could be, "for it was written in three languages, and to those most known in the world at that time." The Greek tongue was then known in most parts of the world. The Hebrew was the Jews native language. And the Latin the language of the Romans. So that it being written both in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, it was easy to be understood both by Jews and Gentiles. And indeed, unto this the providence of God had a special eye, to make it notorious and evident to all the world; for even so all things designed for public view, and knowledge were written. Joseph us tells us of certain pillars, on which was engraved in letters of Greek, and Latin, "It is a wickedness for strangers to enter into the holy place". So the soldiers of Gordian, the third emperor, when he was slain upon the borders of Persia, raised a monument for him, and engraved his memorial upon it, in Greek, Latin, Persia, Judaic, and Egyptian letters, that all people might read the same. And as it was written in three learned languages, so it was exposed to view in a public place; and at that time, when multitudes of strangers, as well as Jews, were at Jerusalem; it was at the time of the passover; so that all things concurred to spread and divulge the innocence of Christ, vindicated in this title.

Thirdly, As it was a public, so it was an honorable title. Such was the nature of it, says Bucer; that in the midst of death, Christ began to triumph by it. And by reason thereof, the cross began to change its own nature, and instead of a rack, or engine of torture, it became a throne of majesty. Yes, it might be called now, as the church itself is, The pillar and ground of truth; for it held out much of the gospel, much of the glory of Christ; as that pillar does, to which a royal proclamation is affixed.

Fourthly, It was a vindicating title: it cleared up the honor, dignity, and innocence of Christ, against all the false imputations, calumnies, and blasphemies, which acre cast upon him before, by the wicked tongues, both of Jews and Gentiles.

They had called him a deceiver, an usurper, a blasphemer; they rent their clothes, in token of their detestation of his blasphemy; because he made himself the Son of God, and King of Israel. But now in this, they acknowledged him to be both Lord and Savior. Not a mock king, as they had made him before. So that herein the honor of Christ was fully vindicated.

Fifthly, Moreover it was a predicting and presaging title. Evidently foreshowing the propagation of Christ's kingdom, and the spreading of his name and glory among all kindreds, nations, tongues, and languages. As Christ has right to enter into all the kingdoms of the earth, by his gospel, and set up his throne in every nation: so it was presaged by this title that he should do so. And that both Hebrews, Greeks, and Latins should be called to the knowledge of him. Nor is it a wonder, that this should be predicted by wicked Pilate, when Caiaphas himself, a man every way as wicked as he, had prophesied to the same purpose, John 11:51-52. For being High-Priest that year, he prophesied, That Jesus should die for that nation, and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one, the children of God that were scattered abroad. Yes, many have prophesied in Christ's name, who, for all that, shall never be owned by him, Matth. 7:22.

Sixthly, And lastly, It was an immutable title. The Jews endeavored, but could not persuade Pilate to alter it. To all their importunities he returns this resolute answer, "What I have written, I have written;" as if he should say, Urge me no more, I have written his title, I cannot, I will not, alter a letter, a point thereof. "Surely the constancy of Pi]ate at this time can be attributed to nothing but divine special Providence." Most wonderful! that he, who before was as inconstant as a reed shaken by the wind, is now as fixed as a pillar of brass. And yet more wonderful], that he should write down that very particular in the title of Christ, This is the King of the Jews, which was the very thing that so scared him but a little before, and was the very consideration that moved him to give sentence. What was now become of the fear of Caesar? that Pilate dares to be Christ's herald, and publicly to proclaim him, a King of the Jews. This was the title.

Secondly, We shall next enquire what hand the Divine Providence had in this business. And indeed, the providence of God in this hour, acted gloriously, and wonderfully, these five ways.

First, In over-ruling the heart and hand of Pilate in the draught and stile of it, and that contrary to his own inclination. I doubt not but Pilate himself was ignorant of, and far enough from designing that which the wisdom of providence aimed at in this matter. He was a wicked man, and had no love to Christ. He had given sentence of death against him; yet this is he that proclaimed him to be Jesus, King of the Jews. It so over-ruled his pen, that he could not write what was in his own heart and intention, but the quite contrary; even a fair and public testimony of the kingly office of the Son of God, This is the King of the Jews.

Secondly, Herein the wisdom of Providence was gloriously displayed, in applying a present, proper, public remedy to the reproaches and blasphemies which Christ had then newly received in his name and honor. The superstitious Jews wound him, and Heathen Pilate prepares a plaister to heal him: they reproach, he vindicates; they throw the dirt, he washes it off. Oh the profound and inscrutable wisdom of Providence!

Thirdly, Moreover, Providence eminently appeared at this time in keeping so timorous a person, a man of so base a spirit, that would not stick at anything to please the people, from receding, or giving ground in the least to their importunities. Is Pilate become a man of such resolution and

constancy? whence is this? but from the God of the spirits of all flesh, who now flowed in so powerfully upon his spirit, that he could not choose but write; and when he had written, had no more power to alter what he had written, than he had to refuse to write it.

Fourthly, Herein also much of the wisdom of Providence appeared, in casting the ignominy of the death of Christ upon those very men who ought to bear it. Pilate was moved by divine instinct, at once to clear Christ, and accuse them. For it is as if he had said, you have moved me to crucify your king, I have crucified him, and now let the ignominy of his death rest upon your heads, who have extorted this from me. He is righteous, the crime is not his but yours.

Fifthly, And lastly, The providence of God wonderfully discovered itself (as before was noted) in fixing this title to the cross of Christ, when there was so great a confluence of all sorts of people to take notice of it. So that it could never have been more advantageously published, than it was at this time. So that we may say, How wonderful are the works of God! "His ways are in the sea, his paths in the great deeps; his footsteps are not known:" His providence has a prospect beyond the understandings of all creatures.

INFERENCE 1. Hence it follows, That the providence of our God can, and often does over-rule the counsels and actions of the worst of men to his own glory.

It can serve itself by them that oppose it, and bring about the glory and honor of Christ, by those very men, and means, which are designed to lay it in the dust. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise you", Psalms 76:10. The Jews thought when they crowned Christ with thorns, bowed the knee, and mocked him, led him to Golgotha and crucified him; that now they had utterly despoiled him of all his kingly dignities; and yet even there he is proclaimed a king. Thus the dispersion of the Jews, upon the death of Stephen, spread the gospel far and near, "For they went everywhere preaching the word," Acts 8:4. Thus Paul's bonds for the gospel fell out to the furtherance of the gospel, Php 1:12. O the depth of Divine Wisdom! to propagate and establish the interest of Jesus Christ, by those very means that seem to import its destruction: that extracts a medicine out of poison! How great a support should this be to the faith of God's people! When all things seem to run cross to their hopes and happiness! "Let Israel therefore hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption," Psalms 130:7. that is He is never at a loss for means to promote and serve his own ends.

INFERENCE. 2. Hence likewise it follows, That the greatest services performed to Christ accidentally and undesignedly, shall never be accepted nor rewarded of God. Pilate did Christ an eminent piece of service. He did that for Christ that not one of his own disciples at that time dared do; and yet this service was not accepted of God, because he did it not designedly for his glory, but from the mere overrulings of providence.

If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted, according to what a man has, says the apostle, 1 Corinthians 8:12. The eye of God is first and mainly upon the will; if that be sincere and right for God, small things will be accepted; and if not, the greatest shall be abhorred. So 1 Corinthians 9:17. If I do this thing (that is preach the gospel) willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, a dispensation is committed to me, q.d. If I upon pure principles of faith and love, from my heart, designing the glory of God, and delighting to promote it by my ministry, do cheerfully and willingly apply myself to the preaching of the gospel, I shall have acceptance and reward with God; but if

my work be a burden to me, and the service of God esteemed as a bondage, why then providence may use me for the dispensing of the gospel to others, but I myself shall lose both reward and comfort. As it does not excuse my sin, that God can bring glory to himself out of it; so neither does it justify an action that God has praise and honor accidentally by it. Paul knew that even the strife and envy in which some preached Christ, should turn to his salvation; and yet he was not at all beholden to them for promoting his salvation that way. So Pilate here promotes the honor of Jesus Christ to whom he had no love, and whose glory he did not at all design in this thing; and therefore has neither acceptance nor reward with God.

O therefore, whatever you do for Christ, do it heartily, designedly, for his glory: of a ready and willing mind; with pure and sincere aims at his glory; for this is that the Lord more respects, than the greatest services by accident.

INFERENCE. 3. Would not Pilate recede from what he had written on Christ's behalf? How shameful a thing is it for Christians to retract what they have said or done on Christ's behalf? When Pilate had asserted him to be king of the Jews, he maintained his assertion, and all the importunity of Christ's enemies shall not move him an hairs breadth from it. "that I have written, I have written," q. d. I have said it, and I will not revoke it. Did Pilate say, "What I have written, I have written:" and shall not we say, What we have believed, we have believed: and what we have professed, we have professed? that we have engaged to Christ, we have engaged. We will stand to what we have done for him: we will never recant our former ownings of and appearances for Christ. As God's election, so your profession must be irrevocable. O let him that is holy be holy still. That counsel given by a reverend divine in this case, is both safe and good. "Be sure, (says he) you stand on good ground, and then resolve to stand your ground against all the world. Follow God, and fear not men. Are you godly! repent not whatever your religion cost you. Let sinners repent, but let not saints repent. Let saints repent of their faults, but not of their faith: of their iniquities, but not of their righteousness. Repent not of your righteousness, lest you afterward repent of your repentance. - Repent not of your seal, or your forwardness, or activity in the holy ways of the Lord. - Wish not yourselves a step farther back, or a cubit lower in your stature, in the grace of God. wish not anything undone, concerning which God will say, Well done." In Galen's time it was a proverbial expression, when any one would show the impossibility of a thing; you may as soon turn a Christian from Christ as do it. A true heart choice of Christ is without reserves, and what is without reserves, will be without repentance. There is a stiffness and stoutness of spirit which is our sin. But this is our glory, in the matters of God, says Luther, I assume this title, Cedo nulli, "I yield to none:" If you be hot and cold, off and on; profess, and retract your profession. He that condemned Christ with his lips, will condemn you by his example. Resolute Pilate shall be your judge.

INFERENCE. 4. Did Pilate affix such an honorable, vindicating title to the cross? Then the cross of Christ is a dignified cross. Then the cross and sufferings of Christ are attended with glory and honor. Remember when your hearts begin to startle at the sufferings and reproaches of Christ, there is an honorable title upon the cross of Christ. And as it was upon his, so it will be upon your cross also, if you suffer for Christ. Moses saw it, which made him esteem the very reproaches of Christ, above all the treasures of Egypt, Hebrews 11:26. How did the martyrs glory in their sufferings for Christ! calling their chains of iron, chains of gold; and their manacles, bracelets.

I remember it is storied of Ludovicus Marsacus, a knight of France, that when he, with divers other Christians of an inferior rank and degree in the world, were condemned to die for religion. and the gaoler had bound them with chains, but did not bind him being a more honorable person than the rest: he was offended greatly by that omission, and said, "Why do not you honor me with a chain for Christ also, and create me a knight of that it lustrous order?"

"To you (says the apostle) it is given in the behalf of Christ not only to believe, but also to suffer for his sake," Php 1:29. There is a two-fold honor attending the cross of Christ; one in the very sufferings themselves; another, as the reward and fruit of them. To be called out to suffer for Christ, is a great honor. Yes, an honor peculiar to the saints. The damned suffer from Christ, the wicked suffer for their sins. The angels glorify Christ by their active but not their passive obedience. This is reserved as a special honor for saints. And as there is a great deal of honor in being called forth to suffer on Christ's account; so Christ will confer special honor upon his suffering saints, in the day of their reward, Matthew 10:32. "He that confesses me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven." O Sirs, one of these days the Lord will break out of heaven, with a shout, accompanied with myriads of angels, and ten thousands of his saints, those glittering courtiers of heaven. The heavens and earth shall flame and melt before him; and it shall be very tempestuous round about him; the graves shall open, the sea and earth shall yield up their dead. You shall see him ascending the awful throne of Judgement, and all flesh gathered before his face; even multitudes, multitudes that no man can number. And then to be brought forth by Christ before that great assembly of angels and saints: and there to have an honorable mention and remembrance made of your labors, and sufferings, your pains, patience and self-denial, of all your sufferings, and losses for Christ; and to hear from his mouth, Well done, good and faithful servant: O what honor is this! Yet this shall be done to the man that now chooses sufferings for Christ, rather than sin; That esteems his reproaches greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.

I tell you, It is an honor the angels have not. I make no doubt, but they would be glad, (had they bodies of flesh as we have), to lay their necks on the block for Christ. But this is the saints peculiar privilege. The apostles went away from the council rejoicing, that they were honored to be dishonored for Christ: Or, as we translate it, "counted worthy to suffer shame for him," Acts 5:41. Surely, if there be any stigmata laudis, "marks of honor," they are such as we receive for Christ's sake. If there be any shame that has glory in it, it is the reproach of Christ, and the shame you suffer for his name.

INFERENCE. 5. Did Pilate so stiffly assert and defend the honor of Christ? What doubt can then be made of the success of Christ's interest, and the prosperity of his cause: when the very enemies thereof are made to serve it?

Rather than Christ shall want honor, Pilate, the man that condemned him, shall do him honor. And as it fared with his person, just so with his interest also. How often have the people of God received mercies from the hands of their enemies? Revelation 12:16. "The earth helped the woman," that is wicked men did the church service. So that this may singularly relieve us against all our despondencies and fears of the miscarriage of the interest of Christ. That people can never be ruined, who thrive by their losses; conquer by being conquered; multiply by being diminished: Whose worst enemies are made to do that for them, which friends cannot or dare not do. See you

a Heathen Pilate proclaiming the honor and innocence of Christ; God will not want instruments to honor Christ by. If others cannot, his very enemies shall.

INFERENCE. 6. Did Pilate vindicate Christ in drawing up such a title to be affixed to his cross? then hence it follows, That God will, sooner or later, clear up the innocency and integrity of his people, who commit their cause to him. Christ's name was clouded with many reproaches; wounded through and through, by the blasphemous tongues of his malicious enemies. He committed himself to him that judges righteously, 1 Peter 2:23. and see how soon God vindicates him. That is sweet and seasonable counsel for us, when our names are clouded with unjust censures, Psalms 37:5-6. "Commit your way unto the Lord; trust also in Him, and he shall bring it to pass. He shall brings forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgement as the noon day." Joseph was accused of incontinence; David of treason; Daniel of disobedience; Elijah of troubling Israel; Jeremiah of revolting; Amos of preaching against the king; the Apostles of sedition, rebellion, and alteration of laws; Christ himself of gluttony, sorcery, blasphemy, sedition, but how did all these honorable names wade out of their reproaches, as the sun out of a cloud! God cleared all their honor for them even in this world. "Slanders (says one) are but as soap, which though it soils and daubs for the present, yet it helps to make the garment more clean and shining." "When hair is shaven, it comes the thicker, and with a new increase: so when the razor of censure has (says one) made your heads bare, and brought on the baldness of reproach, be not discouraged, God has a time to bring forth your righteousness as the light, by an apparent conviction, to dazzle and discourage your adversaries." The world was well changed, when Constantine kissed the hollow of Paphnutius' eye, which was before while put out for Christ. Scorn and reproach is but a little cloud, that is soon blown over. But suppose you should not be vindicated in this world, but die under a cloud upon your names; be sure God will clear it up, and that to purpose in that great day. Then shall the righteous, (even in this respect) shine forth as the sun, in the Kingdom of their Father. Then every detracting mouth shall be stopped, and no more cruel arrows of reproach shot at the white of your reputation. Be patient therefore, my brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. "The Lord comes with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgement upon all; and to convince all that are ungodly, of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed. And of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him," Jude 1:14-15. Then shall they retract their censures, and alter their opinions of the saints. If Christ will be our compurgator, we need not fear who are our accusers. If your names, for his sake, be cast out as evil, and spurned in the dirt; Christ will deliver it you again in that day whiter than the snow in Salmon.

INFERENCE. 7. Did Pilate give this title to cast the reproach of his death upon the Jews, and clear himself of it? How natural is it to men to transfer the fault of their own actions from themselves to others? For when he writes, This is the king of the Jews, he wholly charges them with the crime of crucifying their king: and it is as if he had said, Hereafter let the blame and fault of this action lie wholly upon your heads, who have brought the guilt of his blood upon yourselves and children.

I am clear, you have extorted it from me. O where shall we find a spirit so ingenuous, to take home to itself the shame of its own actions, and charge itself freely with its own guilt? Indeed it is the property of renewed, gracious hearts to remember, confess, and freely bewail their own evils, to the glory of God: and that is a gracious heart indeed, which in this case judges, that the glory, which by confession, goes to the name of his God, is not so much glory lost to his own name, but it

is the power of grace molding our proud natures into another thing, that must bring them to his!

S. The sixth excellent Saying of Christ

The sixth excellent Saying of Christ upon the Cross

"When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished. And he bowed his head, and gave up his spirit." John 19:30

It is finished. This is the sixth remarkable world of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, uttered as a triumphant shout when he saw the glorious issue of all his sufferings now at hand.

It is but one word in the original; but in that one word is contained the sum of all joy; the very spirit of all divine consolation. The ancient Greeks reckoned it their excellency to speak much in a little: "to give a sea of matter in a drop of language." What they only sought, is here found. I find some variety, (and indeed variety rather than contrariety), among expositors about the relation of these words. Some are of opinion, that the antecedent is the legal types and ceremonies; and so make this to be the meaning; It is finished: that is, all the types and prefigurations that shadowed forth the redemption of souls, by the blood of Christ, are now fulfilled and accomplished. And, doubtless, as this is itself a truth, so it is such a truth as may not be excluded, as foreign to the true scope and sense of this place. And though it be objected, that many types and prefigurations remained at this time unsatisfied, even all that looked to the actual death at Christ, his continuance in the state of the dead, and his resurrection; yet it is easily removed, "by considering that they are said to be finished, because they were just finishing, or ready to be finished: and it is as if Christ had said, I am now putting the last hand to it", a few moments of time more will complete and finish it. I have the sum now in my hand, which will fully satisfy and pay God the whole debt.

It is now but bow the head, and the work is done, and all the types therein fulfilled. So that this cannot exclude the fulfilling of the types in the death of Christ, from their just claim to the sense of this place. But yet, thought we cannot here exclude this sense, we cannot allow it to be the whole or principal sense: for lo! a far greater truth is contained herein, even the finishing or completing of the whole design and project of our redemption, and therein of all the types that prefigured it. Both these judicious Calvin conjoins, making the completing of redemption the principal; and the fulfilling of all the types the collateral and less principal sense of it.

Yet it must be observed, when we say, Christ finished redemption-work by his death, the meaning is not that his death alone did finish it; for his abode in the grave, resurrection, and ascension, had all of them their joint influence therein; but these being shortly to follow, all are included in the scope of this place. According then to the principal scope of the place, we observe,

DOCTRINE. That Jesus Christ has perfected and completely finished the great work of redemption, committed to him by God the Father. To this great truth the apostle gives a full testimony, Hebrews 10:14 "By one offering he has perfected forever them that are sanctified." And to the same purpose speaks Christ, John 17:4. "I have glorified you on earth! I have finished the work you gave me to do." Concerning this work, and the finishing thereof by Jesus Christ upon the cross, we shall enquire what this work was; how Christ finished it; and what evidence can be

produced for the finishing of it.

First, What was the work which Christ finished by his death?

It was the fulfilling the whole law of God in our room, and for our redemption, as a sponsor or surety for us. The law is a glorious thing; the holiness of God, that fiery attribute, is engraved or stamped upon every part of it; Deuteronomy 33:2. "From his right hand went a fiery law." The jealousy of the Lord watched over every point and tittle of it, for his dreadful and glorious name was upon it; it cursed everyone that continued noe in all things contained therein, Galatians 3:10. Two things, therefore, were necessarily required in him that should perfectly fulfill it, and both found in our Surety, and in him only, namely, a subjective and effective perfection.

First, A subjective perfection. He that wanted this, could never say, It is finished. Perfect working always follows a perfect Being. That he might therefore finish this great work of obedience, and therein the glorious design of our redemption; lo! in what shining and perfect holiness was he produced! Luke 1:35. "That holy thing that shall be born of you, shall be called the Son of God." And indeed, "such an High-priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," Hebrews 7:26. So that the law could have no exception against his person; nay, it was never so honored since its first promulgation, as it was by having such a perfect and excellent person as Christ to stand at its bar, and give it due reparation.

Secondly, There must be also an effective perfection, or a perfection of working and obeying, before it could be said, It is finished. This Christ had; for he continued in all things written in the law, to do them: He fulfilled all righteousness, as it behaved him to do, Matthew 3:15. He did all that was required to be done, and suffered all that was requisite to be suffered; he did and suffered all that was commanded or threatened, in such perfection of obedience, both active and passive, that the pure eye of divine justice could not find a flaw in it; and so finished the work his Father gave him to do; and this work finished by our Lord Jesus Christ was both a necessary, difficult, and precious work.

First, It was a necessary work which Christ finished upon the cross; necessary, upon a threefold account.

Opus necessarium ex parts Patris; It was necessary on the Father' account: I do not mean that God was under any necessity, from his nature, of redeeming us this or any other way; for our redemption is opus liberi concilii, an act of the free counsel of God; but when God had once decreed and determined to redeem and save poor sinners by Jesus Christ, then it became necessary that the counsel of God should be fulfilled; Acts 4:28. "To do whatever your hand and counsel had before determined to be done."

Secondly, Ex parte Filii. It was necessary with respect to Christ, upon the account of that precious compact that was between the Father and him about it. Therefore it is said by Christ himself, Luke 22:22. "Truly the Son of man goes as it was determined," that is as it was fore agreed and covenanted; under the necessity of fulfilling his engagement to the Father, he came into the world; and being come, he still minds his engagement, John 9:3. "I must work the works of him that sent me."

Thirdly, Ex parte nostri. Yes, and it was no less necessary upon our account that this work should be finished; for, had not Christ finished this work, sin had quickly finished all our lives, comforts, and hopes. Without the finishing this work, not a son or daughter of Adam could ever have seen the face of God. Therefore it is said, John 3:14-15. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so [must] the Son of man be lifted up; that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." On all these accounts the finishing of this work was necessary.

Secondly, As it was necessary this work should be finished, so the finishing of it was exceeding difficult: It cost many a cry, many groan, and many a tear, before Christ could say, It is finished. All the angels in heaven were not able, by their united strength, to lift that burden one inch from the ground, which Christ bare upon his shoulders, yes, and bare it away. But how heavy a burden this was, may in part appear by his agony in the garden, and the bitter outcries he made upon the cross, which in their proper places have been opened.

Thirdly, and lastly, It was a most precious work which Christ finished by his death; that work was dispatched and finished in few hours, which will be the matter of everlasting songs and triumphs to the angels and saints to all eternity. O it was a precious work! The mercies that now flow out of this fountain, namely, justification, sanctification, adoption, etc. are not to be valued; besides the endless happiness and glory of the world to come, which cannot enter into the heart of man to conceive. If the angels sang when the foundation-stone was laid, what shouts, what triumphs shall there be among the saints, when this voice is heard, It is finished!

Secondly, Let us next inform ourselves how, and in what manner Jesus Christ finished this glorious work; and if you search the scriptures upon that account, you will find that he finished it obediently, freely, diligently, and fully.

First, This blessed work was finished by Jesus Christ most obediently, Php 2:8. "He became obedient to death, even the death of the cross." "His obedience was the obedience of a servant, though not servile obedience." So it was foretold of him, before he touched this work, Isaiah 1:5. "The Lord God has opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back;" that is My Father told me the very worst of it; he told me what hard and heavy things I must undergo, if ever I finished this design of redemption; and I was not rebellious, that is I heartily submitted to, and accepted all those difficulties; for there is a Meiosis in the words; I was content to stoop to the hardest and most ignominious part of it, rather than not finish it.

Secondly, As Christ finished it obediently, so he finished it freely. Freedom and obedience in acting are not at all opposite to, or exclusive of each other. Moses' mother nursed him in obedience to the command of Pharaoh's daughter, yet most freely with respect to her own delight and contentment in that work. So it is said of Christ, and that by his own mouth, John 10:17-18. "Therefore does my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. This commandment have I received of my Father." He liked the work for the end's sake. When he had a prospect of it from eternity, then were his delights with the sons of men: then he rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, Proverbs 8:30-31. And when he came into the world about it, with what a full and free consent did his heart echo to the voice of his Father calling him to it; just as you shall sometimes hear an echo answering your voice two or three times over, Psalms 40:1-17. "Lo, I come: I delight to do your will: your law is within my heart." He finished the work

freely.

Thirdly, As he finished it freely, so he finished it diligently; he wrought hard from the morning of his life to the end of it: he was never idle wherever he was, but "went about doing good," Acts 10:38. Sometimes he was so intent upon his work, that "he forget to eat bread," John 4:30-31. As the life of some men is but a diversion from one trifle to another, from one pleasure to another; so the whole life of Christ was spent and taken up between one work and another: never was a life so filled up with labor: the very moments of his time were all employed for God to finish this work.

Fourthly, and lastly, He finished it completely and fully. All that was to be done by way of impetration and meritorious redemption is fully done; no hand can come after his; angels can add nothing to it. "That is perfected to which nothing is wanting, and to which nothing can be added." Such is the work Christ finished. Whatever the law demanded is perfectly paid; whatever a sinner needs, is perfectly obtained and purchased; nothing can be added to what Christ has done; he put the last hand to it, when he said, It is finished. Thus you see what the work was, and how Christ finished it.

Thirdly, In the last place, let us consider what assurance or evidence we have that Christ has so finished redemption-work: and if you pursue that enquiry, you will find these, among other plain evidences of it.

First, When Christ died, redemption-work must needs be finished, inasmuch as the blood, as well as the obedience of Christ, was of infinite value and efficacy, sufficiently able to accomplish all the ends for which it was shed; "and that not by divine acceptance, but upon the account of its proper value." This effect, namely, the finishing redemption-work meritoriously by Christ, does not exceed the power of the cause to which we assign it, namely, the death of Christ. And if there be a sole sufficient cause in act, what hinders but the effect should follow? There was certainly enough in Christ’s blood to satisfy the utmost demand of justice: when that therefore is actually shed, justice is fully paid, and, consequently, the souls for whom, and in whose names it is paid, are fully redeemed from the curse by the merit thereof.

Secondly, It is apparent that Christ finished the work, by the discharge or acquittance God the Father gave him, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand. If Christ, the sinner’s surety, be, as such, discharged by God the creditor, then the debt is fully paid. Now Christ was justified, and cleared at his resurrection, from all charges and demands of justice; therefore it ix said, 1 Timothy 3:16 that he was justified in the spirit, that is openly discharged by that very act of the Godhead, his raising him from the dead. For when the grave was opened, and Christ arose, it was to him as the opening of the prison-doors, and setting a surety at liberty, who was confirmed for another man’s debt. To the same sense Christ speaks of his ascension, John 16:10. "The Spirit (says he) shall convince the world of righteousness," that is of a complete and perfect righteousness in me, imputable to sinners for their perfect justification. And whereby shall he convince and satisfy them that is so? Why, by this, "Because I go to the Father, and you see me no more." There is a great deal of force and weight in those words, "because you see me no more:" for it amounts to this much; by this you shall be satisfied I have fully and completely performed all righteousness, and that, by my active and passive obedience; I have so fully satisfied God for you, as that you shall never be charged or condemned; because, when I go to heaven, I shall abide there in glory with nay Father, and not be sent back again, as I should, if any

thing had been omitted by me. And this the apostle gives you also in so many plain words, Hebrews 10:12-14. "After he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God." And what does he infer from that, but the very truth before us, verse 14 that "by one offering he has perfected forever them that are sanctified?"

Thirdly, It is evident Christ has finished the work, by the blessed effects of it upon all that believe in him: for by virtue of the completeness of Christ's work, finished by his death, their consciences are now rationally pacified, and their souls at death, actually received into glory; neither of which could be, if Christ had not in this world finished the work. If Christ had done his work imperfectly, he could not have given rest and tranquility to the laboring and burdened souls that come to him, as now he does, Matthew 11:28. Conscience would still be hesitating, trembling, and unsatisfied, and had he not finished his work, he could not have had entrance through the veil of his flesh into heaven, as all that believe in him have, Hebrews 10:19-20. If he had but almost done that work, we had been but almost saved, that is, certainly damned. And thus you see briefly the evidences, that the work is finished.

INFERENCE. 1. Has Christ perfected and completely finished all his work for us? How sweet a relief is this to us that believe in him against all the defects and imperfections of all the works of God, that are wrought by us. There is nothing, finished that we do: all our duties are imperfect duties; they come off lamely, and defectively from our hands. It is Christ's charge against the church of Sardis, Revelation 3:2. I have not found your works "pepleromena" perfect, or filled up before God. O there is much impudence and vanity in the best of our duties: but here is the grand relief, and that which answers to all the grounds of our doubts and fears upon that account; Jesus Christ has finished all his work, though we can finish none of ours: and so, though we be defective, poor, imperfect creatures, in ourselves, yet, notwithstanding, we are complete in him, Colossians 2:9-10. Though we cannot perfectly obey, or fulfill one command of the law, yet is "the righteousness of the law fulfilled in us that believe," Romans 8:4. Christ's complete obedience being imputed to us, makes us complete, and without fault before God.

It is true, we ought to be humbled for our defects, and troubled for every failing in obedience; but we should not be discouraged, though multitudes of weaknesses be upon us, and many infirmities compass us about, in every duty we put our hand to: though we have no righteousness of our own; yet of God, Christ is made unto us righteousness; and that righteousness of his is infinitely better than our own: instead of our own, we have his. O blessed be God for Christ's perfect righteousness!

INFERENCE. 2. Did Christ finish his work with his own hand? How dangerous and dishonorable a thing is it to join anything of our own to the righteousness of Christ, in point of justification before God. Jesus Christ will never endure this; it reflects upon his work dishonorably; he does not (in this case) affect social glory: not I, and my God; I, and my Christ, did this; he will be all, or none, in your justification. If he have finished the work, what need of our additions? And if not, to what purpose are they? Can we finish that which Christ himself could not? But we would fain be sharing with him in this honor, which he will never endure. Did he finish the work by himself, and will he ever divide the glory and praise of it with us? No, no, Christ is no half Savior. O it is an hard thing, to bring these shroud hearts to live upon Christ for righteousness: we would fain add our penny to make up Christ's sum. But if you would have it so, or have nothing to do with Christ, you and your

penny must perish together, Isaiah 50:1-11 ult. God gives us the righteousness of Christ, as he gave manna to the Israelites in the wilderness. It is said, Deuteronomy 8:16. "That he fed them with manna in the wilderness, that he might humble them." The quality of the food was not humbling, for it was angels fools, but the manner of giving it was so: they must live by faith upon God for it, from day to day. This was not like other food, produced by their own labor. Certainly God takes the right way to humble proud nature, in calling sinners wholly from their own righteousness to Christ's for their justification.

INFERENCE. 3 .Did Christ finish his work for us: Then there can be no doubt, but he will also finish his work "in" us. As he began the work of our redemptions, and finished it: so he that has begun the good work in you, will also finish it upon your souls. And at this the apostle says, "He is confident," Php 1:6. Jesus Christ is not only called the author, but also the finisher of our faith, Hebrews 12:2. If he begin it, no doubt but he will finish it. And indeed the finishing of his own work of redemption without us, gives full evidence that he will finish his work of sanctification within us; and that because these two works of Christ have a respect and relation to each other; and such a relation, that the work he finished by his own death, resurrection, and ascension, would be in vain to us, if the work of sanctification in us should not in like manner be finished. Therefore, as he presented a perfect sacrifice to God, and finished redemption-work; so will he present every man perfect and complete, for whom he offered up himself, for he will not lose the end of all his sufferings at last. To what purpose would his meritorious impetration be, without complete and full application? Be not therefore discouraged at the defects and imperfections of your inherent grace: be humbled for them, but be not dejected by them: this is Christ's work, as well as that: that work is finished, and so will this.

INFERENCE. 4. Is Christ's work of redemption a complete and finished work? How excellent and comfortable beyond all compare, is the method and way of faith! Surely the way of believing is the most excellent way in which a poor sinner can approach God, for it brings before him a complete, entire, perfect righteousness; and this must needs be most honorable to God, most comfortable to the soul that draws near to God. O what a complete, finished perfect thing is the righteousness of Christ! the searching eye of the holy and jealous God cannot find the least flaw or defect in it. Let God or conscience look upon it; turn it every way; view it on every side; thoroughly weigh and examine it, it will appear a pure, a perfect piece, containing in it whatever is necessary for the reconciling of an angry God, or pacifying of a distressed and perplexed soul. How pleasing, therefore, and acceptable to God must be that faith, which presents so complete and excellent an atonement to him! Hence the acting of our faith upon Christ for righteousness, the approaches of faith to God with such an acceptable present, is called the work of God; that is, the most grateful, acceptable, and well pleasing work to God that a creature can perform; John 6:29. "This is the work of God, that you believe." One act of faith pleases him more, than if you should toil all your lives at a task of obedience to the law. As it is more for God's honor and your comfort, to pay all you owe him at one payment, in one full sum, than to be paying by very small degrees, and never be able to make full payment, or see the bond cancelled; so this perfect work only produces perfect peace.

INFERENCE. 5. Did Christ work, and work out all that God gave him to do, until he had finished his work? How necessary then is a laborious working life to all that call themselves Christians? The life of Christ, you sees, was a laborious life. Shall he work and we play? Shall a zealous,

active, working Christ be reproached with idle, negligent and lazy followers? O work, and work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, Php 2:12.

Objection. But if Christ wrought so hard, we may sit still. If he finished the work, nothing remains for us to do.

Solut. Nothing of that work which Christ did, remains for you to do. It is your commendation and duty to leave all that to Christ: but there is other work for you to do; yes, store of work lying upon your hands. You must work as well as Christ, though not for the same ends Christ did. He wrought hard to satisfy the law, by fulfilling all righteousness. He wrought all his life long, to work out a righteousness to justify you before God. This work falls to no hand but Christ's: but you must work, to obey the commands of Christ into whose right you are come by redemption: you must work to testify your thankfulness to Christ, for the work finished for you: you must work, to glorify God by your obedience: let your light so shine before men. For these, and divers other such ends and reasons, your life must be a working life. God preserve all his people from the gross and vile opinions of Antinomian libertines, who cry up grace and decry obedience: who under specious pretenses of exalting a naked Christ upon the throne, do indeed strip him naked of a great part of his glory, and vilely dethrone him. My pen shall not English what mine eyes have read. Tell it not in Gath. But for you, reader, be you a follower of Christ, imitate your pattern; yes, let me persuade you, as ever you hopest to clear up your interest in him, imitate him in such particulars as these that follow.

First, Christ began early to work for God; he took the morning of his life, even the very beginning of it, to work for God: "How is it (said he to his parents, when he was but a child of about twelve years old) that you sought me? Knew you not that I must be about my Father's business?" Reader, if the morning of your life be not gone, O devote it to the work of God as Christ did: if it be, ply your work the closer in the afternoon of your life. If a man have any great and necessary business to do, it is good doing it in the morning; afterwards a hurry of business and diversion comes on.

Secondly, As Christ began betime, so he followed his work close: he was early up, and he wrought hard, so hard, that "he forget to eat bread." John 4:31-32. So zealous was he in his Father's work, that his friends thought "that he had been beside himself," Mark 3:21. So zealous that "the zeal of God's house eat him up." He flew like a seraphim, in a flame of zeal, about the work of God. O be not you like snails. What Augustus said of the young Roman, well becomes the true Christian, "whatever he does, he does it to purpose."

Thirdly, Christ often thought upon the shortness of his time, and wrought hard because he knew his working-time would be but little. So you find it, John 9:4. "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day; the night comes, when no man can work." O in this be like Christ: rouse your hearts to diligence with this consideration. If a man have much to write, and be almost come to the end of his paper, he will write close, and thereby put much matter in a little room.

Fourthly, He did much work for God in a very silent manner: he wrought hard, but did not spoil his work, when he had wrought it, by vain ostentation. When he had expressed his charity in his acts of mercy and bounty to men, he would humbly seal up the glory of it, with this charge; "see you tell no man of it", Matthew 8:4. He affected no popular air. All the angels in heaven could not do what Christ did, and yet he called himself a worm, for all that, Psalms 22:6. O imitate your pattern; Work

hard for God, and let not pride blow upon it, when you have done. It is hard for a man to do much, and not value him self for it too much.

Fifthly, Christ carried on his work for God resolvedly: no discouragements would beat him off, though never any work met with more from first to last. How did Scribes and Pharisees, Jews, Gentiles, yes, devils set upon him, by persecutions, and reproaches, violent oppositions, and subtle temptations; but yet, he goes on with his Father's work for all that: he is deaf to all discouragements. So it was foretold of him, Isaiah 42:4. "He shall not fail, nor be discouraged." O that more of this spirit of Christ were in his people: O that, in the strength of love to Christ, and zeal for the glory of God, you will pour out your hearts in service, and, like a river, sweep down all discouragements before you.

Sixthly, He continued working, while he continued living: His life and labor ended together: He fainted not in his work: Nay, the greatest work he did in this world, was his last work. O be like Christ in this, be not weary of well doing: Give not over the work of God, while you can move hand and tongue to promote it, and see that your last works be more than your first. O let the motions of your soul after God be, as all natural motions are, swiftest when nearest the center. Say not it is enough, while there is any capacity of doing more for God. In these things, Christians, be like your Savior.

INFERENCE. 6. Did Christ finish his work? Look to it Christian, that you also finish your work which God has given your to do: That you may with comfort say, when death approaches, as Christ said, John 17:4. "I have glorified you on earth, I have finished the work you gave me to do; and now, O Father, glorify you me with your own self." Christ had a work committed to Him, and he finished it; you have a work also committed to you: O see that you may be able to say, it is finished when your time is so: O work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; and, that I may persuade you to it, I beseech you lay these considerations close to heart.

First, If your work be not done before you die, it can never be done when you are dead. "There is no work nor knowledge, nor device in the grave, where you go," Ecclesiastes 9:5; Ecclesiastes 9:10. They that go down to the pit cannot celebrate the name of God, Isaiah 38:18. Death binds up the hand from working, any more; strikes dumb the tongue that it can speak no more; for then the composition is dissolved. The body, which is the soul's instrument to work by, is broken and thrown aside: the soul itself presented immediately before the Lord, to give an account of all its works. O therefore, seeing the night comes, when no man can work, as Christ speaks, John 9:4. make haste and finish your work.

Secondly, If you finish not your work, as the season of working, so the season of mercy will be over at death. Do not think, you that have neglected Christ all your lives, you that could never be persuaded to a laborious holy life, that ever your cries and entreaties shall prevail with God for mercy, when your season is past: No, it is too late, "Will God hear his cry, when troubles come upon him?" Job 27:9. The season of mercy is then over; as the tree falls, so it lies: Then he that is holy shall be holy still, and he that is filthy shall be filthy still. Alas, poor souls, you come too late: "The master of the house is risen up, and the doors are shut," Luke 19:42. The season is over: happy had it been if you had known the day of your visitation.

Lastly, If your work be not finished when you come to die, you can never finish your lives with comfort. He that has not fished his stork with care, can never finish his course with joy. O what a dismal case is that soul in, that finds itself surprised by death in an unready posture! To lie shivering upon the brink of the grave, saying, Lord, what will become of me! O I cannot, I dare not die! For the poor soul to shrink back into the body, and cry, Oh, it were better for me to do any thing than die. Why, what is the matter? Oh, I am in a Christless state and dare not go before that awful judgment-seat. If I had in season made Christ sure, I could then die with peace. Lord, what shall I do? How do you like this, reader? Will this be a comfortable close! When one asked a Christian that constantly spent six hours every day in prayer, why he did so? He answered, Oh, I must die, I must die. Well then, look to it that you finish your work as Christ also did his!

S. The third of Christ's last Words

The third of Christ’s last Words upon the Cross "And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto you, Today shall you be with me in paradise." Luke 23:43 In this scripture you have the third excellent saying of Christ upon the cross, expressing the riches of free grace to the penitent thief; a man that had spent his life in wickedness, and for his wickedness was now to lose his life. His practice had been vile and profane, but now his heart was broken for it; he proves a convert, yes, the first fruits of the blood of the cross. In the former verse he manifests his faith, "Lord, remember me, when you comest into your kingdom. In this Christ manifests his pardon and gracious acceptance of him; "Verily I say unto you, to-day shall you be with me in paradise." In which promise are considerable, the matter of it, the person to whom it is made, the time set for its performance, and the confirmation of it for his full satisfaction.

First, The matter or substance of the promise made by Christ, namely, That he shall be with him in paradise. By paradise he means heaven itself, which is here shadowed to us by a place of delight and pleasure. This is the receptacle of gracious souls, when separated from their bodies. And that paradise signifies heaven itself, and not a third place, as some of the fathers fondly imagine, is evident from 2 Corinthians 12:2; 2 Corinthians 12:4. where the apostle calls the same place by the names of the third heaven, and the paradise. This is the place of blessedness designed for the people of God. So you find, Revelation 2:7. "To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God;" that is to have the fullest and most intimate communion with Jesus Christ in heaven. And this is the substance of Christ’s promise to the thief: You, that is you in spirit, or you in the noblest part, your soul which here bears the image of the whole person; "You shall be with me in paradise."

Secondly, The person to whom Christ makes this excellent and glorious promise: it was to one that had lived lewdly and profanely; a very vile and wretched man, in all the former part of his time, and, for his wickedness, now justly under condemnation; yes, to one that had reviled Christ, after that sentence was executed on him. However, now at last the Lord gave him a penitent believing heart. Now, almost at the last gasp, he is soundly, in an extraordinary way converted; and, being converted, he owns and professes Christ amidst all the shame and reproach of his death; vindicates his innocence, and humbly supplicates for mercy; "Lord, remember me when you comest into your kingdom."

Thirdly, The set time for the performance of this gracious promise: Today, this very day, shall you be with me in glory: Not after the resurrection, but immediately from the time of your dissolution, you shall enjoy blessedness. And here I cannot but detect the cheat of those that deny an immediate state of glory to believers after death; who, (to the end this scripture might not stand in full opposition to their, as uncomfortable, as unsound opinion), loose the whole frame of it, by drawing one pin, yes, by transposing but a comma, putting it at the word day, which should be at the word you; and so reading it thus, "Verily I say unto you to-day," referring the word "day" to the time that Christ made the promise, and not to the time of its performance. But if such a liberty as

this be yielded, what may not men make the scriptures speak? There can be no doubt, but Christ, in this expression, fixes the time for his happiness; "To-day you shall be with me.

Fourthly, and lastly, You have here the confirmation and seal of this most comfortable promise to him, with Christ's solemn asseveration; "Verily I say unto you." Higher security cannot be given. I that am able to perform what I promise, and have not out promised myself; for heaven and the glory thereof, are mine: I that am faithful and true to my promises, and have never forfeited my credit with any; I say it, I solemnly confirm it; "Verily I say unto you, to-day you shall be with me in paradise." Hence we have three plain obvious truths, for our instruction and consolation.

DOCTRINE. 1. That there is a future eternal state, into which souls pass at death.

DOCTRINE. 2. That all believers are, at their death, immediately received into a state of glory and eternal happiness.

DOCTRINE. 3. That God may, though he seldom does, prepare men for this glory, immediately before their dissolution by death.

These are the useful truths resulting from this remarkable word of Christ to the penitent thief. We will consider and improve them in the order proposed.

DOCTRINE. 1. That there is a future eternal state, into which souls pass at death. This is a principal foundation-stone to the hopes and happiness of souls. And seeing our hopes must needs be as their foundation and ground work is, I shall briefly establish this truth by these five arguments. The being of a God evinces it. The scriptures of truth plainly reveal it. The consciences of all men have presentiments of it. The incarnation and death of Christ is but a vanity without it; and the immortality of human souls plainly discovers it.

Arg. 1. The being of a God undeniably evinces a future state for human souls after this life. For, if there be a God who rules the world which he has made, he must rule it by rewards and punishments, equally and righteously distributed to good and bad; putting a difference between the obedient and disobedient. the righteous and the wicked. To make a species of creatures capable of a moral government, and not to rule them at all, is to make them in vain, and is inconsistent with his glory, which is the last end of all things. To rule them, but not suitably to their natures, consists not with that infinite wisdom from which their beings proceeded, and by which their workings are ruled and ordered. To rule them, in a way suitably to their natures, namely, by rewards and punishments, mid not to perform, or execute them at all, is utterly incongruous with the veracity and truth of him that cannot lie: this were to impose the greatest cheat in the world upon men, and can never proceed from the holy and true God. So then, as he has made a rational sort of creatures, capable of moral government by rewards and punishments; so he rules them in that way which is suitable to their natures, promising "it shall be well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked." These promises and threatening can be no cheat, merely intended to scare and fright, where there is no danger, or encourage where there is no real benefit; but what he promises, or threatens, must be accomplished, and every word of God take place and be fulfilled. But it is evident that no such distinction is made by the providence of God (at least ordinarily and generally) in this life; but all things coins alike to all; and as with the righteous, so with the wicked. Yes, here it goes ill with them that fear God; they are oppressed; they receive their evil things, and wicked men their good; therefore we conclude, the righteous Judge of the whole earth, will, in

another world, recompense to everyone according as his work shall be.

Arg. 2. Secondly, And as the very being of God evinces it, so the scriptures of truth plainly reveal it. These scriptures are the pandect, or system of the laws, for the government of man; which the wise and holy Ruler of the world has enacted and ordained for that purpose. And in them we find promises made to the righteous, of a full reward for all their obedience, patience, and sufferings in the next life or world to come; and threatening, made against the wicked, of eternal wrath and anguish, as the just recommence of their sin in hell forever, Romans 2:5-10. "You treasures up to yourself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgement of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that does evil, etc." So 2 Thessalonians 1:4-7. "So that we ourselves glory in you, in the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure: which is (a manifest token) of the righteous judgement of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which you also suffer; seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you: and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, etc." To these plain testimonies, multitudes might be added, if it were needful. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but these words shall never pass away.

Arg. 3. Thirdly, As the scriptures reveal it, so the consciences of all men have borne presentiments of it. Where is the man whose conscience never felt any impressions of hope, or fear, from a future world? If it is said, these may be but the effects and force of discourse, or education; we have read such things in the scriptures, or have heard it by preachers; and so raise up to ourselves hopes and fears about it. I demand, how the consciences of the Heathens, who have neither scriptures nor preachers, came to be impressed with these things? Does not the apostle tell us, Romans 2:15. "That their consciences in the mean while work upon these things?" their thoughts, with reference to a future state, accuse, or else excuse, that is their hearts are cheered and encouraged by the good they do, and terrified with fears about the evils they commit. Whereas, if there were no such things, conscience would neither accuse nor excuse for good or evil done in this world.

Arg. 4. Fourthly, The incarnation and death of Christ, are but vanity without it. What did he propose to himself, or what benefit have we by his coming, if there be no such future state? Did he take our nature, and suffer such terrible things in it for nothing! If you say, Christians have much comfort from it in this life: I answer, the comforts they have are raised by faith and expectation of the happiness to be enjoyed, as the purchase of his blood, in heaven. And if there be no such heaven to which they are appointed, no hell from which they are redeemed, they do but comfort themselves with a fable, and bless themselves with a thing of nothing: their comfort is no greater than the comfort of a beggar, that dreams he is a king, and when he awakes, finds himself a beggar still. Surely the ends of Christ’s death were to deliver us from the wrath to come, 1 Thessalonians 1:10. not from an imaginary, but a real hell, to bring us to God, 1 Peter 3:18. to be the author of eternal salvation to them that obey him, Hebrews 5:9.

Arg. 5. Fifthly and lastly, The immortality of human souls, puts it beyond all doubt. The soul of man, vastly differs from that of a beast, which is but a material form, and so wholly depending on, that it must need perish with matter. But it is not so with ours: Ours are reasonable spirits, that can live and act in a separated state from the body, Ecclesiastes 3:21. "Who knows the spirit of man, that goes upward; and the spirit of a beast, that goes downward to the earth?" For if a man dispute whether man be rational, this his very disputing it proves him to be so: so our disputes, hopes, fears, and apprehensions of eternity, prove our souls immortal, and capable of that state.

INFERENCE 1. Is there an eternal state, into which souls pass after this life? How precious then is present time, upon the improvement whereof that state depends. O what a huge weight has God hanged upon a small wire! God has set us here in a state of trial: "According as we improve these few hours, so will it fare with us to all eternity." Every day, every hour, nay, every moment of your present time has an influence into your eternity. Do you believe this? What! and yet squander away precious time so carelessly, so vainly! How do these things consist? When Seneca heard one promise to spend a week with a friend that invited him, to recreate himself with him; he told him, he admired he should make such a rash promise! What (said he) cast away so considerable a part of your life? How can you do it? Surely, our prodigality in the expense of time, argues we have but little sense of great eternity.

INFERENCE 2. How rational are all the difficulties, and severities of religion, which serve to promote and secure a future eternal happiness? So vast is the disproportion between time and eternity, things seen, and not seen as yet, the present vanishing, and future permanent state, that he can never be justly reputed a wise man, that will not let go the best enjoyment he has on earth, if it stand in the way of his eternal happiness. Nor can that man ever escape the just censure of notorious folly, who, for the gratifying of his appetite and present accommodation of his flesh, lets go an eternal glory in heaven. Darius repented heartily that he lost a kingdom for a draught of water; O, said he, "for how short a pleasure have I sold a kingdom!" It was Moses' choice, and his choice argued his wisdom, he chose rather "to suffer afflictions with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season," Hebrews 11:25. Men do not account him a fool, that will adventure a penny, upon a probability to gain ten thousand pounds. But sure the disproportion between time and eternity is much greater.

INFERENCE. 3. If there certainly be such an eternal state into which souls pass immediately after death; How great a change then does death make upon every man and upon every man and woman? O what a serious thing is it to die! It is your passage out of the swift river of time, into the boundless and bottomless ocean of eternity. You that now converse with sensible objects, with men and women like yourselves, enter then into the world of spirits. You that now see the continual revolutions of days and nights, passing away one after another, will then be fixed in a perpetual NOW. O what a serious thing is death! You throw a cast for eternity when you die. If you were to cast a die for your natural life, O! how would your hand shake with fear, how it would fall! But what is that to this? The souls of men are, as it were, asleep now in their bodies; at death they awake, and find themselves in the world of realities. Let this teach you, both how to carry yourselves towards dying persons when you visit them; and to make every day some provision for that hour yourselves. Be serious, be plain, be faithful with others that are stepping into eternity; be so with your own souls every day. O remember what a long word, what an amazing thing eternity is! especially considering, DOCTRINE. 2. That all believers are, at their death, immediately

received into a state of glory and eternal happiness.

"This day shall you be with me." This the Atheist denies: He thinks he shall die, and therefore resolves to live as the beasts that perish. Beryllus, and some others after him, taught, that there was indeed a future state of happiness and misery for souls, but that they pass not into it immediately upon death and separation from the body, but shall sleep until the resurrection, and then awake and enter into it. But is not that soul asleep, or worse, that dreams of a sleeping soul until the resurrection? Are souls so wounded and prejudiced by their separation from the body, that they cannot subsist or act separate from it? Or have they found any such conceit in the scriptures? Not at all. The scriptures take notice of no such interval; but plainly enough denies it, 2 Corinthians 5:8. "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord." Mark it, no sooner parted from the body, but present with the Lord. So Php 1:23. "I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, which is far better." If his soul was to sleep until the resurrection, how was it far better to be dissolved, than to live? Sure Paul's state in the body had been far better than his state after deaths if this were so; for here he enjoyed much sweet communion with God by faith, but then he should enjoy nothing. To confirm this dream, they urge, John 14:3. "If I go away, I will come attain, and receive you to myself". As if the time of Christ's receiving his people to himself, should not come, until his second coming at the end of the world. But though he will then collect all believers into one body, and present them solemnly to his Father; yet that hinders not, but he may, as indeed he does, receive every particular believing soul to himself at death, by the ministry of angels. And if not, how is it that when Christ comes to judgement, he is attended with ten thousand of his saints, that shall follow him when he comes from heaven? Jude 1:14. You see then the scripture puts no interval between the dissolution of a saint, and his glorification: It speaks of the saints that are dead, as already with the Lord: And the wicked that are dead, as already in hell, calling them spirits in prison, 1 Peter 3:19-20. assuring us, that Judas went presently to his own place, Acts 1:25. And to that sense, is the parable of Dives and Lazarus, Luke 16:22. But let us weigh these four things more particularly, for our full satisfaction in this point.

Arg. 1. First, Why should the happiness of believers be deferred, since they are immediately capable of enjoying it, as soon as separated from the body? Alas, the soul is so far from being assisted by the body (as it is now) for the enjoyment of God; that it is either clogged or hindered by it: So speaks the apostle, 2 Corinthians 5:6; 2 Corinthians 5:8. "While we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord;" that is our bodies prejudice our souls, obstruct and hinder the fullness and freedom of their communion: When we part from the body, we go home to the Lord! then the soul is escaped as a bird out of a cage or snare. Here I am prevented by an excellent pen, which has judiciously opened this point: To whose excellent observations I only add this; That if the entanglements, snares, and prejudices of the soul are so great and many in its embodied estate, that it cannot so freely dilate itself and take in the comforts of God by communion with him, then surely the laying aside of that clog, or the freeing of the soul from that burden, can be no bar to its greater happiness, which it enjoys in its separated state.

Arg. 2. Secondly, Why should the happiness and glory of the soul be deferred, unless God had some farther preparative work to do upon it, before it be fit to be admitted into glory? But surely, here is no such work wrought upon it after its separation by death: all that is done of that kind, is done here. When the compositum is dissolved, all means, duties, and ordinances are ceased. The

working day is then ended, and night comes, when no man can work, John 9:3. To that purpose are those words of Solomon, Ecclesiastes 9:10. "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might; for there is no wisdom, nor knowledge, nor device in the grave where you go." So that our glorification is not deferred, in order to our fuller preparation for glory. If we are not fit when we die, we can never be fit: all is done upon us that ever was intended to be done; for they are called, Hebrews 12:23. the spirits of the just made perfect.

Arg. 3. Thirdly, Again, Why should our salvation slumber, when the damnation of the wicked does not slumber? God defers not their misery; and surely he will not defer our glory. If he be quick with his enemies, he will not be slow and dilatory with his friends. It cannot be imagined, but he is as much inclined to acts of favor to his children, as to acts of justice to his enemies; these are presently damned, Jude 1:7. Acts 1:25. 1 Peter 3:19-20. And what reason why believers, yes, every believer, as well as this in the text, should not be, that very day in which they die, with Christ in glory?

Arg. 4. Fourthly, and lastly, How do such delays consist with Christ's ardent desires to have his people with him where he is, and with the vehement longings of their souls to be with Christ? You may see those reflected flames of love and desire of mutual enjoyment between the bridegroom and his spouse in Revelation 22:17; Revelation 22:20. Delays make their hearts sick: the expectation and faith in which the saints die, is to be satisfied then; and surely God will not deceive them. I deny not but their glory will be more complete when the body, their absent friend, is reunited, and made to share with them in their happiness; yet that hinders not, but meanwhile the soul may enjoy its glory, while the body takes its rest, and sleeps in the dust.

INFERENCE 1. Are believers immediately with God after their dissolution? Then how surprisingly glorious will heaven be to believers! Not that they are in it before they think of it, or are fitted for it; no, they have spent many thoughts upon it before, and been long preparing for it; but the suddenness and greatness of the change is amazing to our thoughts. For a soul to be now here in the body, conversing with men, living among sensible objects, and within a few moments to be with the Lord; this hour on earth, the next in the third heaven; now viewing this world, and anon standing among an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of the just made perfect: O what a change is this! What! but wink, and see God! Commend your soul to Christ, and be transferred in the arms of angels into the invisible world, the world of spirits! To live as angels of God? To live without eating, drinking. sleeping! To be lifted up from a bed of sickness to a throne of glory! To leave a sinful, troublesome world, a sick and pained body, and be in a moment perfectly cured, and feel yourself perfectly well, and free from all troubles and distempers! You cannot think what this will be! Who can tell what sights, what apprehensions, what thoughts, what frames believing souls have, before the bodies they left are removed from the eyes of their dear surviving friends!

INFERENCE. 2. Are believers immediately with God after their dissolution? Where then shall the unbelievers be, and in what state will they find themselves immediately after death has closed their eyes? Ah! what will the case of them be that go the other way? To be plucked out of house and body, from among friends and comforts, and thrust into endless miseries, into the dark vault of hell, never to see the light of this world any more; never to see a comfortable sight; never to hear a joyful sound; never to know the meaning of rest, peace, or delight any more. O what a change is

here! To exchange the smiles and honors of men, for the frowns and fury of God; to be clothed with flames, and drink the pure unmixed wrath of God, who were but a few days since clothed in silks, and filled with the sweet of the creature! How is the state of things altered with them! It was the lamentable cry of poor Adrian, when he felt death approaching: "O my poor wandering soul! alas! where are you going! Where must you lodge this night! You shall never jest more, never be merry more!" Your term in your houses and bodies is out, and there is another habitation provided for you; but it is a dismal one! When a saint dies, heaven above is as it were moved to receive and entertain him; at his coming, he is received into everlasting habitations, into the inheritance of the saints in light. When an unbeliever dies, we may say of him alluding to Isaiah 14:9. "Hell from beneath is moved for him, to meet him at his coming; ii stirs up the dead for him." No more sports, nor plays, nor cups of wine, nor beds of pleasure: the more of these you enjoyed here, the more intolerable will this change be to you. If saints are immediately with God, others must be immediately with Satan.

INFERENCE. 3. How little cause have they to fear death, who shall be with God so soon after their death? Some there are that tremble at the thoughts of death; that cannot endure to hear its name mentioned; they would rather stoop to any misery here, yes, to any sin, than die, because they are afraid of the exchange. But you that are interested in Christ, need not do so; you can lose nothing by the exchange: the words Death, Grave, and Eternity, should have another kind of sound in your ears, and make contrary impressions upon your hearts. If your earthly tabernacles cast you out, you shall not be found naked; you have "a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;" and it is but a step out of this into that. O what fair, sweet, and lovely thoughts should you have of that great and last change! But what speak I of your fearlessness of death? Your duty lies much higher than that far.

INFERENCE. 3. If believers are immediately with God, after their dissolution, then it is their duty to long for that dissolution, and cast many a longing look towards their graves. So did Paul, I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, which is far better. The advantages of this exchange are unspeakable: You have gold for brass; wine for water; substance for shadow: solid glory for very vanity. Oh! if the dust of this earth were but once blown out of your eyes, that you might see the divine glory, how weary would you be to live? How willing to die; But then be sure your title be sound and good: leave not so great a concernment to the last; for, though it is confessed, God may do that in an hour, that never was done all your days, yet it is not common; which brings to our third and last observation.

DOCTRINE. 3. That God may, though he seldom does, prepare men for glory immediately before their dissolution by death.

There is one parable, and no more, that speaks of some that were called at the last hour, Matthew 20:9-10. And there is this one instance in the text, and no more, that gives us an account of a person so called. We acknowledge God may do it, his grace is his own, he may dispense it how and where he pleases: we must always salve divine prerogative. Who shall fix bounds, or put limits to free grace, but God himself, whose it is? If he do not ordinarily show such mercies to dying sinners (as indeed he does not); yet it is not because he cannot, but because he will not; not because their hearts are so hardened by long custom in sin, that his grace cannot break them, but because he most justly withholds that grace from them. When blessed Mr. Bilney, the martyr,

heard a minister preaching thus: O you old sinner, you have lain these fifty years rotting in your sin, do you think now to be saved? That the blood of Christ shall save you? O, said Mr. Bilney, what preaching of Christ is this? If I had heard no other preaching than this, what had become of me? No, no, old sinners, or young sinners, great or small sinners, are not to be beaten off from Christ, but encouraged to repentance and faith; for who knows but the affections of mercy may yearn at last upon one that has all along rejected it? This thief was as unlikely ever to receive mercy, but a few hours before he died, as any person in the world could be. But surely this is no encouragement to neglect the present seasons of mercy, because God may show mercy hereafter; or to neglect the ordinary, because God sometimes manifests his grace in ways extraordinary. Many, I know, have hardened themselves in ways of sin, by this example of mercy. But what God did at this time, for this man, cannot be expected to be done ordinarily for us, and the reasons thereof are:

Reason 1. First, Because God has vouchsafed us the ordinary and standing means of grace, which this sinner had not; and therefore we cannot expect such extraordinary and unusual conversion as he had. This poor creature never heard in all likelihood, one sermon preached by Christ, or any of his apostles: He lived the life of a highwayman, and concerned not himself about religion. But we have Christ preached freely, and constantly in our assemblies: We have line upon line, precept upon precept: and when God affords the ordinary preaching of the gospel, he does not use to work wonders. When Israel was in the wilderness, then God gave them bread from heaven, and clave the rocks to give them drink; but when they came to Canaan, where they had the ordinary means of subsistence, the manna ceased.

Reason 2. Secondly, Such a conversion as this, may not be ordinarily expected by any man, because such a time as that will never come again: it is possible, if Christ where to die again, and you to be crucified with him, you mightest receive your conversion in such a miraculous and extraordinary way; but Christ dies no more; such a day as that will never come again.

Mr. Fenner, in his excellent discourse upon this point, tells us, That as this was an extraordinary time, Christ being now to be installed in his kingdom, and crowned with glory and honor; so extraordinary things were now done; as when kings are crowned, the streets are richly hanged, the conduits run with wine, great malefactors are then pardoned, for then they show their munificence and bounty; it is the day of the gladness of their hearts. But let a man come at another time to the conduits, he shall find no wine, but ordinary water there. Let a man be in the jail at another time, and he may be hanged; veer, and have no reason but to expect and prepare for it. What Christ did now for this man, was at an extraordinary time.

Reason 3. Thirdly, Such a conversion as this may not ordinarily be expected; for as such a time will never come again, so there will never be the like reason for such a conversion any more: Christ converted him upon the cross, to give an instance of his divine power at that time, when it was almost wholly clouded: Look, as in that day the divinity of Christ brake forth in several miracles, as the preternatural eclipse of the sun, the great earthquake, the rending of the rocks and veil of the temple; so in the conversion of this man in such an extraordinary way, and all, to give evidence of the divinity of Christ, and prove him to be the Son of God whom they crucified; but that is now sufficiently confirmed, and there will be no more occasion for miracles to evidence it.

Reason 4. Fourthly. None has reason to expect the like conversion, that enjoys the ordinary means; because, though in this convert we have a pattern of what free grace can do, yet, as divines pertinently observe, it is a pattern without a promise; God has not added any promise to it, that ever he will do it for any other; and where we have not a promise to encourage our hope, our hope can signify but little to us.

INFERENCE 1. Let those that have found mercy in the evening of their life, admire the extraordinary race that therein has appeared to them. O that ever God should accept the bran, when Satan has had the flour of your days! The fore-mentioned reverend author tells us of one Marcus Caius Victorius, a very aged man in the primitive times, who was converted from Heathenism to Christianity in his old age. This man came to Simplicianus, a minister, and told him, he heartily owned and embraced the Christian faith. But neither he nor the church would trust him for a long time; and the reason was, the unusualness of a conversion at such an age. But after he had given them good evidence of the reality thereof, there were acclamations and singing of Psalms, the people everywhere crying, Marcus Caius Victorius is become a Christian. This was written for a wonder! Oh! if God have wrought such wondrous salvation for any of you, what cause have you to do more for him than others! What! to pluck you out of hell when one foot was in! To appear to you at last, when so hardened by long custom in sin, that one might say, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Oh! what riches of mercy halve appeared to you!

INFERENCE. 2. Let this convince and startle such, as even to their gray hairs, remain in an unconverted state, who are where they were when they first came into the world, yes, rather further off by much.

Bethink yourselves, you that are full of days, and full of sin, whose time is almost done, and your great work not begun: who have but a few sands more in the upper part of the glass to run down, and then your conversion will be impossible; your sun is setting; your night is coming; the shadows of the evening, are stretched out upon you; you have one foot in the grave, and the other in hell. O think, if all sense and tenderness be not withered up as well as natural verdure; think with yourselves how sad a case you are in: God may do wonders, but they are not seen every day, then they would cease to be wondered at. O strive, strive, while you have a little time, and a few helps and means more; strive to get that work accomplished now that was never done yet; defer it no longer, you have done so too much already.

It may be (to use Seneca’s expression) you have been these sixty, seventy, or eighty years, beginning to live, about to change your tactics; but hitherto you still continue the same. Do not you see how Satan has gulled, and cheated you with vain purposes, until he has brought you to the very brink of the grave and hell? O it is time now to make a stand, and pause a little where you are, and to what he has brought you. The Lord at last give you an eye to see, and an heart to consider.

INFERENCE. 3. Lastly, Let this be a call and caution to al young ones to begin with God betime, and take heed of delays until the last, so as many thousands have done before them to their eternal ruin. Now is your time, if you desire to be in Christ; if you have any sense of the weight and worth of eternal things upon your hearts: I know your age is voluptuous, and delights not the serious thoughts of death and eternity: you are more inclined to mind your pleasures, and leave

these grave and serious matters to old age: but let me persuade you against that, by these considerations.

First, O set to the business of religion now, because this is the molding age. Now your hearts are tender, and your affections flowing: now is the time when you are most likely to be wrought upon.

Secondly, Now, because this is the freest part of your time. It is in the morning of your life, as in the morning of the day: if a man have any business to be done, let him take the morning for it; for in the after part of the day a hurry of business comes on, so that you either forget it, or want opportunity for it.

Thirdly, Now, because your life is immediately uncertain; you are not certain that ever you shall attain the years of your fathers: there are graves in the church-yard just of your length; and souls of all sorts and sizes in Golgotha, as the Jews proverb is.

Fourthly, Now, because God wil1 not spare you because you are but young sinners, little sinners, if you die Christless. If you are not; as you think, old enough to mind Christ, surely, if you die Christless, you are old enough to be damned: there is the small spray, as well as great logs in the fire of hell.

Fifthly, Now, because your life will be the more eminently useful, and serviceable to God, when you know him betimes, and begin with him early. Austin repented, and so have many thousands since, that he began so late, and knew God no sooner.

Sixthly, Now, because your life will be the sweeter to you, when the morning of it is dedicated to the Lord. The first fruits sanctify the whole harvest: this will have a sweet influence into all your days, whatever changes, straits, or troubles you may afterwards meet with!

S. The third preparative Act of Christ

The third preparative Act of Christ for his own Death

"And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying--Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but yours, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." Luke 22:41-44 The hour is now almost come, even that hour of sorrow, which Christ had so often spoken of. Yet a little, a very little while, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. He has affectionately recommended his children to his Father. He has set his house in order, and ordained a memorial of his death to be left with his people, as you have heard. There is but one thing more to do, and then the tragedy begins. He recommended us, he must also recommend himself by prayer to the Father; and when that is done, he is ready, let Judas with the black guard come when they will. This last act of Christ's preparation for his own death, is contained in this scripture; wherein we have an account, 1. Of his prayer. 2. Of the agony attending it. 3. His relief in that agony, by an angel that came and comforted him.

1. The prayer of Christ; in a praying posture he will be found when the enemy comes; he will be taken upon his knees: he was pleading hard with God in prayer, for strength to carry him through this heavy trial, when they came to take him. And this prayer was a very remarkable prayer, both for the solitariness of it, he withdrew about a stone's cast, Luke 22:41 from his dearest intimates, no ear but his Father's shall hear what he had now to say; and for the vehemency and importunity of it; these were those "iketerias", Hebrews 5:7. strong cries that he poured out to God in the days of his flesh. And for the humility expressed in it; he fell upon the ground, he rolled himself as it were in the dust, at his Father's feet. And in divers other respects it was a very remarkable prayer, as you will hear anon.

2. This scripture gives you also an account of the agony of Christ, as well as of big prayer, and that a most strange one: such as in all respects never was known before in nature. It was a sweat as it had been blood, which, [as] is neither an hyperbole, as some would make it: nor yet a similitude of blood; as others fancy, but a real bloody sweat. For so [as] is sometimes taken for the very thing itself, as John 1:14. And as a worthy divine of our own well notes, that if the Holy Spirit had only intended it for a similitude or resemblance, he would rather have expressed it, as it were drops of water, than as it were drops of blood, for sweat more resembles water than blood.

3. You have here his relief in this his agony and that by an angel dispatched post from heaven to comfort him. The Lord of angels now needed the comfort of an angel. It was time to have a little refreshment when his face and body too stood as full of drops of blood, as the drops of dew are upon the grass. Hence we note,

DOCTRINE. That our Lord Jesus Christ was praying to his Father in an extraordinary agony, when they came to apprehend him in the garden. To open and explain this last act of preparation on

Christ’s part for our use, I shall at this time speak of these particulars. First, The place where he prayed. Secondly, The time when he prayed. Thirdly, The matter of his prayer. And lastly, The manner how he prayed.

First, For the circumstance of place, where was this last and remarkable prayer poured out to God? It was in the garden. Matthew tells us it was called Gethsemane, which signifies, (as Pareus on the place observes) "the valley of fatness, namely, of olives, which grew in that valley or garden most plentifully". This garden lay very near to the city of Jerusalem. The city had twelve gates, five of which were on the east side of it, among which the most remarkable were the fountain gate, so called of the fountain Siloe. Through this gate Christ rode into the city in triumph, when he came from Bethany, the other was the sheep-gate, so called from the multitude of sheep driven in at it for the sacrifice, for it stood close by the temple; and close by this gate was the garden called Gethsemane, where they apprehended Christ, and led him through this gate, as a sheep to the slaughter. Between this garden and the city, ran the brook Cedron, which rose from a hill upon the south, and ran upon the east part of the city, between Jerusalem and the mount of olives: and over this brook Christ passed into the garden, John 18:1. To which the Psalmist alludes in Psalms 110:7. "He shall drink of the brook in the way; therefore he shall lift up the head." For this brook running through the valley of Jehosaphat, that fertile soil, together with the filth of the city which it washed away, gave the waters a black tincture, and so fitly resembled those grievous sufferings of Christ, in which he tasted both the wrath of God and men.

Now, Christ went not into this garden to hide, or shelter himself from his enemies. No, that was not his end; for if so, it had been the most improper place he could have chosen, it being the accustomed place where he was accustomed to pray, and a place well known to Judas, who was now coming to seek him, as you may see, John 18:2. "And Judas, which betrayed him, knew the place, for Jesus ofttimes resorted there with his disciples." So that he repairs there, not to shun, but to meet the enemy; to offer himself as a prey to the wolves, which there found him, and laid hold upon him. He also resorted there for an hour or two of privacy before they came, that he might there freely pour out his soul to God. So much for the circumstances of place where he prayed.

Secondly, We shall consider the time when he entered into this garden to pray: and it was in the shutting in of the evening: for it was after the passover and the supper were ended. Then (as Matthew has it, Matthew 26:36) Jesus went over the brook into the garden, between the hours of nine and ten in the evening, as it is conjectured; and so he had between two and three hours time to pour out his soul to God. For it was about midnight that Judas and the soldiers came and apprehended him there. So that it being immediately before his apprehension, it shows us in what frame and posture Christ desired to be found: and by it he left us an excellent pattern, what we ought to do, when imminent dangers are near us, even at the door. It becomes a soldier to die fighting, "and a minister to die preaching," and a Christian to die praying. If they come, they will find Christ upon his knees, wrestling mightily with God by prayer. He never spent one moment of the time of his life idly; but these were the last moments he had to live in the world, and here you may see how they were filled up and employed.

Thirdly, Next let us consider the matter of his prayers or the things about which he poured out his soul to God in the garden, that evening. And Luke 22:42 informs us what that was: he prayed,

saying, "Father, if you be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will, but your be done." These words are involved in many difficulties, as Christ himself was when he uttered them. By the cup, understand that portion of sorrows then to be distributed to him by his Father. Great afflictions and bitter trials are frequently expressed, in scripture, under the metaphor of a cup. So, that dreadful storm of wrath upon the wicked, in Psalms 11:6. "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire, and brimstone and a horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup," that is the punishment allotted to them by God for their wickedness. And an exceeding great misery, by a large or deep cup. So Ezekiel 23:32-33, "You shall drink of your sister's cup deep and large; you shall be laughed to scorn, and had in derision; it containeth much. You shall be filled with drunkenness and sorrow, with the cup of astonishment and desolation, with the cup of your sister Samaria." And when an affliction is compounded of many bitter ingredients, stinging and aggravating considerations and circumstances, then it is said to be mixed. "In the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red, (noting a bloody trial) it is full of mixture, and he pours out the same but the dregs thereof all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out and drink them:" that is their shall have the worst part of the judgement for their share. Thus afflictions and calamities are expressed by the metaphor of a cup; great calamities by a deep and large cup; afflictions compounded of many aggravating circumstances, by a mixed cup. And from the effect it has on those that must drink it, is called a cup of trembling, Isaiah 57:17. "You have drunken at the hand of the Lord, the cup of his fury, the dregs of the cup of trembling." Such a cup now was Christ's cup; a cup of wrath; a large and deep cup, that contained more wrath than ever was drunk by any creature, seen the wrath of an infinite God. A mixed cup, mixed with God's wrath and man's in the extremity. And all the bitter aggravating circumstances that ever could be imagined; great consternation and amazement; this was the portion of his cup. By the passing of the cup from him, understand his exemption from suffering that dreadful and horrid wrath of God, which he foresaw to be now at hand. For as the coming of the cup to a man, does, in scripture-phrase, note his bearing and suffering of evil, as you find it, Lamentations 4:21. "Rejoice and be g}ad, O daughter of Edom, that dwell in the land of Uz; the cup also shall pass through unto you; you shall be drunken, and make yourself naked;" which is an ironical reproof at the Idumeans, the deadly enemies of the Jews, who wickedly insulted over them, when the cup was at their mouths: as if the Lord had said, you have laughed and jeered at my people, when my hand was on them; you rejoiced to see their calamities: well, make yourselves merry still if you can, the cup shall pass through unto you; your turn is coming, then laugh if you canned. So, on the contrary, the passing away of the cup, notes freedom from, or our escaping of those miseries. And so Christ's meaning, in this conditional request, is, Father, if it be your will, excuse me from this dreadful wrath; my soul is amazed at it. Is there no way to shun it? Cannot I be excused? Or if it be possible, spare me. This is the meaning of it. But then here is the difficulty, how Christ, who knew God had from everlasting determined he should drink it, who had compacted and agreed with him in the covenant of redemption so to do, who came (as himself acknowledges) for that end into the world, John 18:37, who foresaw this hour all along, and professed when he spoke of this bloody baptism with which he was to be baptized, that he was "straitened until it was accomplished," Luke 12:50. How (I say) to reconcile all this with such a petition, that now when the cup was delivered to him, it might pass, or he excused from suffering; this is the knot, this is the difficulty.

What! did he now repent of his engagement? Was all he said before but a nourish, before he saw the enemy? Does he nor begin to wish to be disengaged, and that he had never undertaken such

a work? Is that the meaning of it? No, no, Christ never repented of his engagement to the Father, never was willing to let the burden lie on us, rather than on himself; there was not such a thought in his holy and faithful heart; but the resolution of this doubt depends upon another distinction, which will clear his meaning in it.

1st, You must distinguish of prayers. Some are absolute and peremptory; and so to have prayed that the cup might pass, would have been chargeable with such absurdities, as were but now mentioned: others are conditional and submissive prayers, "If it may be, if the Lord please." And such was this, If you be willing; if not, I will drink it. But you will say, Christ knew what was the mind of God in that case; he knew what transactions had of old been between his Father and him; and therefore though he did not pray absolutely, yet it is strange he would pray conditionally it might pass. Therefore in the

2d Place, you must distinguish of the natures according to which Christ acted. He acted sometimes as God, and sometimes as man. Here he acted according to his human nature; simply expressing and manifesting in this request the reluctance it had at such sufferings, wherein he showed himself a true man, in shunning that which is destructive to his nature. As Christ had two distinct natures so two distinct wills. And (as one well observes) in the life of Christ, there was an intermixture of power and weakness, of the divine glory, and human frailty. At his birth a star shone, but he was laid in a manger. The devil tempted him in the wilderness, but there angels ministered to him. As man he was deceived in the fig-tree, but as God he blasted it. He was caught by the soldiers in the garden, but first made them fall back. So here, as man he feared and shunned death; but as God-man he willingly submitted to it.

"It was (as Deodatus well expresses it) a purely natural desire, mere man, by which for a short moment he apprehended and shunned death and torments; but quickly recalled himself to obedience, by a deliberate will, to submit himself to God. And besides that, this desire was but conditional, under the will of God, accepted by Christ; but from the contemplation of which he was a while diverted by the extremity of horrors; therefore there was no sin in it, but only a short conflict of nature, presently overcome by reason, and a firm will: or a small suspension, quickly overcome by a most strong resolution. Finally, this sacred deliberation in Jesus was not made simply, or in an instant, but with a short time, and with a counterpoise, which is the natural property of the soul in its motions, and voluntary actions." In a word, as there was nothing of sin in it, it being a pure and sinless affection of nature; so there was much good in it, and that both as it was a part of his satisfaction for our sin, to suffer inwardly such fears, tremblings, and consternation: and as it was a clear evidence, that he was in all things made like unto his brethren, except sin. And lastly, as it serves notably to express the grievousness and extremity of Christ's sufferings, whose very prospect and appearance, at some distance, was so dreadful to him.

If the learned reader desire to see what is further said on this point, let him read what the judicious and learned Parker, in his excellent book "de descensu", has collected upon that case.

Fourthly, Let us consider the manner how he prayed, and that was,

1. Solitarily, He does not here pray in the audience of his disciples, as he had done before, but went at a distance from them. He had now private business to transact with God. He left some of them at the entering into the garden; and for Peter, James, and John, that went farther with him

than the rest, he bids them remain there, while he went and prayed. He did not desire them to pray with him, or for him; no, he must tread the winepress alone. Nor will he have them with him, possibly lest it should discourage them to see and hear how he groaned, sweat, trembled, and cried, as one in an agony, to his Father.

Reader, there are times and cases, when a Christian would not be willing, that the dearest and most intimate friend he has in the world, should be privy to what passes between him and his God.

2. It was an humble prayer; that is evident by the postures into which he cast himself; sometimes kneeling, and sometimes prostrate upon his face. He creeps in the very dust, lower he cannot fall; and his heart was as low as his body. He is meek and lowly indeed.

3. It was a reiterated prayer; he prays, and then returns to the disciples, as a man in extremity turns every way for comfort: so Christ prays, "Father, let this cup pass," but in that the Father hears him not; though as to support he was heard. Being denied deliverance by his Father, he goes and bemoans himself to his pensive friends, and complains bitterly to them, "my soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." He would ease himself a little, by opening his condition to them; but alas, they rather in crease than ease his burden. For he finds them asleep, which occasioned that gentle reprehension from him, Matthew 26:40. "What, could you not watch with me one hour?" What, not watch with me? Who may expect it from you more than I? Could you not watch? I am going to die for you, and cannot you watch with me? What! cannot you watch with me one hour? Alas! what if I had required great matters from you? What: not an hour, and that the parting hour too! Christ finds no ease from them, and back again he goes to that sad place, which he had stained and purpled with a bloody sweat, and prays to the same purpose again. O how he returns upon God over and over, as if he resolved to take no denial! But, however, considering it must be so, he sweetly falls in with his Father’s will, Your will be done.

4. And lastly, It was a prayer accompanied with a strange and wonderful agony: so says Luke 22:44 "and being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat was it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." Now he was red indeed in his apparel, as one that trod the wine-press. "It was not a faint thin dew, but a clotted sweat, "trumboi haimator", clodders of blood falling upon the ground. It is disputed whether this sweat was natural or preternatural. That some in extremity have sweat kind of bloody thin dew, is affirmed. I remember Thuanus gives us two instances that come nearest to this, of anything I ever observed or heard of. "The one was a captain, who by a cowardly and unworthy fear of death was so overwhelmed with anguish, that a kind of bloody dew or sweat stood on all his body. The other is of a young man condemned for a small matter to die by Sixtus 5 who poured out tears of blood from his eyes, and sweat blood from his whole body."

These are rare and strange instances, and the truth of them depends upon the credit of the relator; but certainly for Christ whose body had the most excellent crests and temperament, to sweat clotted blood, or globules of blood, as some render it; and that in a cold night, when others needed a fire within doors to keep them warm, John 18:18. I say, for him to sweat such streams through his garments, falling to the ground on which he lay, must be concluded a preternatural thing. And indeed it was not wonderful that such a preternatural sweat should stream from all parts of his body, if you do but consider what an extraordinary load pressed his soul at that time, even such as no mere man felt, or was able to stand under, even the wrath of a great and terrible God, in the

extremity of it. "Who (says the prophet Nahum, Nahum 1:6) can stand before his indignation? And who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him." The effects of this wrath, as it fell at this time upon the soul of Christ in the garden, are largely and very emphatically expressed by the several Evangelists who wrote this tragedy. Matthew tells us, his soul was "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," Matthew 26:38. "The word signifies beset with grief round about." And it is well expressed by that phrase of the psalmist, "The sorrows of death compassed me about, the pains of hell got hold upon me." Mark varies the expression, and gives it us in another word no less significant and full, Mark 14:33. "He began to be sore amazed and very heavy," "Sore amazed, it imports so high a degree of consternation and amazement, as when the hair of the head stands up through fear." Luke has another expression, for it in the text; he was "en agonia", in an agony. An agony is the laboring and striving of nature in extremity. And John gives it us in another expression, John 12:27. "Now is my soul troubled." The original word is a very full word. And it is conceived the Latins derive that word which signifies hell, from this, by which Christ's troubles are here expressed. This was the load which oppressed his soul, and so straitened it with fear and grief, that his eyes could not vent or ease sufficiently by tears; but the innumerable pores of his body are set open, to give vent by letting out streams of blood. And yet all this while, no hand of man was upon him. This was but a prelude, as it were, to the conflict that was at hand. This bloody sweat in which he prayed, was but as the giving or sweating of the stones before a great rain. Now he stood as it were, arraigned at God's bar, and had to do immediately with him. And you know "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." The uses of this follow in this order.

INFERENCE 1. Did Christ pour out his soul to God so ardently in the garden, when the hour of his trouble was at hand? Hence we infer, That prayer is a singular preparative for, and relief under, the greatest troubles.

It is sweet, when troubles find us in the way of our duty. The best posture we can wrestle with afflictions in, is to engage them upon our knees. The naturalist tells us, if a lion find a man prostrate, he will do him no harm. Christ hastened to the garden to pray, when Judas and the soldiers were hastening there to apprehend him. O! when we are near to danger it is good for us to draw near to our God. Then should we be urging that seasonable request to God, Psalms 22:11. "Be not far from me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help." We be to him, whom death or trouble finds afar off from God. And as prayer is the best preparative for troubles, so the choicest relief under them. Griefs are eased by groans. The heart is cooled and disburdened by spiritual evaporations. You know it is some relief if a man can pour out his complaint into the bosom of a faithful friend, though he can but pity him; how much more to pour out our complaints into the bosom of a faithful God, who can both pity and help us; Luther was accustomed to call prayers the leeches of his cares and sorrows; they suck out the bad blood. It is the title of Psalms 102:1-28, A prayer for the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and pours out his complaint before the Lord. It is no small ease to open our hearts to God. When we are as full of grief, as Elihu was of matter, let us say as he did, Job 32:19. "Behold, Lord, my heart is as wine which has no vent, it is ready to burst as new bottles. I will speak that I may be refreshed." To go to God when you are full of sorrow, when your heart is ready to burst within you, as it was with Christ in this day of his trouble; and say, Father, thus and thus the case stands with your poor child; and so and so it is with me; I will not go up and down complaining from one creature to another, it is to no purpose to do so; nor

yet will I leave my complaint upon myself: but I will tell you, Father, how the case stands with me; for to whom should children make their moan, but to their Father? Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me. What thinkest you, reader, of this? Is it relieving to a sad soul? Yes, yes; if you be a Christian that have had any experience this way, you will say there is nothing like it; you will bless God for appointing such an ordinance as prayer, and say, Blessed be God for prayer: I know not what I should have done, nor how in all the world I should have waded through the troubles I have passed, if it had not been for the help of prayer.

INFERENCE. 2. Did Christ withdraw from the disciples to seek God by prayer? Thence it follows, That the company of the best men is not always seasonable. Peter, James, and John, were three excellent men, and yet Christ says to them, Tarry you here, while I go and pray yonder. The society of men is beautiful in its season, and no better than a burden out of season. I have read of a good man, that when his stated time for closet-prayer was come, he would say to the company that were with him, whatever they were, Friends, I must beg your excuse for a while, there is a friend waits to speak with me. The company of a good man is good, but it ceases to be so, when it hinders the enjoyment of better company. One hour with God is to be preferred to a thousand days enjoyment of the best men on earth. If your dearest friends in the world intrude unseasonably between you and your God, it is neither crude nor unmannerly to bid them give place to better company; I mean, to withdraw from them, as Christ did from the disciples, to enjoy an hour with God alone. In public and private duties we may admit of the company of others to join with us; and if they be such as fear God, the more the better: but in secret duties, Christ and you must whisper it over between yourselves; and then the company of the wife of your bosom, or your friend, that is as your own soul, would not be welcome. "When you prayest, enter into your closet, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father which is in secret," Matthew 6:6. It is as much as if Christ had said, See all clear; be sure to retire in as great privacy as may be; let no ear but God's hear what you have to say to him. This is at once a good note of sincerity, and a great help to spiritual liberty and freedom with God.

INFERENCE. 3. Did Christ go to God thrice upon the same account? Thence learn, that Christians should not be discouraged, though they have sought God once and again, and no answer of peace comes. Christ was not heard the first time, and he goes a second: he was not answered the second, he goes the third and last time, yet was not answered in the thing he desired, namely, that the cup might pass from him; and yet he has no hard thoughts of God, but resolves his will into his Father's. If God deny you in the things you ask, he deals no otherwise with you than he did with Christ. "O my God (says he) I cry in the day-time, but you hear not; and in the night, and am not silent." Yet he justifies God, "but you are holy," Psalms 22:2. Christ was not heard in the thing he desired, and yet heard in that he feared, Hebrews 5:7. The cup did not pass as he desired, but God upheld him, and enabled him to drink it. He was heard as to support, he was not heard as to exemption from suffering: his will was expressed conditionally; and therefore though he had not the thing he so desired, yet his will was not crossed by the denial. But now, when we have a suit depending before the throne of grace, and cry to God once and again, and no answer comes; how do your hands hang down, and your spirits wax feeble!

Then we complain with the church, Lamentations 3:8. "When I cry and shout, he shuts out my prayers; you coverest yourself with a cloud, that our prayers cannot pass through." Then, with Jonah we conclude "we are cast out of his sight." Alas! we judge by sense according to what we

see and feel; and cannot live by faith on God, when he seems to hide himself, put us off, and refuse our requests. It calls for an Abraham's faith, to "believe against hope, giving glory to God." If we cry, and no answer comes presently, our carnal reason draws a headlong hasty conclusion. Sure I must expect no answer: God is angry with my prayers: The seed of prayer has lain so long under the clods, and it appears not; surely it is lost, I shall hear no more of it. Our prayers may be heard, though their answer be for the present suspended. As David acknowledged, when he coolly considered the matter, Psalms 31:22. "I said in my haste, I am cut off from before your eyes; nevertheless you heardest the voice of my supplication, when I cried unto you." No, no, Christian; a prayer sent up in faith, according to the will of God, cannot be lost, though it be delayed. We may say of it as David said of Saul's sword, and Jonathan's bow, that they never returned empty.

INFERENCE. 4. Was Christ so earnest in prayer, that he prayed himself into every agony? Let the people of God blush to think how unlike their spirits are to Christ, as to their prayers-frames!

O what lively, sensible, quick, deep, and tender apprehensions and sense of those things about which he prayed, had Christ? Though he saw his very blood starting out from his hands, and his clothes died in it: yet being in an agony, he prayed the more earnestly. I do not say Christ is imitable in this; no, but his fervor in prayer is a pattern for us, and serves severely to rebuke the laziness, dullness, torpor, formality, and stupidity, that are in our prayers. How often do we bring the sacrifice of the dead before the Lord! how often do our lips move, and our hearts stand still! O how unlike Christ are we! his prayers were pleading prayers! full of mighty arguments and fervent affections. O that his people were in this more like him!

INFERENCE. 5. Was Christ in such an agony before any hand of man was upon him, merely from the apprehensions of the wrath of God, with which he now contested? "Then surely it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God; for our God is a consuming fire."

Ah, what is divine wrath, that Christ staggered when the cup came to him! Could not he bear, and do you think to bear it? Did Christ sweat clots of blood at it, and do you make light of it? Poor wretch, if it staggered him, it will confound you. If it made him groan, it will make you howl, and that eternally. Come, sinner, come; do you make light of the threatening of the wrath of God against sin? Do you think there is no such matter in it, as these zealous preachers make of it? Come look here upon my text, which shows you the face of the Son of God standing as full of purple drops under the sense and apprehension of it, as the drops of dew that hang upon the grass. Mark how he cries, "Father if it be possible, let this cup pass." O anything of punishment rather than this. Hear what he tells the disciples; "My soul, (says he,) is sorrowful even to death: amazed, and very heavy." Fools make a mock at sin, and the threatening that lie against it.

INFERENCE. 6. Did Christ meet death with such a heavy heart? Let the hearts of Christians be the lighter for this, when they come to die. The bitterness of death was all squeezed into Christ's cup. He was made to drink up the very dregs of it, that so our death might be the sweeter to us. Alas! there is nothing now left in death that is frightful or troublesome, beside the pain of dissolution, that natural evil of it. I remember it is storied of one of the martyrs, that being observed to be exceeding jocund and merry when he came to the stake, one asked him, What was the reason his heart was so light, when death, (and that in such a terrible form too) was before him? O said he, my heart is so light at my death, because Christ's was so heavy at his death.

INFERENCE. 7. To conclude, what cause have all the saints to love their dear Lord Jesus with an abounding love? Christian, open the eyes of your faith, and fix them upon Christ, in the posture he lay in the garden, drenched in his own blood; and see whether he be not lovely in these his dyed garments. He that suffered for us more than any creature could or did, may well challenge more love than all the creatures in the world. O what has he suffered, and suffered upon your account! it was your pride, earthliness, sensuality, unbelief; hardness of heart, that laid on more weight in that day that he sweat blood.

S. What Do The Scriptures Principally Teach

3. What do the Scriptures Principally teach?

A. The Scriptures principally teach what Man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of Man.

Q. 1. Why is Faith conjoined with Obedience, and put before it?

A. Because Faith is the principle from whence all Obedience flows, and no man can perform any duty aright in the estate of unbelief. Hebrews 11:6. But without Faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is.

Q. 2. Can there be no saving Faith where the Scriptures are not known and preached?

A. No; for the Apostle saith, Romans 10:14. How then shall they call on him, in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a Preacher? and how shall they preach without they be sent? And Romans 10:7. So then, Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Q. 3. Are not we bound to believe what learned men teach us, as Points of Faith, though the things they teach be not contained in the word of God?

A. No; if the things they teach be not contained expressly, or by necessary consequence in the Word of God, we are not obliged to believe them as points of Faith. Isaiah 8:20. To the Law, and to the Testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. Galatians 1:8. Though we, or an Angel from Heaven preach any other Gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. And Christ hath charged us, Matthew 23:10. To call no man Master, for one is your Master, even Christ.

Q. 4. Are there some things in Scripture more excellent than others; because it's said, the Scriptures principally teach Matters of Faith and Duty?

A. Every part of Scripture is alike pure. Proverbs 30:5. Every word of God is pure, and of equal Authority, but not of equal weight; as several pieces of Gold are alike pure, and of the same stamp, but not of equal value.

Q. 5. What may be inferred hence for use?

A. First, Hence 'tis our duty to examine what we hear, by the Word, and not receive any Doctrine, because men confidently affirm it, but because the Scriptures require it. Acts 17:11. These were more noble than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so. Secondly, That Christian Religion is not notional, but practical; and that impractical faith saves no man. James 2:20. Faith without Works is dead.

Chapter 170

S. What Rule Hath God Given To Direct Us

An Exposition of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism by John Flavel 2. What rule hath God given to direct us, how we may glorify and enjoy him?

A. The word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.

Q. 1. How can the Scriptures be called the word of God, seeing the things contained therein were spoken and written by Men?

A. They are truly and properly called the word of God, because they came not by the will of Man, but holy Men of God spoke as they were moved by the holy Ghost. 2 Peter 1:21.

Q. 2. What are the principal Arguments to persuade us that the Scriptures are of Divine Authority, and Inspiration?

A. Three things especially convince us. First, The Holiness of the Doctrine therein contained. Secondly, The awful efficacy thereof on the soul. Thirdly, the uncontrollable Miracles by which they are sealed, put it beyond all rational doubt, that they are the very word of God.

Q. 3. What is the holiness of the Scriptures? and how doth that prove them to be God's word?

A. The Holiness of the Scriptures doth appear in two things. First, In commanding and encouraging whatsoever is pure, and holy. Php 4:8. Whatsoever things are pure. Secondly, In forbidding all unholiness, under pain of Damnation. 1 Corinthians 6:9. Know ye not, that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God, etc. This shows that they came not from Satan, being cross to his desing; nor from man, it being against his corrupt Nature; and therefore from God only.

Q. 4. What is their Authority and Efficacy on the Soul? and how doth that prove them Divine?

A. Their Authority and Efficacy on the Soul, consists in three things: First, In the power they have to search and discover the secrets of men. Hebrews 5:12. The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged Sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of Soul and Spirit, of the Joints and Marrow; and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the Heart. Secondly, In their converting Efficacy, changing and renewing the Soul. Psalms 19:7. The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the Soul. Thirdly, in their cheering and restoring Efficacy, when the soul is cast down under any inward or outward trouble. Psalms 19:8. The Statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the Heart. No human Power can do such things as these. John 17:17. Sanctify them through they truth, thy word is truth.

Q. 5. How do Miracles confirm it?

A. Because all proper Miracles are wrought only by the hand of God. John 3:2. And no man can do these Miracles that thou doest except God be with him; and so are his seal to whatsoever he

affixes them, and it consists not with his truth and holiness to set it to a forgery.

Q. 6. What was the end of writing the Word?

A. That the Church to the end of the world might have a sure, known, standing Rule to try and judge all things by, and not to be left to the uncertainty of Traditions. John 5:39. Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have Eternal Life, and they are they which testify of me.

Q. 7. Doth not the Authority of the Scriptures depend on the Church, Fathers and Councils?

A. No, the Scriptures are not built on the Authority of the Church, but the Church on them. Ephesians 2:19-20. And are built on the Foundations of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone. And for Councils and Fathers, the Scriptures are not to be tried by them, but they by the Scriptures. Isaiah 8:20. To the Law and to the Testimony; if they speak not according to this word, 'tis because there is no light in them.

Q. 8. What may be fairly inferred from this Proposition, That the Scriptures are the word of God?

A. Three things may be inferred. First, the perfection of the Scriptures, which being the only rule given by God, must therefore be perfect. Secondly, that it is the right of common people to read them. John 5:39. Search the Scriptures. Acts 17:11. These are more noble than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so. Thirdly, that we owe no Obedience to the Injunctions of men, farther than they are sufficiently warranted by the written Word. Matthew 11:9. But in vain do they worship me, teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men.

S. What is the Chief End of Man?

Westminster Shorter Catechism Project An Exposition of the Assembly's

Shorter Catechism

by John Flavel 1. What is the chief end of man?

A. Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him for ever.

Q. 1. Seeing a chief supposeth an inferior end; what is that inferior end for which man was made?

A. It was prudently, soberly, and mercifully, to govern, use, and dispose of other Creatures in the Earth, Sea, and Air, over which God gave Man the Dominion; Genesis 1:26. And God said, Let us make man in our Image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the Fish of the Sea, and over the Fowl of the Air, and over the Cattle, and over all the Earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the Earth. So Psalms 8:6. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands, thou hast put all things under his feet.

Q. 2. What then is to be thought of these men, who being wholly intent upon inferior things, forget and neglect their principal end?

A. They are dead whilst they live, 2 Timothy 5:1. But she that liveth in pleasure, is dead whilst she liveth. They have their Portion in this Life, Psalms 17:14. From men of the World which have their Portion in this Life, and their end is destruction; Php 3:19. Whose end is destruction.

Q. 3. How can Man glorify God, seeing he is perfectly glorious in himself?

A. Man cannot glorify God by adding any new degree of glory to him. Job 36:7. If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? but by manifesting his glory with the Lips; Psalms 50:23. Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me; or with the life, Matthew 5:16. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.

Q. 4. Wherein consists the enjoyment of God?

A. It consists, first, in the facial vision of him in Heaven. Secondly, In full conformity to him, 1 John 3:2. But we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Thirdly, In that full satisfaction which results from both the former, Psalm 27:15. I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.

Q. 5. Can none enjoy him in Heaven, who do not glorify him on Earth?

A. No adult person can scripturally expect happiness in Heaven, without holiness on Earth. Hebrews 12:14. And holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Romans 8:30. Whom he justified them he also glorified.

Q. 6. How comes the glory and enjoyment of God our chief end?

A. He is our Master, and rightful owner, and Benefactor; we receive our Being and Preservation from him; Of him, and through him, and therefore to him be all things; Romans 11:36.

Q. 7. Do all men make God their chief end?

A. No, they do not; some make their sensual pleasure their chief End, Php 3:19. Whose God is their Belly; and some the World, Colossians 3:5. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the Earth, and Covetousness, which is Idolatry.

Q. 8. What are the signs of a man's making himself his chief End?

A. Those make themselves their chief End, who ascribe the glory of what they have, or do, to themselves, and not to God, Daniel 4:30. The King spake and said, is not this great Babylon which I have built? Isaiah 10:1-34; Isaiah 18:1-7. For he saith by the strength of my hand have I done it; and by my Wisdom, for I am prudent; therefore they sacrifice to their own net, and burn Incense unto the Drag, Habakkuk 1:16.

Q. 9. Why are the glorifying and enjoying of God put together, as making up our chief End?

A. Because no man can glorify God, that takes him not for his God; and one takes him for his God, that takes him not for his supreme Good; and both these being essentially included in this Notion of the chief End, are therefore justly put together.

Q. 10. What is the first Truth inferred hence?

A. That God hath dignified Man above all other Creatures on Earth, in giving him a capacity of glorifying God here, and of enjoying him hereafter.

Q. 11. What is the second truth inferred hence?

A. That the Soul of man is not annihilated by Death, but advanced by it, Php 1:21, To die is gain, Php 1:23. Having a desire to depart, to be with Christ, which is far better.

Q. 12. What is the third truth inferred hence?

A. That it is the duty and wisdom of every Christian to renounce, deny, and forsake all inferior Interests and Enjoyments, when they come in competition with the glory of God, and our enjoyment of him, Luke 14:33: So likewise whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not all he hath, cannot be my Disciple.

Q. 13. What is the fourth Inference hence?

A. That we are to abhor and renounce all those Doctrines and Practices that debase the glory of God, and exalt and magnify the Creature.

Chapter 172

S. Wherein four weighty Ends of Christ's

Wherein four weighty Ends of Christ’s Humiliation are opened, and particularly applied "He shall see the travail of his soul, and be satisfied." Isaiah 53:11

We are now arrived at the last particular place which we designed to speak to in Christ’s state of humiliation, namely, the designs and blessed ends for which he was so deeply abased. It is inconsistent with the prudence of a common agent, to be at vast expenses of time, pains, and cost, and not to propound to himself a design worthy of all those expenses. And it is much less imaginable, that Christ should so stupendously abase himself, by stooping from the bosom of his Father to the state of the dead, where our last discourse left him, it there had not been some excellent and glorious thing in his eye, the attainment whereof might give him a content and satisfaction, equivalent to all the sorrows and abasements he endured for it. And so much is plainly held forth in this scripture, "He shall see the travail of his soul, and be satisfied." In which words three things fall under our consideration.

First, The travailing pangs of Christ. So the agonies of his soul and torments of his body are fitly called, not only because of the sharpness and acuteness of them, being in that respect like the sharpness and acuteness of them, being in that respect like birth- pangs of a travailing women, for so this word signifies, but also because they fore-run, and make way for the birth, which abundantly recompenses all those labors. I shall not here insist upon the pangs and agonies endured by Christ in the garden, or upon the cross, which the prophet stiles "the travail of his soul," having, in the former sermons, opened it largely in its particulars, but pass to the

Second Thing considerable in these words, and that is the assured fruits and effects of this his travail; he shall see the travail of his soul. By seeing, understand the fruition, obtainment, or enjoyment of the end of his sufferings. He shall not shed his blood upon an hazard; his design shall not miscarry; but he shall certainly see the ends he aimed at, accomplished. And Thirdly, This shall yield him great satisfaction: as a "woman forgets her sorrow, for joy that a man is born into the world," John 16:21. he shall see it and be satisfied. As God, when he had finished the work of creation, viewed that his work with pleasure and satisfaction; so does our exalted Redeemer, with great contentment, behold the happy issues of his hard sufferings. It affords pleasure to a man to see great affairs, by orderly conduct, brought to happy issues. Much more does it yield de light to Jesus Christ to see the results of the most profound wisdom and love wherein he carried on redemption work. All runs into this doctrine,

DOCTRINE. That all the blessed designs and ends for which the Lord Jesus Christ humbled himself to the death of the cross, shall certainly be attained, to his full contentment and satisfaction. My present business is not to prove, that Christ shall certainly obtain what he died for; nor to open the great satisfaction and pleasure which will arise to him out of those issues of his death, but to point at the principal ends of his death: making some brief improvement as we pass along.

First, Then let us enquire into the designs and ends of Christ's humiliation, at least the main and principal ones; and we shall find, that as the sprinkling of the typical blood in the Old Testament was done for four weighty ends or uses, answerable, the precious and invaluable blood of the Testator and surety of the New Testament is shed for four weighty ends also.

First, That blood was shed and applied to deliver from danger; Exodus 12:13. "And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you: and the plague shall not be upon you, to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt."

Secondly, The blood that was shed to make an atonement between God and the people; Leviticus 4:20. "And he shall do with the bullock as he did with the bullock for a sin-offering; so shall he do with this, and the priest shall make an atonement for them, and it shall be forgiven them."

Thirdly, That blood was shed to purify persons from their ceremonial pollutions, Leviticus 14:6-7. "He shall dip the cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop, with the living bird, in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water, and he shall sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from the leprosy seven times; and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose in the open field."

Fourthly, That blood was shed to ratify and confirm the testament or covenant of God with the people, Exodus 24:8. "And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the God has made with you concerning all these words." These were the four main ends for shedding and sprinkling, that typical blood. Suitably, there are four principal ends for shedding and applying Christ's blood. As that typical blood was shed to deliver from danger, so this was shed to deliver from wrath, even the wrath to come. That was shed to make an atonement, so was this. That was shed to purify persons from uncleanness, so was this. That was shed to confirm the Testament, so was this. As will appear in the following particulars more at large.

First, One principal design and end of shedding the blood of Christ was to deliver his people from danger, the danger of that wrath which burns down to the lowest hell. So you find, 1 Thessalonians 1:10, "Even Jesus who delivered us from wrath to come." Here our misery is both specified and aggravated. Specified, in calling it wrath, a word of deep and dreadful signification. The damned best understand the importance of that word. And aggravated, in calling it wrath to come, or coming wrath. Wrath to come implies both the futurity and perpetuity of this wrath. It is wrath that shall certainly and inevitably come upon sinners. As sure as the night follows the day, as sure as the winter follows the summer, so shall wrath follow sin, and the pleasures thereof. Yes, it is not only certainly future, but when it comes it will be abiding wrath, or wrath still coming. When millions of years and ages are past and gone, this will still be wrath to come. Ever coming as a river ever flowing.

Now from this wrath to come, has Jesus delivered his people by his death. For that was the price laid down for their redemption from the wrath of the great and terrible God, Romans 5:9. "Much more then, being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." The blood of Jesus was the price that ransomed man from this wrath. And it was shed not only to deliver them from wrath to come, but to deliver them freely, fully, distinguishingly, and wonderfully from it.

First, Freely, by his own voluntary interposition and susception oft the mediatorial office, moved thereunto by his own affections of compassion, which yearned over his elect in their misery. The saints were once a lost generation, that had sold themselves, and their inheritance also; and had not wherewithal to redeem either: but they had a near kinsman (even their elder brother by the mother's side) to whom the right of redemption did belong who being a mighty man of wealth, the heir of all things, undertook to be their God; and out of his own proper substance to redeem both them and their inheritance. Them, to be his own inheritance, Ephesians 1:10. and heaven, to be theirs, 1 Peter 1:4. All this he did most freely, when none made supplication to him. No sighing of the prisoners came before him. He designed it for us before we had a being. And when the purposes of his grace were come to their parturient fullness, then did he freely lay out the infinite treasures of his blood to purchase our deliverance from wrath.

Secondly, Christ by death has delivered his people fully. A full deliverance it is, both in respect of time and degrees. A full deliverance in respect of time. It was not a reprieve, but a deliverance. He thought it not worth the shedding of his blood to respite the execution for a while. Nay, in the procurement of their eternal deliverance from wrath, and in the purchase of their eternal inheritance, he has but an even bargain, not a jot more than his blood was worth. Therefore is he become "the author of eternal salvation to them that obey him," Hebrews 5:9. And as it is full in respect of time, so likewise in respect of degrees. He died not to procure a mitigation or abatement of the rigor or severity of the sentence, but to rescue his people fully from all degrees of wrath. So that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ, Romans 8:1. All the wrath of God to the last drop, was squeezed out into that bitter cup which Christ drank off, and wrung out the very dregs thereof.

Thirdly, This deliverance obtained for us by the death of Christ is a special and distinguishing deliverance. Not common to all, but peculiar to some; and they by nature no better than those that are left under wrath. Yes, as to natural disposition, moral qualifications, and external endowments, oftentimes far inferior to them that perish. How often do we find a moral righteousness, an harmless innocence, a pretty ingenuity, a readiness to all offices of love, in them that sue notwithstanding left under the dominion of other lusts, and under the damning sentence of the law; while on the other side, proud, peevish, sensual, morose, and unpolished natures, are chosen to be the subjects of this salvation? "You see your calling, brethren," 1 Corinthians 1:26.

Fourthly and lastly, It is a wonderful salvation. It would weary the arm of an angel to write down all the wonders that are in this salvation. That ever such a design should be laid, such a project of grace contrived in the heart of God, who might have suffered the whole species to perish. That it should only concern man, and not the angels, by nature more excellent than us; that Christ should be pitched upon to go forth upon this glorious design. That he should effect it in such a way, by taking our nature and suffering the penalty of the law therein. That our deliverance should be wrought out and finished when the Redeemer and his design seemed both to be lost and perished. These with many more are such wonders as will take up eternity itself to search, admire, and adore them.

Before I part from this first end of the death of Christ, give me leave to deduce two useful corollaries from it, and then proceed to a second.

Coroll. 1. Has Christ by death delivered his people from the wrath to come? How ungrateful and disingenuous a thing must it be then for those that have obtained such a deliverance as this, to repine and grudge at those light afflictions they suffer for a moment upon Christ's account in this world!

Alas! what are these sufferings, that we should grudge at them? Are they like those which the Redeemer suffered for our deliverance? Did ever any of us endure for him what he endured for us? Or is there anything you can suffer for Christ in this world, comparable to this wrath to come, which you must have endured, had he not, by the price of his own blood, rescued you from it.

Readers will you but make the comparison in your own thoughts, in the following particulars, and then pronounce when you best duly compared.

First, What is the wrath of man to the wrath of God? What is the arm of a creature to the anger of a Deity? Can man thunder with an arm like God?

Secondly, What are the sufferings of the vile body here, to the tortures of a soul and body in hell? The torments of the soul, are the very soul of torments

Thirdly, What are the troubles of a moment to that wrath, which, after millions of years are gone, will still be called wrath to come? O what comparison between a point of hasty time, and the interminable duration of vast eternity!

Fourthly, What comparison is there between the intermitting sorrows and sufferings of this life, and the continued uninterrupted wrath to come? Our troubles here are not constant, there are gracious relaxations, lucid intervals here; but the wrath to come allows not a moment's case or mitigation.

Fifthly, What light and easy troubles are those, which, being put into the rank and order of adjuvant causes, work under the influence and blessing of the first cause, to the everlasting good of them that love God, compared with that wrath to come, out of which no good effects or issues are possible to proceed to the souls on which it lies?

Sixthly, and lastly, How much more comfortable is it, to suffer in fellowship with Christ and his saints for righteousness sake, than to suffer with devils and reprobates for wickedness sake? Grudge not then, O you that are delivered by Jesus from wrath to come, at anything you do suffer, or shall suffer from Christ, or for Christ in this world.

Corol. 2. If Jesus Christ has delivered his people from the wrath to come, how little comfort can any man take in this present enjoyments and accommodations in the world, while it remains a question with him, whether he be delivered from the wrath to come? It is well for the present, but will it be so still? Man is a prospecting creature, and it will not satisfy him that his present condition is comfortable, except he have some hopes it shall be so hereafter. It can afford a man little content that all is easy and pleasant about him now, while such passages and terrible hints of wrath to cone are given him by his own conscience daily. O, methinks such a thought as this, what if I am reserved for the wrath to come? should be to him, as the fingers appearing upon the plaster of the wall were to Belteshazzar in the height of a frolic. It is a custom with some of the Indians, when they have taken a prisoner (whom they intend not presently to eat) to bring him with great triumph into the village, where he dwells that has taken him; and placing him in the house of one that was slain in the wars, as it were to re- celebrate his funeral, they give him his wives or sisters

to attend on him, and use at his pleasure: they apparel him gorgeously, and feed him with all the dainty meats that may be had; affording him all the pleasure that can be devised; when he has passed certain months in all these pleasures, and (like a capon) is made fat with delicate fare, they assemble themselves upon some festival day, and in great pomp bring him to the place of execution, where they kill and eat him.

Such are all the pleasures and enjoyments of the wicked, which feed them for the day of slaughter. How little stomach can a man have to those dainties that understands the end and meaning of them! Give not sleep therefore to your eyes, reader, until you have got good evidence, that you are of that number whom Jesus has delivered from the wrath to come. Until you canned say, he is a Jesus to you. This may be made out to your satisfaction three ways.

First, If Jesus have delivered you from sin, the cause of wrath, you may conclude he has delivered you from wrath, the effect and fruit of sin. Upon this account the sweet name of Jesus, was imposed upon him, Matthew 1:21. "You shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." While a man lies under the dominion and guilt of sin, he lies exposed to wrath to come; and when he is delivered from the guilt and power of sin, he is certainly delivered from the danger of this coming wrath. Where sin is not imputed, wrath is not threatened.

Secondly, If your soul do set an inestimable value on Jesus Christ, and be endeared to him upon the account of that inexpressible grace manifested in this deliverance, it is a good sign your soul has a share in it. Mark what an epithet the saints give Christ upon this account, Colossians 1:12-13. "Giving thanks to the Father, who has delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." Christ is therefore dear and dear beyond all compare to his saved ones. I remember it is storied of the poor enthralled Grecians, that when Titus Flaminius had restored their ancient liberties, and proclamation was to be made in the marketplace by an herald; they so pressed to hear it, that the herald was in great danger of being stifled and pressed to death among the people; but when the proclamation was ended, there were heard such shouts and joyful acclamations, that the very birds of the air fell down astonished with the noise, while they continued to cry, "Soter, Sorter", a Savior, a Savior; and all the following night they continued dancing and singing about his pavilion.

If such a deliverance so endeared them to Titus, how should the great deliverance from wrath to come, endear all the redeemed to love their dear Jesus? This is the native effect of mercy upon the soul that has felt it.

Thirdly. To conclude, A disposition and readiness of mind to do, or endure anything for Christ's sake, upon the account of his deliverance from the wrath to come; is a good evidence you are so delivered, Colossians 1:10-11. "That we may walk worthy of the Lord to all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work." There is readiness to do for Christ. "Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness." There is a cheerful readiness to endure anything for Christ. And how both these flow from the sense of this great deliverance from wrath, Colossians 1:12 will inform you, which was but now cited. O then, be serious and assiduous in the resolution of this grand case. Until this be resolved, nothing can be pleasant to your soul.

End 2. As the typical blood was shed and sprinkled to deliver from danger, so it was shed to make atonement, Leviticus 4:20. "He shall expiate (we translate atone) the sin." The word imports both. And the true meaning is, that by the blood of the bullock, all whose efficacy stood in its relation to the blood of Christ, signified and shadowed by it, the people, for whom it was shed, should be reconciled to God, by the expiation and remission of their sins. And what was shadowed in this typical blood, was really designed and accomplished by Jesus Christ, in the shedding of his blood.

Reconciliation of the elect to God, is therefore another of those beautiful births which Christ travailed for. So you find it expressly, Romans 5:10. "If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." This [if] is not a word of doubting, but argumentation. The apostle supposes it is a known truth, or principle yielded by all Christians, that the death of Christ was to reconcile the elect to God. And again he affirms it with like clearness, Colossians 1:20. "And having made peace by the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things." And that this was a main and principal end designed both by the Father and Son in the humiliation of Christ, is plain from 2 Corinthians 5:18-19. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself." God filled the humanity with grace and authority. The Spirit of God was in him to qualify him. The authority of God was in him by commission, to make all he did valid. The grace and love of God to mankind was in him, and one of the principal effects in which it was manifested, was this design upon which he came, namely, to reconcile the world to God. Upon which ground Christ is called the "propitiation for our sins," 1 John 2:2. "Now reconciliation or atonement is nothing else but the making up of the ancient friendship between God and men which sin had dissolved, and so to reduce these enemies into a state of concord, and sweet agreement." And the means by which this blessed design was effectually compassed, was by the death of Christ, which made complete satisfaction to God, for the wrong he had done him. There was a breach made by sin between God and angels, but that breach is never to be repaired or made up; since, as Christ took not on him their nature, so he never intended to he a mediator of reconciliation between God and them. That will be an eternal breach. But that which Christ designed, as the end of his death, was to reconcile God and man. Not the whole species, but a certain number, whose names were given to Christ. Here I must briefly open, 1. How Christ's death reconciles. 2. Why this reconciliation is brought about by his death, rather than any other way. 3. What are the articles according to which it is made. And 4. What manner of reconciliation this is.

First, How Christ reconciles God and man by his death. And it must needs be by the satisfaction his death made to the justice of God for our sins. And so, reparation being made, the enmity ceases. Hence it is said, Isaiah 53:5. "the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed." That is (as our English Annotators well explain it) he was chastised to procure our peace, by removal of our sins, that set God and us asunder, the guilt thereof being discharged with the price of his blood.

Now this reconciliation is made and continued between God and us, three ways; namely, by the oblation of Christ, which was the price that procured it, and so we were virtually meritoriously reconciled. By the application of Christ and his benefits to us through faith, and so we are actually reconciled. And by the virtual continuation of the sacrifice of Christ in heaven, by his potent and eternal intercession, and so our state of reconciliation is confirmed, and all future breaches prevented. But all depends, as you see, upon the death of Christ. For had not Christ died, his death could never be applied to us, nor pleaded in heaven for us. How the death of Christ

meritoriously procures our reconciliation, is evident from that fore-cited scripture, Romans 5:10. "When we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son," that is Christ's death did meritoriously or virtually reconcile us to God, who, as to our state, were enemies long after that reconciliation was made. That the application of Christ to us by faith, makes that virtual reconciliation to become actual, is plain enough from Ephesians 2:16-17. "And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby. And came and preached peace to you that were afar off, and to them that were near." Now therefore (as it is added, Ephesians 2:19.) "You are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints," etc. And that this state of friendship is still continued by Christ's intercession within the veil, so that there can be no breaches made upon the state of our peace, notwithstanding all the daily provocations we give God by our sins, is the comfortable truth which the apostle plainly asserts, after he had given a necessary caution to prevent the abuse of it, in 1 John 2:1-2. "My little children, these things I write unto you that you sin not; and if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation," etc. Thus Christ reconciles us to God by his death.

Secondly, And if you enquire why this reconciliation was made by the death of Christ, rather than any other way, satisfaction is at hand, in these two answers.

First, That we can imagine no other way by which it could be compassed. And,

Secondly, If God could have reconciled us as much by another way, yet he could not have obliged us so much by doing it in another way, as he has by doing it this way. Surely, none but he that was God manifested in our flesh could offer a sacrifice of sufficient value to make God amends for the wrong done him by one sin, much less for all the sins of the elect. And how God should (especially after a peremptory threatening of death for sin) readmit us into favor without full satisfaction, cannot be imagined. He is indeed inclined to acts of mercy, but none must suppose him to exercise one attribute in prejudice to another. That his justice must be eclipsed, while his mercy shines. But allow that Infinite Wisdom could have found out another means of reconciling us as much, can you imagine, that in any other way he could have obliged us as much, as he has done by reconciling us to himself by the death of his own Son? It cannot be thought possible. This therefore was the most effectual, just, honorable, and obliging way to make up the peace between him and us.

Thirdly, This reconciliation, purchased by the blood of Christ, is offered unto men by the gospel, upon certain articles and conditions; upon the performance whereof it actually becomes theirs; and without which, notwithstanding all that Christ has done and suffered, the breach still continues between them and God. And let no man think this a derogation from the freeness and riches of grace, for these things serve singularly to illustrate and commend the grace of God to sinners. As he consulted his own glory, in the terms on which he offers us our peace with him: so it is his grace which brings up souls to those terms of reconciliation. And surely he has not suspended the mercy of our reconciliation upon unreasonable or impossible conditions. He has not said, if you will do as much for me, as you have done against me, I will be at peace with you; but the two grand articles of peace with God, are repentance and faith. In the first, we lay down arms against God, and it is meet it should be so, before he readmits us into a state of peace and favor; in the other, we accept Christ and pardon through him with a thankful heart, Yielding up ourselves to his government,

which is equally reasonable.

These are the terms on which we are actually reconciled to God. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." So Romans 5:1. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." And surely it would not become the holy God to own, as his friend and favorite, a man that goes on perversely and impenitently in the way of sin; not so much as acknowledging, or once bewailing the wrong he has done him, purposing to do so no more; or to receive into amity one that slights and rejects the Lord Jesus, whose precious blood was shed to procure and purchase peace and pardon for sinners. But if there be any poor soul, that says in his heart, it repents me for sinning against God, and is sincerely willing to come to Christ, upon gospel-terms, he shall have peace. And that peace,

Fourthly, Is no common peace. The reconciliation which the Lord Jesus died to procure for broken-hearted believers, it is,

First, A firm well-bottomed reconciliation, putting the reconciled soul beyond all possibility of coming under God's wrath any more, Isaiah 54:10. "Mountains may depart, and hills be removed, but the covenant of this peace cannot be removed." Christ is a surety, by way of caution, to prevent the new breaches, 2 John 1:2.

Secondly, This reconciliation with God is the fountain out of which all our other comforts flow to us; this is plainly included in those words of Eliphaz to Job, Job 22:21. "Acquiant now yourself with him, and be at peace, thereby good shall come upon you." As trade flourishes, and riches come in when peace is made between states and kingdoms; so all spiritual and temporal mercies flow into our bosoms, when once we are reconciled to God. What the comfort of such a peace will be in a day of straits and dangers, and what it will be valued at in a dying day, who but he that feels it can declare? And yet such an one cannot fully declare it, for it passes all understanding, Php 4:7. We shall now make some improvements of this, and pass on to the third end of the death of Christ.

INFERENCE 1. If Christ died to reconcile God and man, how horrid an evil then is sin! And how terrible was that breach made between God and the creature by it, which could no other way be made up by the death of the Son of God! I remember I have read, that when a great chasm or breach was made in the earth by an earthquake, and the oracle was consulted how it might be closed; this answer was returned, That breach can never be closed, except something of great worth be thrown into it. Such a breach was that which sin made, it could never be reconciled but by the death of Jesus Christ, the most excellent thing in all the creation.

INFERENCE. 2. How sad is the state of all such as are not comprised in the articles of peace with God! The impenitent unbeliever is excepted. God is not reconciled to him; and if God be his enemy, how little avails it, who is his friend? For, if God be a man's enemy, he has an Almighty enemy in him, whose very frown is destruction, Deuteronomy 32:40-42, "I lift up my hand to heaven and say, I live forever. If I whet my glittering sword, and my hand take hold on judgement, I will render vengeance to my enemies, and I will reward them that hate me. I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, (and my sword shall devour flesh) and that with the blood of the slain and the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy."

Yes, he is an unavoidable enemy. Fly to the utmost parts of the earth, there shall his hand reach you, as it is Psalms 139:10. The wings of the morning cannot carry you out of his reach. If God be your enemy, you have an immortal enemy, who lives forever to avenge himself upon his adversaries. And what will you do when you are in Saul's case? 1 Samuel 28:15-16. Alas, where will you turn? To whom will you complain? But what will you do, when you shall stand at the bar, and see that God, who is your enemy, upon the throne? Sad is their case indeed, who are not comprehended in the articles of peace with God.

INFERENCE. 3. If Christ died to reconcile us to God, give diligence to clear up to your own souls, your interest in this reconciliation. It Christ thought it worth his blood to purchase it, it is worth your care and pains to clear it. And what can better evidence it, than your conscientious tenderness of sin, lest you make new breaches. Ah, if reconciled, you will say, as Ezra 9:14. "And now our God, seeing you have given us such a deliverance as this; should we again break your commandments?" If reconciled to God, his friends will be your friends, and his enemies your enemies. If God be your friend, you will be diligent to please him, John 15:10; John 15:14. He that makes not peace with God is an enemy to his own soul. And he that is at peace, but takes no pains to clear it, is an enemy to his own comfort. But I must pass from this to the third end of Christ's death.

End 3. You have seen two of those beautiful births of Christ's travail, and lo, a third comes, namely, The sanctification of his people. Typical blood was shed, as you heard, to purify them that were unclean; and so was the blood of Christ shed to purge away the sins of his people: so speaks the apostle expressly, Ephesians 5:25-26. "Christ gave himself for the church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it." And so he tells us himself, John 17:29. "And for their sakes I sanctify myself," that is consecrate or devote myself to death, "That they also might be sanctified through the truth." Upon the account of this benefit received by the blood of Christ, is that Doxology, which, in a lower strain, is now sounded in the churches, but will be matter of the Lamb's song in heaven, Revelation 1:5-6. "To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins, in his own blood, - be glory and honor forever." Now, there is a twofold evil in sin, the guilt of it, and the pollution of it. Justification properly cures the former, sanctification the latter; but both justification and sanctification flow unto sinners out of the death of Christ. And though it is proper to say the Spirit sanctifies, yet, it is certain, it was the blood of Christ that procured for us the Spirit of sanctification. Had not Christ died, the Spirit had never come down from heaven upon any such design. The pouring forth of Christ's blood for us, obtained the pouring forth of the spirit of holiness upon us. Therefore the Spirit is said to come in his name, and to take of his, and show it unto us. Hence it is said, 1 John 5:6. "He came both by blood and by water;" by blood, washing away the guilt; by water, purifying from the filth of sin. Now this fruit of Christ's death, even our sanctification, is a most incomparable mercy. For, do but consider a few particular excellencies of holiness.

First, Holiness is the image and glory of God. His image, Colossians 3:10. and his glory, Exodus 15:11. "Who is like unto you, O Lord, glorious in holiness." Now, when the guilt and filth of sin are washed off, and the beauty of God put upon the soul in sanctification, O what a beautiful creature is the soul now! So lovely in the eyes of Christ, even in its imperfect holiness, that he says, Song of Solomon 6:5. "Turn away your eyes from me, for they have overcome me." So we render it, but the Hebrew word signifies, "they have made me proud, or puffed me up. It is beam of divine glory upon the creature, enamouring the very heart of Christ.

Secondly, As it is the soul’s highest beauty, so it is the soul’s best evidence for heaven. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," Matthew 5:8. "And without holiness no man shall see God," Hebrews 12:14. No gifts, no duties, no natural endowments will evidence a right in heaven, but the least measure of true holiness will secure heaven to the soul.

Thirdly, As holiness is the soul’s best evidence for heaven, so it is a continual spring of comfort to it in the way there. The poorest and sweetest pleasures in this world are the results of holiness, "until we come to live holy, we never live comfortably. Heaven is epitomized in holiness.

Fourthly, And to say no more; it is the peculiar mark by which God has visibly distinguished his own from other men, Psalms 4:3 "The Lord has set apart him that is godly for himself," q. d. this is the man, and that the woman, to sham I intend to do good forever. This is a man for me. O holiness, how surpassingly glorious are you!

INFERENCE 1. Did Christ die to sanctify his people, how deep then is the pollution of sin, that nothing but the blood of Christ can cleanse it! All the tears of a penitent simmer, should he shed as many as there have fallen drops of rain since the creation to this day, cannot wash away one sin. The everlasting burnings in hell cannot purify the flaming conscience from the least sin. O guess at the wound by the largeness and length of this tent that follows the mortal weapons, Sin.

INFERENCE. 2. Did Christ die to sanctity his people? Behold then the love of a Savior. "He loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." He did not shed the blood of beasts, as the priests of old did, but his own blood, Hebrews 9:12. And that not common, but precious blood, 1 Peter 1:1; 1 Peter 1:19. The blood at God; one drop of which out-values the blood that runs in the veins of all Adam’s posterity. And not some of that blood, but all, to the last drop. He bled every vein dry for us: and what remained lodged about the heart of a dead Jesus, was let out by that bloody spear which pierced the Pericardium: so that he bestowed the whole treasure of his blood upon us. And thus liberal was he of his blood to us when we were enemies. This then is that heavenly Pelican that feeds his young with his own blood. O what manner of love is this! But I must hasten.

End 4. As Christ died to sanctify his people; so he died also to confirm the New Testament to all those sanctified ones. So it was in the type, Exodus 24:8. and so it is in the text. "This is the New Testament in my blood," Matthew 26:28. that is ratified and confirmed by my blood. For, where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator, Hebrews 9:16. So that now all the blessings and benefits bequeathed to believers in the last will and testament of Christ, are abundantly confirmed and secured to them by his death. Yes, he died on purpose to make that testament of force to them. Men make their wills and testaments, and Christ makes his. What they bequeath, and give in their wills, is a free and voluntary act, they cannot be compelled to do it. And what is bequeathed to us in this testament of Christ, is altogether a free and voluntary donation. Other testators use to bequeath their estates to their wives and children, and near relations; so does this testator; all is settled upon his spouse, the church, upon believers, his children. A stranger intermeddles not with these mercies. They give all their goods and estates, that can that way be conveyed, to their friends that survive them. Christ gives to his church, in the New Testament, three sorts of goods.

First, All temporal good things, 1 Timothy 6:1. Matthew 6:33. that is the comfort and blessing of all, though not the possession of much. "As having nothing, and yet possessing all things," 2 Corinthians 6:10.

Secondly, All spiritual good things are bequeathed to them in this testament, as remission of sin, and acceptance with God, which are contained in their justification, Romans 3:24-26. Sanctification of their natures, both initial and progressive, 1 Corinthians 1:30. Adoption into the family of God, Galatians 3:26. The ministry of angels, Hebrews 1:14. Interest in all the promises, 2 Peter 1:4. Thus all spiritual good things are in Christ's testament conveyed to them. And as all temporal and spiritual, so,

Thirdly, All eternal good things. Heaven, glory, and eternal life, Romans 8:10-11. No such bequests as these were ever found in the testaments of princes. That which kings and nobles settle by will upon their heirs, are but trifles to what Christ has conferred in the New Testament upon his people. And all this is confirmed and ratified by the death of Christ, so that the promise is sure, and the estate indefeasible to all the heirs of promise.

How the death of Christ confirmed the New Testament is worth our enquiry. The Socinians, as they allow no other end of Christ's death, but the confirmation of the New Testament, so they affirm he did it only by way of testimony, or witness-bearing in his death. But this is a vile derogation from the efficacy of Christ's blood, to bring it down into an equality with the blood of martyrs. As if there were no more in it than was in their blood. But know, reader, Christ died not only, or principally, to confirm the Testament by his blood, as witness to the truth of those things, but his death rectified it as the death of a testator, which makes the New Testament irrevocable. And so Christ is called in this text. Look as when a man has made his will, and is dead, that will is presently in force, and can never be recalled. Besides, the will of the dead, is sacred with men. They dare not cross it. It is certain the last will and testament of Christ is most sacred, and God will never annul or make it void. Moreover, it is not with Christ as with other testators, who die, and must trust the performance of their wills with their executors, but as he died to put it in force, so he lives again to be the executor of his own testament. And all power to fulfill his will is now in his own hands, Revelation 1:18.

INFERENCE 1. Did Christ die to confirm the New Testament, in which such legacies are bequeathed to believers. How are all believers concerned then to prove the will of a dead Jesus! My meaning is, to clear their title to the mercies contained in this blessed testament. And this may be done two ways. By clearing to ourselves our covenant-relations to Christ. And by discovering those special covenant-impressions upon our hearts, to which the promises therein contained, do belong.

First, Examine your relations to Christ. Are you his spouse? Have you forsaken all for him? Psalms 45:10. Are you ready to take your lot with him, as it falls in prosperity or adversity? Jeremiah 2:2. And are you loyal to Christ! "You shall be for me, and not for another," Hosea 3:3. Do you yield obedience to him as your Head and Husband? Ephesians 6:24. then you may be confident you are interested in the benefits and blessings of Christ's last will and testament; for can you imagine Christ will make a testament and forget his spouse? It cannot be. If he so loved the church as to give himself for her, much more what he has is settled on her. Again, are you his spiritual seed, his children by regeneration? Are you born of the Spirit? John 3:1-36. Do you resemble Christ in

holiness? 1 Peter 1:14-15. Do you find a reverential fear of Christ carrying you to obey him in all things? Malachi 1:6. Are you led by the Spirit of Christ? "As many as are so led, they are the sons of God," Romans 8:14. To conclude, Have you the spirit of adoption, enabling you to cry, Abba, Father? Galatians 4:6. that is, helping you in a gracious manner, with reverence mixed with filial confidence, to open your hearts spiritually to your Father on all occasions? If so, you are children; and if children, doubt not but you have a rich legacy in Christ's last will and testament. He would not seal up his testament, and forget his dear children.

Secondly, You may discern your interest in the new testament or covenant (for they are substantially the same thing) by the new covenant impressions that are made on your hearts, which are so many clear evidences of your right to the benefits it contains. Such are spiritual illuminations, Jeremiah 31:34. gracious softness and tenderness of heart, Ezekiel 11:19. the awful dread and fear of God, Jeremiah 32:43. the copy or transcript of his laws on your hearts in gracious correspondent principles, Jeremiah 31:33. These things speak you the children of the covenant, the persons on whom all these great things are settled.

INFERENCE. 2. To conclude, it is the indispensable duty of all on whom Christ has settled such mercies, to admire his love, and walk answerably to it.

First, Admire the love of Christ. O how intense and ardent was the love of Jesus! who designed for you such an inheritance, with such a settlement of it upon you! These are the mercies with which his love had travailed big from eternity, and now he sees the travail of his soul, and you also have seen somewhat of it this day. Before this love let all the saints fall down astonished, humbly professing that they owe themselves, and all they are, or shall be worth, to eternity, to this love.

Secondly, And be sure you walk becoming persons for whom Christ has done such great things. Comfort yourselves under present abasures with your spiritual privileges, James 2:5. and let all your rejoicing be in Christ, and what you have in him, while others are blessing themselves in vanity. Thus we have finished the state of Christ's humiliation, and thence proceed to the second state of his exaltation. An Introduction to the State of Exaltation.

Having finished what I designed to speak to, about the work of redemption, so far as it was carried on by Christ in his humble state, we shall now view that blessed work as it is further advanced and perfected in his state of exaltation. The whole of that world was not to be finished on earth in a state of suffering, and abasure, therefore the apostle makes his exaltation, in order to the finishing of the remainder of his work so necessary a part of his priesthood, that without it he could not have been a priest, Hebrews 8:4. "If he were on earth he should not be a priest," that is if he should have continued always here, and had not been raised again from the dead, and taken up into glory, he could not have been a complete and perfect priest. For look, as it was not enough for the sacrifice to be slain without, and his blood left there; but after it was shed without, it must be carried within the veil, into the most holy place before the Lord, Hebrews 9:7, so it was not sufficient that Christ shed his own blood on earth, except he carry it before the Lord into heaven, and there perform his intercession-work for us.

Moreover, God the Father stood engaged in a solemn covenant to reward him for his deep humiliation, with a most glorious and illustrious advancement, Isaiah 49:5-7. And how God (as it became him) made this good to Christ, the apostle very clearly expresses, Php 2:9.

Yes, justice required it should be so. For how could our surety be detained in the prison of the grave, when the debt for which he was imprisoned was by him fully discharged, so that the law of God must acknowledge itself to be fully satisfied in all its claims and demands? His resurrection from the dead was, therefore, but his discharge or acquittance upon full payment. Which could not in justice be denied him.

And, indeed, God the Father lost nothing by it, for there never was a more glorious manifestation made of the name of God to the world, than was made in that work. Therefore it is said, Php 2:11. speaking of one of the designs of Christ's exaltation, it was, (says the apostle), "That every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." O how is the love of God to poor sinners illustriously, yes, astonishingly, displayed in Christ's exaltation. When, to show the delight and delight, which he took in our recovery, he has openly declared to the world, that his exalting Christ to all that glory, such as no mere creature ever was, or can be exalted to, was bestowed upon him as a reward for that work, that most grateful work at our redemption, Php 2:9. Therefore God also has highly exalted him; there is an "emphatical pleonasm in that word," our English is too flat to deliver out the elegance of the original, it is super-exaltation. The Syriac renders it, "he has multiplied his sublimity." The Arabic, "he has heightened him with an height." Justin, "he has famously exalted him." Higher he cannot raise him, a greater argument of his high satisfaction and content in the recovery of poor sinners cannot be given. For this, therefore, God the Father shall have glory and honor ascribed to him in heaven to all eternity.

Now this singular exaltation of Jesus Christ, as it properly respects his human nature, which alone is capable of advancement; for, in respect of his divine nature, he never ceased to be the Most High. So it was done to him as a common person, and as the Head of all believers, their Representative in this as well as in his other works. God therein showing what, in due time, he intends to do the persons of his elect, after they, in conformity to Christ, have suffered a while. Whatever God the Father intendeth to do in us, or for us, he has first done it to the person of our Representative, Jesus Christ. And this, if you observe, the scriptures carry in very clear and plain expressions, through all the degrees and steps of Christ's exaltation, namely, his resurrection, ascension, session at the right-hand of God, and returning to judge the world; of which I purpose to speak distinctly in the following sermons.

He arose from the dead as a public person, Colossians 3:1. "If you then be risen with Christ," says the apostle, so that the saints have communion and fellowship with him in his resurrection.

He ascended into heaven, as a public person, for so it is said in Ephesians 2:6. "He has raised us up," or exalted us together with Christ. He sits at God's right-hand, as a common person, for so it follows in the next clause, "and has made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." We sit there in our Representative. And when he shall come again to judge the world, the saints shall come with him. So it is prophesied, Zechariah 14:5. "The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with you." And as they come with Christ from heaven, so they shall sit on thrones with him, judging by way of suffrage. They shall be assessors with the Judge, 1 Corinthians 6:2. This deserves a special remark, that all this honor is given to Christ, as our Head and representative, for thence results abundance of comfort to the people of God. Carry it therefore along with you in your thoughts, throughout the whole of Christ's advancement. Think when you shall hear that Christ is risen from the dead, and is in all that glory and authority in heaven, how sure the salvation

of his redeemed is. "For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God, by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Surely, it cannot be supposed, but "he is able to save to the uttermost, all them that come to God by him; seeing he ever lives to make intercession," Hebrews 7:25. Think how safe the people of God in this world are, whose Head is in heaven. It was a comfortable expression of one of the fathers, encouraging himself and others with this truth in a dark day, "Come, (said he) why do we tremble thus, Do we not see our head above water?" If he live, believers cannot die, John 14:19. "Because I live, you shall live also." And let no man's heart suggest a suspicious thought to him, that this wonderful advancement of Christ may cause him to forget his poor people, groaning here below under sin and misery. For the temper and disposition of his faithful and tender heart, is not changed with his condition. He bears the same respect to us as when he dwelt among us. For indeed he there lives and acts upon our account, Hebrews 7:25. 1 John 2:1-2. And how seasonable and comfortable will the meditations of Christ's exaltation be to you, O believer, when sickness has wasted your body, withered its beauty, and God is bringing you to the dust of death! Ah! think then, that that "vile body shall be conformed to the glorious body of Christ," Php 3:21. As God has glorified, and highly exalted his Son, "whose form was marred more than any man's;" so will he exalt you also. I do not say, to a parity, or equality, in glory with Christ, for, in heaven he will be discerned and distinguished, by his peculiar glory, from all the angels and saints; as the sun is known by its excellent glory from the lesser stars. But we shall be conformed to this glorious Head, according to the proportion of members. O where will love mount the believer in that day!

Having spoken thus much of Christ's exalted state, to cast some general light upon it, and engage your attentions to it, I shall now according to the degrees of this his wonderful exaltation, briefly open it, under the fore-mentioned heads, namely, his resurrection, ascension, session at the Father's right hand, and his return to judge the world.

S. Wherein the Resurrection of Christ

Wherein the Resurrection of Christ, with its influences upon the Saints Resurrection, is clearly opened, and comfortably applied, being the first Step of his Exaltation "He is not here; for he is risen, as he said: come, see the place where the Lord lay." Matthew 28:6

We have finished the doctrine of Christ's humiliation, wherein the Sun of righteousness appeared to you, as a setting sun, gone out of sight; but as the sun when it is gone down to us, begins a new day in another part of the world, so Christ, having finished his course, and sock in this world, rises again, and that, in order to the acting, another glorious part of his work in the world above. In his death, he was upon the matter totally eclipsed, but in his resurrection, he began to recover his light and glory again. God never intended that the darling of his soul should be lost in obscure sepulcher. An angel descends from heaven, to roll away the stone, and, with it, the reproach of his death; and to be the heavenly herald, to proclaim his resurrection to the two Mary's, whose love to Christ had, at this time, drawn them to visit the sepulcher, where they lately left him. At this time (the Lord being newly risen) the keepers were trembling, and become as dead men. So great was the terrible majesty and awful solemnity attending Christ's resurrection; but, to encourage these good souls, the angel prevents them with these good tidings; "He is not here; for he is risen, as he said: come, see the place where the Lord lay:" q. d. Be not troubled, though you have not the end you came for, one sight more of your dear, though dead Jesus; yet you have not lost your labor; for, to your eternal comfort, I tell you, "he is risen, as he said." And to put it out of doubt, come hither and satisfy yourselves, "See the place where the Lord lay." In which words arts we have both a declaration and confirmation of the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

First. A declaration of it by the angels, both negatively and affirmatively. Negatively, He is not here. Here. indeed you laid him, here you left him, and here you thought to find him as you left him; but you are happily mistaken, He is not here. However, this giving them no satisfaction, so he might continue dead still, thought removed to another place, as indeed they suspected he was, John 20:13. therefore his resurrection is declared positively and affirmatively; He is risen; "egerte", the word imports, the active power or self-quickening principle, by which Christ raised himself from the state of the dead. Which Luke takes notice of also, Acts 1:3 where he says, He showed, or presented, himself alive after his passion. It was the divine nature, or Godhead of Christ, which revived and raised the manhood.

Secondly, Here is also a plain confirmation of Christ's resurrection, and that, first, From Christ's own prediction, He is risen, as he said. He foretold that which I declare to be now fulfilled. Let it not therefore seem incredible to you. Secondly, by their own sight, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." The grave has lost its guest; it is now empty; death has lost its prey. It received, but could not retain him, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." Thus the resurrection of Christ is declared, and confirmed. Hence our observation is,

DOCTRINE. That our Lord Jesus Christ, by the almighty power of his own Godhead, revived, and rose from the dead; to the terror and consternation of his enemies, and the unspeakable

consolation of believers. That our Lord Jesus Christ, though laid, was not lost in the grave; but the third day revived and rose again, is a truth confirmed to us by many infallible proofs, as Luke witnesseth, Acts 1:3. We have testimonies of it, both from heaven and earth, and both infallible. From heaven, we have the testimony of angels, and to the testimony of an angel all credit is due; for angels are holy creatures, and cannot deceive us. The angel tells the two Mary's, in the text, "He is risen." We have testimonies of it from men, holy men, who were eye-witnesses of this truth, to whom he showed himself alive by the space of forty days after his resurrection, by no less than nine solemn apparitions to them. Sometimes five hundred brethren saw him at once, 1 Corinthians 15:6. These were holy persons, who dared not deceive, and who confirmed their testimony with their blood. So that no point of religion is of more confessed truth, and infallible certainty than this before us. And blessed be God it is so. For if it were not, then were the "gospel in vain," 1 Corinthians 15:14. seeing it hangs the whole weight of our faith, hope, and salvation, upon Christ as risen from the dead. If this were not so, then could the holy, and divinely inspired apostles be found false witnesses, 1 Corinthians 15:15. For they all, with one mouth, constantly, and to the death affirmed it. If Christ be not risen, then are believers yet in their sins," 1 Corinthians 15:17. For our justification is truly ascribed to the resurrection of Christ, Romans 4:25. While Christ was dying, and continued in the state of the dead, the price of our redemption was all that while but in paying, the payment was completed, when he revived and rose again. Therefore for Christ to have continued always in the state of the dead, had been never to have completely satisfied; hence the whole force and weight of our justifications depends upon his resurrection. Nay, had not Christ risen, "the dead had perished," 1 Corinthians 15:17. Even the dead who died in the faith of Christ, and of whose salvation there now remains no ground to doubt. Moreover, Had he not revived and risen from the dead, how could all the types that prefigured it have been satisfied? Surely they must have stood as insignificant things in the scriptures; and so must all the predictions of his resurrection, by which it was so plainly foretold. See Matthew 12:40. Luke 24:46. Psalms 16:10. 1 Corinthians 15:4. To conclude. Had he not risen from the dead, how could he have been installed in that glory whereof he is now possessed in heaven, and which was promised him before the world was, upon the account of his death and sufferings? "For to this end Christ both died, and rose and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living," Romans 14:9. And that, in this state of dominion and glorious advancement, he might powerfully apply the virtues and benefits of his blood to us, which else had been as a precious cordial spilt upon the ground. So then, there remains no doubt at all of the certainty of Christ's resurrection; it was so, and upon all accounts it must needs be so; for you see how great a weight the scriptures hang upon this nail. And blessed be God it is a nail fastened in a sure place. I need spend no more words to confirm it; but rather choose to explain and open the nature and manner of his resurrection, which I shall do by showing you four or five properties of it. And the first is this,

First, Christ rose from the dead with awful majesty. So you find it in Matthew 28:2-4. "And behold there was a great earthquake; for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men." Human infirmity was not able to bear such heavenly majesty as attended the business of that morning. Nature sank under it. This earthquake was, as one calls it, triumpale signum: a sign of triumph, or token of victory, given by Christ, not only to the keepers, and the neighboring city, but to the whole world, that he had overcome death in its own dominions, and, like a conqueror, lifted

up his head above all his enemies. So when the Lord fought from heaven for his people, and gave them a glorious, though but temporal deliverance, see how the prophetess drives on the triumph in that rhetorical song, Judges 5:4-5. Alluding to the most awful appearance of God, at the giving of the law. "Lord, when you went out of Seir, when you marchedst out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water. The mountains melted from before the Lord, even that Sinai from before the Lord God of Israel." Our Lord Jesus went out of the grave, in like manner, and marched out of that bloody field with a pomp and majesty becoming so great a conqueror.

Secondly, And to increase the splendor of that day, and drive on the triumph, his resurrection was attended with the resurrection of many of the saints; who had slept in their graves until then, anrd then were awakened and raised to attend the Lord at his rising. So you read, Matthew 27:52-53. "And the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints, which slept, arose, and came out of the graves, after his resurrection; and went into the holy city and appeared unto many." This wonder was designed, both to adorn the resurrection of Christ, and to give a specimen or pledge of our resurrection; which also is to be in the virtue of his. This indeed was the resurrection of saints and none but saints, the resurrection of many saints, yet it was but a special resurrection, intended only to show what God will one day do for all his saints. And for the present, to give testimony of Christ's resurrection from the dead. They were seen, and known of many in the city, who doubtless never thought to have seen them any more in this world. To enquire curiously, as some do, who they were, what discourse they had with those to whom they appeared, and what became of them afterwards, is a vain thing. God has cast a veil of silence and secrecy upon these things, that we might content ourselves with the written word, and he that "will not believe Moses and the prophets, neither will he believe though one rise from the dead", as these saints did.

Thirdly, As Christ rose from the dead with those satellites or at pendants, who accompanied him at his resurrection; so it was by the power of his own Godhead that he quickened and raised him self; and by the virtue of his resurrection were they raised also, who accompanied him. It was not the angel who rolled back the stone that revived him in the sepulcher, but he resumed his own life; so he tells us, John 10:18. "I lay down my life that I may take it again." Hence 1 Peter 3:18. He is said to be put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit, that is by the power of his Godhead, or divine nature, which is opposed there to flesh, or his human nature. By the eternal Spirit he offered himself up to God, when he died, Hebrews 9:14. that is by his own Godhead, not the third person in the Trinity, for then it could not have been ascribed to him as his own act, that he offered up himself. And by the same Spirit he was quickened again.

And, therefore, the apostle well observes, Romans 1:4. "That he was declared to be the Son of God with power, by his resurrection from the dead." Now if he had been raised by the power of the Father, or Spirit only, and not by his own, how could he be declared by his resurrection to be the Son of God? What more had appeared in him than in others? For others are raised by the power of God, if that were all. So that in this respect also it was a marvelous resurrection. Never any did, or shall rise as Christ rose by a self-quickening principle. For though many dead saints rose at that time also, yet it was by the virtue of Christ's resurrection that their graves were opened, and their bodies quickened. In which respect he says, John 11:25. when he raised dead Lazarus, "I am the resurrection and the life," that is the principle of life and quickening, by which the dead saints are raised.

Fourthly, And therefore it may be truly affirmed, that though some dead saints are raised to life before the resurrection of Christ, yet that Christ is "the first-born from the dead," as he is called, Colossians 1:18. For though Lazarus and others were raised, yet not by themselves, but by Christ. It was by his virtue and power, not their own. And though they were raised to life, yet they died again. Death recovered them again, but Christ dies no more. "Death has no dominion over him." He was the first that opened the womb of the earth, the first-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.

Fifthly, But lastly, Christ rose as a public or common person. "As the first fruits of them that slept," 1 Corinthians 15:20. I desire this may be well understood; for upon this account it is that our resurrection is secured to us by the resurrection of Christ; and not a resurrection only, but a blessed and happy one, for the first-fruits both assured and sanctified the whole crop or harvest.

Now that Christ did rise, as a public person, representing and comprehending all the elect, who were called the children of the resurrection, is plain from Ephesians 2:6. where we are said to be risen with, or in him. So that, as we are said to die in Adam, (who also was a common person) as the branches die in the death of the root; so we are said to be raised from death in Christ, who is the head, root, and representative, of all his elect seed. And why is he called the firstborn, and first begotten frown the dead, but with respect to the whole number of the elect, that are to be born from the dead in their time and order also and as sure as the whole harvest follows the first fruits, so shall the general resurrection of the saints to life eternal follow this birth of the first-born from the dead.

It shall surely follow it I say, and that not only as a consequent follows an antecedent, but as an effect follows its proper cause. Now there is a three-fold casualty, or influence that Christ's resurrection has upon the saints resurrection, of which it is at once the meritorious, efficient, and exemplary cause.

First, The resurrection of Christ is a meritorious cause of the saints resurrection, as it completed his satisfaction, and finished his payment, and so our justification is properly assigned to it, as before was noted from Romans 4:25. This his resurrection was the receiving of the acquittance, the cancelling of the bond. And had not this been done, we had still been in our sins, as he speaks, 1 Corinthians 15:7. and so our guilt had been still a bar to our happy resurrection. But now, the price being paid in his death, which payment was finished when he revived; and the discharge then received for us, now there is nothing lies in bar against our resurrect lion to eternal life.

Secondly, As it is the meritorious cause of our resurrection, so it s the efficient cause of it also. For when the time shall come that the saints shall rise out of the dust, they shall be raised by Christ, as their head, in whom the effective principle of their life is. "Your life is hid with Christ in God," as it is Colossians 3:3. As when a man awakes out of his sleep, "the animal spirits seated in the brain, being set at liberty by the digestion of those vapors that bound them up, do play freely through every part and member of the body;" so Christ, the believers mystical head, being quickened, the spirit of life, which is in him, shall be diffused through all his members to quicken them also in the morning of the resurrection. Hence the warm animating dew of Christ's resurrection is said to be to our bodies, as the dew of the morning is to the withered, languishing plants, which revive by it, Isaiah 26:19. "Your dew is as the dew of herbs;" and then it follows, "the earth shall cast forth her

dead." So that by the same faith we put Christ's resurrection into the promises, we may put the believer's resurrection into the conclusion. And therefore, the apostle makes them convertibles, reasoning forward, from Christ's to ours; and back again from ours to his, 1 Corinthians 15:12-13. Which is also the sense of that scripture, Romans 8:10-11. "And if Christ be in you, the body indeed is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness." that is Though you are really united to Christ by the Spirit, yet your bodies must die as well as other men's; but your souls shall be presently, upon your dissolution, swallowed up in life. And then it follows, Romans 8:11. "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you; he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwells in you," that is though your bodies must die, yet they shall live again in the resurrection; and that by virtue of the Spirit of Christ which dwells in you, and is the bond of your mystical union with him your head. You shall not be raised as others are, by a mere word of power, but by the Spirit of life dwelling in Christ your head, which is a choice prerogative indeed.

Thirdly, Christ's resurrection is not only the meritorious and efficient cause, but it is also the exemplary cause or pattern of our resurrection. "He being the first and best, is therefore the pattern and measure of all the rest." So you read, Php 3:21. "Who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." Now the conformity of our resurrection to Christ's stands in the following particulars. Christ's body was raised substantially the same; so will ours. His body was raised first; so will ours be raised before the rest of the dead. His body was wonderfully improved by the resurrection; so will ours. His body was raised to be glorified; and so will ours.

First, Christ's body was raised substantially the same that it was before; and so will ours. Not another, but the same body. Upon this very reason the apostle uses that identical expression, 1 Corinthians 15:53. "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal, immortality." Pointing, as it were, to his own body when he spoke it; the same body, I say, and that not only specifically the same, (for indeed no other species of flesh is so privileged) but the same numerically, that very body, not a new or another body in its stead. So that it shall be both the what it was, and the who it was. And indeed to deny this is to deny the resurrection itself. For should God prepare another body to be raised in stead of this, it would not be a resurrection, but a creation; for non resurrectio dici poterit, ubi non resurgit quod cecidit. That cannot be called a resurrection, where one thing falls and another risers, as Gregory long since pertinently observed.

Secondly, His body was raised, not by a word of power from the Father, but by his own Spirit. So will ours. Indeed the power of God shall go forth to unburrough sinners, and fetch them forcibly out of their graves; but the resurrection of the saints is to be effected another way; as I opened but now to you. Even by his Spirit which now dwells in them. That very Spirit of Christ which effected their spiritual resurrection from sin, shall effect their corporal resurrection also from the grave.

Thirdly, His body was raised first, he had in this, as well as in other things, the pre-eminence; so shall the saints, in respect of the wicked, have the pre-eminence in the resurrection, 1 Thessalonians 4:16 "The dead in Christ shall rise first." They are to attend the Lord at his coming, and will be brought forth sooner than the rest of the world, to attend on that service. As the sheriff; with his men, goes forth to meet the judge, before the gaoler brings forth his prisoners.

Fourthly, Christ's body was marvelously improved by the resurrection, and so will ours. It fell in weakness, but was raised in power; no more capable of sorrows, pains and dishonors. In like manner our bodies are "sown in weakness, but raised in strength, sown in dishonor, raised in glory. Sown natural bodies, raised spiritual bodies," as the apostle speaks, 1 Corinthians 15:43-44. Spiritual bodies, not properly, but analogically. No distemper hang about glorified bodies, nor are they henceforth subject to any of those natural necessities, to which they are now tied. There are no flaw, defects, or deformities, in the children of the resurrection. What members are now defective or deformed, will then be restored to their perfect being and beauty; "for, if the universal death of all parts be rescinded by the resurrection, how much more the partial death of any single member?" or as Tertullian speaks, and from thenceforth they are free from the law of mortality, "They can die no more," Luke 20:35-36. Thus shall they be improved by their resurrection.

Fifthly, To conclude, Christ's body was raised from the dead to be glorified and crowned with honor. Oh it was a joyful day to him; and so will the resurrection of the saints be to them, the day of the gladness of their hearts. It will be said to them in that morning, "Awake, and sing, you that dwell in the dust," as Isaiah 26:19. O how comfortable will be the meeting between the glorified soul, and its new raised body. Much more comfortable than that of Jacob's and Joseph's, after twenty years absence, Genesis 46:29. Or that of David's with Jonathan, when he came out of the cave to him, 1 Samuel 20:41. Or that of the father of the prodigal with his son, who "was dead, and is alive, was lost, and is found." As he speaks, Luke 15:1-32: And there are three things will make it so.

First, The gratifications of the soul, by the satisfaction of its natural appetite of union with its own body. For even glorified souls in heaven have such an appetition and desire of reunion. In deed, the angels, who are pure spirits, as they never had union with, so they have no inclination to matter; but souls are otherwise tempered and disposed. We are all sensible of its affection to the body now, in its compounded state, we feel the tender care it has for the body, the sympathy with it, and lothness to be separated from it. It is said, 2 Corinthians 5:6. "to be at home in the body." And had not God implanted such an inclination to this its tabernacle in it, it would not have paid that due respect it owes the body while it inhabited in it, nor have regarded what became of it when it left it. This inclination remains still with it in heaven, it reckons not itself completely happy until its old dear companion and partner be with it, and in that sense some understand those words, Job 14:14. "All the days of my appointed time," that is of the time appointed for my body to remain in the grave, will I wait until my change (namely, that which will be made by the resurrection) come; for it is manifest enough he speaks there of the resurrection. Now, when this its inclination to its own body, its longings and hankerings after it, are gratified with a sight and enjoyment of it again, oh what a comfortable meeting will this make it! especially if we consider,

Secondly, The excellent temper and state in which they shall meet each other. For, as the body shall be raised with all the improvements and endowments imaginable, which may render it amiable, and every way desirable, so the soul comes down immediately from God out of heaven, shining in its holiness and glory. It comes perfumed out of those ivory palaces, with a strong scent of heaven upon it. And thus it re-enters its body, and animates it again. But,

Thirdly, And principally, that wherein the chief joy of this meeting consists, is the end for which the glorified soul comes down to quicken and repossess it, namely, to meet the Lord, and ever to be

with the Lord. To receive a full reward for all the labors and services it performed to God in this world. This must needs make that day, a day of triumph and exaltation. It comes out of the grave, as Joseph out of his prison, to be advanced to the highest honor. O do but imagine what an ecstasy of joy, and ravishing pleasure it will be, for a soul thus to resume its own body, and say as it were, unto it, come away, my dear, my ancient friend, who servedst and sufferedst with me in the world; come along with me to meet the Lord, in whose presence I have been ever since I parted with you. Now your bountiful Lord has remembered you also, and the day of your glorification is come. Surely it will be a joyful awaking. For, do but imagine, what a joy it is for dear friends to meet after long separation, how do they use to give demonstrations of their love and delight in each other, by embraces, kisses, tears, etc. Or frame but to yourselves a notion of perfect health, when a sprightly vivacity runs through every part, and the spirits do, as it were, dance before us, when we go about any business as especially to such a business as the business of that day will be, to receive a crown, and a kingdom. Do but imagine then what a sun shine morning this will be, and how the gains and agonies, cold sweats, and bitter groans at parting will be recompensed by the joy of such a meeting? And thus I have showed you the certainty of Christ's resurrection, the nature and properties of it, the threefold influence it has on the saints resurrection, and the conformity of ours unto his in these five respects. His body rose substantially the same, so shall ours; his body was raised by the Spirit, so shall ours. Not by the Godhead of Christ as his was, but by the Spirit, who is the bond of our union with Christ. He was raised as the first begotten from the dead, so the dead in Christ shall rise first. His body was improved by the resurrection, so shall ours. From the consideration of all which,

INFERENCE 1. We infer, that if Christ was thus raised from the dead, then death is fairly overcome, and swallowed up in victory: were it not so, it had never let Christ escape out of the grave. The prey of the terrible had never been thus rescued out of its paws. Death is a dreadful enemy, it defies all the sons and daughters of Adam. None dared cope with this king of terrors but Christ, and he, by dying, went into the very den of this dragon, fought with it, and foiled it in the grave, its own territories and dominions, and came off a conqueror. For, as the apostle speaks, Acts 2:24. "It was impossible it should hold or detain him." Never did death meet with its over match before it met with Christ, and he conquering it for us, and in our names, rising as our representative, now every single saint triumphs over it as a vanquished enemy, 1 Corinthians 15:55. "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? Thanks be to God, who has given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Thus, like Joshua, they set the foot of faith upon the neck of that king, and, with an holy scorn, deride its power. "O death, where is your sting?" If it be objected that it is said, 1 Corinthians 15:26. "The last enemy that is to be destroyed is death." And if so, then it should seem the victory is not yet achieved, and so we do but boast before the victory; it is at hand to reply that the victory over death, obtained by Christ's resurrection, is twofold, either personal and incomplete, or general and complete. He actually overcame it at his resurrection, in his own person, perfectly and virtually for us, as our head; but at the general resurrection of the saints (which his resurrection, as the first-fruits, assures them of) then it will be utterly vanquished and destroyed. Until then, it will exercise some little power over the bodies of the saints, in which respect it is called the last enemy. For sin, the chief enemy that let it in, that was conquered utterly and eradicated when they died; but death holds their bodies in the grave until the coming of Christ, and then it is utterly to be vanquished. For after that they can die no more, 1 Corinthians 15:54. "And then shall be brought to pass that saying that is written,

Death is swallowed up in victory." Then, and not until shell, will that conquest be fully completed in our persons, though it be already so in Christ's; now incompletely in ours, and then completely and fully forever. For the same word which signifies victory does also signify perpetuity, and in this place a final or perpetual conquest. And, indeed, now it smites only with its dart, not with its sting, and that but the believer's body only, and the body but for a time remains under it neither. So that there is no reason why a believer should stand in a slavish fear of it.

INFERENCE. 2. Has Christ, and has his resurrection such a potent and comfortable influence into the resurrection of the saints? Then it is the duty, and will be the wisdom of the people of God, so to govern, dispose, and employ their bodies, as become men and women, that understand what glory is prepared form them at the resurrection of the just. Particularly,

First, Be not fondly tender of them, but employ and use them for God here. How many good duties are lost and spoiled by sinful indulgence to our bodies? Alas! we are generally more solicitous to live long, than to live usefully. How many saints have active, vigorous bodies, yet God has little service from them. If your bodies were animated by some other souls that love God more than van do, and burn with holy zeal to his service, more work would be done for God by your bodies in a day, than is now done in a month. To have an able, healthy body, and not use it for God, for fear of hurting it, is as if one should give you a strong and stately horse, upon condition you must not work or ride him. Wherein is the mercy of having a body, except it be employed for God? Will not its reward at the resurrection be sufficient for all the pains you nor put it to in his service?

Secondly, See that you preserve the due honor of your bodies. "Possess them in sanctification and honor," 1 Thessalonians 4:4. O, let not these eyes be now defiled with sin, by which you shall see God. Those ears be inlets to vanity, which shall hear the Hallelujahs of the blessed. God has designed honor for your bodies, O, make them not either the instruments or objects of sin. There are sins against the body, 1 Corinthians 6:18. Preserve your bodies from those defilements, for they are the temple of God; "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy," 1 Corinthians 3:17.

Thirdly, Let not the contentment and accommodation of your bodies draw your soul into snares, and bring them under the power of temptations to sin. This is a very common case. O how many thousands of precious souls perish eternally for the satisfaction of a vile body for a moment? Their souls must, because their bodies cannot suffer. It is recorded to the immortal honor of these worthies, in Hebrews 11:35. "That they accepted not deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection." They might have had a temporal resurrection from death to life, from reproach to honor, from poverty to riches, from pains to pleasure; but upon such terms they judged it not worth acceptance. They would not expose their souls to secure their bodies. They had the same natural affections that other men have. They were made of as tender flesh as we are, but such was the care they had of their souls, and the hope of a better resurrection, that they listened not to the complaints and whinings of their bodies. O, that we were all in the same resolutions with them.

Fourthly, With-hold not, upon the pretense of the wants your own bodies may be in, that which God and conscience bid you to communicate for the refreshment of the saints, whose present necessities require your assistance. O, be not too indulgent to your own flesh, and cruel to others. Certainly, the consideration of that reward which shall be given you at the resurrection, for every act of Christian charity, is the greatest spur and incentive in the world to it. And to that end it is

urged as a motive to charity, Luke 14:13-14. "When you makes a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and you shall be blessed; for they cannot recompense you: for you shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the justly". It was the opinion of an eminent moderns divines, that no man living, fully understands and believes that scripture, Matthew 25:40. "In as much as you have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me." How few saints would be exposed to daily wants and necessities, if that scripture were but fully understood and believed!

INFERENCE. 3. Is Christ risen from the dead, and that as a public person and representative of believers? How are we all concerned then to secure to ourselves an interest in Christ, and consequently in this blessed resurrection? What consolation would be left in this world, if the hope of the resurrection were taken away? It is this blessed hope that must support you under all the troubles of life, and in the agonies of death. The securing of a blessed resurrection to yourselves, is therefore the most deep concernment you have in this world. And it may be secured to yourselves, if, upon serious heart-examination, you can discover the following evidences.

Evidence 1. First, If you are regenerated creatures, brought forth in a new nature to God, for we are "begotten again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Christ's resurrection is the ground work of our hope. And the new birth is our title or evidence of our interest in it. So that until our souls are partakers of the spiritual resurrection from the death of sin, we can have no assurance our bodies shall be partakers of that blessed resurrection to life.

"Blessed and holy (says the Spirit), is he that has part in the first resurrection, on such the second death has no power," Revelation 20:6. Never let unregenerate souls expect a comfortable meeting with their bodies again. Rise they shall by God's terrible citation, at the sound of the last trumpet, but not to the same end that the saints arise, nor by the same principle. They to whom the spirit is now a principle of sanctification, to them he will be the principle of a joyful resurrection. See then that you get gracious souls now, or never expect glorious bodies then.

Evidence. "If you be dead with Christ, you shall live again by the life of Christ. If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection," Romans 6:5. "sumfutoi", planted together. Some refer it to believers themselves; Jews and Gentiles are planted together in Christ. So Erasmus, "Believers grow together like branches upon the same root," which should powerfully enforce the great gospel duty of unity among themselves. But I would rather understand it, with reference to Christ and believers, with whom believers are in other scriptures said to suffer together, and be glorified together; to die together, and live together; to be crucified together, and buried together; all noting the communion they have with Christ, both in his death, and in his life. Now, if the power of Christ's death, that is the mortifying influence of it, have been upon our hearts, killing their lusts, deadening their affections, and flattening their appetites to the creature, then the power of his life, or resurrection, shall come (like the animating dew) upon our dead withered bodies, to revive and raise them up to live with him in glory.

Evidence 3. If your hearts and affections be now with Christ in heaven, your bodies in due time shall be there also, and conformed to his glorious body. So you find it, Php 3:20-21. "For our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his own glorious body." "The body is here called vile, or the body of our vileness." Not as God made it, but as sin has marred it. Not

absolutely, and in itself, but relatively, and in comparison of what it will be in its second edition, at the resurrection. Then those scattered bones and dispersed dust, like pieces of old broken battered silver, will be new cast, and wrought in the best and newest fashion, even like to Christ's glorious body. Whereof we have this evidence, that our conversation is already heavenly. The temper, frame, and disposition of our souls is already so; therefore the frame and temper of our bodies in due time shall be so.

Evidence 4. If you strive now by any means to attain the resurrection of the dead, no doubt but you shall then attain what you now strive for. This was Paul's great ambition, "that by any means he might attain the resurrection of the dead," Php 3:11. He means not simply a resurrection from the dead, for that all men shall attain, whether they strive for it or no. But by a metonymy of the subject for the adjunct, he intends that complete holiness and perfection, which shall attend the state of the resurrection, so it is expounded, ver. 12. So then, if God have raised in your hearts a vehement desire, and assiduous endeavor after a perfect freedom from sin, and full conformity to God, in the beauties of holiness; that very love of holiness, your present partings, and tendencies after perfection, speak you to be the persons designed for it.

Evidence 5. If you are such as do good in your generation. If you be fruitful and useful men and women in the world, you shall have part in this blessed resurrection, John 5:28-29. "All that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life." Now it is not every act materially good, that entitles a man to this privilege; but the same requisites that the schoolmen assign to make a good prayer, are also necessary to every good work. The person, matter, manner, and end, must be good. Nor is it any single good act, but a series and course of holy actions, that is here meant. What a spur should this be to us ail, as (indeed the apostle makes it, closing up the doctrine of the resurrection, with this solemn exhortation, 1 Corinthians 15:58. with which I also close mine) "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be you steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!

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